

The Anatomy of a Working Class Neighbourhood:

West Sparkbrook 1871 to 1914

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Synopsis

This thesis explores the premise that during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras there existed a significant and influential division within the working class of England's industrial towns and cities. This division, based largely on economic factors to do with the size and regularity of earnings, manifested itself first in the type and locality of residence, which in turn emphasised and reinforced the division of the working class into an upper section of better-paid usually more skilled and regularly-employed and a lower, poorer section of the low-waged and casually employed. Whilst it is not suggested that this produced "working classes" rather than "a working class", it did, nevertheless, result in two sections among the wage-earning class whose members pursued in many significant ways quite different ways of life. Economic differences allied to residential segregation meant that each section developed different notions of such concepts as "rough" and "respectable" and did not by any means share beliefs as to what constituted acceptable or "deviant" behaviour.

These and other questions are pursued by an examination of the years from 1871 to 1914 in the Birmingham neighbourhood of West Sparkbrook. The chronology has been set to make possible the use of census material and oral evidence, and the neighbourhood was chosen because, although it was in these years mainly an area of middle and upper working class housing, it had within it clearly differentiated pockets of lower working class housing, and so makes significant comparisons possible.

After an examination of the growth of West Sparkbrook as a residential district, an analysis has been made of the institutions, habits and behaviour of the people of the district. Documentary,

archival and oral evidence has been called on to examine the cultural schism in a number of exemplary areas. Differences in housing, schooling, working and shopping have been considered, and attitudes towards drinking, gambling and fighting. The differing roles and responsibilities within the family of men, women and children have been shown in the different groups, as well as leisure behaviour and the role of religion and of religious and charitable institutions in the lives of the community. From this picture emerges a clearer idea of the limits imposed on behaviour by the notions of "rough" and "respectable", and the extent to which these notions were developed by each group within its specific social, economic and cultural environment.

Approximately 100,000 words.

This thesis is dedicated to my family and to the working class of Birmingham, especially to the city's poor.

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The Anatomy of a Working Class Neighbourhood: West Sparkbrook

1871 to 1914

Chapter One

Poverty amidst Progress: Social Conditions in Birmingham 1871-1914

Throughout the period under review in this chapter, the Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham produced annual reports. The resultant profile I have provided here of the environment in which the poorest inhabitants of the city lived is based largely on these reports.

During the nineteenth century, Birmingham grew rapidly from a town of limited importance into a thriving, industrial city whose wares were acknowledged throughout the world. By outstripping its rivals to The North - Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and Leeds - Birmingham became the second city of The British Isles.

"Birmingham is one of the great towns of Europe, the capital of the Midland Shires and Emporium of the Mechanical Art"¹

As the reputation of the town (later to become city) grew so too did the number of its inhabitants: in 1841 this stood at 182,922; by 1871 it had grown to 342,505 and in 1901 it reached 522,204. Furthermore, by the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the population of the city as determined by official boundaries could, in fact, be reasonably augmented by the inhabitants of surrounding districts where resided formerly Birmingham people or else those who were dependent on the city for their livings.

¹ The Post Office Directory of Birmingham, 1871 p1 (Printed and Published by Kelly & Co.)

"Birmingham's population proper, including suburbs, is probably greater than that of any other provincial city"².

This situation was, indeed, recognised in 1891 and 1911 when the city extended to include such areas³.

The flight of the better-off inhabitants of Birmingham away from the city to the healthier, rural and semi-rural districts on its outskirts had begun at an early date in its industrial and urban development. Nonetheless, in the middle years of the nineteenth century it was still possible to find members of the middle-class residing within the borough's boundaries, although in ever-decreasing numbers. Increasingly, the factory owner, the small master in favourable circumstances, the well off shopkeeper and the members of the professions sought the smoke free air of the agricultural areas, especially those to the South, which surrounded the borough. Social division and the segregation of the classes became ever more visible in a manner reminiscent of that observed by Engels in Manchester. As early as 1829 it was noticed that the "naturally salubrious"⁴ air of Birmingham was being affected by:

"...the disadvantages which must result from its dense population, the noxious effluence of various metallic trades, and above all the continual smoke arising from the immense quantity of coal consumed..."⁵

Conditions such as these amongst the burgeoning amount of factories in Birmingham itself, ensured that residence in the borough

² Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p6.

³ In 1891 Balsall Heath, Harborne and Saltley became part of the city. In 1911 Kings Norton, Yardley, Aston Manor, Handsworth and Erdington. Quinton had joined the city in 1909.

⁴ Pigot and Co's Commerical Directory of Birmingham, 1829 p.5.

⁵ Ibid., p5.

would become the choice chiefly of those who could not afford to move away and pay the higher rents demanded by landlords owning houses in healthier areas⁶. It was not long before the better paid, regularly employed, skilled workers of the working class began to follow the middle class in their desire to escape the inclement conditions of life within an industrial borough. As a result, those wards clustered around the centre of Birmingham became dominated by the poor, incarcerated by their poverty.

"Not only is the natural beauty of the field a commodity as saleable in the Birmingham market as any artificial market - even so is the fresh air and the dappled sky. There is nothing new in this; for fresh air and freedom from contagion, as well as a clear sky and sweet water, the fruits and flowers of the earth, and the sweet ministrations of colour are, all the world over, almost always bought by the highest bidder, and he who has no money must be content with looking at these things as poor children are in beholding their favourite toys in shop windows"⁷.

This segregation of the classes according to residence (which was greatly determined by income) was facilitated as the century progressed by the introduction of trams and the suburban lines on railways, as well as the advent of the bicycle. These modes of transport enabled the more prosperous (including those of the working class) to live outside the borough's limits and yet still reach their place of work quickly, if that was within Birmingham. In contrast, the poor could not afford transportation; they needed to live in close proximity to the factories which provided them with what employment was available, and these were generally situated near to the centre of the borough.

⁶ The one district of the borough which was deviant from this rule of the movement of the better off, was that of Edgbaston.

⁷ "The Condition of The People" in Our Times (1881) p.230.

"Why don't I leave? Because I can't get a house any better near to my husband's work, or near the school the children go to. We've got no choice. We're obliged to take the houses we can afford...."⁸.

Around the central shopping area of Birmingham became gathered the poor in their mass living in cheap, unhealthy and ill-favoured houses; encircling the poverty stricken inner wards were those of the upper working class, dotted with pockets of poverty and beyond were the middle class suburbs and the retreats of the upper class.

The population of Birmingham and its colonies in its immediate environs was divided by occupation, income, housing, lifestyles, prospects and ambitions.

"It is a very trite remark that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; the sense in which it is usually understood being that it is the upper half which is ignorant of the designs of the lower. It may not be quite so hackneyed that it does not care, but it is to be feared that both statements are equally true... We have got to be exclusive in our manners now and do not live in public as we used to. We are boxed off from each other when we eat and drink, when we ride and when we see plays and we are pewed off from each other when we pray. Each class is thickly curtained off from the other..."⁹.

By the turn of the century this process of separation was so complete and had wrought such a profound affect on the city, that its Medical Officer of Health bemoaned that the outflow of the prosperous had left the city to "deal with the less vigorous parts of the population"¹⁰.

Although the main shopping centre of Birmingham was encompassed by poverty stricken districts, the passage of those who were more affluent through such areas to shop in the city did not engender

⁸ J. Cuming Walters; Scenes in Slumland, Pen Pictures of The Black Spots in Birmingham no.1. Articles reprinted from The Birmingham Daily Gazette March 1901.

⁹ Pictures of The People: Drawn by One of Themselves no.1. Birmingham 1871. Articles from The Birmingham Morning News.

¹⁰ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p6.

social intercourse or even knowledge.

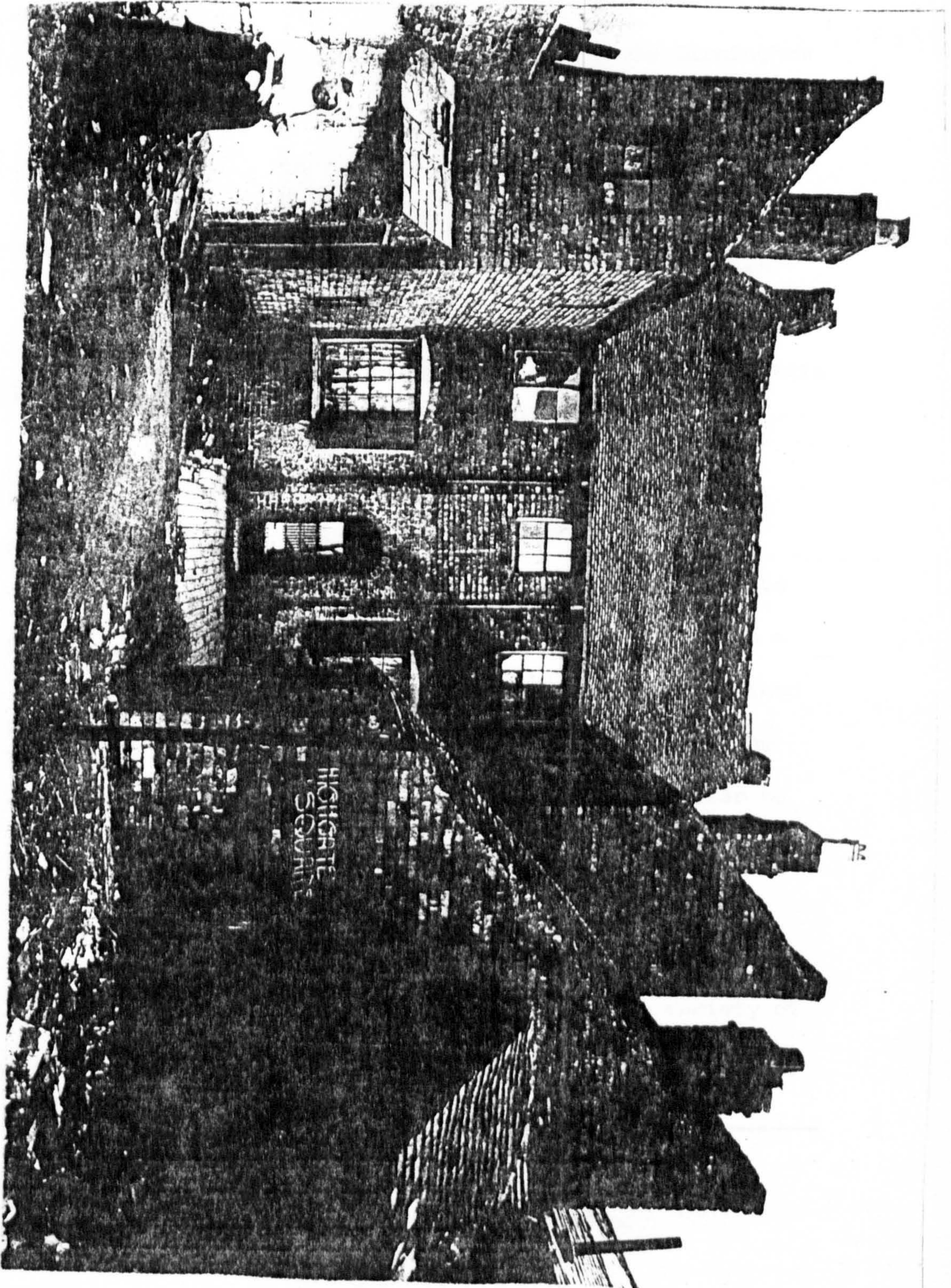
"Most pedestrians are satisfied with the mere traversing of the principal streets of this industrial locality, dull and prosaic enough in its most presentable thoroughfares. They have little reason to turn up the little squalid offshoots of the main arteries, and a less desire to drive down into some of those roughly paved and narrow passages, which ultimately broaden into a dim, square plot of ground, round which the houses crowd as though they had as great a struggle as the daylight to assert themselves, and were seeking to pose as silent symbols of the human struggles within their walls. Little do these ordinary passers-by know, therefore, of the conditions prevailing within a stones throw of them, of the unutterable squalor and the miserable character of the lives led by their inhabitants. They never see"¹¹.

This lack of knowledge of the living conditions of the poor, of the bleak environment in which they lived, of their inability to escape and of their impotence to greatly alter their position, was at its most obvious where the poor gathered most densely and in large numbers. It was, nevertheless, exhibited to as great an extent wherever the poor crowded together, even in the midst of upper working class districts, so that such quarters were avoided both consciously and - perhaps more insidiously - unconsciously. Moreover, as the population of Birmingham grew so too was compounded the problem of its poor.

Despite all this, the activities (and indeed existence) of groups such as The Birmingham Political Union and The Complete Suffrage Union, induced a belief which swamped the evidence of residential segregation. This was the conviction that in Birmingham the:

¹¹ T.J. Bass: Everyday in Blackest Birmingham, Facts not Fiction (1898) p3.

The Reverend Bass was vicar of St. Laurence, arguably the poorest parish in the city, and wrote several books on the plight of his parishioners.



Highgate Square, Moseley Road, Highgate
(City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies
Department. "The Slum Collection" c1905-1907)

"... middle class is ready to work heartily with the working class and I hope a thorough union may take place with you..."¹².

The apparent co-operation between all sections of the two classes in such political movements and the apparent acceptance by the Birmingham working class of middle class leaders such as Thomas Attwood and Joseph Sturge, led to the growth of the confidence that in the borough all classes and social conditions were united; of the assurance that in Birmingham were not manifested the schisms in society which exhibited themselves in other great manufacturing centres; of the firm impression that, indeed, the population of the borough was "very little mixed"¹³ and that the co-operation of the classes ensured a more integrated society in Birmingham than elsewhere.

The widespread adherence to such a belief verged, in time, on myth making and as often occurs the myth soon subsumed what elements of truth had existed. Social co-operation became transferred from a truth applicable only to certain sections of Birmingham society into one that was universal and all embracing. Certainly, aspects of the social and economic life of the borough were salient and peculiar to it, making it different from other industrial towns and cities: Birmingham was not dependent on a single industry such as steel or cotton for its economic well being and it was this fact which tended to mask social division, ensuring the view that it was the variety of trades which allowed:

¹² J.A. Langford: Modern Birmingham and its Institutions vol II (1873) p.356. Part of a speech by John Bright M.P., in 1867.

¹³ The Post Office Directory of Birmingham, 1871 p.8.

"... the solid prosperity of Birmingham.... There has never been a time amongst us when an ingenious mechanic skilled in manipulation of the forge, the hammer, the file, the stamping press and the lathe, or adept in the casting shop, a capable tool maker and inventor of machinery, or an improver of existing methods, might not start as a master on his own account or lay the foundations, usually, of a thrifty business and often of a trade of international importance"¹⁴.

There was great diversity of occupation in Birmingham in the nineteenth century with more than five hundred separate classes of trade. Of necessity, therefore, there was a large number of skilled workmen in the borough serving these trades. It is when applied to the relationship of this group with those of the middle class involved in industry, that the idea of the inter-dependence of the working and middle classes in Birmingham and their mutual assistance for their joint benefit becomes reflected in reality. Skilled workmen could - and did - aspire to the stature of small master, particularly in periods of prosperity; whilst economic depression might once more reduce him to the ranks of the employed. A bond arose which was especially pertinent to these two sections - skilled man and small master - but which, through the contacts of the latter, extended to larger factory owners. Shared experiences and often a common background enhanced the affinity induced by economic relationships; the small master generally:

"... spoke and behaved like a worker; he was usually a very good craftsman who could take his jacket off and do a good job"¹⁵.

In turn the skilled workman was often better paid than many clerks adhering to their middle class position. Their decent and, most importantly, regular income gave them a certain economic independence

¹⁴ J. Thackeray Bunce. Article in The Birmingham Weekly Post April 1st 1899.

¹⁵ S.U. Blackwell: Birmingham Past, Present and Future (c 1945) p2, Issued by The Communist Party of Great Britain.

denied to the lower working class; the money to rent a better built and more sanitary house; the freedom to buy books and newspapers and to allow their children to go to school regularly, and most relevant of all, it gave them the choice. It was thus amongst this section of the working class that there existed the prospect of social mobility, or at least the optimism of it, of which Asa Briggs talks¹⁶. Between the manufacturer and the skilled man there was in fact interdependence, common action and an emphasis on mutual interest and it was the latter whom in reality the Birmingham middle class addressed when they talked of "the people" or "the working class".

"For my part I am convinced that the most fruitful field before reformers at the present time is to be found in an extension of the functions and authority of Local Government. Local Government is near the people. Local Government will bring you into contact with the masses. By its means you will be able to increase their comforts, to secure their health, to multiply their leisures which they may enjoy in common, to carry out a vast co-operative system for mutual aid and support, to loose the inequalities of our social system and to raise the standard of all classes in the community"¹⁷.

Social co-operation became enshrined in 'The Civic Gospel' whilst the implementation of its principles assumed almost the character of a crusade, fired by the zeal of clergymen such as Vince and Dawson and advanced by their Non-Conformist adherents, families such as Chamberlain, Kenrick, Martineau, Cadbury and Tangye. Their commitment to The Civic Gospel was undoubtedly sincere but in reality the implementation of its tenets proved beneficial only in the short term for the poor of Birmingham. A period of action in the 1870's, under the enthiastic direction of Joseph Chamberlain, in which attempts were made to ameliorate the conditions of the poor soon

¹⁶ Asa Briggs: Victorian Cities (Pelican 1977) Chapter 5 p.187.

¹⁷ Joseph Chamberlain M.P. Speech of April 28th 1885. Henry W. Lucy (ed): Speeches of the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain with a Sketch of His Life (1885) pp.131-2.

foundered (with the departure of its innovator) on a sea of official indifference and municipal apathy and neglect. For the next twenty five years the council rested on the laurels of its achievements whilst the plight of the poor once more deteriorated. Yet still the city was eulogised despite its consequent inaction:

"I look upon Birmingham with, perhaps, a foolish pride as the Holy City - the Mecca of England, where life is fuller of possibilities of utility, happier, broader, wiser and a thousand times better than in any other town in the United Kingdom"¹⁸.

In truth, little provision was made for the poor of Birmingham; they were exempt from the benefits of its prosperity. Between the city's upper working class and their less fortunate brethren lay a gulf made wide by differences in wage, life-style, culture, beliefs and expectations and which was made more distinct by the separation of the two within different districts and quarters. The unskilled and ill-educated had little hope of social mobility and probably less optimism about it. Their lives were bounded by goals more prosaic and attainable (albeit often distant): a steady job and regular wage; absence of illness and avoidance of injury. The birthright of the slum dweller was poverty, shackling them to their position in society and preventing their escape.

"Of the three hundred and forty odd thousands of human activities that swarm this great brick beehive, there are at least two hundred thousand at moderate computation who are constantly battling for mere existence. My substantial friend with the gold eye-glass, do you care to know how that battle is carried on.... You have not known what it is to expend all your physical and mental energy and to have all your cares absorbed in so mean and barren an object as that of just keeping soul and body together. There is a prison in Holland where they confine those prisoners who are refractory and will not work. It is underground and the water is allowed to flow in. If the prisoner did not pump, pump incessantly the full tide would rise to his knees - to his waist - to his

¹⁸ John Henry Chamberlain: quoted in Leonard Brierley "A Chat about Old Birmingham" in The Central Literary Magazine vol XII January 1893 p.137.

mouth - and drown him. He must pump though beads stand on his forehead and his arms are ready to drop off from fatigue. Well, many of your countrymen's lives are like that. They have capacities, perhaps, but they have no time to cultivate them; they have tastes and desires which are not ignoble if they could give them play, but they must go on working that eternal lever up and down till mind and body are weary and all the faculties are dull and dim; they must pump or the waters of pauperism will close around them"¹⁹.

According to this author's computation, 58% of the population of Birmingham was living either in poverty or just above the poverty line. Although his figures are not scientifically based and he does not state how he arrives at them, they are made plausible by the later findings of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree. In the former's social survey of London it was found that 30% of the capital's population was living below the poverty line (this was deemed to be a wage of between 18/- and 20/- a week for a 'moderate' family)²⁰. At the turn of the century, Seebohm Rowntree in his social survey of York, arrived at a similar conclusion. He also drew attention to the existence of a 'poverty cycle' whereby poor families might, over the years, rise and fall above the poverty line. Thus, whilst at any given time 30% of the population might be living in poverty there was also another large percentage existing just above the poverty line, struggling to survive and who might, through a variety of reasons, fall once more into poverty ²¹.

Amidst the euphoria concerning Birmingham's prosperity and the well-being of all its people, such facts are often forgotten. It is true that in the 1870's serious efforts were made to translate myth into reality. Joseph Chamberlain recognised that only drastic measures could suffice to remedy Birmingham's problems, especially that

¹⁹ Pictures of The People: Drawn by One of Themselves No.I (Birmingham 1871).

²⁰ Charles Booth: Life and Labour of The People in London Volume I (1892).

²¹ Seebohm Rowntree: Poverty. A Study of Town Life (1901).

of slum property.

"Unless they went to the very root of the evil - unless they went to the dwellings themselves - their heartiest work would be useless. Even now their work was, in the case of some of these pigsties, absolutely endless and hopeless. As for the other work, the work of ministers of religion and school masters that was thrown away. So long as there was canker at the root, morality was an empty thing"²².

This speech inspired Birmingham Council to implement the powers handed to it under The Artisans Dwellings Act of 1875: some of the worst slums in the borough, around Old Square and Lichfield Street, were cleared to enable the forming of the Corporation Street shopping thoroughfare; the gas companies and waterworks company were acquired by the council; and efforts were made to replace open middens draining directly into the sewers which resulted in the formation of The Birmingham Tame and Rea District Drainage Board. In 1875 Birmingham's first Health Committee was established and within eight years its inspectors condemned more than 3,000 wells as dangerously contaminated.

In consequence of these measures during and directly after Chamberlain's mayorality between 1873-6, Birmingham's death rate fell. Professor Briggs has commented that:

"The averages for the whole city, always misleading, do not express the full measure of benefit reaped by the 'black spot' districts"²³.

Such benefits were, however, short-lived but they did ensure that most observers and commentators would regard Birmingham in a generous and praiseworthy manner, oblivious to the reversion to apathy of the Council once Chamberlain had become an M.P. For them the town:

²² Joseph Chamberlain. Quoted in J. Cuming Walters: The Remedies For Slumland no.2. Articles Reprinted from The Birmingham Daily Gazette (1901). Speech to The Town Council July 27th 1875.

²³ Asa Briggs, op cit p.225.

"... had risen from the reproach of 'blackest' Birmingham to the best ideal of municipal reform"²⁴.

In reality "blackest Birmingham" reasserted itself aided and abetted by a council exhausted by its earlier activity, sated by its apparent success and engrossed with the vision and not the reality of 'the best governed city in the world'.

Foremost among the charges which could be levelled at the council was that whilst it had partially carried out the work of destruction of slum property, it had lamentably failed in the task of construction. The clearance of the slums for the town's proud new 'Parisian type' thoroughfare did not erase the problem of the slums. Those who had dwelt there were not provided with alternative accommodation; no concerted effort was made by the council to construct houses for them. Instead, the homeless - able only to afford the cheapest and most squalid of housing - crowded into the already densely packed slum wards near to their former dwellings. St. Mary's, St. Stephen's, St. Bartholomew's, Duddeston and Deritend encircled the city centre with a collar of slums for whose inhabitants the council evinced at best indifference and at worst the active participation of some of its members in profiting from and perpetuating slum housing.

"The pen of a Zola could scarcely do justice to the filthy horror of this slum in Christian England, and in the best governed city in the world, with the finest Health Committee and the most enterprising municipality ever known"²⁵.

²⁴ G.N.H. Trederick: Reminiscences of Twenty Five Years in Sparkbrook (1915) p.2.

²⁵ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland. Pen Pictures of The Black Spots in Birmingham no.8. Articles Reprinted from The Birmingham Daily Gazette March 1901. Cuming Walters was born in 1863 and was educated at King Edward's Grammar. He joined The Birmingham Daily Gazette becoming eventually leader writer before becoming editor of The Manchester City News in 1902. His series of articles on the slums of Birmingham aroused a furore which just managed to arouse the council from its lethargy, although Cuming Walters was sued for libel by a councillor.

Comparisons between Birmingham and Liverpool and Manchester showed that the city lagged significantly behind the latter two during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in its provision for and actions towards the poor. In both the Lancashire cities some attempt was being made to provide accommodation for their very poorest citizens, those who could only afford to rent three rooms or less. As Table 1 shows by 1901 Birmingham had managed to construct just fifty two such dwellings providing that type of accommodation as opposed to Manchester's figure of six hundred and thirty one and Liverpool's of four hundred and fifty four. Emphasising Birmingham's lack of concern for the poor is the fact that in the provision of four roomed cottages alone - the type of accommodation which was aimed at the better paid of the working class - was the city ahead of its Northern rivals. Even the city's Health Committee had to acknowledge that its members had been:

"... embarrassed in their operations under these Acts by the consciousness that the inconsiderate destruction of dwellings may create new evils, unless provision is made for the accommodation of the dishoused occupiers... 'The demolition of insanitary houses' said the Chairman 'leads to overcrowding'. The Coroner lately said that one fourth of the working men's houses ought to be destroyed. But if we destroy we must be prepared to build"²⁶.

Indeed, under The Housing of The Working Class Acts capital expenditure by Birmingham had been a miserly £28,000 in comparison to that of Liverpool of £178,000²⁷.

A similar situation existed with regard to the provision of staff for matters relating to nuisance and sanitation and in the remunera-

²⁶ C.A. Vince M.A.: History of The Corporation of Birmingham vol III 1885-1899 p.115. The Acts referred to are The Housing of The Working Class Acts of 1875 and 1890.

²⁷ These figures providing comparisons between Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester are taken from J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland: The Faults and The Remedies. A Summary (1901) who acknowledges that he has taken them from a report of The Corporation of Nottingham (1901)

Table 1
Provision of Tenements By
Municipal Authorities

City	One	Number of Rooms		Four	Total
		Two	Three		
Manchester	69	471	91	21	652
Liverpool	66	297	142	16	621
Birmingham	-	24	28	112	164

tion received by such officers ²⁸. Both Liverpool and Manchester employed twenty eight sanitary inspectors paid between 35/- and 40/- a week in the former and up to 45/- in the latter; Birmingham employed nineteen at salaries ranging from 30/- to 37/- a week. Manchester boasted a Sanitary Superintendant receiving £500 p.a. and a Chief Inspector earning £220 p.a.; Liverpool could rely on the facilities of a Chief Inspector earning £275 p.a. and seven prosecuting inspectors who received £140 p.a. By comparison, Birmingham employed a Chief Inspector at £400 p.a. who could call on the services of just one assistant who was paid £117 p.a. Such glaring differences in the actions of the three councils prompted the sardonic observation that:

"Either Liverpool and Manchester are disgracefully extravagant or Birmingham is too economic"²⁹.

In Birmingham one Inspector was employed to monitor the conditions of living of twenty thousand people who dwelt in lodging houses; Liverpool in contrast had a Chief Inspector and twelve inspectors. Even with regard to factory inspectors employed by the municipalities (in which Birmingham might have been expected to at least achieve parity with its Northern counterparts) the city was, yet again, trailing in its provisions: one officer was employed who was paid 45/- a week whilst Liverpool employed three at the same salary and Manchester six, earning between 35/- and 40/- a week. Female Health Visitors were introduced by Birmingham in 1899 and whilst the same number as those in Liverpool were employed - eight - there was a significant disparity in payment: those in the former city earned 25/- a week whilst in the latter the wage was between 30/- and 35/- a week. Again, whilst

²⁸ All the officers described here were employed directly by the Corporations, they were officers of local government not national.

²⁹ J. Cuming Walters: Further scenes in Slumland no.I (1901).

Liverpool employed three inspectors of food and drugs and Manchester two, Birmingham managed just one. Only with respect to the Inspector of Court Cleaning and his staff was Birmingham at an advantage over the other two cities.

"How unfavourably, in most respects, does our city with 'Forward' for its motto compare with the two cities to which it most clearly approximates in size and requirement. A different spirit seems to animate the three municipalities"³⁰.

The revelation of such discrepancies in attitudes of and provisions by the three councils allied to J. Cuming Walters' vivid and often horrific descriptions of slum life in Birmingham, aroused the interest and outrage of the public in the city. Nevertheless, the council barely managed to raise itself from its sloth and indifference: by the narrow margin of thirty two votes to thirty it was voted to establish a new Housing Committee which would appropriate those functions of The Estates and Health Committees and exercise such powers as deemed desirable under The Public Health Acts and all powers under The Housing Acts. Yet still the council halted at exerting itself fully in the battle to alleviate the conditions in which slum dwellers lived: faith was still given to the belief that reconstruction should be carried out by private builders and not the council directly. To compound the council's conviction it was decided that new housing should be erected in the suburbs in the misguided expectation that by implementing a cheap transport policy, slum dwellers would be encouraged to move away from the city centre. Finally, by compelling the landlords

³⁰ J. Cuming Walters: Further Scenes in Slumland no.I (1901).

The 1891 census gave populations of:

Birmingham	514,956
Manchester	543,902
Liverpool	634,212



Number 8 Court Birchall Street before re-construction
("The Slum Collection")

of the worst slum properties to carry out repairs, it was felt that these measures together would eradicate the problem of the slums.

Within a short time, however, the council was shown to have failed.

It soon became obvious that whilst:

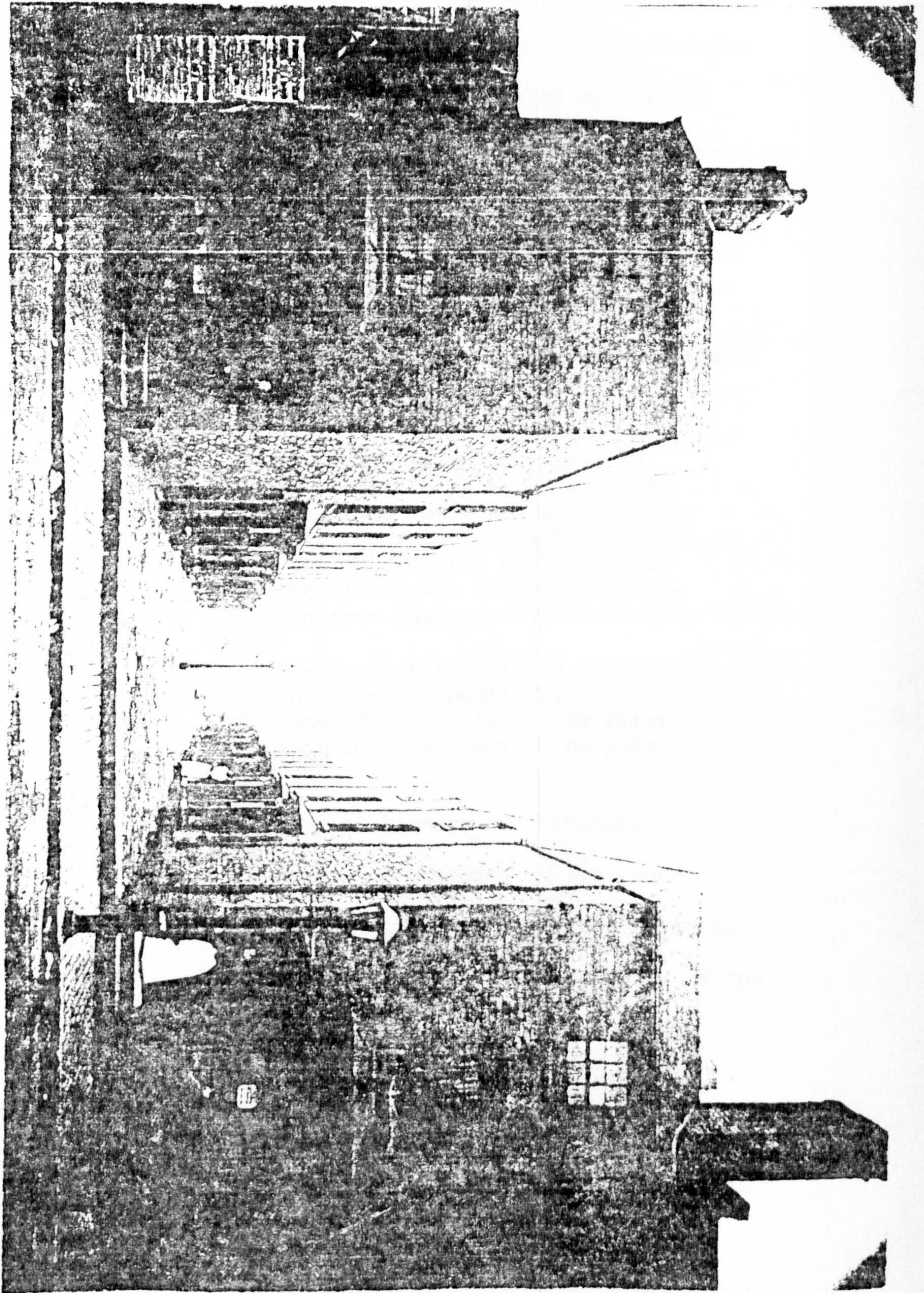
"Increased facilities of locomotion-railways and tramways - enable a larger portion of the people to live in the suburbs, where relatively cheap land is available and where the private builder can build profitably, and the central sites of great value often have to be dealt with by the local authority by writing off, more or less, of their value. But private interest has failed in the lowest class population, which presents the real difficulty in the housing problem"³¹.

From 1905 the council found it necessary to compulsorily purchase certain slum properties and to carry out repairs under its direction, whilst ordering the demolition of other such housing. Yet, it was not until after The First World War that Birmingham began to build its own council houses in large estates on former agricultural land acquired by the city's extension in 1911³². Nevertheless, the articles of J. Cuming Walters did succeed in partially enlivening a previously moribund council, enervated by the absence of a character willing to carry on the work begun by Joseph Chamberlain in the 1870's. Under Part Two of The Housing of The Working Class Act, the Housing Committee was empowered to declare such houses as it decided as unfit for human habitation: in 1900 none were condemned; in 1901 fifteen; yet in 1902 four hundred and fifty were so classified; the figure dropped back to three hundred and four in 1903 but rose again to one thousand and nineteen in 1904³³.

³¹ Arthur Wesley Crompton (professional Associate of The Surveyor's Institute): The Housing Question (published by "Land Agents' Record" c 1913).

³² By the extension of 1911 the city's population rose from 525,960 to 842,291 and its acreage from 13,477 to 43,537. Similarly unbuilt land rose from 26% to 55%. Henry E. Stilgoe (City Engineer and Surveyor): The Birmingham Town Planning Schemes (1913).

³³ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1904, p.60.



Number 8 Birchhall Street after re-construction
("The Slum Collection")

Notwithstanding this improvement, it was still felt by many critics that the council remained ineffectual and unwilling to attack the root of the problem. Much still depended on the philanthropy of dedicated volunteers: a Sanitary Aid Council was established by some of these, assisted by certain clergymen; additionally a Rowton House was built in Highgate. In the absence of a modern social security system much redounded on these volunteers seeking to alleviate the condition of the poor. Nevertheless, an interested and active council could achieve much and J. Cuming Walters was not alone in adversely contrasting the municipal vigour of Birmingham with:

"... the efforts of the Housing Committee in Liverpool in building for the poorer working classes. In that city the interiors are not plastered; the plain brick walls are simply colour washed. Wherever possible concrete is substituted for timber in order to counteract the destructive habits of the tenants. The spaces between the floors are fitted with concrete, and the passage of vermin from one compartment to another is rendered impossible.

Of course, the more external renovation of the slums of Birmingham leaves the houses in their old position, back-to-back and with the consequent lack of ventilation. My first indignant outcry was 'The whole structure ought to be piled in a heap and set fire to...' "34.

It is possible to divide the social history of Birmingham into four district phases based on the extent of activity of the council towards the slums and their dwellers; and which periods are reflected in the city's general death rate. Prior to 1871, when the creed of The Civic Gospel was being determined, the position of the poor in Birmingham was desperate; between 1871 and 1881, in the wake of the reforms initiated by Joseph Chamberlain, there occurred a significant drop in the borough's death rate; from 1881 the mortality rate stabilised although exhibiting a slight increase up to 1900; finally from this date to 1915 came another noticeable fall although this was aided

34 T.J. Bass: Hope in Shadowland (1903) p.91.

by favourable domestic conditions in 1904 and especially by the extension of 1911 which brought into Birmingham more healthy, suburban districts ³⁵.

There was, significantly, one constant throughout this curve of deterioration and amelioration; that being the vast disparity between the death rates of the various wards of the city ³⁶. Despite the assertions of those such as Professor Briggs who see the years after 1871 as ones of continued improvement in the environment of Birmingham, it is still true that the death rate in the slum wards (allowing for any benefit) remained abnormally high. Large numbers of poor children and adults were dying unnecessarily; their lives shortened by inadequate housing, insanitary conditions, a lack of health care and - seminal to all these - an absence of a regular and reasonable income.

With a consistency that was marked in its manifestations, the inner city wards were, throughout this period, considerably less favourable areas in which to live than the outer wards. The most advantageous of these was invariably Edgbaston.

"Fortunately, there is one extensive West End suburb - Edgbaston - which forms a healthy and desirable residential locality for the Birmingham upper classes...Edgbaston is still a rich, well-populated suburb within a very easy distance of the city centre"³⁷.

Living conditions in "The Birmingham Belgravia"³⁸ and other wards more fortuitious in their geographical setting, were very different from those in the poorer wards. Yet even within the generally more prosperous outer wards pockets of slums existed giving the lie to the

³⁵ Table 2 opposite indicates these periods. Figures taken from The Reports of The Medical Officers of Health of The Borough of Birmingham 1871-1914.

³⁶ Map 1 p.17 indicates the difference in the general death rates between the city's wards.

³⁷ Thomas Anderton: A Tale of One City: The New Birmingham Papers reprinted from The Midland Counties Herald (1906) Chapter VIII p.89.

³⁸ Ibid., p.89.

Table 2 : The General Death Rate

Birmingham 1871-1915

Period	Death Rate	
	Birmingham	England & Wales
1871-75	25.2	22.0
1876-80	22.8	20.8
1881-85	20.7	19.4
1886-90	20.2	18.9
1891-95	20.3	18.7
1896-1900	20.5	17.7
1901-05	16.5	16.0
1906-10	15.0	14.7
1911-15	14.6	14.1

From The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1915 p.8.

(The Period 1901 to 1915 represents the city as extended at various dates to include generally healthier, semi-rural districts around Birmingham).

boast of Birmingham being the city of vision, the city of progress, the "Holy City". In Victorian and Edwardian Birmingham slums were:

"... not confined to one portion of the city, nor to one ward. They stretch out with infinite ramifications from the worst crowded centre of Birmingham.... to the uttermost boundaries No part of Birmingham seems wholly free from the slum stains. There are patches of black in Edgbaston as in Bordesley; rural Small Heath has its horrors just like sulphurous, smelly Saltley"³⁹.

One circumstance united all slum districts wherever their location: inadequate and insanitary housing characterised by a low rent. The slum areas of Birmingham were immediately recognisable by the presence of the ubiquitous 'back-to-back' houses, grouped in courts and arranged in terraces ⁴⁰. Cheaply built and erected hurriedly the inner houses of such terraces had three party walls dividing them from their neighbours by means of a single brick wall, four and a half inches thick. Population densities for built upon land were obviously high, yet all too often nearby to such terraces lay large plots of land upon which were built factories, which further proved injurious to the health of the slum dweller.

"In Oxygen Street - ye gods, what a name for a street where atmosphere, polluted by neighbouring works, made my throat and nose smart and eyes run - the houses were amongst the worst I have ever seen"⁴¹.

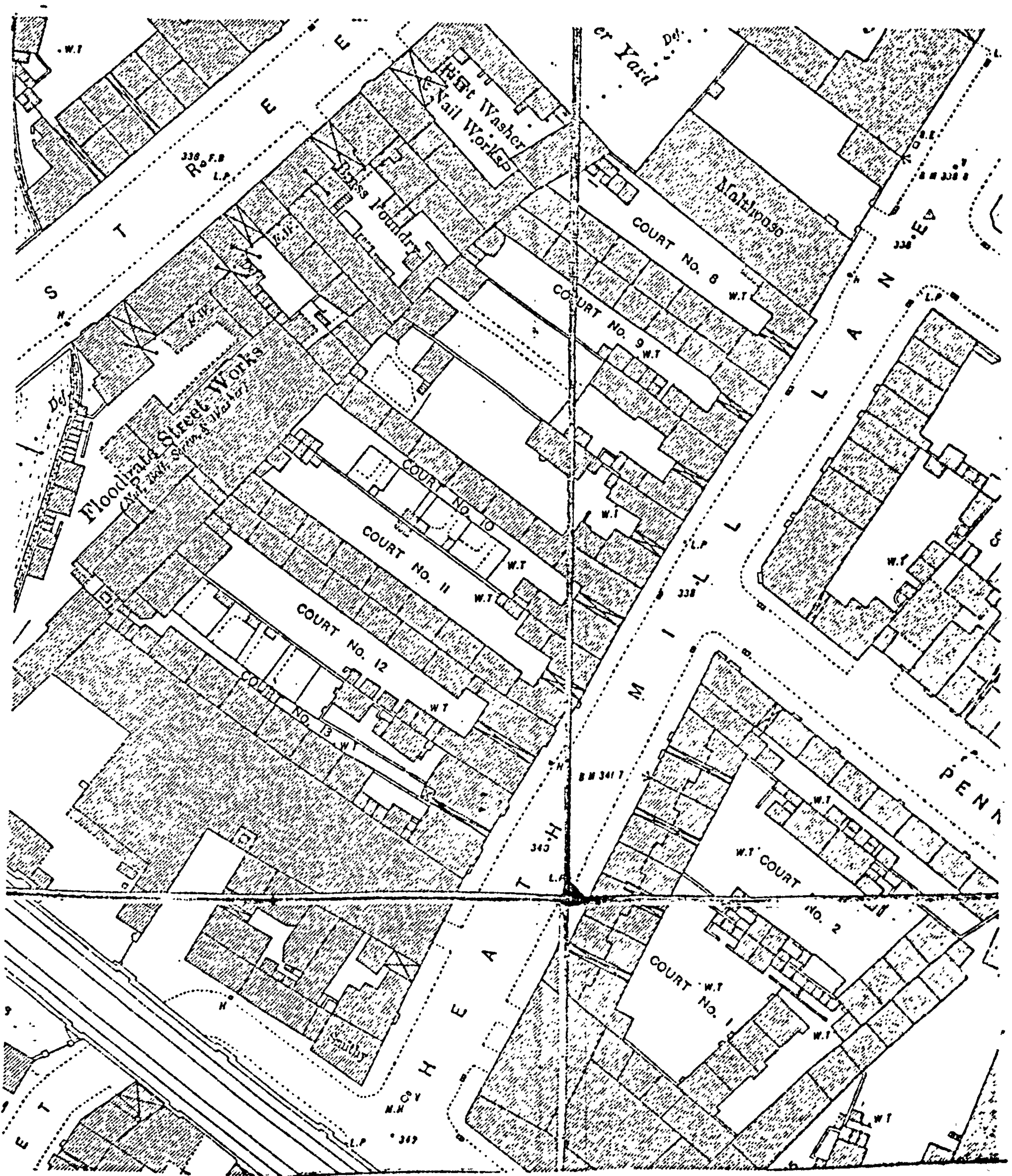
In 1914 there were forty three thousand, three hundred and sixty six back-to-backs in Birmingham, to which number could be added other poor quality housing ⁴². As late as 1960, following war time depredations and a massive post war clearance, there still lingered twenty five thousand.

³⁹ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland no.10.

⁴⁰ Plan 1 opposite indicates terraces of back-to-backs.

⁴¹ T.J. Bass: Down East Amongst The Poorest (1904) p.22.

⁴² Janet L. Rushbroke B.Sc.: Birmingham's Black Spots (1934) (published by Margaret W. MacIves and L.S. Florence). Introduction by Margaret W. MacIves.



Plan 1

Plan of Back-to-Backs
Heath Mill Lane, Digbeth, Birmingham

(Ordnance Survey Map 1889 scale 10.58 ft
to 1 mile)

Most courts, known colloquially as 'yards', were approached by an alley or 'entry' between 'front houses'. This 'entry' could be a wide gap or often a small tunnel-like alley between and below 'front houses'. These latter were exactly that; they fronted onto the street, although normally back-to-backs themselves.

"Our street was called Camden Street. Along one side of this street ran ten terraces called 'groves'. Ours was called Camden Drive. There were five houses or hovels with five more back-to-backs to each terrace. They were all built the same; one large living room, one bedroom and an attic. There were also cellars that ran under each house, damp, dark and cold"⁴³.

There were variations on the theme: not all back-to-backs had an attic; others had two small bedrooms on the same level; most had a small scullery cut out of the living room⁴⁴. Whatever the style, all were too small and cramped, insanitary and unsuitably built.

"The jerry builder, if not carefully looked after, will put up structures which, though presenting a decent appearance to superficial observers, are totally unfit for occupation from a sanitary point of view. They may be built on an impure foundation with mortar consisting of dirt instead of sand, and only enough lime to 'swear by' while the drains are in too many instances 'a delusion in a snare'"⁴⁵.

In the same passage Dr. Alfred Hill, the city's Medical Officer of Health, reported that a sample of mortar from buildings in the process of erection in Springfield Street revealed a ratio of one part lime to twenty four parts dirt instead of sand. Such houses were also often built on an impure foundation of house refuse and road scrapings, before any organic material had been destroyed. Actions of this kind only added more hazards to slum life.

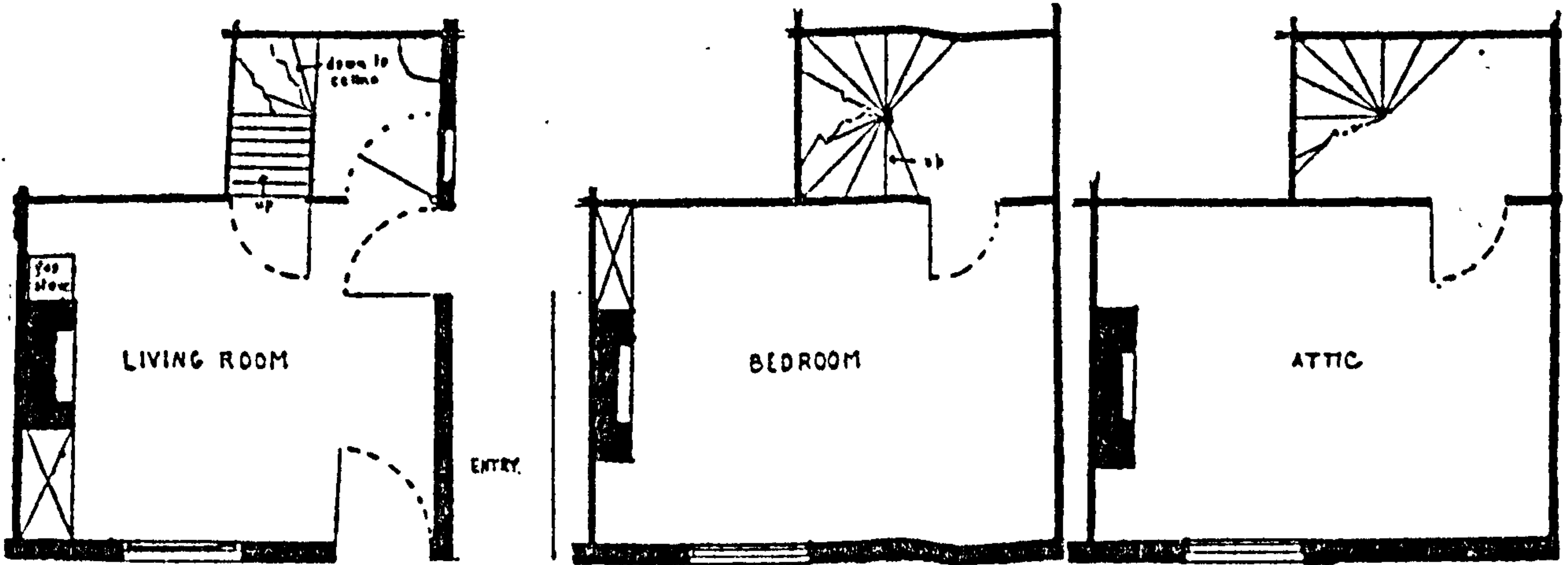
The unsatisfactory manner in which back-to-backs were built soon led to their rapid deterioration: tiles falling off the rooves; plaster

⁴³ Kathleen Dayuss: Her People (Virago Books 1982) p.3.

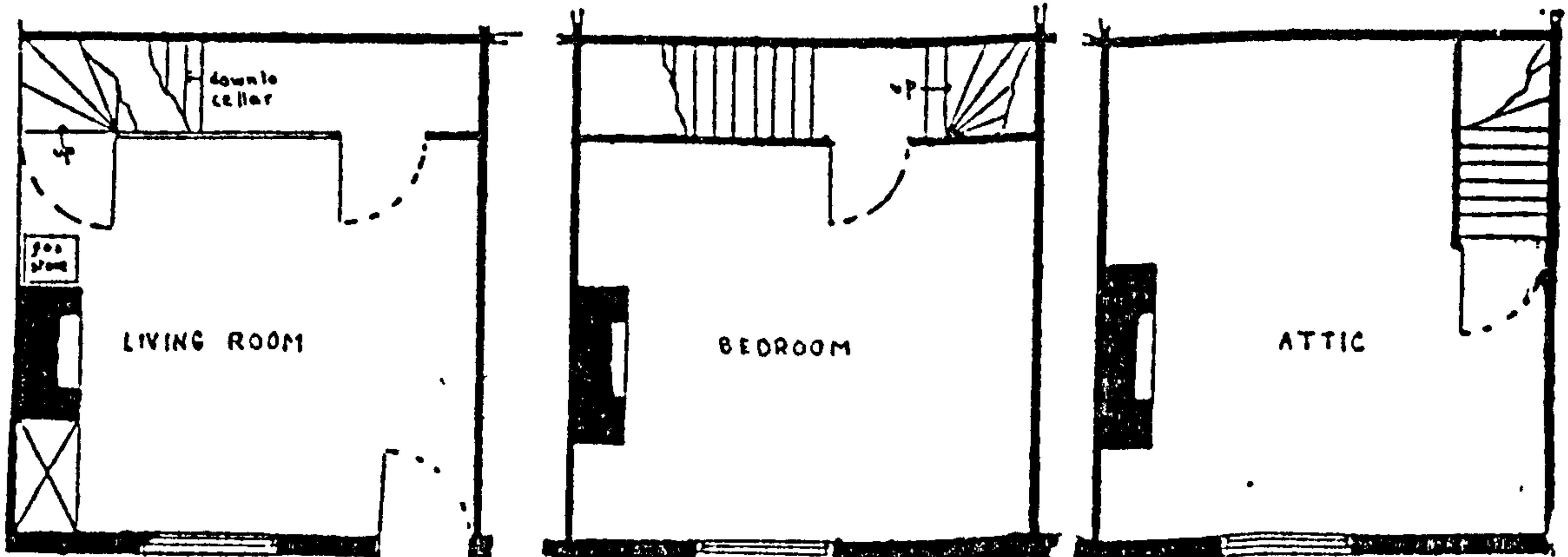
⁴⁴ The four main types of back-to-back houses are shown opposite (Plan 2).

⁴⁵ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1880 p.45.

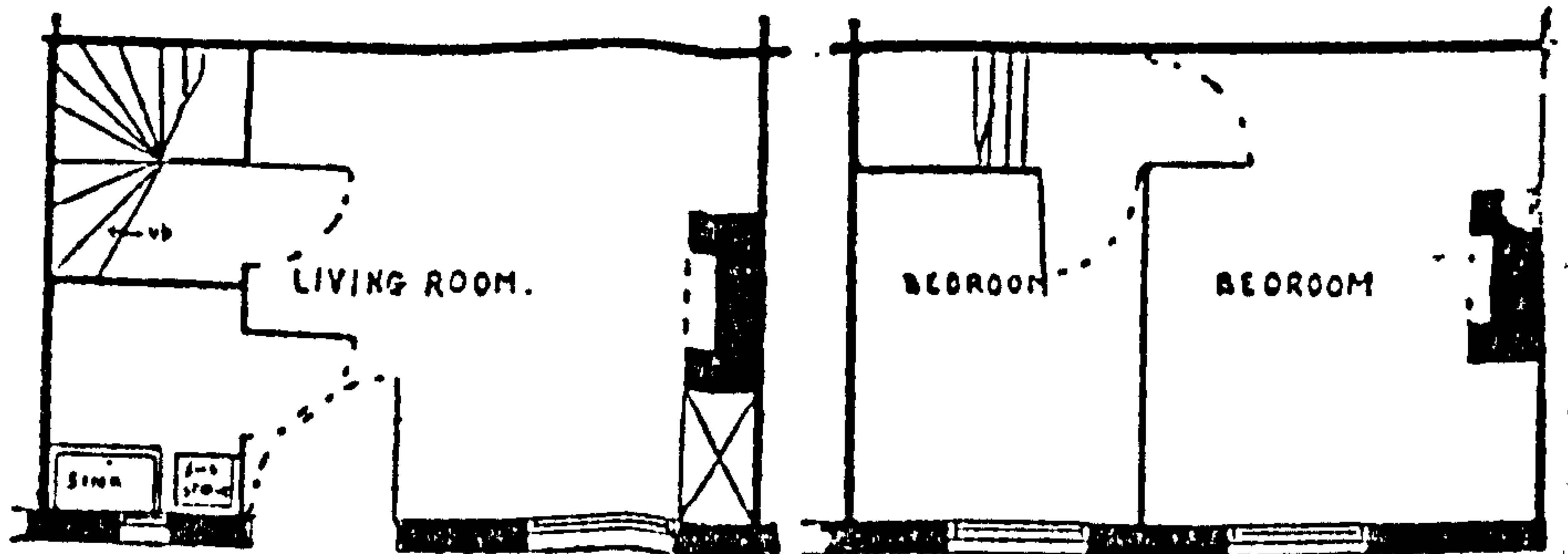
The Four Types of Back-to-Back House (From
 L.S. Florence Birmingham's Blackspots [1934]
 pp.6,7,8,10)



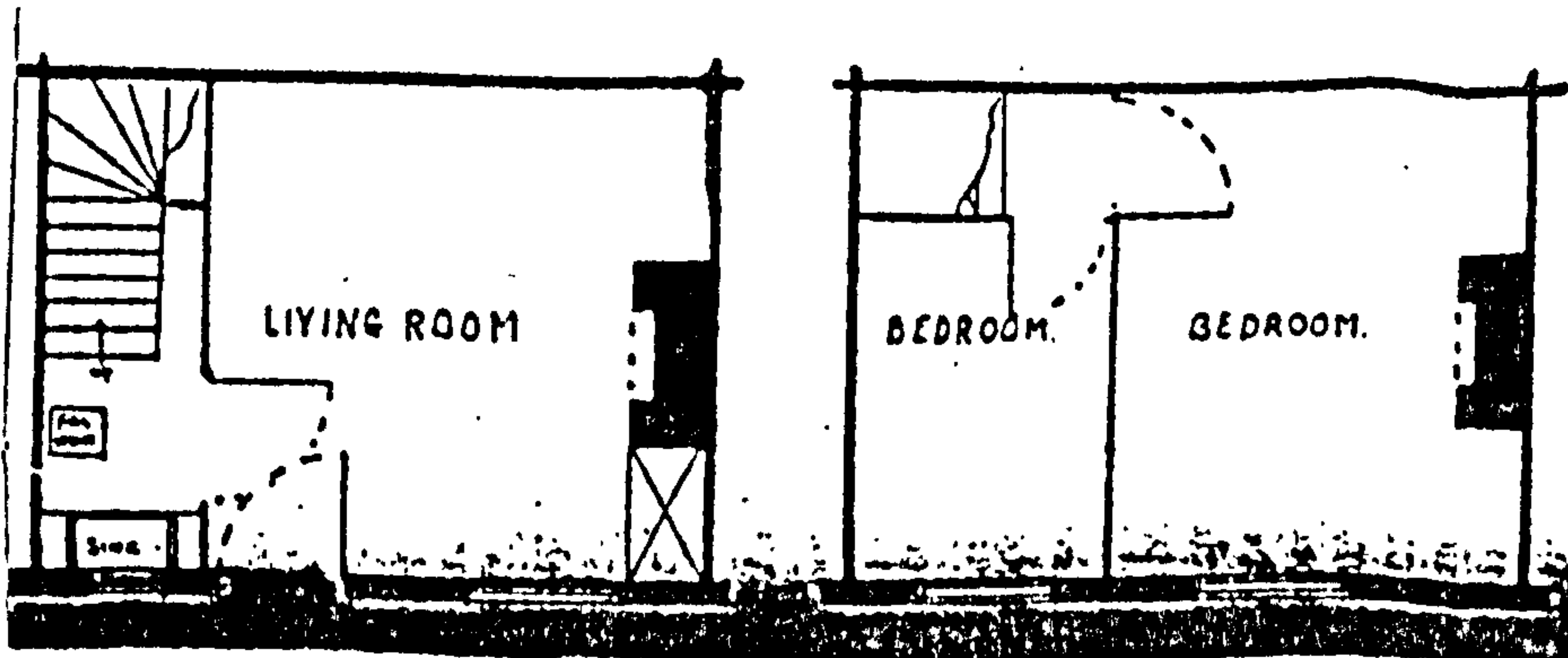
TYPE 1 (see p. 6).



TYPE 2 (see p. 9)



TYPE 3 (see p. 9).



falling off the walls, bricks falling out of position and such like. Poor drainage and abominable sanitary conditions exacerbated these problems. By 1900 most yards obtained their water from a single stand-pipe centrally placed for all the court, instead of the wells which had preceded them. Yet, the close proximity of lavatories to dwellings and the water supply could only prove detrimental to health. Lavatories were grouped and shared by several families, but few were of the 'flush' type, the majority being 'dry privies' although midden privies were extant into the twentieth century. In 1880 these were still numerous and deemed:

"... a danger to health by the evolution and diffusion of noxious gases and vapours which find their way into the confined houses around, and by the soakage of filthy liquids into the ground and wells which are still largely used to supply drinking water"⁴⁶.

Progress in replacing these middens was slow and as with much else concerning municipal activity in Birmingham had been initiated by Joseph Chamberlain. Furthermore, by the turn of the century the 'dry privy' system itself had become outmoded and was proving dangerous to health. By this method pans were placed beneath the toilet seat, being emptied once a week, often less. As late as The First World War there persisted fifty eight thousand and twenty eight houses without a separate lavatory⁴⁷. As a consequence of the outdated lavatory facilities, their infrequent emptying, their nearness to housing and their generally dilapidated and filthy condition, diseases such as cholera, diphtheria and dysentery were rife in slum districts. These difficulties were compounded by the presence of large tubs in which were deposited rubbish and the ashes from fires. Commonly known as 'miskins' these too were irregularly emptied and

⁴⁶ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of The Borough of Birmingham, 1880 p.20.

⁴⁷ Janet L. Rushbrooke B.Sc.: Birmingham's Black Spots (1934).
Introduction by Margaret W. MacIves.

1. Breast-fed infants should not be weaned during this period.

2. Bottle-fed infants should only have milk which has been bought in a fresh condition, boiled, and stored in a clean and cool place.

3. The jugs and feeding-bottles used for the milk should be kept scrupulously clean by scalding.

4. Infants should not be allowed to crawl on the floor or court-yard where they can pick up dirt. Their clothing, &c., should be kept very clean so as to prevent their sucking anything dirty.

5. Diarrhoea is so rapidly fatal in young infants that whenever it commences medical advice should be sought at once and valuable time not lost.

6. By using common sense in keeping the house, yard, and everything in connection with young children in a clean condition, it is probable that a large number of deaths can be easily prevented, and it will be greatly to the advantage of the citizens if a special effort is made during the short period the warm weather lasts.

JOHN ROBERTSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

The Council House,
Birmingham.

Poster Warning About Diarrhoea

(From The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1905 p.50.)

consequently accumulated with filth and garbage.

The iniquities of back-to-back housing and its attendant evils became increasingly obvious.

"But the seamy side comes out in the case of cottages without back door or back windows, known as back-to-back or more euphoniously as 'single' houses. The evils of such a system do not need emphasising for readers of The Review.

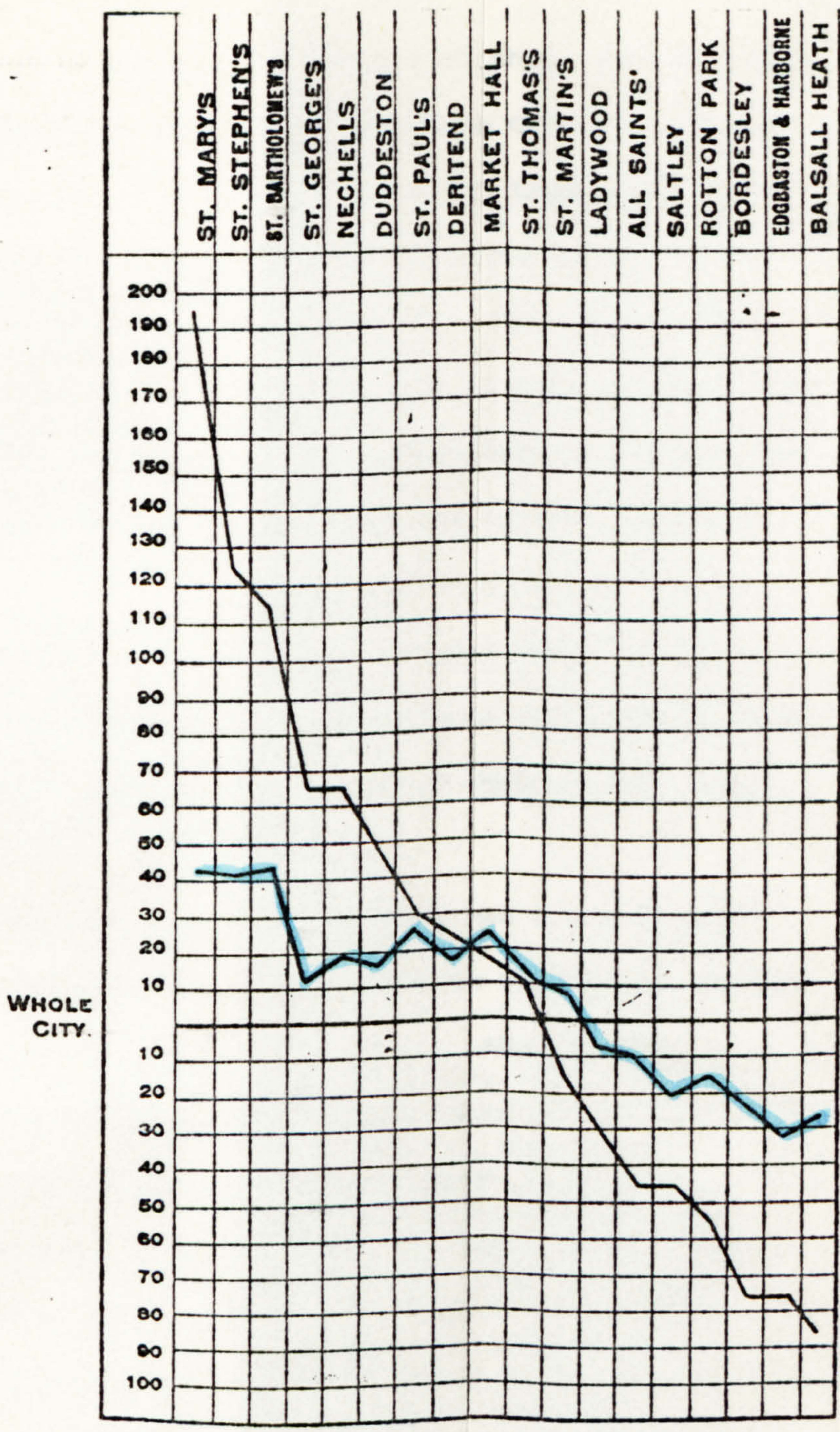
'You look at the muck in poor class streets' says Dave in Mr. Reynold's suggestive book "Seems So', 'That's all got to be trod in the house just when a woman's been down on her knees an' washed it all more likely. Then her has to do it all over again and leave it. The chil'ren does it running in and out when there is no backway'.

"But this is only one of the least of the evils of the system. One row will face North and have no sunlight from one year's end to the other. The opposite row will face South and in a Summer like last will bake like an oven from morning to night. But the worst feature is possibly the sanitary arrangements, which are usually provided at the end of a long court. The effect of this on the life of the younger people of the court need not be emphasised"⁴⁸.

Housing and the health of slum dwellers were seen to be inextricable. A definite relationship was observed between the incidence of the general death rate in a district and the amount of rent paid by its inhabitants. A report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham gave statistical evidence to justify this assumption, finding that the death rate rose with a higher proportion of houses let at 3s 6d or less in an area: in St. Bartholomew's ward where 50% or more of the houses were in this category the mortality rate was 37.6 per thousand; this figure dropped to 32.7 per thousand in districts where the proportion of such houses was between 25% and 50%; in an area where between 0% and 25% of the houses could be thus classified the death rate was a more respectable 26.1 per thousand; and finally in those districts where there were no houses let at 3s 6d per week the figure fell dramatically to 17.1 per thousand⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ J.H. Muirhead: Social Conditions in Provincial Towns no.8, Birmingham (1912) p.2.

⁴⁹ The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1899 p.8. Graph 1 opposite indicates the correlation.



WHOLE CITY.

Proportion of Houses at 3/6 per week or less in 1898 — (Percentage above or below Whole City).

Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 Births, 1908-1910 — (Percentage above or below Whole City).

BIRMINGHAM FREE

Graph 1

The Influence of Slum Housing on The Infant Mortality Rate (From The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1910 p.8.)

■ Indicates Line of Proportion of Houses.

In the same report of 1899 it was stated that there were thirteen thousand houses that could be included in the above category, and in 1900 it was pointed out that if the city's sanitary inspectors and health visitors confined their attention to this group alone, then such houses would be visited only once a year ⁵⁰. Moreover, houses at a higher level of rent also required visiting as many of these were health hazards. It was the opinion of the city's Medical Officer that more staff must be employed by the council if the correct number of visits were to be reached ⁵¹. The vivid affect bad housing had on health is illustrated when it is noted that in 1901 three thousand inhabitants of Birmingham died who would have lived given better housing, health care and sanitation ⁵². A number of these deaths could be laid at the door of an inactive council.

Poverty killed: the birth right of the poor was a higher death rate; their inheritance the dreadful conditions in which they existed.

"Look at the houses, the alleys, the courts, the ill-lit, ill-paved walled in squares, with last night's rain still trickling down from the rooves and making pools of the ill-sluiced yards. Look at the begrimed windows, the broken glass, the apertures stopped with yellow paper or filthy rags, glance at the rooms where large families eat and sleep every day and every night amidst rags and vermin, within dank and mildewed walls from which the blistered paper is drooping or the bit of discolouration called 'paint' is peeling away. Here you can veritably taste the pestilential air, stagnant and nephitic, which finds no outlet in the prison like houses of the courts; and yet here where there is breathing space for so few, the many are herded together and overcrowding is the rule not the exception.... The poor have nowhere else to go. It is here amid the rank and rotting garbage, in the filthy alleys and the time-blackened, old-fashioned dwellings, near the ill-smelling canal; or in the vicinage of factories which pour out their fumes in billowing masses from the throats of giant stacks - here it is

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1899 p.39.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1899 p.39.

⁵² J. Cuming Walters: The Remedies For Slumland no.I. "The Problem and The Powers" (1901).

they must come for shelter. What wonder that drink becomes a second refuge? What wonder that the innocent are soon contaminated and that crime and violence are so rampant? What wonder that sickness is prevalent, that the death rate is appalling..."⁵³.

The councillors of Birmingham stood indicted not through indifference alone or even from a lack of attention to the plight of the poor but - more damingly - by the active participation of some of them in perpetuating slum property. Through their connivance and greed they willingly contributed to the high mortality rates of the poor. It was revealed in the articles of J. Cuming Walters that five Aldermen were owners of slum property and more perfidiously it emerged that The Deputy Chairman of The Health Committee also owned slum property and that one of the committee's officials collected his rents and intercepted reports on the state of his property ⁵⁴. Such disclosures led the Reverend T.J. Bass to declaim that:

"May God awaken those within this parish ⁵⁵ and those outside it, to a sense of duty, so that such neighbourhoods may no longer be left in their darkness but may be illuminated with 'The Light of Light'"⁵⁶.

To avoid the discovery of their identity many owners of slum property employed agents to collect their rents for them. Further, it was often found expedient to sub-lease the property. This practice proved satisfactory for both landlord and sub-leasee: the former received his correct rent regularly and without incurring agents' fees; in turn, whilst the latter would partly furnish the property in as sparse a manner as possible, he would be remunerated by increasing the rent. As a result the tenants would be forced to take in lodgers, further adding to the problems of overcrowding. In one six roomed house in the centre of Birmingham it was exposed that thirty people

⁵³ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland no.2.

⁵⁴ J. Cuming Walters: Knight of The Pen (1933) p.127.

⁵⁵ The Parish of St. Laurence.

⁵⁶ T.J. Bass: Everyday in Blackest Birmingham. Facts not Fiction (1898) Introduction.

lived. The owner of the court in which the house was situated (a woman living in the country) had sub-leased the twelve houses situated there to a well off woman living in the suburbs. A rental of 8/- a week was paid to the landlord for each house, the six rooms of each were sub-let at 4/- a week providing a massive return on the investment of the sub-leasee⁵⁷.

Whilst such circumstances caused a further deterioration in the living standards of the poor, they also ensured a further lessening of the will of landlords to improve their property. In 1875 seventy thousand houses were inspected of which it was found that twenty thousand had windows fitted in such a way as to prohibit their opening at the top. The Borough's Medical Officer of Health observed that such houses were built "having disregard of a sufficiency of air and light"⁵⁸. Contradicting the belief in the amelioration of the living conditions of the poor in Birmingham during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was declared by The Medical Officer of Health in 1901 that:

"I feel I must reiterate the opinion expressed in previous reports, that it is useless to look for any great diminution in the death rate of Birmingham, until, among other measures, more provision has been made for light and ventilation in its crowded wards"⁵⁹.

Implicit in this statement is a condemnation of back-to-backs, the cause of the absence of light and ventilation.

There was a macabre symmetry to the statistics of slum life: the higher and denser the population, the poorer the area; the poorer the area, the higher the death rate. Overcrowding increased in proportion to the depth of poverty of an area. The taking in of lodgers was all

⁵⁷ J. Cuming Walters: Knight of The Pen (1933) p.175.

⁵⁸ Report of The Health of The Borough of Birmingham for 1874 p.15.

⁵⁹ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p.10.

too common and though helpfully financially it further diminished living conditions. Yet this fact of a high incidence of lodgers was determined less by 'free will' and more by birth and income. The poor had no choice but to sub-let their homes given their lack of skill and irregular employment.

"I have assumed hitherto that the income, large or small, was at least regular; but this is very seldom the case in Birmingham, with its multiform industry, depending so largely upon foreign conditions, altogether beyond its control. There is no more prolific source of poverty than an uncertain and fluctuating income, the average of which cannot be struck. It is next to impossible in such circumstances to keep out of debt. A few weeks' break, in even a fairly good income, will throw a family into difficulty for months, or perhaps years"⁶⁰.

The nature of industry in Birmingham consolidated the positions of its upper and lower working class. It was these latter, those who most needed regular employment, who were least likely to find it. Seebohm Rowntree's dynamic description of poverty was not necessarily relevant to irregularly and casually employed, nor to the under-employed and less so to the unemployed ⁶¹. Many of these would dwell in poverty all their lives, never rising above the poverty line. As a consequence, the lower working class family relied on all its members to maximise its income. In such circumstances children's part-time jobs and women's casual work (let alone full-time work) became essential. Over the city as a whole 19% of married women worked, although this figure rose significantly to over 50% in the central wards ⁶². The income of working women was often the primary source of earnings of the family and was thus not supplemental but essential.

For most families, whatever its members could earn, poverty was inescapable. The idea persisted, however, in a trenchant manner of

⁶⁰ Pictures of The People: Drawn By One of Themselves . Birmingham (1871) no.3.

⁶¹ Seebohm Rowntree, op cit.

⁶² City of Birmingham Health Department, "Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women and Infantile Mortality" p.4 in The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1909.

the culpability of the poor in their poverty, or rather of the majority of the poor. Continual stress was made on the necessity to differentiate between this section, the nine-tenths of the sunken who were undeserving who ought to be allowed to wallow in their poverty, and the tenth who constituted the respectable, deserving poor who needed to be protected from the debased and saved from degeneration,

".... the respectable poor have to herd with the criminal and the depraved in slums which are a blight upon God's earth and a disgrace to our common Christianity. Forced into these infernos by poverty, thousands of clean-minded, decent people sink to the level of their surroundings and their children grow up under conditions which make purity of mind or body almost impossible"⁶³.

Indeed the poor were not a lumpen mass all of a muchness, yet such stark, opposing divisions do not exhibit the full variety of attitudes, life-styles and morals of the lower working class. Extremes were present: from slovenliness to snobbish respectability; from drunkenness to temperance; from improvidence to thrifty self-help. The majority of the people, however, gravitated somewhere between the two extremes, although exhibiting a tendency one way or the other. As for the debate on their environment, it centred on whether they were products of it or the environment was a product of their lifestyle. Dr. Alfred Hill, the City's Medical Officer of Health, had no doubt - notwithstanding his regular comments on adverse living conditions - as to where the blame lay when he opined that the "unhealthiness of the lower class districts is largely the result of the habits of the poor as well as the conditions of the houses they occupy"⁶⁴. In contrast, the Reverend T.J. Bass was avowed in his belief that,

⁶³ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland. Preface by The Editor of The Birmingham Daily Gazette.

⁶⁴ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1901 p.24. Dr. Hill was the city's first Medical Officer retaining his post till September 31st 1903, from his appointment in 1873.

"Dirty tenants sometimes make dirty houses, but the opposite is true. Damp, dirty, insanitary houses make dirty tenants" ⁶⁵.

Nevertheless, to the uncommitted social reformer, to the outsider travelling through, the slums of Birmingham were as one, a "hateful spot" ⁶⁶ in which environment blighted the dwellers but only because these were so inclined. A factor other than poverty united slum districts and that was the dirt, a dirt which was seen to be present because of the active participation of all the poor;

".... the dirty streets of the slums, and the dirty houses, and the dirty people who live in them, with their dirty habits and the miserable half-clammed, half-clad dragged up shades of humanity (commonly designated 'kids' by their parents, but generally recognised by the more comprehensive appellation of 'children' in the upper circles of society)..."⁶⁷.

Children were ever-present in slum areas and more obvious than those in more prosperous localities given their greater numbers and their clinging to the street when faced with unattractive conditions at home. By the Edwardian age the birth rate of the poorer wards of the city was well above that of the better-off wards ⁶⁸, yet allied to this high birth rate was a correspondingly higher infantile mortality rate ⁶⁹. In 1905, four years after the furore caused by the articles of J. Cuming Walters, the rate for Birmingham was higher than those for London, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds and that despite a massive fall in the horrendously high rate for the St. Mary's ward of 331 per thousand live births in 1904 to 201. Many of these deaths were unnecessary: nearly 50% were caused by whooping cough; measles; diarrhoea;

⁶⁵ T.J. Bass: Hope in Shadowland (1903) p.15.

⁶⁶ Gwendolen Freeman: The Houses Behind. Sketches of a Birmingham Back Street (1947) p.70.

⁶⁷ Leslie Keen: Sketches of City Life. Adventure in The Slums (February 1893) p.3. Clammed is slang for starving.

⁶⁸ Table 3 opposite shows this.

⁶⁹ Table 4.

Table 3 : The Birth Rates of
Various of The Wards of Birmingham (1905)

Ward	Position	Status	Birth Rate
St. Paul's	Central Ward	Poor	26.1
St. George's	Central Ward	Poor	33.9
St. Stephen's	Central Ward	Poor	34.8
St. Bartholomew's	Central Ward	Poor	27.2
St. Mary's	Central Ward	Poor	34.6
Deritend	Central Ward	Poor	34.9
Edgbaston & Harborne	Suburban	Middle & Upper Class	19.7
Nechells	Outer Ring	Mixed Working Class	36.3
Bordesley	Outer Ring	Generally upper working class	27.5
Balsall Heath	Outer Ring	Generally upper working class	27.0

From The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1905, p.13.

enteritis; tubercular diseases; bronchitis; pneumonia and pleurosy.

All of these were preventable diseases.

Furthermore, a significant relationship was discovered between the absence of breast feeding and an increase in the infant mortality rate. Of that class visited by the city's Health Visitor (namely, the very poor) 56.7% of babies under six months were breast fed; 28.8% were breast fed and received other foods; and 14.5% were not breast fed at all. It was amongst this latter group that the incidence of infant deaths was at its highest ⁷⁰.

Special arrangements and utensils for the feeding of infants were rare, through both a lack of money and of knowledge:

"Well, we always had a baby in the house.... our Tony was three.... He was still on the bottle at one time and our mother used to buy tins of Nestles condensed milk. Tin form. She used to mek his milk up and when the tin was empty we, as kids, used to fight for it to get the spoon round. It was hard and dried and we'd get some cold water and swill it round..... Instead of mother going out and buying rusks as they do today - never did that - she'd get some stale bread.... She'd toast the bread, put it in the saucer, put the hot tea on it, with plenty of sugar on...."⁷¹.

Sterilisation of a baby's feeding utensils was unheard of and near impossible to achieve, anyway, in a slum house. Soothers were too expensive so a 'sugar titty' was used which was made by sprinkling sugar on a piece of muslin or rag which was then bound up to bear some resemblance to a teat.

In marked contrast to the high births, infant mortality and general death rates of the central wards were those of the city's model estates. As can be seen from Table 5 (p.30) the figures for these latter only added credence to the view that better housing in healthier surroundings at a rental which the poor could have afforded, would

⁷⁰ The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p21.

⁷¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr. S. Froggat pp.8,9.

Table 4 : The Infant Mortality Rate of
Various of The Wards of Birmingham 1904 and 1905

Ward	Position	Status	Infant Mortality Rate	
			1904	1905
St. Paul's	Central	Poor	225	138
St. George's	Central	Poor	213	151
St. Stephen's	Central	Poor	232	177
St. Bartholomew's	Central	Poor	331	201
St. Mary's	Central	Poor	263	207
Deritend	Central	poor	208	205
Edgbaston & Harborne	Suburban	Middle & Upper Class	133	131
Nechells	Outer Ring	Mixed Working Class	219	161
Bordesley	Outer Ring	Generally upper working class	178	140
Balsall Heath	Outer Ring	Generally upper working class	150	113

From The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1905, p.20.

certainly have raised the quality of life of the lower working class of Birmingham. Yet the model estates, such as Bournville, Harborne and Bordesley Green - all in suburban areas - were further examples of the assistance given in Birmingham to the upper working class whilst ignoring the position of the poor. A co-ordinated and coherent programme was necessary:

".... to educate the city dwellers' to insist on getting better accommodation than is provided in the back-to-back courtyard houses of the central areas, with its sooty atmosphere and unwholesome environment.... we urgently want houses for those who are at present more or less compelled to live under bad conditions because no sanitary houses can be obtained. This work means something more than mere housing, for it requires not only town planning but means of transit and attention to commercial requirements"⁷².

This action was also required with regard to education, clothing, the treatment of children, dental care and the spending of more money to reduce preventable deaths.

Most germane of all, however, to the matter of poverty and its concomitants of disease, ill health and death was income. Wages and their regularity were the deciding factors in location and it was location that affected life:

"Bad air, offensive smells, insufficient light, inadequate breathing space - these are the evils and defects from which the slum dwellers suffer. Look at the wan, drawn faces of the women and then the haggard faces of the children; notice the number of little funerals; observe the men prematurely aged; regard the frequency of early collapse; get statistics of cases of fever caused by bad drainage and house poison; reckon up the number of infants with wasted limbs, weak vision and sore bodies - and then you will begin to understand what life in the slums means for one and all, the just and the unjust, the young and the old...."⁷³.

The 1910 Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham graphically illustrated the connection between income and health. During

⁷² Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p.5.

⁷³ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland no.9.

Table 5

Comparison Between Model Estate
and St. Mary's Ward

Area	Date	Birth rate	Death rate	Infant Mortality Rate
Bournville	1915	10.4	8.00	47
Harbourne Tenant's Ideal Estates	"	22.3	5.7	51
Bordesley Green	"	23.3	5.0	36
St, Mary's	"	32.8	24.5	187

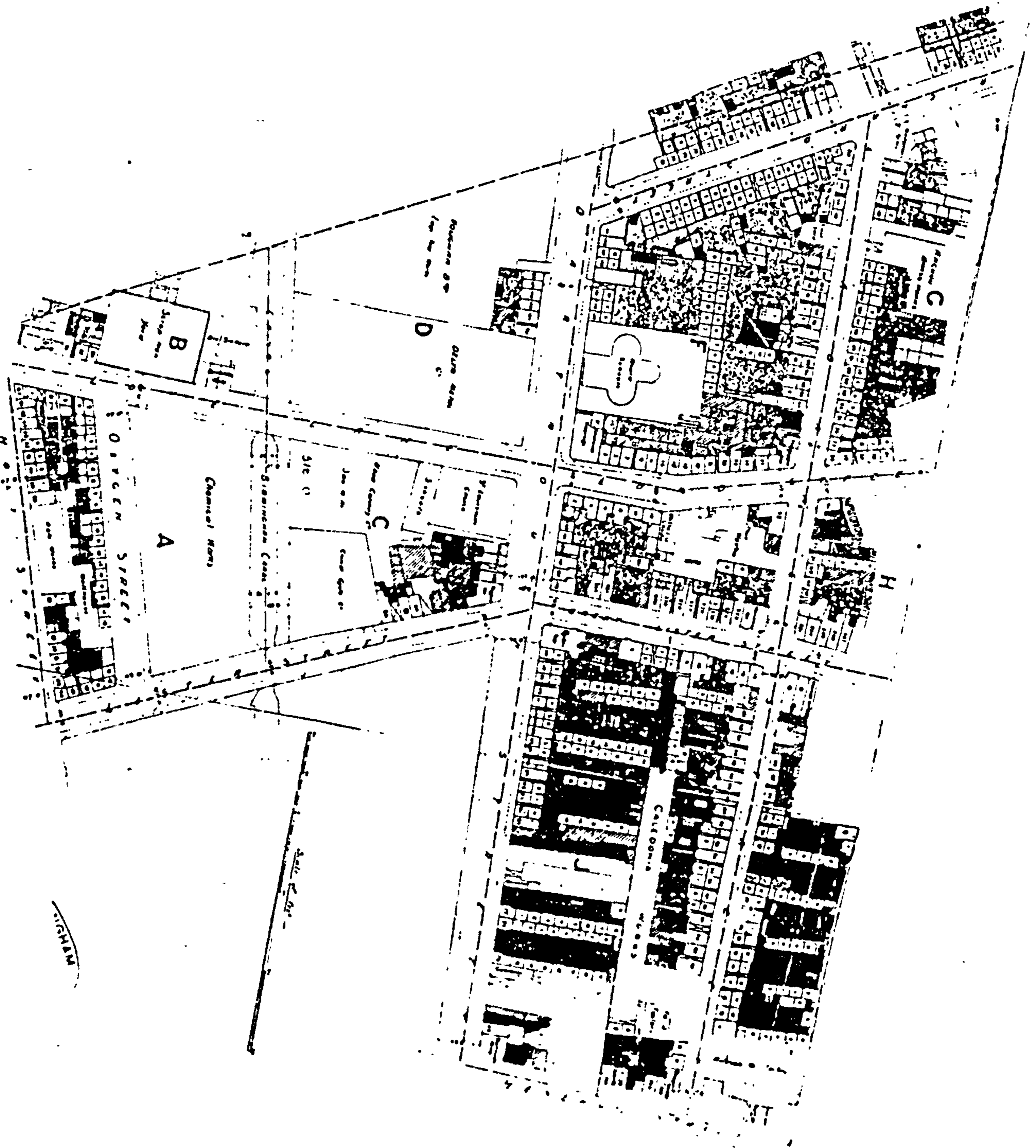
1909 and 1910 a study was carried out in the central wards of St. Stephen's and St. George's. If those families whose head of household (generally the father) earned 20/- a week or more were grouped, it emerged that the infant death rate was 140 per thousand live births; however, the infant death rate for that section whose head of household earned less than 20/- a week was markedly higher at 210 per thousand live births. Babies born to members of this latter group were also, on average, by the age of twelve months a pound worse off in weight than babies born to the former section⁷⁴.

Statistics proved, therefore, the division of the working class, a division which, I shall argue later, was reflected in attitudes and life-styles. However, following on from the above findings came an implied recognition of the working class gathering to live with other members of that class who shared a similar income. This residential segregation resulted in the massive discrepancies in the health of their inhabitants between the various wards. Moreover, it also led to great differences within wards. In 1875 the average general death rate for Birmingham was 26.78 per thousand yet for Tanter Street (cleared to make way for The Corporation Street Development) it pinned at an horrific 73 per thousand⁷⁵. Twenty years later Tanter Street was replaced in its infamy by the deprived and desperately poor parish of St. Laurence, Aston.

In 1901, following the request of certain ratepayers led by the vicar of the parish, the Rev. T.J. Bass, the city's Medical Officer inspected the area with reference to the provisions of The Public Health Acts. The district, centred on Adams Street, comprised fourteen and

⁷⁴ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1910 p.97.

⁷⁵ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of The Borough of Birmingham, 1875 p.14.



Plan of The Parish
of St. Laurence
(Report of The Medical
Officer of Health of
Birmingham, 1901 p.32.)

three quarter acres of which eight and three quarters were occupied by housing. A population of two thousand four hundred and twenty nine crowded into five hundred and eighty nine houses giving a ratio of

4.1 people per house and a density (if only the dwelling areas were included) of two hundred and seventy two persons per acre; comparing with a city average of forty one. In both 1899 and 1900 the mean death rate for the parish was 39.5 per thousand as opposed to a city average of 20.7 per thousand and that of the wards of St. Mary's and Nechells (to which the parish belonged) of 29.6 and 21.4 per thousand, respectively⁷⁶. Thus within two poor, working class wards were exhibited drastic dissimilarities between various streets and groups of streets in their standard of living.

Apart from a few socially concerned people, the true living conditions of the poor and indeed their very nature, escaped the notice of the more affluent of Birmingham society. This ignorance was compounded and abetted by a council which had long avoided its responsibilities to a whole, populous section of its constituency, ensuring that the poor would be almost bereft of support.

"Work in St. Bartholomew has been full of exciting incident, so that Darkest Africa from a missionary point of view is not without a parallel in Darkest Birmingham"⁷⁷.

In a country complacent with its Imperial glory, the city of Birmingham was perhaps the most satisfied with its illusory success in social matters, the most deluded by its past triumphs, the most deceived by the apparent prosperity of all its inhabitants. Beneath the victorious veneer, however, were the submerged stretches of poverty and

⁷⁶ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1901 p.31.

⁷⁷ The Birmingham Gazette and Express, August 10th 1907 Rev. James Henry "I Remember - Some Scenes from Clerical Life".
The Rev. James Henry had been vicar of St. Bartholomews another very poor area in central Birmingham.

Table 6.

Population Density

Birmingham

Ward	Area in Acres	Population in 1905	Persons/ Acre
Whole City	12,639	542,959	43.0
Edgbaston and Harbourne	3467	33,002	9.1
Saltley	2,354	47,318	20.1
Balsall Heath	463	40,412	87.3
St. Thomas'	179	18,563	103.7
St. Stephens'	169	23,284	137.8
St. Georges'	120	20,350	169.6

Report of The Medical Officer of Health of
Birmingham, 1905' p 8.

deprivation in which a large bulk of its citizens existed. For these Birmingham was:

"..... indeed the City of The Dreadful Night, a city of plague, a city of horror, with its fiendish cruelties, the miserable outcasts, its plaintive spectacles, its mingled cries of defiance, despair, wickedness, wrong, rising like a deep groan from the multitude for pity or redress to heaven"⁷⁸.

The poor were hidden amongst their slums in districts segregated from those of the more prosperous by the rigid boundaries imposed by overcrowding, poverty, dirt, illness, high death rates and a high birth rate. Bad housing, exploitation and indifference were the consequence of a council patently lacking in civic responsibility. Physical partitions and the shutters of the mind ensured that the poor were "divided by language, background, experience"⁷⁹ from their fellow citizens. As society advanced it left behind in its wake a great flotsam of the forgotten and the forlorn. In many respects the gap between the poor and the rest of society was widening at a time when that society in general was becoming more prosperous. Life in the slums remained one of unremitting struggle for in truth "There are few rosy patches, if any in the fight for bread.... Just long years and drudging work in the past and in the future"⁸⁰.

Poverty and squalor were endemic in prosperous, thriving Birmingham. Their symbols and successes were everywhere apparent: in the mortality rate of the poor and their children and in other indices of deprivation. The affluent of the city and their councillors forgot the poor, unwilling to accept what was unacceptable to the city's cherished image. Birmingham was a city rent by schisms in which the poor were excluded from full admittance into 'The Holy City', remaining by resolute civic and municipal determination without the city walls.

⁷⁸ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland no.10.

⁷⁹ Gwendolen Freeman, op cit p.8.

⁸⁰ Will Thorne: My Life's Battles (London 1925) p.20.

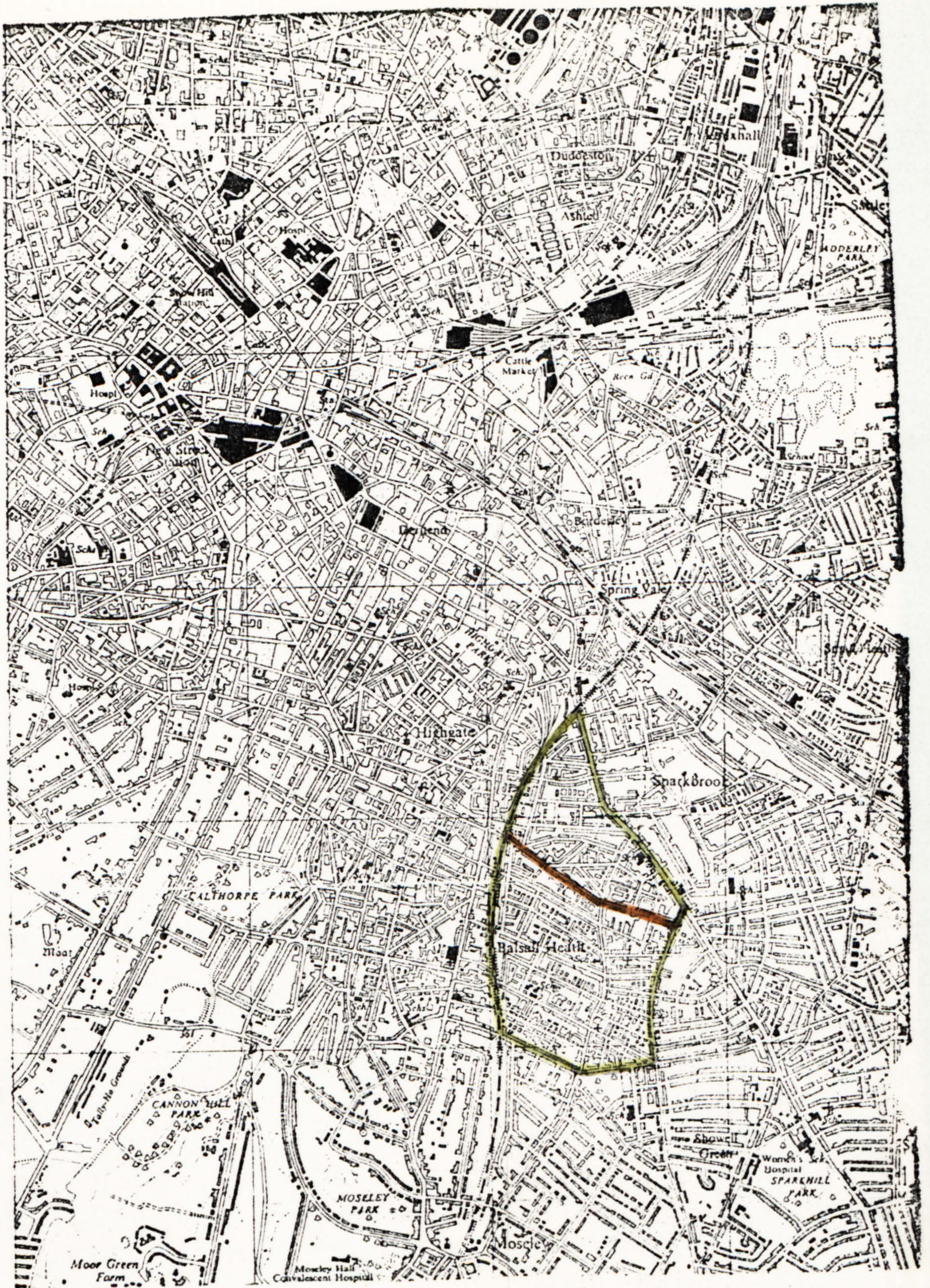
Chapter Two

The Development of West Sparkbrook: From Rural Retreat to Working Class Neighbourhood

The subject of this study is those parts of the Birmingham districts of Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath which lie South West of the Stratford Road; East of the Birmingham to Gloucester Railway; West of the Stoney Lane and North of Brighton and Taunton Roads. This area lies one and a half miles to the South East of the city centre and I have called it West Sparkbrook because for four reasons I believe it to be a recognisable and distinct district¹. Firstly, the roads and railway just mentioned provide natural (albeit man made) boundaries separating the district from surrounding areas to an extent whereby a coherent community could and did evolve. Secondly, given this separation and the consequent growth of community, the inhabitants of West Sparkbrook felt themselves to be (and were perceived as such by those living in adjacent districts) part of a unit, independent from but still, nevertheless, allied and connected to those localities contiguous to its boundaries. It is thus because of the inhabitants own vision of themselves that I have used the term West Sparkbrook and not East Balsall Heath. Thirdly, the unity of the area was made viable by the growth of the Ladypool Road as a busy and thriving centre, not just of shopping activity, but also of community life. Of the thirty nine roads included in the survey all but eight lead either directly off the Ladypool Road or are branches of such roads². The importance and significance of the road to the cohesion of West Sparkbrook were widely recognised by the locality's residents.

¹ Map 1 opposite indicates the location of West Sparkbrook within the Birmingham area.

² Map 2 shows both the relevance of the Ladypool Road and the elements of the study. Appendix 1 lists the roads included in the survey.



Map 1

The Situation of West Sparkbrook within Birmingham

— Highgate Road, dividing the two elements of The Study.

"'The Lane' ran like an artery, vital and pulsating, through that rather dreary and uniform section of Sparkbrook. It had everything. Besides the rich variety of shops, there were pubs, a picture house, a chapel, a church, a park, a school and probably other things that do not come immediately to my mind"³.

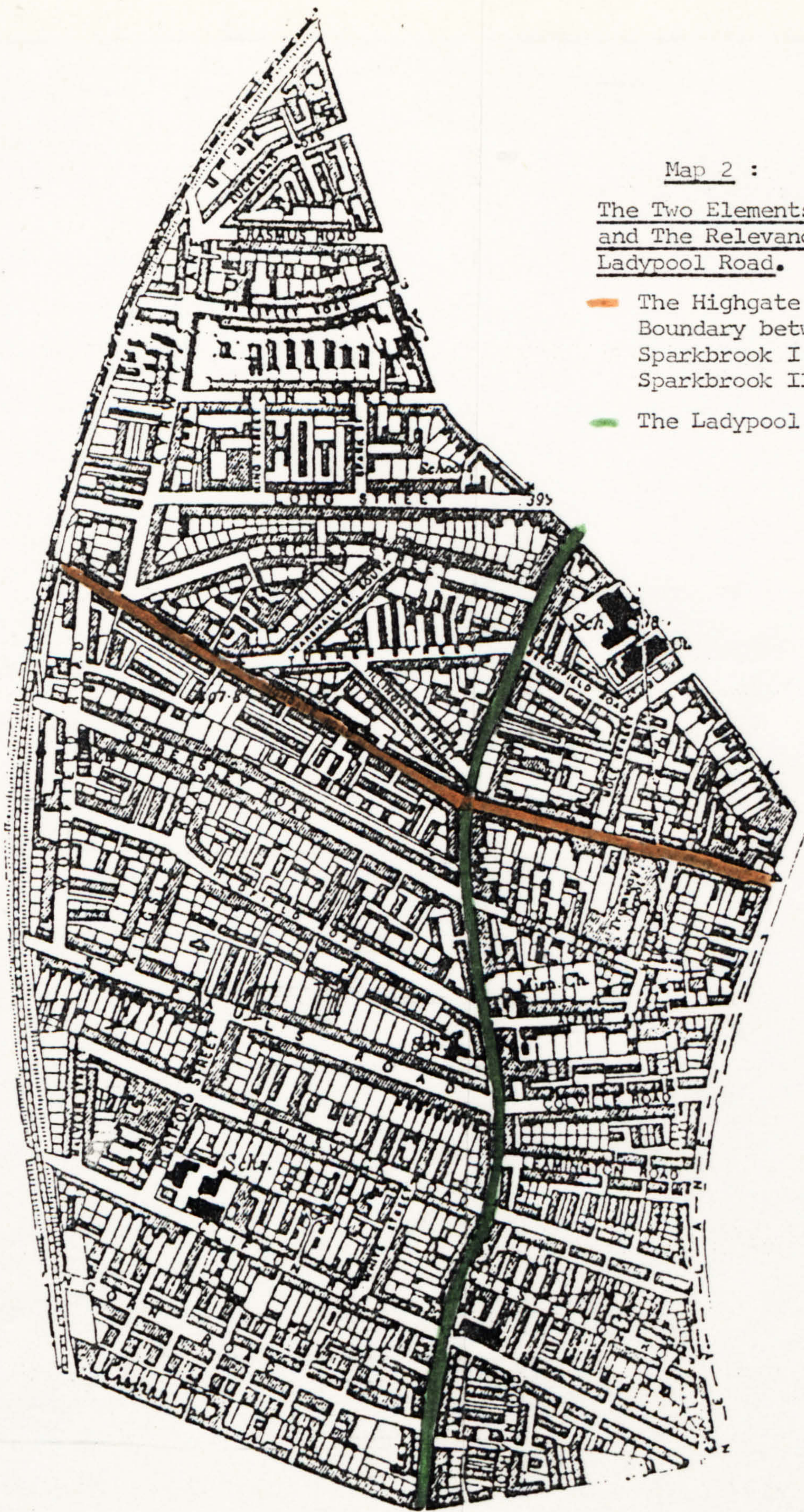
Finally, the feeling of distinctiveness and the area's geographical unity have been widely recognised by local government since the nineteenth century and also - to an extent - by The Established Church. The area is dissected, furthermore, not only on a North-South axis by the Ladypool Road, but also on an East-West one by the Highgate Road. Unlike 'The Lane' this road acted not as a unifying factor but rather as a divisive one. From 1838 the Northern element of this study, as part of Deritend and Bordesley, had been an integral portion of Birmingham, whilst the southern sector of West Sparkbrook lay in Worcestershire; firstly belonging to Kings Norton Parish and latterly (after 1862) as a constituent of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health District. In 1891 The Board became annexed to Birmingham and for the first time the Northern and Southern sections of West Sparkbrook were united under the same administrative authority. The earlier division was, nonetheless, of relevance to the development of the area and thus its social composition and I have, therefore, continued with this geographical partition in my study. Adhering to the nomenclature of local government I have dubbed the sub-division to the North of the longitudinal line provided by the Highgate Road, as West Sparkbrook I and that to the South as West Sparkbrook II⁴.

The original intention of this study was to examine the retail trade in food, drink and tobacco in West Sparkbrook between 1871 and

³ Leslie Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember (Lodenek Press, Padstow, Cornwall, 1980) p.12.



The original name of Ladypool Road was Ladypool Lane and it was (and is) known locally as 'The Lane'.

⁴ Map 3



Map 2 :

The Two Elements of The Study
and The Relevance of The
Ladypool Road.

-  The Highgate Road:
Boundary between West
Sparkbrook I and West
Sparkbrook II
-  The Ladypool Road

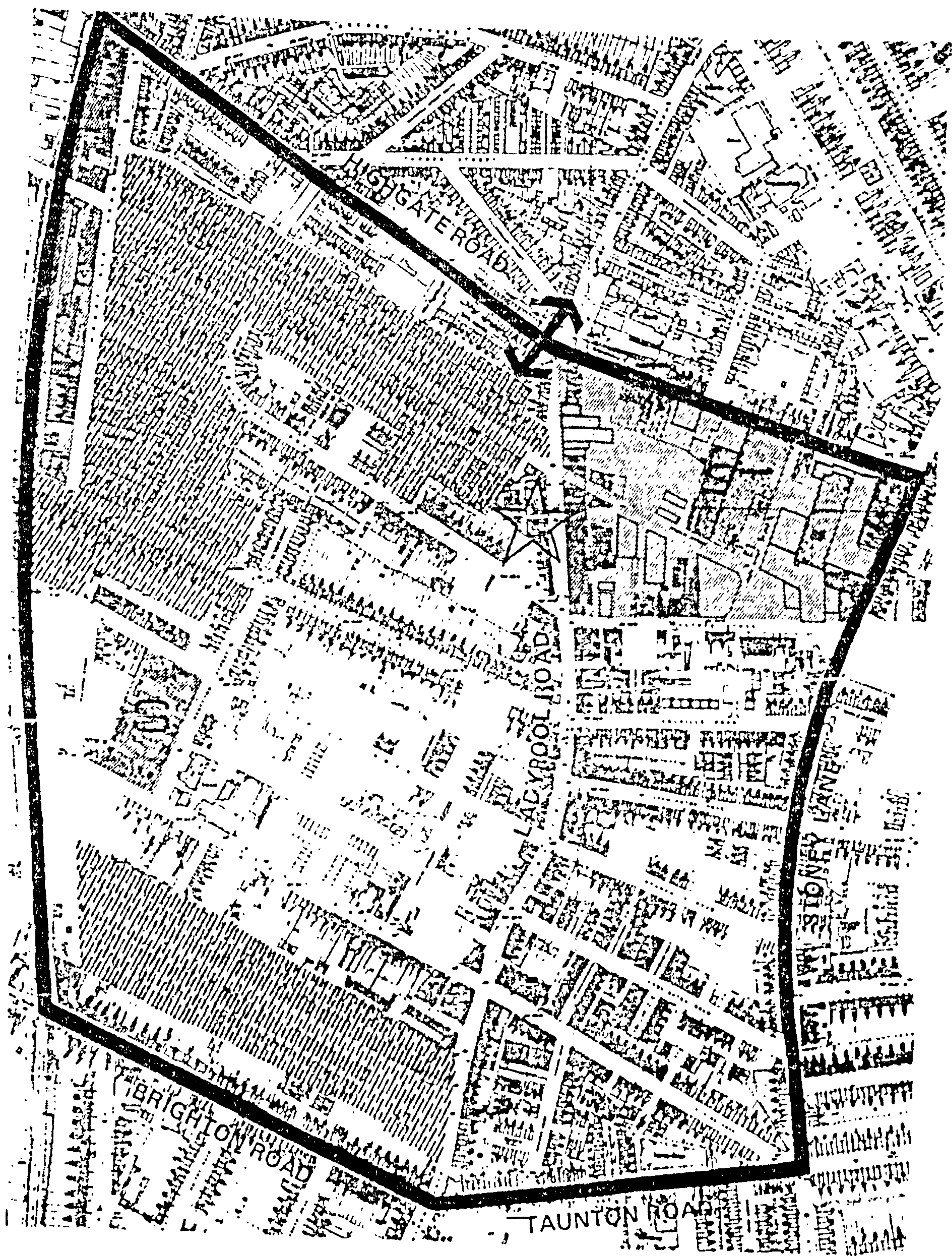
and 1914. However, it soon became obvious that such a study would have ramifications beyond its original brief given the importance of the retail trade in the district to its inhabitants and to the effects such trade had on the social life of the area. In thus touching on other social foci it became obvious that a partial treatment of their significance would be inadequate and thus the study has evolved into, it is hoped, a coherent and detailed examination of the development of West Sparkbrook, its social composition and the social factors at work in the district and its significance within the Birmingham of the later Victorian and Edwardian periods. In short I have sought to anatomise West Sparkbrook in such a manner that the study will prove of benefit as an example of the society of a particular working class district, unique but sharing many similarities with other working class areas.

Therefore, in my thesis I shall examine housing, schooling, drink, gambling, the place of women in the working class society of West Sparkbrook, children and particularly the partition of the working class into upper and lower sections. However, of necessity, my study on the district itself needs to begin with some attention to the development of the area.

Sparkbrook derives its name from a brook - The Spark - the result of "several streams which unite near the turnpike road at Stoney Lane"⁵, the chief of which rises near Belle Walk, Moseley. According to The English Place Name Society, the brook is named after the family of Sparke, mentioned in records of 1275 and 1327⁶. Physically, the area

⁵ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health July 6th 1864.
Letter of The Warwick and Birmingham Canal Company June 15th 1864.

⁶ A. Mawer & F.M. Stenton in collaboration with F.T.S. Houghton, The Place Names of Worcestershire Volume 4 of The English Place Name Society (1927) p.233.



Map 3

Sparkbrook West 2 Action Area
(Public Works Department 1972)
in City of Birmingham Central Library
Local Studies Department LF 31.301 668509

of this study is part of the valley of The Spark: to the East, along the Stoney Lane, the land rises sharply to Sparkhill; to the West of the Birmingham to Gloucester Railway line, along the Moseley Road, the ground falls sharply into the valley of The Rea; to the South the terrain rises towards Moseley; to the North, along the Stratford Road, there is a rise towards Camp Hill and the City Centre; it is only to the North-East that the land remains on the same level and this too is part of the valley of the Spark.

After rising in Moseley the brook runs along Stoney Lane and then turns North-East along Benton Road to its mergence with the River Cole. Today, it is only visible for the last half mile of its journey, emerging from its culverts and into view just past the site of the old B.S.A. works. Although mentioned in 1511 as "a torrent called Sparkbroke"⁷ its appearance now would belie such an appellation. The brook's only real significance until the nineteenth century - when it was used as a feeder for the Birmingham to Warwick Canal and latterly as an open sewer - was, in common with many other streams and rivulets, as a boundary. Its passage along the Stoney Lane provided the means of separation between Yardley and Kings Norton and later Yardley and Balsall Heath, before those districts were incorporated within Birmingham. The point of its crossing at the Stratford Road served as part of the boundary between Warwickshire and Worcestershire, between the manors of Yardley and Bordesley and between the parishes of Aston and Yardley.

Memories of the brook before it was largely culverted in the 1890's recall a West Sparkbrook of rural tranquility in contrast to the urban landscape which soon came to dominate the scene.

⁷ A. Mawer and F.M. Stanton, op.cit. Rental of Bordesley Manor. (Dugdale Society volume iv)p.233.

"The brook running along Stoney Lane was a delightful fishing place for the young anglers of that generation, and often one could see the boys with glass jars and bottles containing the tiny, darting minnows caught in the brook, being taken home to be placed in the window to be admired by the passers-by. The brook ran round the corner of Stoney Lane, just where Horton's chemist shop now stands and under an old brick bridge across Stratford Road to Poplar Road, the road here was quite narrow, and many a time I have seen the only Sparkbrook policeman with his huge stick, turning the Birmingham 'peaky blinders' back again, refusing to allow them to pass from the borough into the county"⁸.

The origin of the name 'Balsall Heath' is more difficult to ascertain than that of Sparkbrook. It would appear that the name is related to that of 'Bordesley', situated a short distance to the East. A deed in the possession of Mr. W.B. Bickley, dated 1541, mentions 'Bordishalle Heath' and, as the possessor observes, in the local accent the 'd' is silent, being pronounced 'Bor'sley'⁹. Thus in the Bordesley Tax Roll of 1552 'Bawsall Heath'¹⁰ is mentioned and in July 1610 one Joseph Rotton of 'Baulsole Heath' was baptised at Kings Norton Parish Church. Furthermore, a will of 1614 names 'Bordeshall Heath'¹¹ which would have been pronounced locally as 'Bor'shall Heath'. By 1753 the spelling coincided with pronunciation, as evinced by the description of a "fish pool at Balsall Heath" in Aris' Birmingham Gazette¹².

Another place name of note is that of the Ladypool Road itself, the naming of which is shrouded in local myth and legend.

"When we lived in Chesterton Road, of a Sunday Dad'd take us to a herbalist and botanical beer seller - opposite Runcorn Road. He sold sasporella, dandelion and burdock. While we were there one time, I was about five years old, an old man told us about the brook which ran down Church Road, along Taunton Road into The Spark in Stoney Lane. He was a very old, gnarled man with a stick. He said there had been a pool

⁸ Wilbert Orson in The South Birmingham Advertiser, Thursday September 22nd 1921 (recalling the 1860's).

⁹ A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, op cit p.351.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.351.

¹¹ Ibid., p.351.

¹² Aris' Birmingham Gazette, June 18th 1752.

at the top of Church Road by St. Mary's, in which a lady had committed suicide. That's why the road's called Ladypool"¹³.

An alternative explanation is that the fish caught from the pool were dedicated to 'Our Lady', to whom the Church was sanctified. Indeed, until the mid nineteenth century the spelling of the road was 'Lady Pool'. Furthermore, at least uptill 1846 the lane was also known as Broad Lane¹⁴; nearby Stoney Lane was alternatively 'Sparkbrook'¹⁵ and 'Low' Lane¹⁶; whilst Kyrwick's Lane was described also as 'Hardwickes'¹⁷ and 'Skirts' Lane¹⁸. These alternative names fell into disuse as the century progressed and with the onset of urban development; they are, perhaps, indicative of this change from a rural area into an integral district of Birmingham.

Moreover, this transformation is inextricably bound up with the rise in population and resultant expansion of the borough. The growth of West Sparkbrook was dominated by the proximity of a larger neighbour, hungry for land on which to accommodate those who gained a living from its industry. It was inevitable that Birmingham's enlargement would bring within its orbit rural areas which would soon be engulfed by its urban advance.

"But in addition to this must be noted the hundreds of erections springing up on every side beyond the limits of the borough, which are connecting the town by vast wildernesses of brick and mortar with the agricultural districts of Worcestershire and Warwickshire on the one hand and the great mining and manufacturing communities of South Staffordshire on the other"¹⁹.

¹³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews Number 5 Mr. H. p.3.

¹⁴ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department Town Clerk's Deeds 16005.

¹⁵ Ibid., 21550.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21550.

¹⁷ See Map opposite p.60.

¹⁸ 1851 Census: Kings Norton 2121.

¹⁹ The Birmingham Journal and Commerical Advertiser April 30th 1853.

The expansion of Birmingham, which was to see it and its environs metamorphose into a sprawling conurbation, had begun early in the nineteenth century. This expansion was invariably heralded by the arrival of upper and middle class families escaping an increasingly industrial and proletarian Birmingham, but who were soon followed by the better off of the city's working class.

The suburbanisation of previously rural districts such as West Sparkbrook on the outskirts of the city gives the lie to the belief that Birmingham was peculiar because of the closeness in which its classes lived. An even outwardly, socially mixed district might forcefully exhibit the aspects of residential and social segregation which were so rampant in Birmingham as a whole. Wherever the poor lived they did so in exclusion, huddled in their ghettos of poverty, separated as much from their more affluent brethren in the working class as from the middle and upper classes of Birmingham. There existed:

"... a painful separation between the two classes, the rich and the poor are as much divided from each other as smoke and typhus are divided from Edgbaston.... All the gentry live apart. Edgbaston is their Goshen, where it is always day, when the day in the town is turned to night"²⁰.

Edgbaston was not unique, it was merely the foremost among a number of districts, rural in nature and close to the centre of Birmingham, which provided a refuge, from as early as the last two decades of the eighteenth century, for the wealthy of the borough who evinced a desire to live in more salubrious surroundings. West Sparkbrook was one such district. However, the division of the area into many rather than one estates, coupled with its nearness to Birmingham ensured that it would not become associated with the gentry in the same way as was Edgbaston. Nevertheless, the first stage of development of the local-

²⁰ "The Condition of The People" in 'Our Times (1881) p.229.

ity, which lasted to around 1830, maintained a decidedly upper class nature. West Sparkbrook became dotted with the homes of the wealthy, many of them nonconformist²¹, and of those sections of the working class which served them, chiefly servants and agricultural workers.

This trend to the area and others to the South-East of Birmingham was facilitated by three factors. In 1726 the Stratford Turnpike was opened; starting from Camp Hill it cut through Sparkbrook, dividing it into its Western and Eastern portions and bringing both within easy travelling distance of the centre of the borough. The opening of the Alcester Turnpike in 1767 enabled the same process to occur with regard to Balsall Heath whilst finalising the creation of West Sparkbrook by separating the area from the former district. Both the northern and southern elements of the study were now brought within a few minute's drive of Birmingham, enhancing their appeal to a mobile upper class. Yet, the general expansion of Birmingham remained to the North with High Street, Deritend being the only scene of building activity to the South-East. This changed when Henry Bradford began granting building leases, during the 1770's, along the street which bears his name, and thus began the south-easterly broadening of the town.

The process hastened with the increased momentum of The Industrial Revolution in Birmingham. Every available plot of land in the town was being seized, on which to build workshops and cheap dwellings for those who laboured in them. In this way, the gardens in the centre of Birmingham which belonged to its wealthier citizens soon became filled in with offices, manufactories and housing. The Newhall Estate, owned

²¹ It is in connection with one of these Non-Conformists, The Reverend Dr. Priestley, that the district first impinged on national history. In July 1791 Church and King mobs rioted in Birmingham and on the 14th sacked Fair Hill, the home of Dr. Priestley. Today a plaque in Priestley Road, commemorates the site of the house.

by the Colmore family, was the first to succumb to this industrial onslaught, but it was soon followed by the Wenman, Gooch and Inge Estates. Areas which had once been the abodes of merchants maintaining large gardens were now the preserve of the working class. William White, mayor of Birmingham in 1882, when recalling the Birmingham of the 1840's, observed that:

"From Worcester Street and Smallbrook Street up to the Town Hall and crowding the hill closely behind New Street, those discreditable slums existed under the name of the Old Inkleys, The New Inkleys, Tonk Street, Peck Lane, The Froggery, King, Queen and Pinfold Streets....and our noble Town Hall itself was hemmed in on three sides by buildings in a similar condition"²².

It was this transition which encouraged the town's middle class to emulate the wealthy in their flight outwards into more healthy areas. By 1829 it could be acknowledged that:

"In the vicinity of Birmingham are a great number of noblemen's and gentlemen's seats and almost all the merchants and manufacturers have their country houses in the environs of the town...."²³.

The second phase in the development of West Sparkbrook, the tone of which was middle-class, had now begun. Whilst still rural in nature the district was, nevertheless, conveniently placed on the outskirts of Birmingham for travel into the town for work and shopping. As late as 1846 it could still be said of Sparkbrook that it was a "secluded but aristocratic neighbourhood"²⁴, whilst Balsall Heath had earlier been described as "healthy and in a genteel neighbourhood"²⁵.

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- ²² William White: The Story of Severn Street and Priory First Day Schools
²³ Pigot's Directory 1829 p.11. (1895) pp.9-10.
²⁴ The Birmingham Journal and Commerical Advertiser, September 26th 1846. Sale by Auctioneers Daniel Johnson.
²⁵ H.J. Everson, op.cit., August 24th 1801.

The first true suburban development, albeit on a small scale, occurred in the 1820's on the Ladypool Lane, near to Stratford Turnpike²⁶. A sale of 1834 indicates this offering: "that capital and old established inn" The Angel, situated at the junction of the two above mentioned roads; two "capital" houses with leases expiring on Ladyday 1923; two cottages and four newly built houses in Ladypool Lane; ground rents for two houses, the leases of which expired at Midsummer 1926; a house with large gardens and stables in Ladypool Lane (the lease of which expired at Michaelmas 1920); and finally, two ground rents secured by a house, coach house, stable and gardens which lease expired at Michaelmas 1920²⁷. Based on ninety nine year leases the earliest house would have been built in 1821 and the latest in 1827.

All these lots were situated on the land of Thomas Mole, whose death on February 7th 1831 had prompted the sale. His will directed that his real and personal estate should be put in trust for his children and that when the youngest, Harriet, achieved her majority, the residue unsold should be auctioned.²⁸ In preparation for the auction the trustees had instructed the forming of two streets on the estate - aptly named Thomas and Mole. Lots of building land along these two were also offered in the sale of 1834. The cutting of the two roads was momentous for West Sparkbrook in that it presaged the large scale development of the area which effectively altered it from an agricultural district on the outskirts of Birmingham into an integral neighbourhood of that city.

²⁶ The Stratford Turnpike was, significantly, one of the first roads in and around Birmingham to be macadamized. The Birmingham Journal, June 25th 1856. The Street Commissioners of Deritend ordered the work carried out as far as The Mermaid Public House, at the South-Eastern boundary of West Sparkbrook.

²⁷ The Birmingham Advertiser, March 16th 1834 Auctioneers E & C Robins.

²⁸ City of Birmingham Central Library Archives Department: Town Clerk's Deeds 21550.

At this stage, however, the sale of The Mole Estate was appealing to those wishing to build structures for the middle class.

"The land is sound and the above are the only remaining lots on sale of this beautiful estate. The streets have been formed at a very considerable cost, and the purchasers of the former sale are making active arrangements for the erection of respectable houses"²⁹.

Despite this assertion a feature of development of this estate which was to recur regularly in the later break up of other estates in the district, was of the tardiness of those who purchased building plots to actually build houses on their lots. Seven years after this particular auction only three people lived in Mole Street, although Thomas Street had a population of one hundred and four living in eighteen houses³⁰.

It became obvious that many purchasers of building land were holding on to their lots, using them as gardens and waiting perhaps - in the manner of land speculators - for the occasion when the continued expansion of Birmingham would make their purchases more valuable. The Tithe Map for Balsall Heath of 1840 and that for Deritend of 1845 show that in Thomas Street (apart from the eighteen houses just mentioned) most of the land was in use as gardens³¹. It was the later infilling of these gardens (in a miniature version of what had earlier taken place in Birmingham) which was to effect the change in nature of this sector of West Sparkbrook. As late as 1858 land here was being sold as "gardens" which were suitable for building purposes³², whilst cer-

²⁹ The Birmingham Advertiser, June 19th 1834 Auctioneers E.C. Robins.

³⁰ The 1841 Census: Kings Norton 1197 18.

³¹ Map of The Parish of Kings Norton, Part 5, Worcestershire Yield 1840 (John Walker surveyor).

Map of Aston Juxta Birmingham, 1848. (William Fowler and Sons).

³² The Birmingham Journal, June 19th 1858.

Gardens of Mr. Jones (758 sq yds) in Thomas Street and gardens of Mr. Thompson (641 sq yds) in Alfred Street. Auctioneers Ludlow and Daniel by order of trustees of J. Thompson.

tain gardens lingered in Mole Street until 1890³³. A letter of 1896 indicates the persistence of usage of land in this manner in the midst of otherwise heavily built up and urban areas.

"The 'Horticultural Works'.... is still garden ground and has been so for the last forty years to my knowledge"³⁴.

This particular plot of land (directly behind The Castle and Falcon public house on the Moseley Road) had been sold as early as 1787 "for building upon"³⁵.

During the 1830's, however, apart from The Mole Estate the only other building activity in West Sparkbrook was occurring along Highgate Lane which had been formed in 1807,³⁶ and of which Thomas Street was an Easterly extension . The purpose of the Lane was to unite the Alcester and Stratford Turnpikes but in the process it ensured communication between West Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath. Indeed in this latter district development was almost frenetic in the late 1820's and 1830's, during which time The Frowd, Edwardes, Homer and Haden Estates were all broken up. In contrast to the rapid suburbanisation of Balsall Heath, West Sparkbrook remained rural in character with much of its land under pasture, the chief use of which was to enable drovers to rest their cattle on the edge of Birmingham, "fattening" them up before selling them in the borough's markets³⁷. However, in West Sparkbrook II there were two farms proper: Stoney Lane Farm and a farm on The Simcox Estate close to where Brunswick Road would be

33 See Plan I: City of Birmingham Central Library, Archives Department: Town Clerk's Deeds 6909 12/9/1889.

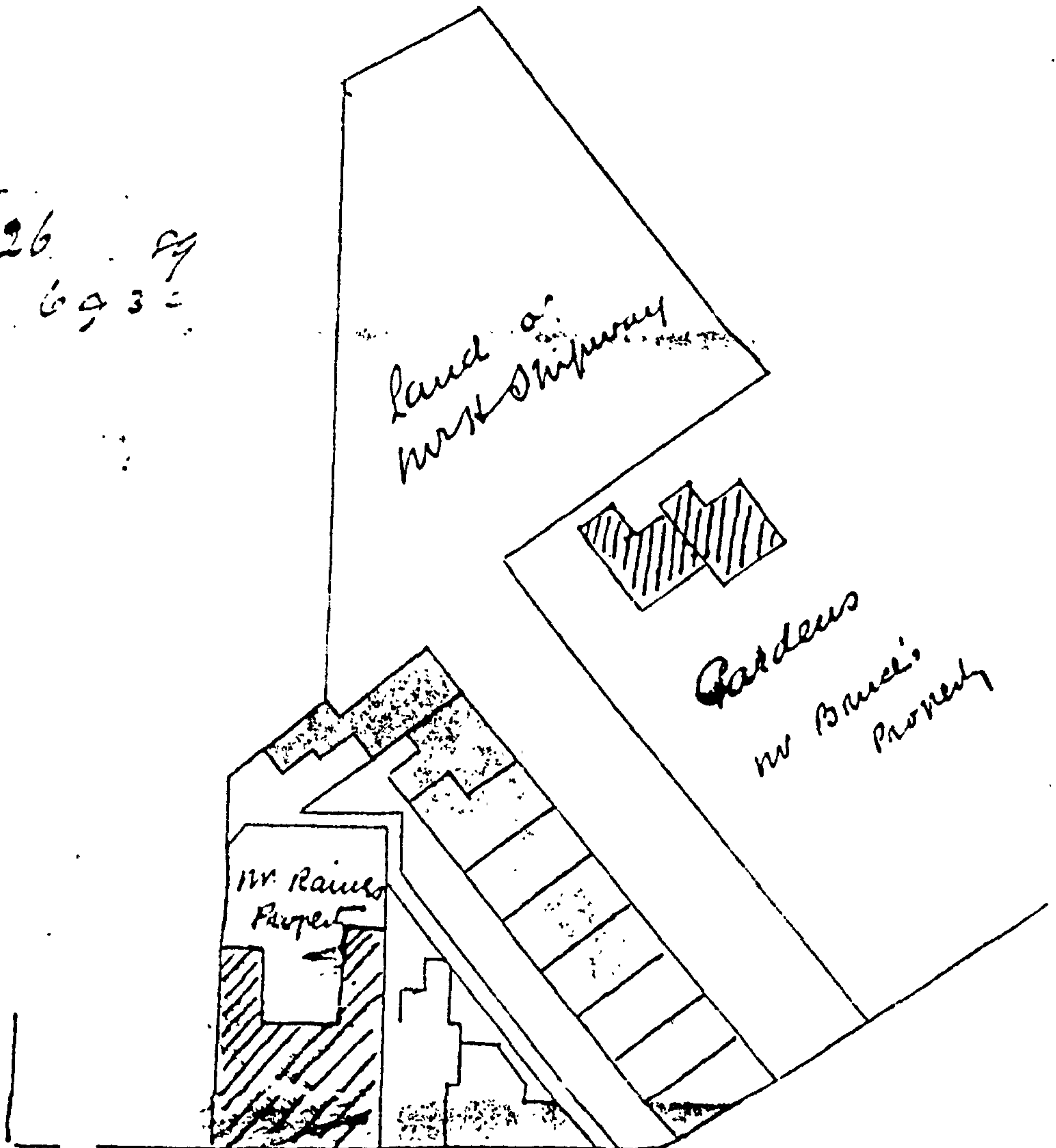
34 City of Birmingham Central Library, Archives Department M.S. 62.4. Letter from Ebenezer Piercy and Son, 24th January 1896.

35 Ibid., M.S. 62.1.

36 Aris' Birmingham Gazette, September 9th 1807.

37 The Birmingham Weekly Post, November 5th 1921 "Suburbs of Birmingham. The Story of Sparkbrook".

Sep. 26 89
6930



Shedland
120

MOLE STREET

Garden Land in Mole Street 1889-90

(City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. Register of New Buildings September 26th 1889 Plan Number 6930).

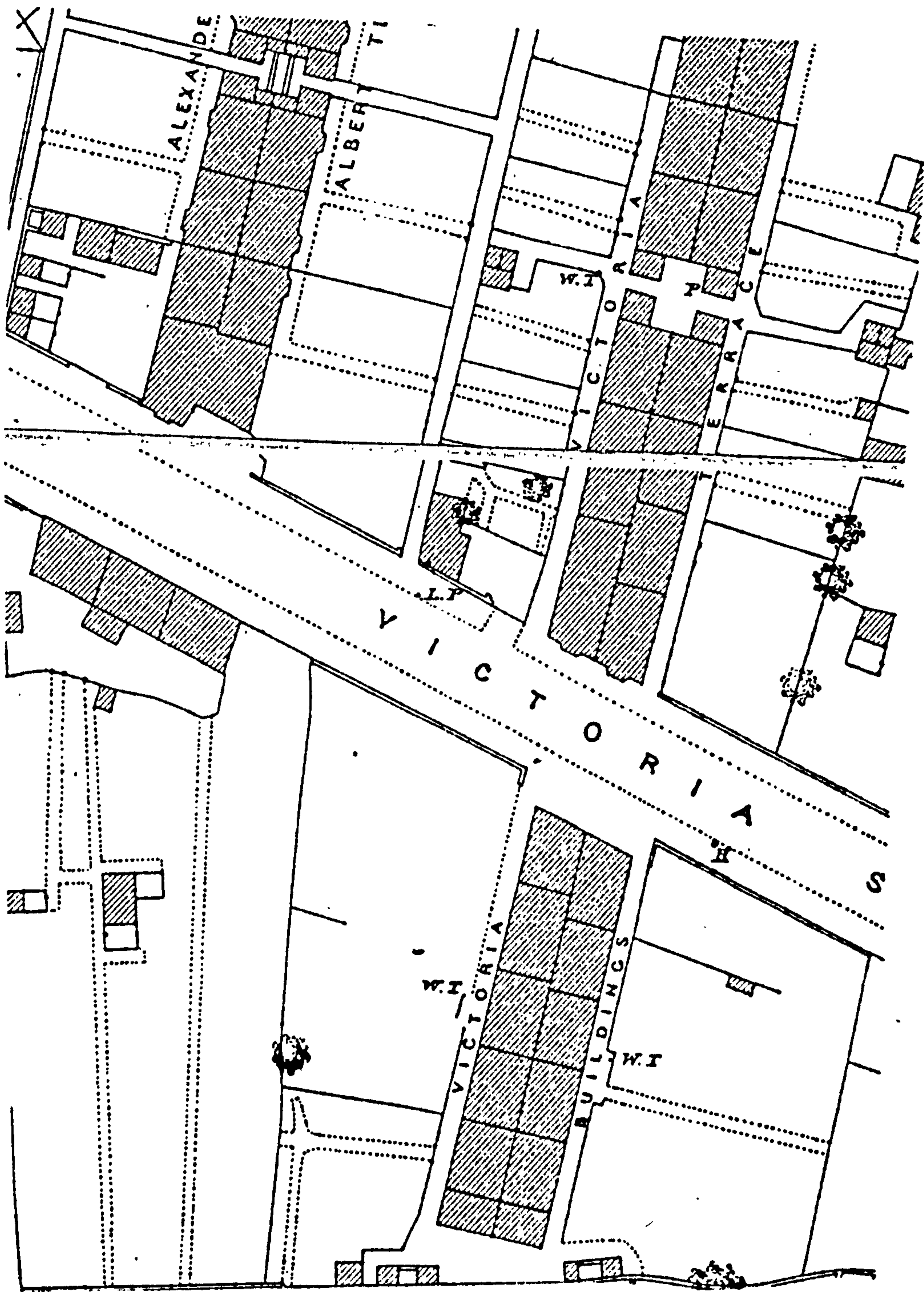
built. Further, at the Moseley end of Ladypool Road (just outside the district) was Old Farm³⁸.

Moreover, there remained a number of residences of the wealthy' in West Sparkbrook I: close to the Stratford Turnpike lay "The Larches", the house built by Dr. Withering to replace Fair Hill, with its estate and the house, gardens and pleasure grounds of Mr. Beale. Elsewhere, the houses of the middle class predominated although this was to soon end with the break up of the small Blayney and East Estates in West Sparkbrook II, close to the former Mole Estate. The moderate size of these two estates ensured the change of this locality into a working class village: more houses could be built on the limited land available with the working class in mind than could be for the middle class. This conversion was not fully carried out until the 1880's, by which time any land in proximity to Birmingham was at a premium, but its beginning was rooted in the 1840's. The three streets formed out of these estates were short, out of necessity, whereas those cut out of larger estates which were broken up wholesale later in the century were longer and at right angles to the main roads.

In a spirit of *royalist* fervour the street formed on the land of the Reverend Robert Blayney was named Victoria; to maintain the loyalist image terraces of houses which were later built along it were named after the Royal Family: Victoria, Albert and Alexandra. The first actual houses were erected around 1843: an advertisement in The Birmingham Journal of 1852 offered for sale ten leasehold houses in Victoria Street which had ninety one years of their leases remaining³⁹. Along the borders of The Blayney and East Estates, running

³⁸ Kings Norton Tithe Map Schedule Numbers: 3966, 4022, 4037.

³⁹ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, September 6th 1852. Auctioneers James G. and Lister Lea.



Back-to-Back Terraces in Victoria Street
(Ordnance Survey Map, 1889 scale 10.58 ft to 1 mile)

along the base of Victoria Street, was formed the aptly named Queen Street; whilst on The East Estate itself was cut Alfred Street, named after Alfred the son of the landowner, The Reverend Timothy East. Here the first houses were built around 1845: a notice of sale of 1850 describes four leasehold houses of which leases ninety three years were unexpired⁴⁰. These houses were represented as "substantially built" containing two parlours, four bedrooms, out offices, gardens and palisadings at the front. Though not comparable in size to the villas found along Ladypool Lane, these houses were, nevertheless, well built, spacious structures constructed with the middle class in mind.

Development on The Blayney and East Estates was again incomplete and patchy although it was further stimulated by the building of The Birmingham to Gloucester Railway Line. The line, first mooted in 1835, was to pass East of The Alcester Turnpike, therefore making more effective the division of West Sparkbrook II from Balsall Heath and also separating West Sparkbrook I from Highgate⁴¹. Thus, the building of the railway helped to foster the distinct nature of the locality, aiding the creation of a sense of community. Moreover, by the time the railway was opened in 1840 only Highgate Lane and Clifton Road ran in an East-West axis, thereby traversing the railway. The only railway bridges uniting Balsall Heath with West Sparkbrook II were over the former and the yet to be cut Brighton Road. Later roads formed in this axis were sundered by the railway, thus further enhancing the identity of West Sparkbrook.

⁴⁰ Ibid., July 13th 1850. Auctioneers John Fallows.

⁴¹ Aris' Birmingham Gazette, September 28th 1835. The Act approving of the line was passed on February 24th 1837 and it was opened in 1840. A station was built at Camp Hill, on the boundary of West Sparkbrook I and Highgate.

With regard to Clifton Road, although shown in plans of the line of the 'intended' railway in the 1830's, it is not mentioned in the 1841 census nor in the 1840 tithe map. The land on which it was formed belonged to Samuel Rawlins, but it was not until the 1850's that building began along it. One other road lay to the East of the Turnpike, John Street, built on the land of John Jones. This short road became a cul-de-sac with the building of the railway and although at the turn of the century it was joined to Runcorn Road in West Sparkbrook II, it was effectively a part of Balsall Heath.

Despite the laggardly development of houses in West Sparkbrook in the 1840's a certain amount of industry was present in the district and especially in its environs. Fittingly for a district experiencing house building the primary industry was that of brick making. According to The Trades Directory of 1846 there were ten brickworks in Balsall Heath and Highgate, out of a total of twenty three for Birmingham as a whole⁴². As early as 1812 a brick and tile yard was mentioned in Stoney Lane⁴³, whilst in 1848 eighty thousand prime burnt and unburnt bricks, a quantity of malt kilns, tiles, two brick kilns and sundry implements were offered for sale on the Ladypool Road⁴⁴. The Post Office Directory of 1860 mentions the brickworks of Bains and Pidgeon on the Ladypool Road⁴⁵ although by 1867 the latter was the sole owner⁴⁶. When these works had been worked out, water flooded them - hence Pidgeon's Pool - being filled in in 1890⁴⁷.

⁴² Wrightson and Webb. The Directory of Birmingham and the Vicinities of Edgbaston, Handsworth, Aston, Highgate and Balsall Heath, 1846.

⁴³ Aris' Birmingham Gazette, November 11th 1812.

⁴⁴ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser September 9th 1848.

⁴⁵ The Post Office Directory of Birmingham, 1860.

⁴⁶ The Post Office Directory of Birmingham, 1867.

⁴⁷ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health, July 4th 1890 Minute number 721.

Across the railway in Balsall Heath, the first factory opened in 1853⁴⁸. The following year two coal wharves were built on a level with the railway at Camp Hill Station, the sidings of which were capable of holding twenty six railway trucks⁴⁹. However, more important than these occurrences was the development of Highgate and Bordesley - areas adjacent to West Sparkbrook I - as districts of major manufacturing activity. As early as 1840 the Moseley Road in Highgate was described as "a populous manufacturing neighbourhood"⁵⁰ and the growth of industry in these localities was to encourage the building of houses for the working class in nearby West Sparkbrook. Closeness to work was the prerequisite for any nascent working class district and this was now fulfilled in the area of this study. By the late 1840's Thomas, Mole, Victoria and Alfred Streets as well as those parts of the Ladypool and Stoney Lanes adjacent to them, became the scene of increased house-building. It is also during this period that Queen Street was formed. In 1849 six thousand two hundred and twenty square yards of building land which fronted to Alfred, Queen and Victoria Streets and Ladypool and Stoney Lanes was sold⁵¹. Over the next two years (with the inclusion of frontages to Thomas Street) a further six thousand two hundred and sixty nine square yards of building land was sold⁵².

A variety of styles of houses was built on this land, including, initially, those dwellings which could be termed middle class in their appeal. In 1851 houses were offered for sale which were "substantially

⁴⁸ The Balsall Heath Varnish and Colour Works of Messrs Heath in Haden Street. The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, October 16th 1853. Auctioneers Cheshire and Gibson.

⁴⁹ Ibid., August 8th 1855. The Birmingham to Gloucester Railway had now become The Midland Railway.

⁵⁰ The Birmingham Advertiser, March 12th 1840. Auctioneers B. Payne & Son.

⁵¹ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, March 31st 1849.

⁵² Ibid., 1st June 1850, 17th August 1850, 6th September 1851. Auctioneers James G. Lister Lea.

built" and let to "respectable tenants"⁵³. Increasingly, however, housing was being erected specifically aimed at the working class, to which only the stark prefix of "dwelling" could be added⁵⁴. Indeed it is from this decade, the 1850's that date the first back-to-back's of West Sparkbrook. An assignment of lease of 1854 mentions eight houses which became known as "Macdonald's Buildings"⁵⁵. These were a terrace of back-to-back's and it is interesting that in a distinct contrast to the self-effacing manner of later landlords of slum property, those who owned newly built back-to-back's gloried in naming their terraces after themselves. Thus, on land to the East of that just discussed were built "Sill's Buildings" which were so poorly constructed that they were demolished by order in 1910. According to an auction of 1861, another sixteen such houses had been built in 1849⁵⁶. The total rental of the dwellings was £94 18/- per annum, giving an average rental of 2s3d a house. This contrasts with better quality housing in the same street which in 1851 was being let at 5s3d a week⁵⁷.

Speculators were prominent in the early development of Victoria Street. For example, the land on which Macdonald's Buildings were erected had been bought by one William Sextus Harding⁵⁸. By an indenture of 1853 he had leased his building land to a Thomas Brooks⁵⁹ who in 1854 mortgaged the houses he was in the process of building with the said William Sextus Harding⁶⁰. It was because Brooks failed

⁵³ Ibid., August 2nd 1851. Auctioneers James G. and Lister Lea.

⁵⁴ The Birmingham Journal, July 18th 1857. Auctioneers Fallows and Smith.

⁵⁵ City of Birmingham Central Library Archives Dept.: Town Clerk's Deeds 9437 March 25th 1854.

⁵⁶ The Birmingham Journal, June 8th 1861. Auctioneers James G. and Lister Lea.

⁵⁷ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, August 2nd 1851. (J.G. & L.L.).

⁵⁸ This man figured prominently in the conversion of West Sparkbrook into a working class area.

⁵⁹ Town Clerk's Deeds 9435 September 1st 1853.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9436 March 11th 1854. .

to repay his mortgage that the houses passed to Roger Macdonald who sold his lease to the Wardell family in 1866⁶¹.

Speculators such as Harding were widespread in Birmingham and its environs and their modus operandi was well known:

"A speculator, or two or three, combine to purchase a freehold estate - it may be from 10 to 40 or 50 acres, which they cut up into streets and stake out into allotments for building purposes. They then make arrangements with some speculative builder, who agrees to pay double the amount of ground rent for the land that it is worth, on the understanding that he shall receive the necessary advance to complete the building. Having erected his row or terraces, he gets the houses filled with tenants at high rents - for there is a peculiar liking among a certain class of people to go into new houses, and as soon as this is done, he mortgages or sells his property to some person who thinks he has made a good investment for his capital. The ground landlords then appear upon the scene and the ground rents are put up for sale by auction, and as the houses are newly built and occupied by tenants paying high rents, a goodly sum is netted by the land speculator who gets twice or thrice the value of the land... In the course of the next few years the purchaser of the buildings finds he has made a bad bargain, the building being of the most flimsy character, and the tenants, after discovering the unstable character of their houses, move to a more eligible spot or it may be to houses of equal accommodation at a less rent.

A.B."⁶².

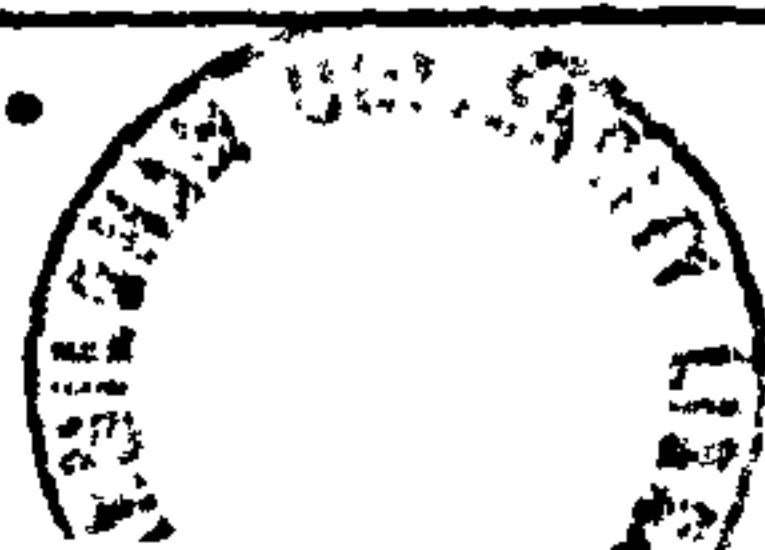
In such a manner was the social composition of a district radically altered in a short time. By the late 1850's, Victoria, Queen and Alfred Streets had become lower working class in character and assumed the mantle of the 'poor village' of West Sparkbrook. A similar process occurred in Mole Street, although not quite so fundamental. In 1849 a terrace of four houses in Mole Street were described as:

"eligible residences, occupied by most respectable tenants, are well cellared, have each handsome flagged entrance hall, breakfast, dining and drawing rooms, four or five good chambers, china pantries, kitchen, back kitchen and suitable out-offices"⁶³.

61 Ibid., 9486 November 29th 1866.

62 The Balsall Heath Times, August 26th 1882.

63 The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, June 9th 1849.
Auctioneers F. Hornblower.



Again, however, back-to-backs were to intrude into a fleetingly middle class street. Yet crucially for the later position of Mole Street within the social hierarchy of roads of West Sparkbrook, these back-to-backs were built behind better quality housing which fronted to the street, they were hidden as opposed to those of Victoria Street which were open to view.

Meanwhile, in contraposition to the emergent poor quarter centred on Victoria Street, was the situation in Clifton Road. The tenor of development here was to presage the residential, economic, social and cultural divisions of West Sparkbrook which were to become so marked later in the nineteenth century. Although Balsall Heath in general could be termed a "new town" as early as 1848⁶⁴, growth in the area of this study - apart from the streets previously discussed - was slow. The district remained predominantly rural:

"In 1857 people built houses around Camp Hill Station and presently regretted that they had gone so far to reside in the country"⁶⁵.

However, the activities of The Birmingham Freehold Land Society in the Clifton Road area were a major factor in the transformation of West Sparkbrook.

This Society had been founded in September 1847: "to elevate the social - promote the moral - exalt the political - and improve the pecuniary condition of unenfranchised and labouring classes"⁶⁶. Its inspiration was James Taylor Junior and it was patronised by the leading Liberals of Birmingham such as G. Muntz M.P., W. Scholefield M.P.

⁶⁴ The Birmingham Journal, May 6th 1858.

Advertisement for the sale of "The Fighting Cocks" public house in Moseley Village.

⁶⁵ The Birmingham Gazette and Express, October 31st 1908. Mr. A.J. Pass. "I Remember - When Camp Hill was a Country Suburb" C111.

⁶⁶ The Prospectus of The Birmingham Freehold Land Society. (7th Edition) originally The Birmingham and Midland Counties Freehold Land Society.

and C. Geach M.P. With slogans like "Possess The Land"; "County Votes for Working Men"; "Qualify and Register"; and "Freeholds For The People"⁶⁷ its avowed aim was to secure the vote for as many working class people as possible. It sought to do this, through the county vote, by pooling the resources of its members to buy cheaply freehold land in the counties which would be retailed to those members at wholesale prices. The county vote was an important factor in encouraging any prospective purchaser of land in West Sparkbrook II, even in Thomas Street:

"in the parish of Kings Norton where the payments are very low, just outside the borough of Birmingham and giving votes for East Worcestershire"⁶⁸.

However, it was the goal of enabling working men to secure such votes which was the *raison d'etre* of The Society.

Ballots were held to decide which members were successful in receiving land after an estate had been bought and then apportioned. These members could then let the land off on building leases, or build on it themselves. The entrance fee to The Society was 1/- with a payment of 3/- per fortnight and 6d per share each quarter. Although there were reduced rates, the appeal of The Society lay in its attraction to the better paid, regularly employed of the working class. Indeed, to enhance the nature of The Society as an upper working class movement, it was encouraged by Taylor and other organisers for

⁶⁷ The Prospectus of The Birmingham Freehold Land Society (7th Edition).

⁶⁸ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, March 31st 1849. Sale of Land in Alfred, Queen and Victoria Streets and Ladypool and Stoney Lanes. Auctioneers J. Fallows.

members to be thrifty, sober and diligent in self-help⁶⁹.

The purchase of The Rawlins Estate in 1853, the sixteenth of The Society, began the suburbanisation of that part of West Sparkbrook I⁷⁰. Its advantages were its:

"... proximity... to Birmingham, at the same time that it is out of and exempt from the heavy local taxation of the borough, and the great increase in population of the neighbourhood, with the eligibility of the land for building purposes, renders it second to no other estate hitherto purchased or allotted by the Land Society in this town or neighbourhood"⁷¹.

Three new roads were cut out of the estate: White Street, named after John White a leading member of The Society who had figured prominently in the purchase⁷²; Hertford Street and Brunswick Road. In contrast to the already formed Clifton Road, these three extended into the estate of Thomas Simcox, adjoining that formerly belonging to Samuel Rawlins. An indenture of 1855 between John White and Thomas Simcox indicates that The Society bought a section of the latter's estate⁷³. This did not result in a comprehensive development, however, rather it began a process which was to last until 1893 on Simcox's land, of slow and deliberate house-building.

In 1854 another Freehold Land Society, Hawley's, purchased an adjoining estate, the twenty four acres belonging to Mr. Henry Tarleton

69 The Birmingham Freehold Land Society was part of a national movement which published "The Freehold Land Times and Building News". However, the freehold land movement in general was seen as the result of the work of James Taylor, although there are parallels with earlier movements and especially the ideas of William Cobbett and Joseph Sturge. Founded in 1847 the movement provided houses and the right to vote as 40/- freeholder's.

70 The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, September 24th 1853. Auctioneers Cheshire and Gibson.

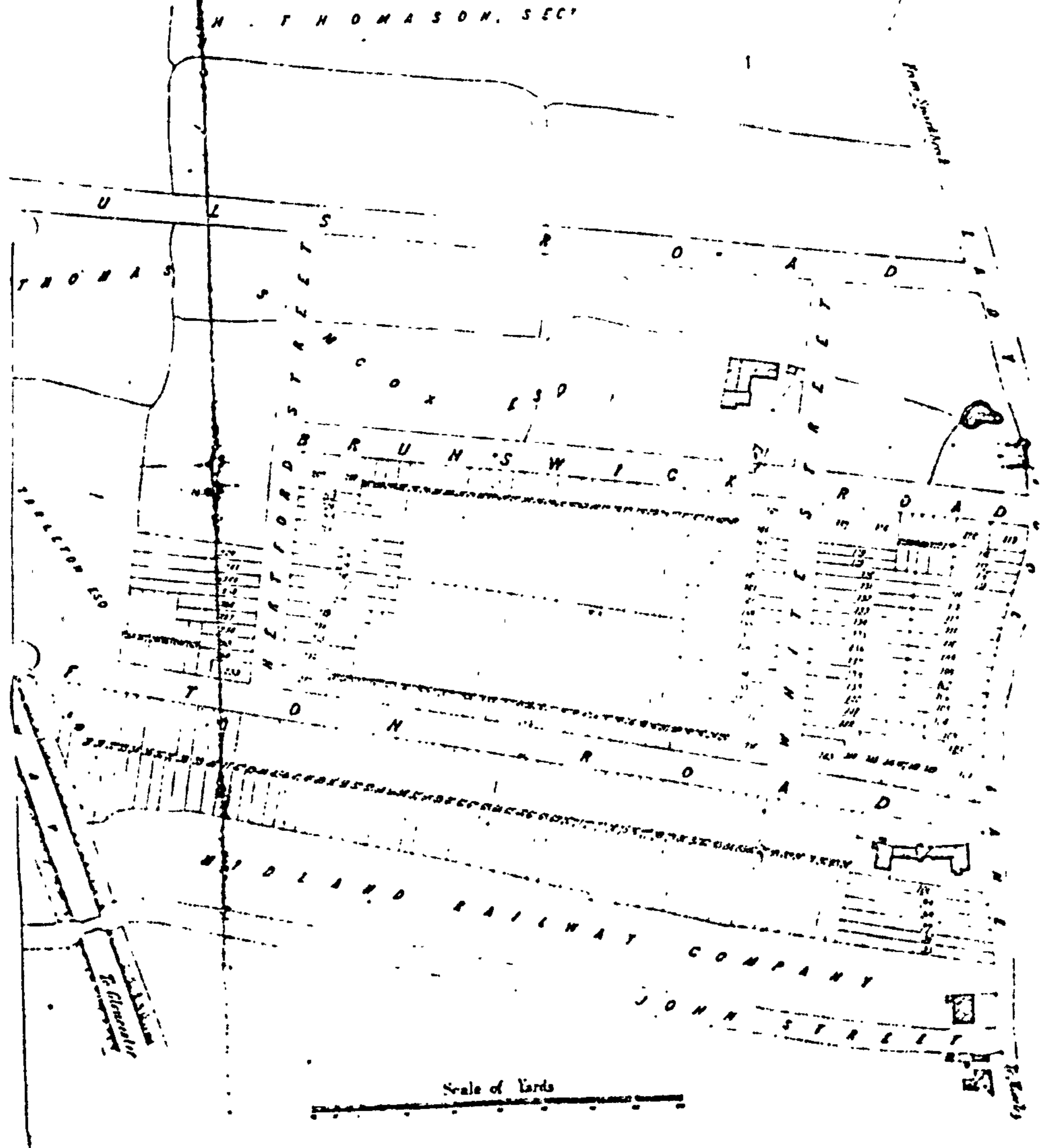
71 Ibid., June 10th 1854.

72 The Balsall Heath Times, March 4th 1882.

73 City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. West Hagley 63, February 5th 1855.

Birmingham Freehold Land Society
vs. Nicholl (Trust)
BALSALL HEATH ESTATE.

N. F. H. O. M. A. S. O. N. S. E. C. I.



The Birmingham Freehold Land Society, Balsall Heath Estate,
(City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department)

situated between The Midland Railway and Hertford Street⁷⁴. House-building on both estates was tardy : in 1861 six "unfinished houses" which were roofed and slated were offered for sale, the leases of which were for ninety nine years from Lady Day 1860⁷⁵. However, unlike development on The Blayney and East Estates where housing for the poor came to dominate, that in these two estates began and remained essentially upper working class in nature. A building lease of 1857 for land in Malvern Street (the only street formed out of The Tarleton Estate) enjoined the leasee to build two or more:

"good and substantial brick or stone dwelling houses with the outside wall thereof at least 9" thick with proper and necessary out-offices"⁷⁶.

The walls of back-to-backs were a mere four and a half inches thick and leases such as these precluded their building in the Clifton Road area to any large extent. Other factors mitigated against their construction: the estate was larger than The Blayney and East Estates; The Freehold Land Society was aimed at the upper working class and thus houses built on these estates were aimed at this section not the poor. Furthermore, the policy of The Society was specifically against the erection of back-to-backs as evinced by the stricture against their building in Wheeler Street, Lozells - part of The Wheeler Street Estate. Nevertheless, eleven back-to-backs were built off Brunswick Road and White Street later deteriorated in status, thus bringing a poor element to an otherwise upper working class locality. This

74

Hawley's Society was based at The Temperance Hall, Newhall Street and was so closely connected with The Birmingham Freehold Land Society that the two names were interchangeable as in the advertisement announcing the purchase of The Tarleton Estate stating that Hawley's Freehold Land Society "had effected another large purchase of land near St. Paul's Church, Balsall Heath adjoining the Estate recently purchased by them". The Birmingham Journal, April 1st 1854.

75

The Birmingham Journal, February 9th 1861.

76

City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department MS 169
October 13th 1857.

element was, however, small and isolated and thus did not generally lower the status of the neighbourhood.

According to the plan of The Balsall Heath Estate (page 54) Saint Paul's Road had been cut through The Simcox Estate, running from the Moseley Road to the Ladypool Lane. Nonetheless, the first houses here were not built until 1859 and these were near to the recently erected St. Paul's Church⁷⁷. Only one other road was formed during the 1850's, that being Brighton Road running through the estate of Humphrey Pountney on a parallel line to St. Paul's Road. The road is mentioned in The Post Office Directory of 1860 and an indenture of lease to the property at one hundred and forty eight dates from 1861⁷⁸. Remarkably, another estate had been sold in 1854 as "exceedingly well adapted and quite ripe for Building purposes" but which did not see full development until the first years of the twentieth century⁷⁹. This estate lay between Brighton Road and Clifton Road and lingered as the last vestiges of rural West Sparkbrook.

House construction along all these roads formed during the 1850's did not become intense until the following decade. The 1861 census gives a population of fifty in twelve houses for Brunswick Road; one hundred and two in twenty five houses for Clifton Road and forty eight in ten houses in Malvern Street; St. Paul's Road is mentioned only in connection with a manufactory and Hertford and White Streets not at all. In contrast to this total of two hundred inhabitants, Thomas, Queen, Victoria and Alfred Streets boasted six

⁷⁷ Ibid., West Hagley 63 September 19th 1859.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Town Clerk's Deeds 21505. Brighton Road is not included in this study: firstly, because its Southern section lies clearly in Moseley and secondly, because its Northern section is unconnected by any offshoots to West Sparkbrook.

⁷⁹ The Birmingham Journal, August 5th 1854.

hundred and eighty one. Indeed, as late as 1871 only thirty six people lived in White Street, which had been formed twenty years previously. Despite this disparity in population the district of West Sparkbrook II was increasingly polarised: on the borders of West Sparkbrook was evolving a 'poor' quarter, and centred on Clifton Road was the locality of the upper working class. Whilst these two villages were connected by the Ladypool Lane, they remained separate in composition with the poor of Victoria Street unable to aspire to the standard of living of their more affluent brethren. The probate of George Johnson of Malvern Street, in 1874, illuminated the gap between the poor living in conditions such as those discussed in Chapter One and the upper working class. In his will, Johnson bequeathed,

"... unto my dear wife, Martha, the whole of my household furniture, plate, linen, china, glass, pictures and other household effects.... Also the whole of my stock in trade, materials, tools and effects belonging to my trade...."⁸⁰.

Another process was becoming evident which abetted this polarisation, that whereby the roads nearer to Moseley acquired a higher social status.

"The nearer you went to Moseley, to Church Road, was the posher end The more you went the other end, the rougher you became"⁸¹.

As once Balsall Heath had attracted the middle class it was the turn of Moseley although many of its inhabitants "would be even better content if it were further removed from Birmingham"⁸². The desire of Moseley residents to separate themselves from the increasingly working class West Sparkbrook became evident in 1855 when that part of

⁸⁰ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department MS 29/126.

⁸¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews no.16 Mrs. Johnson p.10. February 28th 1874.

⁸² The Birmingham Weekly Post, October 8th 1921. "Suburbs of Birmingham. The Story of Moseley".

Ladypool Lane in the former became Church Road⁸³. However, the upper working class roads on the boundary of the two districts served as a buffer between Moseley and the poor quarter of West Sparkbrook II.

Thus the 1850's experienced a limited amount of house-building in which the area of this study changed in social composition. As with Balsall Heath, however, there was a short period of overlap between middle and working class periods in West Sparkbrook during which co-existed:

"... a few affluent families.... respectable tradesmen.... humbler inhabitants, clerks and mechanics and the like.... and there were too the dwellings of the poor, the cottage rows planted in the rear of the highway, the abodes of poverty, and strait means, scanty as the little vaults in brick in which their obscurity was buried"⁸⁴.

The affluent of the area resided in the northern section of West Sparkbrook which had largely been by-passed by house-building. Indeed this area was overwhelmingly rural having: "not greatly altered from when Rupert's cavaliers rode through it"⁸⁵. Its chief attraction was The Angel "Tavern and Tea Garden", a favourite haunt of Birmingham's middle class which was

"... one of the few retreats at the edge of the town for persons wishing to enjoy the delights of the country with a party of friends without having to travel a great distance"⁸⁶.

At The Poplars, just across the Stratford Road in East Sparkbrook, lived firstly the Moles and then the Simcox's. A sale here in 1855 offered paintings by artists such as Reubens, VanDyke and Titians

⁸³ H.J. Everson op cit., volume VI January 25th 1855.

⁸⁴ The Birmingham Journal, May 22nd 1857.
Sermon of Rev. J. Owen at the laying of the foundation stone of St. Paul's Church, Balsall Heath.

⁸⁵ The Birmingham Weekly Post, November 11th 1921. "Suburbs of Birmingham. The Story of Sparkbrook..."

⁸⁶ The Birmingham Journal, Commercial Advertiser, April 26th 1838.

and water colours by Turner, as well as a thousand volumes of books⁸⁷. In the will of John Wright of Sparkbrook House - which lay in eleven acres of ground - £4,200 was left to various charities in 1854⁸⁸; and in 1857, near The Angel, was sold "excellent modern furniture. Genuine collection of oil paintings, useful pony, expensive and newly built pony phaetons etc."⁸⁹.

Indeed, during the 1850's West Sparkbrook I remained unexceptional from many other rural districts on the outskirts of Birmingham, apart from one factor, the growth of The Sparkbrook Races. The first meeting was held in August 1857 on a course formed from three fields near The Larches, and was largely the result of the endeavours of the landlord of The Angel, Mr. Whitworth⁹⁰. As a consequence of the success of this first meeting⁹¹, the fixture became an annual one and though attracting large crowds was not universally popular, with some seeing in it a "moral evil to society in general"⁹².

Yet, it was not the opprobrium of the sober and the religious which was to cause the demise of the races, rather it was the urbanisation of West Sparkbrook. The races were run for the last time on the "old course" in 1858 and survived one more year at a new course opposite The George Inn on the corner of Alfred Street and Ladypool Road⁹³. The impetus to the sale of the estates of West Sparkbrook I (which prevented the Sparkbrook races being run) came with the development of The Highgate Hill Estate - just across the Moseley Road -

⁸⁷ The Birmingham Journal, February 10th 1855. Auctioneers Fallows and Smith.

⁸⁸ Ibid., May 27th 1854.

⁸⁹ Ibid., February 28th 1857. Auctioneers Roderick and Son.

⁹⁰ The Birmingham Weekly Post. "Suburbs of Birmingham. The Story of Sparkbrook", November 5th 1921.

⁹¹ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, August 23rd 1851.

⁹² Ibid., August 20th 1853, Letter from "Vindicator".

⁹³ The Birmingham Journal, July 30th 1859.

in the mid 1850's. This estate was sold for partly residential and partly industrial use and it was the building of factories and workshops here on "the nearest land to the centre of the town now unoccupied", which encouraged the building of houses for the working class in West Sparkbrook I⁹⁴.

"The Larches" was offered for sale in 1856, along with building land adjoining the mansion. This consisted of eleven and a half acres fronting to Kyrwicks Lane, the recently formed Main and Long Streets and "a newly laid Out Street"⁹⁵. This and two others similarly described were Larches, Spark and King Streets. Again prominent in the purchase of land in a newly broken up estate was William Sextus Harding, first noticed in connection with Victoria Street⁹⁶. Although Spark Street was still termed "New Street" in 1864⁹⁷, house-building along these recently cut roads was quicker and more determined than that occurring in West Sparkbrook II. The 1871 census gives a population for Main, Long, Larches, Spark and King Streets of one thousand four hundred and seventy seven, which had risen to two thousand and sixty eight in 1881.

The building of The Birmingham Small Arms factory on a twenty six acre site nearby in Small Heath, accelerated the break-up of the estates of West Sparkbrook. Firstly, the remnants of The Larches Estate - now cut off from other rural areas to the South - were sold off. Priestley Road was cut through this section, although by the time of the 1871 census only one house had been built along it. Next followed The Turner Estate - between Larches Street and Highgate Road -

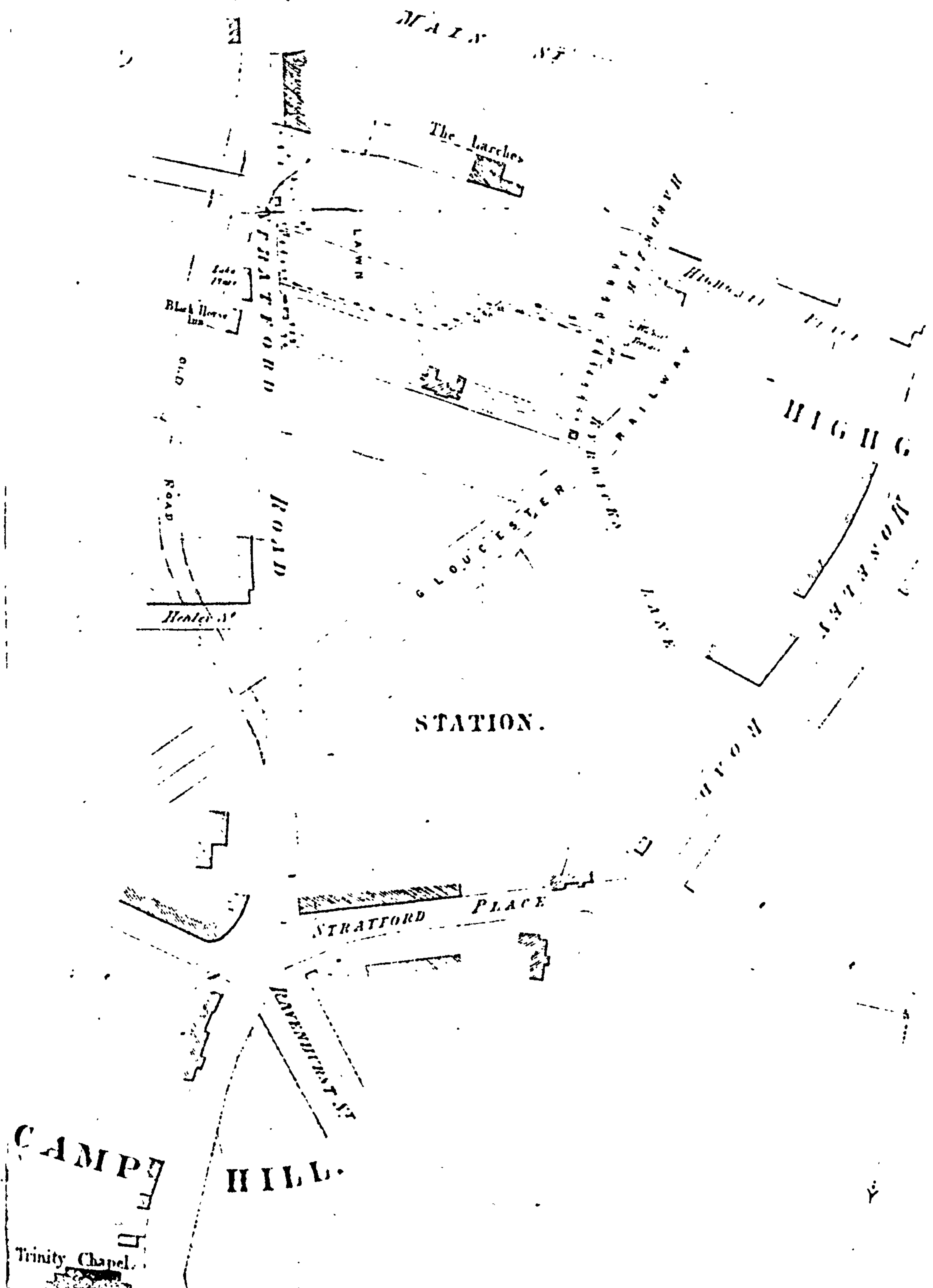
⁹⁴ Ibid., May 1st 1858. Auctioneers J.G.L. Lea.

⁹⁵ Ibid., December 13th 1856. Auctioneers J.G.L. Lea.

⁹⁶ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department: West Hagley 246 Lease of March 28th 1864.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

SPARKBROOK.



The Larches Estate, West Sparkbrook II c1859
(City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department
ref. 383202)

which was developed in the 1860's following the death of its owner, George Turner, and its sale by his trustees in 1860⁹⁸. Three streets were formed: Turner, Marshall Street South (named after a relative George Marshall Turner)⁹⁹ and Tillingham Street. Along these the Turner family retained freeholds, granting building leases to leasees¹⁰⁰.

Unlike development in the southern element of the study house building in the manner of urbanisation began later in West Sparkbrook I, but it was more concentrated and frantic. Between 1860 and 1870 the area was transformed so completely that:

"Instead of finding 'rus in urbe', one sees 'urbe in rus' on every side"¹⁰¹.

Only a few pockets of land remained uncovered by working class housing and these were soon to succumb to the urban outflow now enveloping the district. By 1876 Auckland Road had been cut out of the land of The Midland Railway Company, at the northernmost extremity of the area. House-building here was completed by 1887¹⁰². Between Auckland Road and Priestley Road was formed Erasmus Road (named after Erasmus Darwin, Priestley's friend) on the estate which, according to the title map of 1848, had been owned by the wealthy Simcox family, prominent in the early history of West Sparkbrook. This road was formed after 1871 (it is not mentioned in the census of that year) but before 1876, as the Register of New Buildings for Birmingham, which began in that year, only notes the building of five houses along the road. Finally, to the East of the Ladypool Road lay a small area out

⁹⁸ The Birmingham Journal, March 17th 1860.

⁹⁹ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department Town Clerk's Deeds 18906.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Town Clerk's Deeds 21029, 18911.

¹⁰¹ The Birmingham Gazette and Express, August 3rd 1907. "I Remember, The Growth of Suburban Life in Birmingham" XVII Mr. John Rogers (born 1838).

¹⁰² The Register of New Buildings in Birmingham.

of which was formed Beechfield Road, and where house-building occurred between 1877 and 1890¹⁰³, and Ladypool Avenue which was the scene of building activity in the early 1890's.

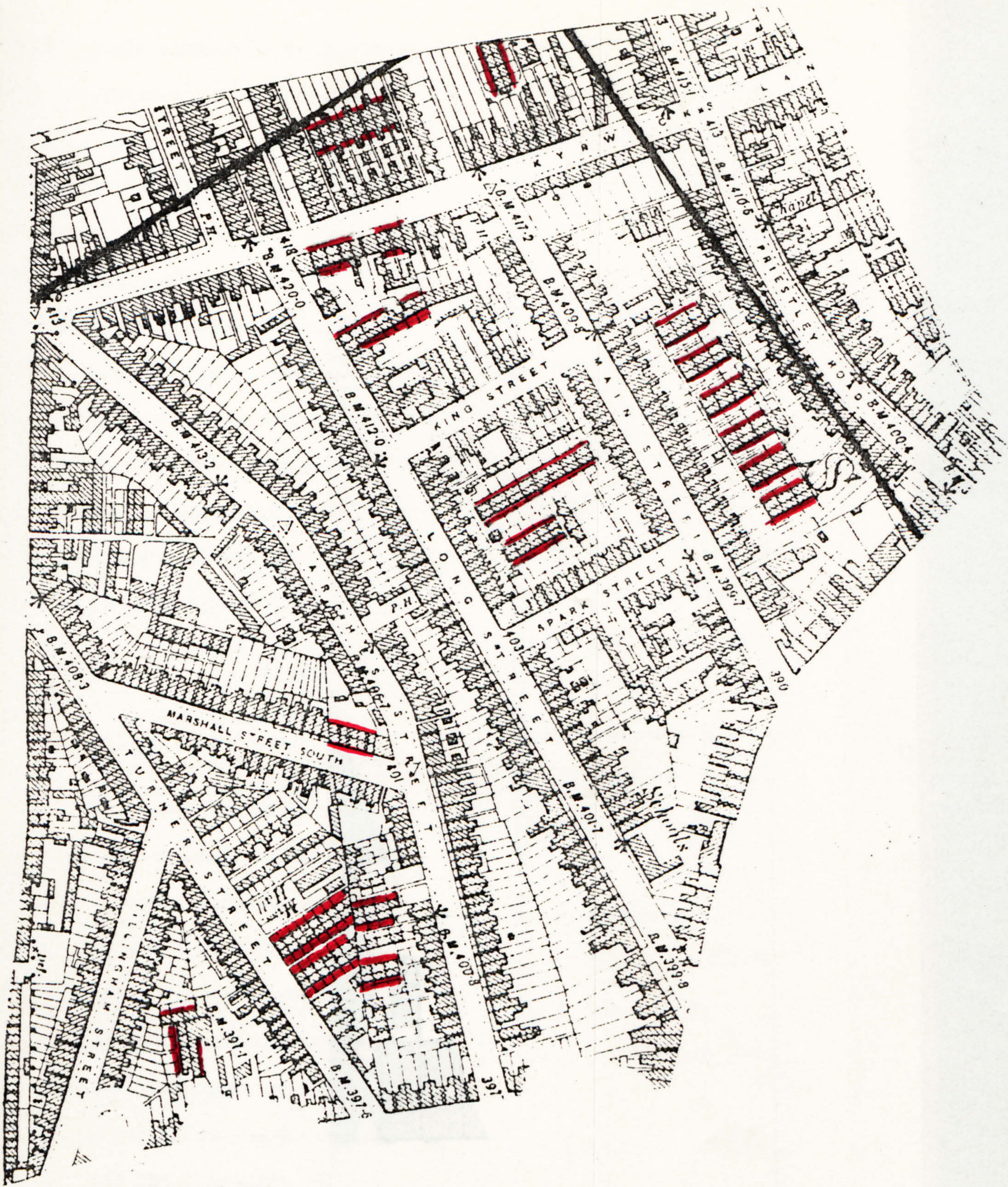
Thus by 1880, West Sparkbrook I had become transfigured from the rural retreat of the wealthy into a working class suburb of Birmingham. Its comparatively late development ensured that, given its proximity to the town, there would be no intermediate phase of middle-class housing as was partially experienced in the southern element of the study. Moreover, as Birmingham began to become a town rigid in its separation of the classes it was inevitable that as the district was on its outskirts then housing for the upper working class would predominate. The flight of the wealthy from the locality was reminiscent of that being experienced throughout Birmingham and its environs.

"I remember one John Grouse,
A buckle maker in Brummagem,
He built himself a country house,
To be out of the smoke of Brummagem,
But though John's country house stands still,
The town itself has walked uphill,
Now it stands beside a smokey mill,
In the middle of the streets of Brummagem"¹⁰⁴.

The poor, however, were to be present in West Sparkbrook I and though always in a definite minority were, nevertheless, significant. Crucially, though, for the general tone of the neighbourhood was the fact that there was no poor quarter in West Sparkbrook I comparable to that centred on Victoria Street in the south of the study area. The ubiquity of the back-to-backs in the former ensured that the district would not be polarised into two communities and this was further facilitated by this housing being situated off the street and - as

103 Ibid.

104 The Central Literary Magazine vol.IV January 1889 p.225. "A Hundred and Fifty Years Ago: Old Birmingham" by F. Giles.



The Back-to-Backs of West Sparkbrook I
(Ordnance Survey Map 1889 scale 10.58 ft
to 1 mile)

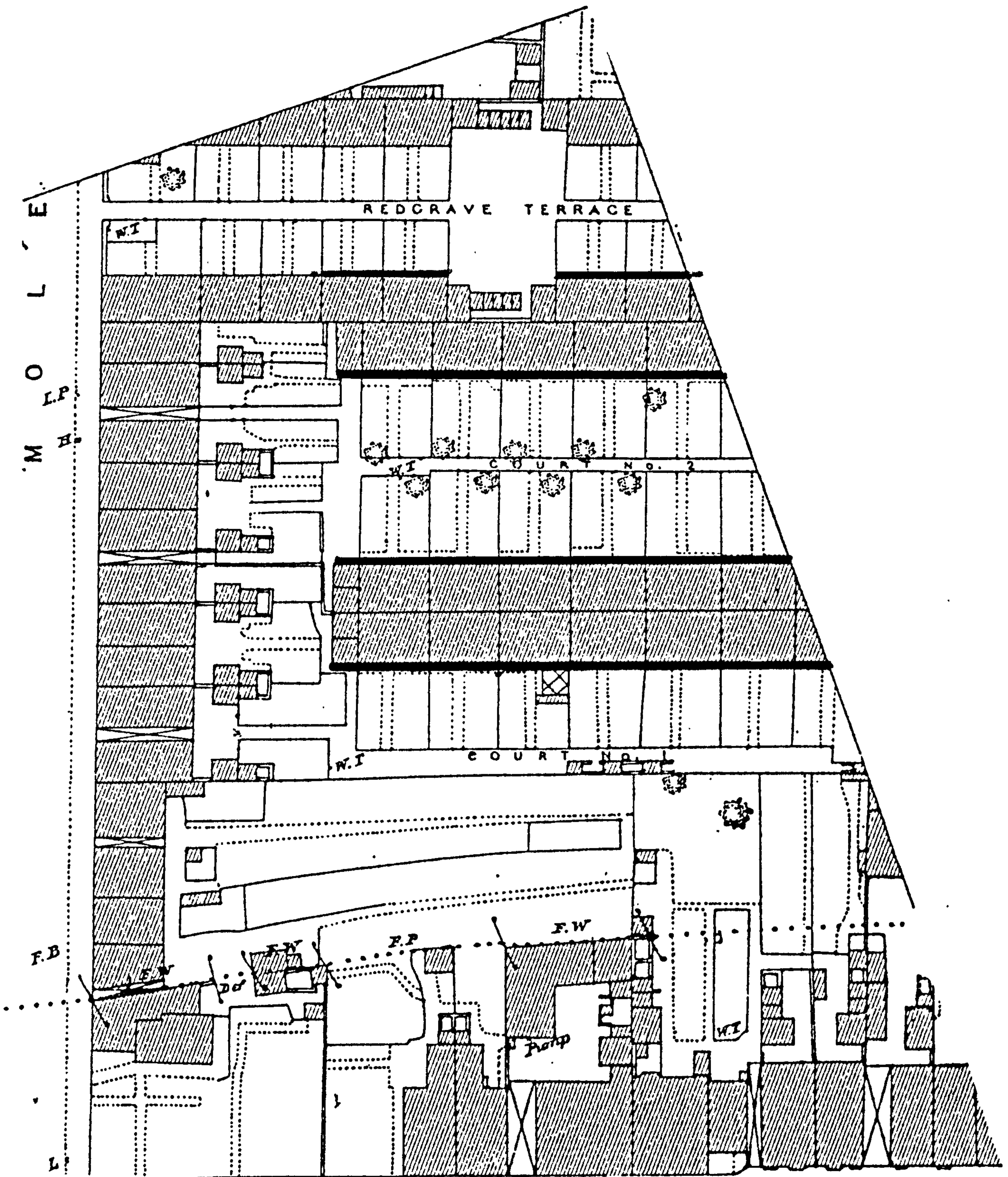
with that in Mole Street- hidden behind more respectable and upper working class 'front' houses. Moreover, those back-to-backs present in the locality were built prior to 1876 when Joseph Chamberlain pushed through the building bye-laws of that year which effectively eliminated the construction of this type of dwelling in Birmingham. It might be argued that if this had been left to 1883 when Aston Borough banned the building of back-to-backs, more such houses might have been built in West Sparkbrook I. As it was, houses built in the area after 1876 were subject to conditions such as those imposed on the builder George Bull who was erecting twelve houses in Turner Street which had to have walls to scullerys and pantries 9" thick¹⁰⁵.

As a result of the division of West Sparkbrook I into a number of estates and of the protracted nature of house-building on them, a great variety of style of housing was evident in the district. This was most apparent in Kyrwicks Lane, a pre-nineteenth century route, which formed the westernmost boundary to all the estates of the area. The major house-building activity along the lane occurred at the time of the break-up of the Larches and Turner Estates, on its eastern side. However, the Tithe Map of 1848 does indicate the presence of houses on Kyrwicks Lane's western side near to Montpellier and Athole Streets. Indeed a sale of 1854 described houses "pleasantly situated in Skirts Lane" which had ninety four years left on their leases, giving a date of building - if the leases were of a ninety nine year duration - of around 1849¹⁰⁶.

The development of Highgate Lane mirrored that of Kyrwicks Lane, accelerating with the increase in house-building on estates contiguous

¹⁰⁵ The Register of New Buildings For Birmingham Plan No.3906.

¹⁰⁶ The Birmingham Journal, February 4th 1854.
Sale of Reynold's Buildings.



Location of Back-to-Backs in Mole Street

(Ordnance Survey Map, 1889 scale 10.58 ft to 1 mile)

to it. Furthermore, as with Kyrwicks Lane, it differed from the process of social change in the rest of West Sparkbrook I in that for a short time a smattering of middle class families resided along the lane. These soon gave way to the working class, however, and only on the Stratford Road did there remain, throughout the period under review, a significant middle class presence. Indeed, the Western portion of the Stratford Road, that section which lay within this study, was more closely connected socially and economically with East Sparkbrook.

One feature common to both sections of West Sparkbrook with regard to house-building in the nineteenth century, is that of infilling along already formed roads. A sale of 1911 offered eight front houses and nine at the back in Victoria Street; based on a reversion in title of 1980 a ninety nine year lease would give a date of construction of 1881¹⁰⁷. It is significant that in West Sparkbrook II, part of The Balsall Heath Local Board, back-to-backs were being built as late as 1881. New houses were also being built in Queen Street: in 1892 planning permission was given for a terrace of seven dwellings and in 1895 for one of four¹⁰⁸. In Mole Street, first formed in the 1830's, fifty houses were built between 1887 and 1891¹⁰⁹.

Development on the former estate of The Freehold Land Society and of the Simcox family was, in the 1870's and 1880's, not infilling but rather the fulfillment of that which had progressed so gradually in the preceding twenty years. A notice of sale in 1914 offered two small houses whose leases of ninety nine years dated from March

¹⁰⁷ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department Particulars of Sale October 5th 1911 by Messrs. Grimley and Son.

¹⁰⁸ Register of New Buildings Plan November 9090.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Plan Numbers 5708; 6086; 6854; 6909. 6930; 7166; 8058.

25th 1871¹¹⁰. The same sale offered a shop and two dwelling houses with leases dating from December 27th 1880¹¹¹. Most of this house-building in Hertford Street took place in that section of the street which intruded into The Simcox Estate. An indenture of lease between Thomas Simcox and Henry Flint enjoined the latter to build, within two years of the lease being granted in 1877, "good and substantial messuages" which would stand back not less than eight feet from the street and on which the builder should spend at least £1,000 in their construction¹¹². Six houses were built - Hertford Villas - upon which Henry Flint raised a mortgage of £1,400 off Thomas Simcox¹¹³.

The close attention to detail paid by such landlords as to the type of house built on their land ensured that the locality centred on Clifton Road would maintain its upper working class status.

"Hertford Street was.....a very new area. Those houses were very well built. They had extraordinarily long gardens. Three storeys high and the attic part of the house ran the full length with skylights back and front. You could get four beds into those rooms. Tradesmen - but of a better type - other than labourers lived there. Artisans, craftsmen"¹¹⁴.

During the 1870's White Street, which according to the plan of The Freehold Land Society was to have extended across The Simcox Estate to Saint Paul's Road, now emerged as reaching only to Brunswick Road. The decade saw increased house-building along this road (ten front houses being sold by their builder in 1879¹¹⁵) and also Saint Paul's Road itself. Along this latter several building leases were granted to Henry Flint, already noticed in connection with houses in Hertford

¹¹⁰ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department
Particulars of Sale March 26th 1914 by Messrs Grimley and Son.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department: Town Clerk's
Deeds: 18119-18121.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 19 Mr. Manton p.4.

¹¹⁵ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department West Hagley
68 July 5th 1879.

Street¹¹⁶. Concurrent with this house construction came the disappearance of Ladypool Farm situated on The Simcox Estate. This small farm mentioned in the 1871 census had disappeared by the 1881 census during which time the population of Brunswick Road rose from one hundred and fourteen to six hundred and fifty seven and that of Saint Paul's Road from twenty nine to three hundred and thirty four. One final piece of land remained uncrossed by roads in this vicinity and this was remedied when, in 1883, plans were passed to extend Brunswick Road from Hertford Street to Malvern Street¹¹⁷. The majority of houses in this section were built in 1892 when H. Taylor constructed twenty five dwellings¹¹⁸.

One completely new street was cut in 1870 despite the Balsall Heath Local Board expressing their regrets on "the position of the street proposed to be made"¹¹⁹. Nevertheless, plans for Henry Street (aptly named after Henry Ludlow through whose estate it passed) were approved¹²⁰ despite The Board's insistance that - because of the sewage and drainage problems which bedevilled the district - no junction with the sewers of The Board could be allowed¹²¹. The new street was short in length, given the small size of The Ludlow Estate. Further, whilst other streets formed on a West-East axis effectively joined the Moseley Road to the Ladypool Road, Henry Street extended only part of the way from the latter, being stopped by The Watkins Estate. By 1881 the street had four hundred and five residents but was still regarded as a newcomer. In 1882 one indignant correspond-

¹¹⁶ Ibid., West Hagley 67 Lease of July 4th 1877.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Heath August 10th 1887.

¹¹⁸ The Register of New Buildings for Birmingham Plan 8979. Minute No. 500.

¹¹⁹ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health Minute 610 June 1st 1870.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., Minute 536 October 6th 1869. Such decisions were empowered to The Street Inspector's Committee.

ent to a local newspaper complained of:

"....that street, if it possibly can, as yet, be called a street, as it leads to nowhere and, therefore, has very little vehicular traffic, it is only yet in its infancy"¹²².

Ten years later Henry Street was to be absorbed by Oldfield Road but its earlier development ensured a bisection of the road into a poorer portion (formerly Henry Street) and respectable portion.

This latter part was formed out of The Watkins Estate and it was the development of this land which was to virtually complete the urbanisation of West Sparkbrook II. The previously gradualistic change of the district had ensured that it had long maintained a semi-rural appearance, with two villages separated socially and geographically and a farm.

"My parents alluded to Sparkbrook in their youth as a pretty little village, describing the open country on both sides of the Stratford Road.... the River Spark running openly on the East side of Stoney Lane"¹²³.

Contrary to the hitherto slow process of house-building, the rapid and comprehensive development of The Watkins Estate effected a drastic change in the area.

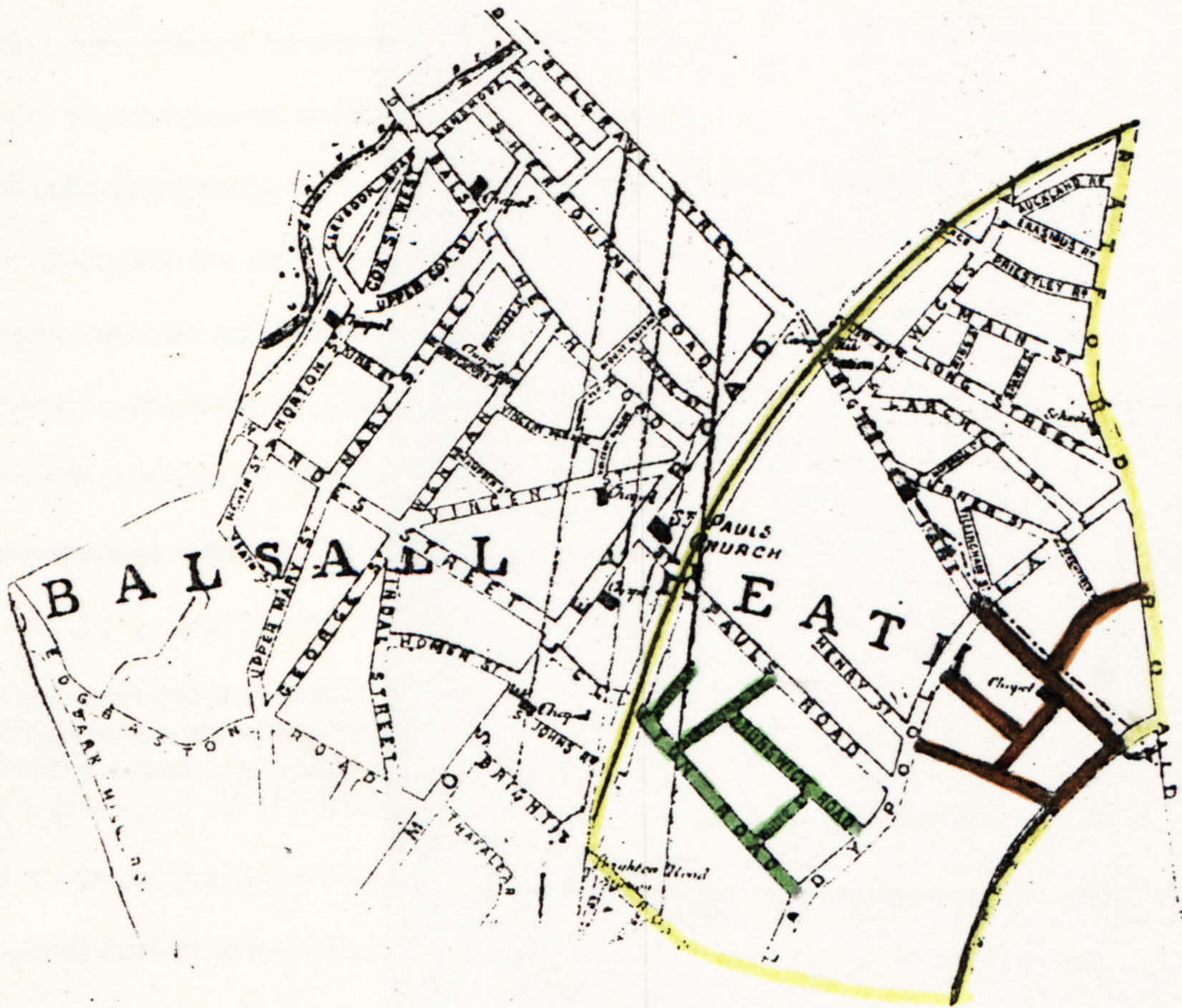
The first hint of the metamorphosis which was to affect West Sparkbrook II came when on July 14th 1888 J.G. Watkins borrowed £5,000 giving as mortgage his land lying to the West of the Ladypool Road, East of the railway and South of Highgate Road¹²⁴. A week later his architect, Edward Holmes, submitted to The Balsall Heath Board plans for the making of new roads¹²⁵. Approval was granted conditional on the construction and sewerage of the roads being to

¹²² The Balsall Heath Times, March 18th 1882.




¹²³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews no 2 W.G. Chinn p.8.

¹²⁴ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department MS 62.3. The land was at that time used by The Pickwick Cricket Club.

¹²⁵ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health. Special Meeting July 20th 1888. Minute No. 90.



The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health District c1885

-  The boundary of The Study
-  The Poor Quarter
-  Estate of The Freehold Land Society

the satisfaction of The Board's surveyor, and on Watkins and Holmes executing a deed, prepared by The Clerk of The Board, declaring that this work would be carried out within five years¹²⁶.

As a result four new roads were formed: Ombersley and Woodfield (named after Mr. Watkins' residence of Woodfield at Ombersley, Worcestershire) Oldfield (perhaps recalling the inn of that name at Ombersley) and Kingsley. Building plots were sold during 1888 but The Board were now more stringent in their approval of plans than in previous years. Plans for the first twenty five houses were passed on May 1st 1889 and they effectively disallowed the building of back-to-backs as The Board insisted on their walls being 9" thick¹²⁷. Equally, the small "two up, two down" dwellings such as Harpers Buildings in Henry Street were also excluded. However, it is important to note that the dwellings which were built along these roads were aimed at the upper working class family rather than middle class ones. The dominance of such housing in West Sparkbrook since the 1850's, the closeness of the area to Birmingham and industrial districts such as Highgate, ensured that this would be so. Moreover, the coming of the suburban railway facilitated further the outward movement of the middle class into totally rural districts far removed from the city. Indeed, The Dorridge Building Estate, deep in Warwickshire, was first advertised in August 1860 exemplifying the attraction of once inaccessible districts for Birmingham's prosperous citizens¹²⁸. Moseley managed to maintain its high status, despite its growing proximity to the urban outreaches of the city, protected by this band of upper working class housing in West Sparkbrook II

126

Ibid.

127

Ibid., Minute number 342 May 1st 1889.

128

The Birmingham Journal and Commerical Advertiser, August 1853.
Auctioneers Cheshire & Gibson.

and Balsall Heath.

"Balsall Heath intervened between Moseley and Birmingham.... however... the overflow of the population of the city completely covered Balsall Heath principally with working class houses and the absorption of the latter into the municipality of Birmingham was followed by the development of Moseley as a residential district"¹²⁹.

Thus, whilst West Sparkbrook was now unattractive to the middle class more stringent building regulations prevented the building of houses designed for the poor. House-building in Ombersley Road was dominated by one firm, The Drasey Brothers, to such an extent that they passed into local folk-lore.

"I lived in Ombersley Road, in 'Mugs' Row'. It was built largely by The Drasey Brothers who built The Hippodrome in 1899. They were bookies and that's why it was called 'Mugs' Row', because it was built with 'mugs' money"¹³⁰.

Indeed from May 1889 The Drasey's were responsible for building one hundred and thirty nine houses and two shops in the road¹³¹. Other builders, too, were involved in the development of Ombersley Road which accounted for varying house styles and subtle social divisions within the road¹³². This fact was also to be evident in other roads formed out of The Watkins' Estate. By October 1890 the road was so rapidly being populated that a sub-committee of The Board was appointed to report on the desirability of erecting a urinal and lamp near to the railway bridge¹³³.

The Drasey Brothers were also involved in house-building along Woodfield and Kingsley Roads, though not Oldfield. Henry Street

¹²⁹ The Birmingham Daily Post, May 22nd 1911. Moseley's suburban station was opened in 1867.

¹³⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough pp.4-5. "Mugs' Money" is colloquial for fools who waste their money and to non-gamblers betting was a 'mugs game'.

¹³¹ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health and The Register of New Buildings for Birmingham.

¹³² The other builders were Mundy, Smallwood and Hall.

¹³³ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health Minute Number 59 October 1st 1890.

briefly co-existed with this latter but was soon absorbed. "Tunnel-backs" were prominent in Oldfield Road where ten builders were active in constructing houses. This type of house "tunnelled back" from the road in avenues. Access was gained either through an entry which was narrow or one that was wide. Tunnel-backs were to be evident in roads formed from the other Watkins Estate in West Sparkbrook II, East of the Ladypool Road, South of Alfred Street and West of the Stoney Lane.

"One old chap... used to tell me about that farm at the corner of Taunton Road, by the old house in Alder Road... he told me that if you wanted to go to Stoney Lane you'd got to go down into Alfred Streed... Because all the other were fields and it was a ditch all the way along"¹³⁴.

This area was developed following the death of John Watkins when his trustees presented to The Board plans for the cutting of three new roads to be called Colville, Brunswick and Fulham (soon to become Leamington). The plans were passed subject to the surveyor of The Board fixing the gradient of the roads and the authority being allowed to obtain land from the estate so that Ladypool Road might be widened¹³⁵. With the forming of these roads passed Stoney Lane Farm, its farmhouse having been situated at the Stoney Lane end of Brunswick Road.

"Ancient residents of Balsall Heath will remember Sam Melson and his quaint old farmhouse.... This and all the roads were.... fertile fields farmed by him and also used.....as the training ground for his small stud of race-horses"¹³⁶.

134 C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Les Brown p.11.
The farm mentioned was Old Farm at the Southern boundary of Moseley.

135 Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health Minute Number 704.
June 4th 1890.

The section of Ladypool Road in Birmingham had been widened in 1854 when the borough purchased 463 yards of land from Mr. Unett (Birmingham Council Estates and Building Committee May 2nd 1854).

136 Dyke Wilkinson: Bygone Birmingham p.23; a series of articles as they appeared in the Birmingham Daily Mail (1923).

In July 1891 plans were approved for the forming of four more roads on the farmland: Chesterton, Clifton, Roshven and Taunton (named after J.R.G. Taunton the last Chairman of The Board before its inclusion into Birmingham)¹³⁷.

Unlike those streets formed in mid century out of small estates, these new roads ran at right angles to the Ladypool Road. They were also longer, although tunnel-backs and 'back houses' filled in the land between them. Chesterton Road became a high status road of chiefly tunnel-backs whilst Brunswick, Leamington and Colville Roads were lower status and included back houses.

1891 was also momentous for The Simcox Estate where unhurried development had been in progress since the 1850's. This had increased in intensity during the 1880's with one hundred and sixteen houses being built along St. Paul's Road during the decade¹³⁸. However, in April 1891 final plans for road forming on the estate were passed by The Board enabling the extension of Woodfield and Kingsley Roads and the cutting of Melrose Avenue¹³⁹. These three roads (Saint Paul's, Kingsley and Woodfield) now became the highest in status in West Sparkbrook; indeed in those houses erected by Mr. Lattimer flush closets were installed¹⁴⁰.

Amidst this urbanisation of the district one vestige of rural West Sparkbrook remained lying between Brighton and Clifton Roads. Here there

"Used to be the Artillery.... Used to be a field. And only about one hundred yards, two hundred yards up from the Ladypool Road there used to be a stile. Used to have to get over this stile. Them was all fields. And there's a

137 Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health Minute Number 420 July 1st 1891.

138 Ibid., various Minutes.

139 Ibid., Minute Number 237 April 1st 1891.

140 Ibid., Minute Number 643 January 4th 1888.



Plan of Tunnel Back and Back Houses in Chesterton and Brunswick Roads

(H.M. Land Registry Title Number WM 96386).

- Tunnel Backs
- Back Houses

brook runs through it. Little tiny brook....."¹⁴¹

In 1903 this land, hitherto used by the precursor of The Territorial Army, was built upon, almost fifty years after it had first been sold as building land. Planning permission was granted by the city to The Runcorn Road Estate Syndicate to build two hundred and fifty six houses¹⁴². Thus a conversion which had begun in the 1830's with the break up of The Mole Estate was now complete. West Sparkbrook, in common with other formerly rural areas contiguous to Birmingham's boundaries, was now a working class neighbourhood.

"The old pleasant suburbs, such as they were in 1832, have now become thickly populated districts, which except in name, are in reality portions of the great midland metropolis.....

While the old suburbs such as Aston, Ashted, Bloomsbury, Nechells, Balsall Heath..... have become small towns, the suburban residents have found new homes further from the town....."¹⁴³.

An immediate and profound effect of this last major stage of development in the 1890's was the conversion of the Ladypool Road - and to a lesser extent the Stoney Lane - from almost country lanes into roads of major shopping activity.

"Older inhabitants have described the Ladypool Lane as providing a quiet spot with hedgerows on either side, which often provided somewhere for a 'downer' in the summer time to sleep off the effects of a Sunday noon session at the local"¹⁴⁴.

The Watkins, Simcox and Runcorn Road Estates all had frontages to the Ladypool Road, and all the new roads formed out of them led directly off the road or else were offshoots of those that did. Thus the Ladypool Road became the artery of West Sparkbrook; that portion of it in West Sparkbrook I had already houses along it but the

¹⁴¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews Number 1 William Chinn p.3.

¹⁴² The Register of New Buildings for Birmingham Plan Number 19443.

¹⁴³ R.K. Dent: Old and New Birmingham (1879) p.618.

¹⁴⁴ W.G. Chinn: From Victoria's Image (A Reminiscence in Reflection) p.37.

section in West Sparkbrook II now saw shops opening up all along its length. Hitherto, the district had lacked a focal point for its unity: Balsall Heath, on the Moseley Road, was to have a library and baths; Moseley, Selly Oak and Kings Norton had their centres based on the former villages; West Sparkbrook had none of these. Instead, the locality embraced the Ladypool Road as an alternative ensuring that it would become a focus of community life as well as a shopping centre:

"... 'the Lane' played, unobtrusively, an important part in my early life. I say unobtrusively, because for years 'the Lane' was taken for granted by people who lived in Sparkbrook. It is in retrospect that I see its importance, its significance and its unique quality"¹⁴⁵.

Public houses, beer shops, a park, a church, a chapel, a picture house and a fairground were soon found along its length. However, its eminence in the district was ensured by the quality of its shopping. Between 1888 and 1896 one hundred and ninety four shops and houses were built along its Southern section: in the former year there were only nineteen shopkeepers involved in the retail trade of food, drink and tobacco; by 1896 there were fifty nine and in 1904 the number reached eighty as householders turned their front rooms into shops, or indeed the whole dwelling. The rise in significance of the Ladypool Road inevitably meant the eclipse of roads formerly important in the shopping of the district. Most of these were roads leading off the Ladypool Road and became during the 1890's static areas of shopping activity: in 1888 Clifton Road possessed twenty nine shopkeepers included in the afore-mentioned definition, the same figure as in 1904; Highgate Road had fifty seven such shopkeepers in 1888 and sixty one in 1904¹⁴⁶. Both roads were now secondary in their nature, unable to

¹⁴⁵ Leslie Mayell, op cit., p.8.

¹⁴⁶ The 1888 figures for Highgate Road are the sum of the shopkeepers of Highgate Lane and Thomas Street which were later joined together to form Highgate Road. All figures are taken from Kelly's Directories of Birmingham.

compete with the more central and wider Ladypool Road.

"The narrow railway bridge in Highgate Road... is an eyesore, an inconvenience and an accident trap. When it was originally constructed the road was a country lane; now it is a main thoroughfare with rows of shops.

A struggling shopkeeper. "147

Stoney Lane, also with frontages to The Watkins Estate and to The Beach and Smith-Ryland Estates in Sparkhill, also developed as a shopping centre: in 1888 there were five shopkeepers along it who could be included in the above category; by 1904 there were thirty eight. However, Stoney Lane was a peripheral road and its shops did not thrive as those of the Ladypool Road did, indeed they acquired a reputation of being "seedy"¹⁴⁸.

The Ladypool Road was undoubtedly pre-eminent attracting clientele from Moseley and Sparkhill in addition to those from its hinterland. Yet, not all of the road was a shopping thoroughfare, (the exception being the portion in West Sparkbrook) nor was that part of it which was, homogeneous in nature. The road could easily be sub-divided:

"From... Highgate Road, where it actually started upto, say, Brunswick Road, seemed to be a different class of shops from what there was from Brunswick Road to Taunton Road. There were some very nice shops up there.... Comparable to some of the shops you'd got in the town.... It might have been a better class of shopkeeper. There was more competition down the other end. The things'd be cheaper that end. I mean for every butcher you'd get from Brunswick Road up to Taunton Road, you'd get three down the other side"¹⁴⁹.

As might be expected the 'nicer' shops were nearer to Moseley whilst those which sold their goods cheaper were nearer to the poorer parts of West Sparkbrook. This section of the road (between Brunswick and Highgate Roads) assumed the character of a market with butchers auctioning meat, barrow boys and hawkers. Here also were dominant food

147 The Birmingham Daily Post, Thursday December 3rd 1891.

148 Leslie Mayell, op cit., p.24.

149 C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes pp.8,9.

shops.

"There was everything down there. One of the finest shopping centres in Birmingham. It was a really good class shopping centre. You could get anything you wanted. All reasonable in price. Plenty of butchers, hucksters shops. You had pork butchers, offal shops - tripe shops. You'd take your jug or your basin and get your faggots and peas, pigs trotters...."¹⁵⁰.

Of fourteen butchers along the road in 1904, nine were in this 'market' part¹⁵¹. Indeed today, the Ladypool Road between Highgate and Brunswick Roads is now the 'core' shopping centre of the road under Local government plans.

By a process which had evolved naturally and was not imposed, the Ladypool Road became essential to the character, cohesion and identity of West Sparkbrook. It ensured that the district would become one with a vigour of its own although still part of Birmingham and dependent on that city.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., number 11 Mr. Curtis p.10.

¹⁵¹ These and preceding figures concerning shops are taken from the relevant Trades Directories of Birmingham.

¹⁵² Census figures from the 1871 census will be found under Deritend and Bordesley 3139 26 and Kings Norton 3080 3. For the 1881 census under Balsall Heath 2948/9 7 and Bordesley 3019/20 7.

Chapter Three

Environment and Residential Segregation

As the development of West Sparkbrook progressed, the district began to increasingly resemble Birmingham society in microcosm: outwardly, the area appeared a prosperous upper working class neighbourhood, yet it enfolded within itself localities of poverty which were shunned and ignored in the same way as the poor central wards of the city were by its more affluent citizens. Internally, West Sparkbrook was rent by the same divisions - albeit not so potent - which sundered the poor in their totality in their slum wards from the more comfortable in the suburbs. The lifestyle of the poor in the area of this study, as well as their living conditions, resembled the plight of the lower working class throughout Birmingham: they were densely packed into cheap housing in unhealthy quarters avoided by nearly all except each other and the charitable.

By the mid 1860's the poor 'village' of West Sparkbrook was established: its centre was Victoria Street but it embraced completely Queen Street and partially Alfred, Mole and Thomas Streets. Nearly fifteen hundred people (not all of them lower working class) crowded into this small area in 1881¹, becoming very much a minority in the district with the development of The Watkins' Estates. As if to emphasise the separate nature of this locality, the only time its inhabitants impinged on the lives of the rest of those of West Sparkbrook was when they conformed to the stereotyped notions of the upper working class as to the drunkenness and violence of the poor. In Slater's Directory of Birmingham of 1852-3 only three shops are

¹ The 1881 Census gives a population as follows: Victoria Street - 288; Queen Street - 306; Alfred Street - 271; Mole Street - 278, Thomas Street - 352.

mentioned for this quarter, all of them beershops². Furthermore, the first press reference to Victoria Street, on a matter other than building, came in 1855 when a labourer was stabbed whilst walking down the street³. Rowdiness and criminality were both seen as characteristics inherent in the poor and which were obvious in their sections of West Sparkbrook.

"The improvements which are being made in Birmingham by the Corporation and the contemplated enlargement of the New Street Railway Station has necessitated the taking down of whole blocks of the lowest classes of buildings, in which this predatory portion of the community resided, and the result has been made that they have been compelled to find fresh quarters. Unfortunately, for the inhabitants of the district⁴, not a few of them have found a location in the neighbourhood of Sparkbrook and the result has been that robberies and burglaries have now become a matter of almost daily occurrence"⁵.

As the poor of West Sparkbrook were seen to be sharing in the characteristics of the poor generally, so too did they live in similar conditions. It is not surprising that the least healthy and most unattractive portion of the district was coalescent with its poor quarter. In a rare incident in 1873 there had occurred an outbreak of typhoid in genteel Moseley; the cause, it emerged, was infected milk sold by the milk-sellers of Balsall Heath. Dr. Ballard, The Medical Officer of Health of The Local Government Board recognised the singularity of the event observing, in the process, that only one death had occurred:

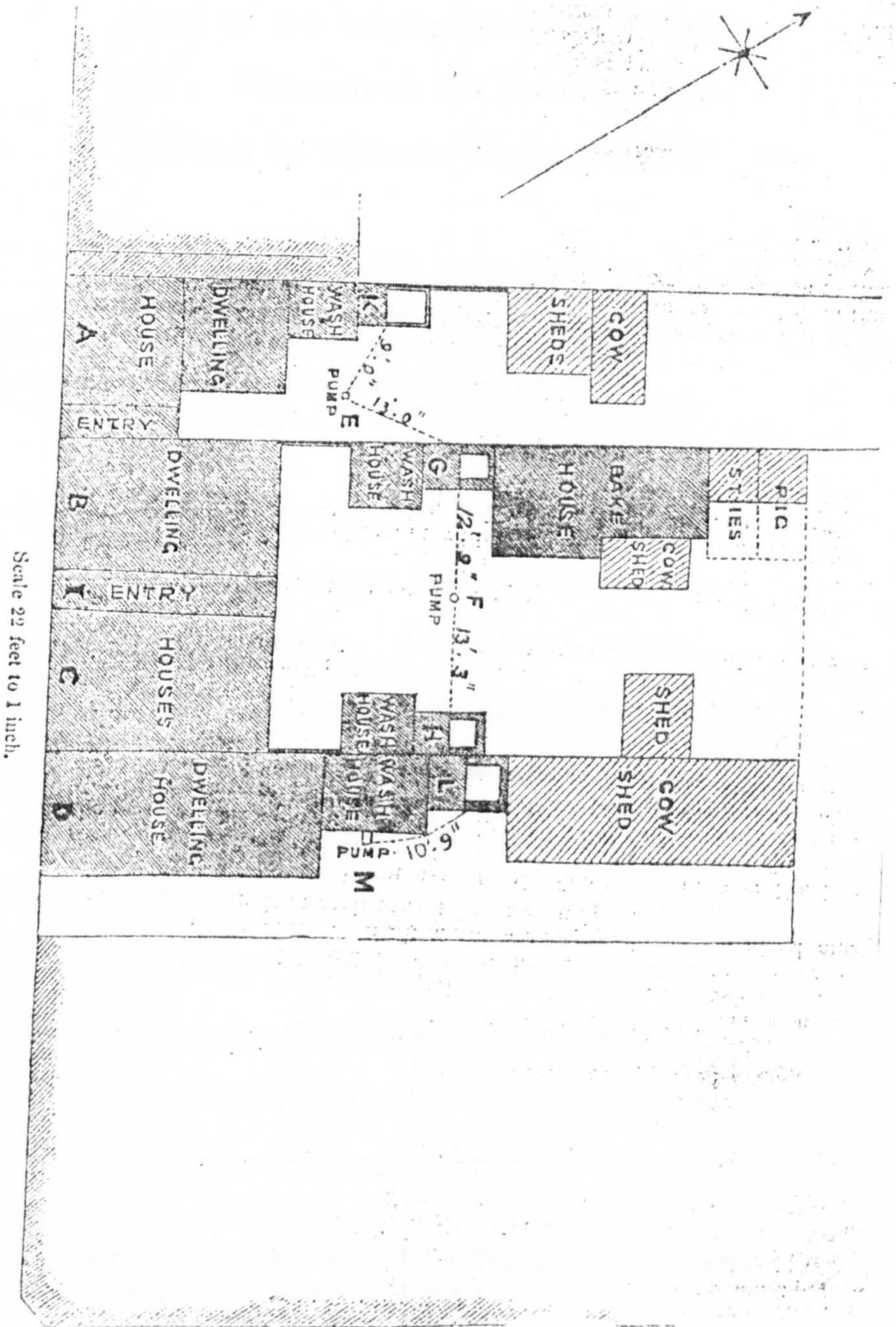
² Slater's Directory of Birmingham, 1852-3. George Fowler and William Wells of Thomas Street and Edward Smith of Alfred Street.

³ The Birmingham Journal, June 2nd 1855.

⁴ Balsall Heath.

⁵ The Balsall Heath Times, February 4th 1882. When writers, during the period in which Balsall Heath was a Local Board, referred to Sparkbrook it was with reference to Victoria, Alfred, Queen and Thomas Streets. The "predatory portion" with which the writer is concerned is the criminal class who were on "ticket leave". This was a form of probation whereby in order to lessen the overcrowding of prisons - those criminals whose offences were not serious would be allowed to leave gaol early so long as they had behaved themselves whilst in prison. On their release they were given a ticket.

Plan Showing Proximity of Pig Sties and Cow Sheds to
 Dwellings in Balsali Heath
 (Report of Dr. Ballard to The Local Government of Health
 Board, 1874).



117. No. 2.
 Entomology and
 Pathology
 by Dr. Ballard.

"... at Sparkbrook, at the outskirts of the Balsall Heath District, in a place notorious for the endemicity of enteric fever"⁶.

In 1877 an outbreak of typhoid fever was confined to Victoria Street and the resultant examination of the water supply in the street found that it was altogether insufficient in the neighbourhood of Waddel's Buildings and 15, Victoria Street⁷. Although at its worst in this locality, the problem was not confined to Victoria Street and its environ's:

"... with few exceptions...throughout their district the water used by the inhabitants...was pumped out of the soil. He (Dr. Ballard) had inspected wells at the various points of elevation and there was not one of them which was not polluted, and there was one in which it was found the water would make excellent manure"⁸.

Yet, the difficulties experienced by the poor of the district were compounded, as were not those of the upper working class, by the proximity of The Spark to their locality. The Balsall Heath Board found, throughout its existence, the problems associated with drainage and sewerage, endemic to the Victoria Street area, impossible to solve⁹. In 1872 a deputation of the inhabitants of the area presented a memorial to The Board complaining of the defective drainage in their quarter¹⁰; in response to their requests a two foot glazed drain pipe was ordered to be laid down and The Board's surveyor instructed to inspect the Stoney Lane, along which ran The

6 Reports of The Medical Officers of The Privy Council and Local Government Board, 1874. Supplementary Report to The Local Government Board on some recent inquiries under The Public Health Act 1858 (Fever at Balsall Heath appendix number 5).

7 Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health Medical Officer's Report November 7th 1877.

8 Special Meeting of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health January 11th 1873. Report of Dr. Ballard.

9 The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health was constituted by Act of Parliament on September 16th 1862 (London Gazette p.4508) and became part of Birmingham on November 9th 1891.

10 Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health July 5th 1872. Report of The Street Committee.

Spark¹¹. Moreover, the brook itself was used to "carry off sewage, and was now little better than a common sewer"¹². To further exacerbate the worries of the authority The Spark was a feeder of The Warwick and Birmingham Canal, the owners of which sued The Board over the deteriorating quality of water in the brook¹³. As a consequence of the canal company's initial action notices were served upon owners of property whose premises drained into ditches which then fed into The Spark directing them to "disconnect this so as to avoid polluting the water running into the canal feeder". It was also ordered that these drains should be connected to proper sewers¹⁴. Further notices were served on owners of property in Victoria and Thomas Streets in 1882 with regard to properly piping the ditches adjoining their properties¹⁵. However, it was again necessary to serve notices in respect of the same streets in 1885¹⁶.

Indeed, in 1883 the Board felt compelled to write to The Tame and Rea Drainage Company - to which it belonged - regarding:

"...the great inconvenience that the inhabitants....at Sparkbrook are suffering through the outlet at Stoney Lane being insufficient to take off the sewage of that district, by means of which at storm time it floods the cellars of the inhabitants"¹⁷.

The effect on the health of the poor of West Sparkbrook because of the closeness of the polluted Spark, of inadequate drainage and sewerage, of infected drinking water from dirty wells and the generally ill-favoured location of their homes can be imagined.

11 Ibid.

12 H.J. Everson A Chronological History of Moseley, Balsall Heath, Kings Heath and Kings Norton (1920-30) November 25th 1872.

13 This legal conflict plagued The Board's existence and the resultant costs ensured that the authority would be integrated with Birmingham.

14 Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health, (General Purpose Committee) September 28th 1881 Minute 589.

15 Ibid., (General Purpose Committee) January 2nd 1882 Minute 631.

16 Ibid., February 4th 1885 Minute 417.

17 Ibid., July 4th 1883 Minute 610.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to quantify this effect before 1892 given the absence of detailed mortality rates for the individual streets of The Board which, therefore, precludes a comparison between the death rates of the streets of the poor and those of the upper working class. However, between 1892 and 1903 the Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham does provide such a breakdown, but again there are complications as without access to the 1891 and 1901 censuses, population figures for the streets of the district are unavailable and it is between these dates that many of the upper working class roads of West Sparkbrook were formed¹⁸. Notwithstanding these comments and with provisos as to their real accuracy, it is possible to make certain comparisons between the death rates of the poor streets of the area and those of Birmingham and various of its wards. Such comparisons involving Victoria, Queen and Alfred Streets must necessarily be based on the population figures for those streets given by the 1881 census.

Thus in 1881 Victoria Street had a population of two hundred and eighty eight living in sixty one houses (two other houses were unoccupied); in Queen Street there lived three hundred people who occupied seventy two houses (five others being uninhabited); and in Alfred Street resided two hundred and seventy one people living in fifty two houses (a further twelve were unoccupied)¹⁹. According to The Educational Census of these streets which began in 1908, the number of houses in Victoria Street (now called Studley Street) had risen to eighty one; in Queen Street it remained the same (that is if the unoccupied houses are included); and in Alfred Street it had risen to

¹⁸ I have written to The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys but they were unable to furnish me with the information I required.

¹⁹ The 1881 Census.

seventy five²⁰. If the size of each household is worked out, according to the 1881 census, Victoria Street had 4.72 people to a dwelling; Queen Street had 4.16 and Alfred Street 5.2. If these figures are related to the number of houses in each street according to The Educational Census, it is possible to arrive at how many deaths per thousand people living in these streets there were. Obviously, there are defects to such an extrapolation. However, I believe the exercise valid not only because it helps quantify the qualitative material but because if a mean average of 4.7 people per household is taken this is a figure which is eminently feasible.

Table 1 opposite gives the death rates for Birmingham as a whole; for Balsall Heath Ward, which is representative of a generally upper working class area and to which West Sparkbrook II belonged; for Edgbaston and Harborne, which was consistently the city's healthiest ward; for St. Bartholomew's which was one of Birmingham's poorest wards; and for Studley, Queen and Alfred Streets. 1894 is the year for which the first comparison can be made because it is only then that the city's Medical Officer of Health felt able to breakdown the mortality rates for the individual wards. The figures for the three streets in question are based on estimated populations of Studley Street: three hundred and eighty one; Queen Street: three hundred and sixty two and Alfred Street: three hundred and fifty three. Equally, the death rates rely on the various reports of The Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham which give the annual number of deaths in each of the respective streets²¹.

²⁰ The Educational Census: Studley, Queen and Alfred Streets. City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies MS 229 no.17.

²¹ To produce the relevant statistics I have divided the population of each street into a thousand and multiplied that figure by the number of deaths per year. The relevant figure for Studley Street is 2.62; for Queen Street 2.76 and for Alfred Street 2.8.

Table 1

Comparative Death Rates

Year	Birmingham	Edgbaston and Harborne	Saint Bartholomews	Balsall Heath	Studley Street	Queen Street	Alfred Street
1894	18.2	13.4	23.7	15.2	21.0	5.5	11.2
1895	19.9	15.5	24.8	16.4	18.3	30.8	22.4
1896	20.4	15.6	26.8	15.4	15.7	24.8	16.8
1897	21.1	14.1	29.3	16.3	21.0	22.1	22.4
1898	19.5	15.9	25.2	17.4	26.2	16.6	11.2
1899	20.5	13.0	27.1	16.0	31.4	24.8	8.4
1900	21.0	13.6	27.7	14.7	23.6	16.6	22.4
1901	19.9	13.1	25.9	15.0	21.0	16.6	19.6
1902	18.0	12.3	24.6	14.8	13.1	19.3	14.0
1903	17.2	12.1	24.4	13.5	10.5	11.0	5.6
Average	19.6	13.9	26.0	15.5	20.2	18.8	15.4

Death rates, are per 1000 persons living.

Table 2

The Number of Deaths in Victoria (Studley)
Queen and Alfred Streets

Year	Studley Street	Queen Street	Alfred Street
1894	8	2	4
1895	7	11	8
1896	6	9	6
1897	8	8	8
1898	10	6	4
1899	12	9	3
1900	9	6	8
1901	8	6	7
1902	5	7	5
1903	4	4	2

No great credence can be given to the resultant death rates for individual years given the small populations of the three streets involved and given the discrepancies which can thus arise between years: for example the death rate for Studley Street in 1899 is a massive 31.4 per thousand persons living (rivaling that of the city's poorest and most deprived streets); yet only 10.5 in 1903. Nonetheless, if the death rates arrived at in the manner discussed are averaged out for the ten years surveyed then reliable and relevant comparisons can be made. Thus, the average for Alfred Street which was part of the poor quarter but whose inhabitants straddled the borderline between the lower and upper working class, is virtually the same as that for Balsall Heath ward, this being one of the city's healthiest. The average for Queen Street, however, is significantly higher: 18.8 compared to 15.5 and reflects that street's position firmly within the poor 'village' of West Sparkbrook. Even so, this figure is still less than the average for Birmingham as a whole. However, it is in respect of Studley Street, the district's poorest, that the figures are most eloquent; the street's average is 20.2, higher than the city's and a third as high again as that for Balsall Heath. Though the average is substantially less than that for St. Bartholomew's they do emphasise the fact that the poor, wherever they lived, were at greater risk of death because of their environment than the upper working class; this being equally true even if they lived in ghettos of poverty in the districts of the latter. Poverty killed wherever its location; Studley Street's one saving grace was that it was 'on its own' in West Sparkbrook, isolated apart from the still superior Queen Street. It could be argued, therefore, that if Studley Street had been just one of a cluster of similar streets

its already high death rate would have risen further, given the evidence provided by Birmingham's Medical Officer for Health regarding ventilation and overcrowding (discussed in Chapter One).

The locality centred on Victoria Street was thus, because of its position, unattractive to any except the poor. Constant flooding from The Spark which especially affected "the houses in Alfred Street and Stoney Lane" was a further cause of avoidance²² and indeed the quarter's problems were aggravated by the policies of The Board and their inadequate response to its difficulties.

"I having invested my little savings in the bit of land joining yours....and...I built my cottage there²³..... I come into it in August 1869 with a happy little family number six. I have lost four children in three years with fevers and other deadly diseases that follow such a dreadful stinking place as your Tank the water and filth is allowed to cover over many of land after it has got out of the Tank and remains there for weeks and months together nearly stifling my little home with its perfume.....I have just lost my oldest child and only son eleven years and eleven months. My wife and the other child I have left have been ill...five week's tomorrow and are under the Surgeon's are now and a long-way from being well....My family been afflicted will involve me in debt over £10.... and knowing....that you are about to make another filtering bed it will be a thing impossible for us to live at my little cottage. I have been informed by two surgeons that it is impossible for me to rear my family near such a place. I have informed Mr. Taylor about it many times and he laughs at me and quite makes a scoff at me... (Have to shut up if nothing done leave to who borrowed money off)"²⁴.

Those few members of the upper working and lower middle classes who had once resided in the vicinity rapidly departed. Moreover, the habits of some of the poor served only to cause a further deterioration in general living conditions, even though some of the habits were a result of their economic circumstance. One such was the widespread

²² Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board December 10th 1881 Minute 99.

²³ On Stoney Lane by Alfred and Thomas Streets. The correspondent lived at Rose Cottage.

²⁴ Minutes of The Balsall Heath Local Board December 4th 1872. Mr. Taylor was an official of The Board. Minute 809.

practice of keeping animals and fowls in whatever space was available in order to supplement both the family income and diet. Pigs were especially popular but they were a great danger to health and had, indeed, been responsible for the typhoid outbreak of 1873.

Whilst West Sparkbrook II maintained a still largely rural character pig keeping was not restricted to the poor; yet as artisan type houses began to be built in increasing numbers the practice declined except in those roads not yet fully developed²⁵ and especially in the poor quarter. In 1887 a notice was served on Mr. Mather to desist from keeping pigs in Alfred Street²⁶ and in 1889:

"...it appeared that a number of pigs were being kept in Victoria Street, Sparkbrook in such close proximity to dwelling houses as to be a nuisance and injurious to health"²⁷.

The problems of hygiene and nuisance within the area of The Board were, undoubtedly, at their most severe in the Victoria Street area. In 1888 the authority's Health Committee had a notice printed and copies of it served periodically upon owners and occupiers of property abutting on or adjacent to The Spark and its tributaries:

"...cautioning them against throwing or permitting to be thrown any filth, liquid or solid into any ditch, water-course or street channel communicating with the Sparkbrook or any of its tributaries and that any person offending be at once proceeded against"²⁸.

Difficulties concerning sewerage, drainage, rubbish and illness resulting from their inadequate treatment were also present elsewhere in the district: in 1877 an offensive sewer was reported in Saint Paul's Road²⁹; flooding occasionally affected parts of the Ladypool Road and Clifton Road³⁰; and, of course, disease did not affect the

²⁵ Ibid., Brighton Road November 5th 1884 Minute 343.

²⁶ Ibid., October 5th 1887. Minute 566.

²⁷ Ibid., November 6th 1889. Minute 505.

²⁸ Ibid., February 1st 1888. Minute 687.

²⁹ Ibid., April 4th 1877. Minute 1258.

³⁰ Ibid., June 25th 1879 and November 3rd 1869. Minutes 22 and 30 and 547.

residents of Victoria Streets solely³¹. Significantly, though, where such problems occurred in the upper working class sections of the area they were usually in isolation, quickly remedied and usually did not recur.

Those worries which afflicted West Sparkbrook's poor quarter were definitely not short lived, neither were they short term; they persisted throughout the authority of The Board and were reflections of the social, economic and cultural divisions of the district which were to become increasingly obvious prior to 1914. In no matter more than housing were these divisions evident.

"I have to bring under your notice the state of Parker's Buildings in Victoria Street, the houses being in a filthy condition especially 1st, 8th and 9th. These require painting, papering and lime washing throughout. The adjoining property Macdonald's Building is very unsatisfactory. There is no water supply. Foul exhalations are constantly exuding from the ash pit into the wash house and yard the stench from which is highly prejudicial to health. The 1st, 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th houses are especially filthy and require papering, painting and lime washing throughout. The roofs of some of the houses are dilapidated and a constant source of discomfort in wet weather"³².

The following year, 1879, Parton's, Victoria and McDermotts Buildings - all in Victoria Street - were found to be dirty in either their wash-houses or in some of their houses; mention was also made of 42 and 43, Queen Street³³. A mere twenty five years had passed since the earliest of these buildings had been constructed and yet some, such as those belonging to Mr. Manning in Victoria Street, were reported as "unfit for human habitation"³⁴. Over the next ten years various notices were served on this particular landlord ordering him to repair and cleanse his property³⁵.

³¹ Ibid., February 6th 1889 scarlet fever at 92, Clifton Lane and July 1st 1885 five cases of scarlet fever in Stoney Lane. Minute nos. 476 and 575.

³² Ibid., July 3rd 1878 Report of The Medical Officer of Health. Minute 14277.

³³ Ibid., March 5th 1879. Minute 14339.

³⁴ Ibid., March 5th 1879 Report of The General Purpose Committee. Minute 14341.

³⁵ Ibid., April 10th 1888. Minute 737.

Back-to-backs were absent from Queen Street yet that did not result in the exclusion of poor quality housing from this street. The worst example here of inferior housing was "Ten House Row", literally a terrace of ten houses lying off Queen Street, between that and Stoney Lane. In 1879 the lavatory accommodation was found deficient and the lavatories themselves were filthy and so dilapidated that rebuilding was necessary. Furthermore, the wash-houses were damp and dilapidated and numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10 were very dirty³⁶. A summons was later issued against the agent who collected the rent off the tenants but it was not until six months after the first report that the landlord, Mr. George Whitfield of New Street, was discovered³⁷. Moreover, the three new lavatories which The Board had demanded be built were not erected until November 1879³⁸.

The activities of The Board in that year against owners inattentive as to the state of their property and dilatory in their responses to the authority's notices, did not solve the problem of bad housing in Victoria and Queen Streets. Indeed, the relative prosperity and good health of the majority of the district's inhabitants induced in The Board's members a certain smugness, reminiscent of that exhibited by the councillors of Birmingham, and forgetfulness towards remedying the plight of the poor.

"The District continues to be free from the principal Zymotic diseases and is in a healthy condition"³⁹.

The poor were in a minority in Balsall Heath, gathered together to be sufficiently noticed only in two localities: that centred on Victoria Street and "The Glory Hole" in Vincent Street. Yet, their

³⁶ Ibid., March 5th 1879. Minute 14339.

³⁷ Ibid., July 2nd and October 1st 1879. Minutes 64 & 124.

³⁸ Ibid., December 3rd 1879. Minute 189.

³⁹ Ibid., Report of The Medical Officer of Health July 3rd 1878 Minute no. 14211.

minority status did not mean that their difficulties were overcome by dint of living within an upper working class area, rather it meant that they were forced into the shadow emerging often by mistake. Such was the situation with regard to the houses at 54 to 57 Queen Street owned by a Mr. Cartwright. In 1887 it was discovered - only through an inspection of a polluted well - that the dwellings had been converted, without permission, from three double houses into six single houses. Furthermore, this action was contrary to The Board's Bye-Laws and number 57 possessed a wall and foundations which were in "ruinous state and dangerous to the passengers and occupiers of the neighbouring buildings"⁴⁰ and closets and ashpits which were dilapidated⁴¹.

Mr. Cartwright did nothing to remedy this situation and consequently was prosecuted by The Board. However, the experience exemplified the problems besetting any such prosecution and the lack of recourse that the poor had to the law: Initially, the justices found for The Board and imposed a fine of 15/- and a further fine of 10/- for each day that the complaints were not remedied⁴². Six months after the judgement no action had been taken by the landlord and thus he was again the subject of a prosecution by The Board. Although Mr. Cartwright's solicitor stated that the work had been carried out, The Board proved otherwise as:

"....there were bolts on both sides of the door whereby the houses could still be let to two families which in the case of one house was being done"⁴³.

Despite this the justices failed to agree with The Board that the

⁴⁰ Ibid., August 10th 1887. Minute 520.

⁴¹ Ibid., September 7th 1887. Minute 521.

⁴² Ibid., October 5th 1887. Minute 549.

⁴³ Ibid., May 2nd 1888. Minute 2.

work had not been done to separate the houses once more into double dwellings. As a result no order was made against the landlord.

A final inditement on the quality - or lack of it - of housing in the poor quarter came in March 1910 when Sill's Buildings in Studley Street were demolished whilst the following year numbers 35, 36, 37, 39 and 41 Queen Street were also cleared. In contrast to the continual mention of bad housing in Victoria and Queen Streets made by The Board, only one other road under the authority's jurisdiction is noted more than once with regard to this problem; this being Highgate Lane. Certain dwellings along here had also been built during the 1840's and 1850's and similarly were now the homes of the poor. In 1878 it was reported that numbers 70, 71 and 72 were filthy and dilapidated and required papering, painting and repairing throughout, whilst the yard required relaying, the ashpit contained a large quantity of putrid water and the well was unusually offensive⁴⁴.

Flooding and defective drainage were also problems along Highgate Lane⁴⁵, yet at no time were these difficulties so sustained and widespread as to warrant a comparison of Highgate Lane with Victoria and Queen Streets. Bad landlordism, poor quality housing, an unhealthy environment were all almost endemic to these two streets; elsewhere in the district they might be present but were nearly always so in isolation.

The condition of the poor in this locality within an upper working class district proved the universality of the difficulties which afflicted the lower working class. Obviously, these were at their most acute in those areas where the poor were in the majority and were

⁴⁴ Ibid., June 5th 1878 Report of The Medical Officer of Health. Minute 14197.

⁴⁵ Ibid., January 8th 1879 and January 9th 1882. Minutes 14303 and 119.

gathered in large numbers. Nevertheless, they existed wherever the poor lived

"Perhaps those who live in riches and luxury in Edgbaston and who pass in their carriages down Hagley Road and Broad Street would be amazed to learn that almost within a stone's throw of Five Ways are gruesome enough spots"⁴⁶.

Whatever their location, the poor remained beset by environmental problems and lived apart, excluded from both mind and sight within their drab, slum neighbourhoods.

⁴⁶ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland: number 17.

Chapter Four

Residential Segregation

By the first years of the twentieth century the vestiges of rural West Sparkbrook disappeared and both elements of the district had been united within Birmingham. The intensive house building of the 1890's had ensured that the nature of the area would remain working class. Moreover, the situation of the locality at the outer edges of urban housing for that class ensured that the disparate social strata of West Sparkbrook would, outwardly at least, coalesce to form a viable community, united by their allegiance to their neighbourhood and by their common adherence to the working class. Indeed, whatever their status, to whichever stratum of that class they belonged, they were all avowedly:

"....working class. All. When you come out of Sparkbrook you'd have to go right up Ladypool Road to Moseley. Then the better class people lived in Moseley. There was a few better in Sparkhill, but you was out in the fields then. But as you got into town it got more working class. But if you went a mile and a half on, a shade better; the working man to the poor man. And outside of that, the bosses"¹.

It was the position of the area which imposed unity, exposing its difference from most of the adjacent districts. West Sparkbrook was not an inner city ward surrounded by others of a similar social composition; rather it was bounded on three sides by middle-class suburbs: Moseley, Sparkhill and East Sparkbrook². Robert Roberts has observed with justification that:

"Every industrial city of course, folds within itself, a clutter of loosely defined, overlapping 'villages'. Those in the Great Britain of seventy years ago were almost self-contained communities"³.

¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr S. Froggat p.21.

² Until 1911 Moseley was part of Kings Norton and Sparkhill a constituent of Yardley. East Sparkbrook, as part of Deritend and Bordesley had entered Birmingham as a result of The 1832 Reform Act.

³ Robert Roberts: The Classic Slum: Salford Life in The First Quarter of The Century (Pelican 1977) p.16.

Birmingham, too, was comprised of numerous villages yet what distinguished the city, very often, from its peers to The North was the existence within its limits of large middle-class suburbs - foremost among which was Edgbaston. Furthermore, their number was augmented by similar areas just outside the city boundary.

The existence of spacious and populous middle class districts ensured that Birmingham and its immediate environs would be split first not into villages but instead into small towns whose limits were not "loosely defined", nor did they overlap; rather they were well marked out and rigid in their separation. Each town was determined by its social composition: in this manner class sundered East and West Sparkbrook more effectively than the natural boundary provided by the Stratford Road.

"They were all working class people...lived in that part of Sparkbrook. But of course, there's the other part of Sparkbrook,...and all those roads the other side of the Stratford Road....they were bigger houses....We were working class people, weren't we. We were all working class people. Of course. Everybody had to work for a bit of money"⁴.

The population of West Sparkbrook was around twenty ~~six~~ thousand⁵; these people felt themselves to be part of a community separate from those contiguous to its borders. This belonging was not necessarily enunciated in the terminology I have used; rather the inhabitants talked of 'their' part of Sparkbrook; of 'The Brook'; of 'The Lane'; they were all the same, all belonging to a grouping wider and more all-embracing than mere family and stratum.

⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 7 Mrs Merriman p.15. Much of the evidence in this and later chapters is based on oral evidence. The transcripts and interviews are available if a detailed examination of them is required.

⁵ This figure is based on estimation included in Appendix 6.

Pronounced residential and social barriers - the two being interdependent - separated this working class township of Birmingham from its middle class neighbours.

"There were definite boundaries, of course, between the social areas. Brighton Road was a definite boundary line"⁶.

This road and its easterly extension, Taunton Road, clearly severed Moseley and West Sparkbrook in a way that enhanced the disunion of the two, rather than by imposing some unity borne out of common boundaries.

The roads of the former were:

"...strictly residential and decidedly superior. The houses were large and had front gardens with well-kept hedges and shrubs and trees. Mr. Taylor, the deputy headmaster of Stratford Road Council School lived in one of the roads.... and that really meant something in those days when teachers were regarded with respect, even awe"⁷.

Superior quality and more commodious houses were not the only indicators as to the higher status of Moseley: the tone of the two districts was dissimilar; one was quiet, calm, clothed in greenery and redolent of middle class, suburban respectability; the other was noisier, full of bustle and activity in its largely treeless roads. This difference in the style of living as well as the condition of living between the two districts was also reflected in comparisons with East Sparkbrook, around the parish Church of which - Christchurch - lived "the elite" in "lovely houses" ; indeed, the residents here could fairly be called "upper class"⁸. According to the working class view they were "solicitors and that sort"⁹ and furthermore they employed servants. As late as the 1930's residence here denoted the possession of "a proud and established middle class address"¹⁰.

6 C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 19 Mr. Manton p.6.

7 Leslie Mayell, op cit., p.13.

8 C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes p.9.

9 Ibid., p.10.

10 Vivian Bird. Article in The Sunday Mercury August 4th 1963.

South of Sparkbrook lay Sparkhill and the division between it and the area of this study was the Stoney Lane. On the eastern side of this thoroughfare lay the "nice, respectable roads"¹¹ formed out of The Beach and Smith-Ryland Estates. Although not commensurate in status with either Moseley or East Sparkbrook, the area was, nonetheless, profoundly different in character from West Sparkbrook. In all three areas lived the affluent.

"I can't understand when people talk about class. You've either got money or you haven't. Everybody works. People with money live differently from the others. That's only simply because they've got money"¹².

Income, its sufficiency and its aggregate, separated the classes.

This economic division thereby induced cultural differences which led to and later enhanced social scissions which in turn were abetted by education or the lack of it¹³.

The attitude of the working class of West Sparkbrook towards their middle class neighbours was tempered by their lack of knowledge of the true living standards and life-style of this class. Residential segregation as stark as that as Birmingham's disallowed any influence the proximity of working and middle class areas might have and ensured that there would be a mutual ignorance based on an absence of social intercourse. It was known that the middle class lived in better houses and that they enjoyed 'better' conditions; but for many the exact nature of this betterment could not be imagined. This unawareness was sustained by the manner in which each class based town was self-contained and self-sufficient. Each district had its own shops and forms of entertainment; moreover there was little reason for

¹¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Walter Chinn p.33.

¹² Ibid., number 18 Mr. Ebury p.24.

¹³ The concept of schooling is discussed in Chapter 11.

the working class to patronise businesses in Moseley because "all the shops in Moseley Village were really quite high class"¹⁴ and consequently prices would be higher and out of their range.

To a great extent people remained within their own communities leaving only for work or to visit those in areas comparable in social status to their own.

"Us kids when we used to go up there [Moseley], we used to tread light. We couldn't hang about. We were frightened. We knew we were out of bounds. The same as if you went up... Sparkhill. We used to creep. Behave ourselves. We used to look at the houses like they was palaces"¹⁵.

If not feared the middle class were held in a kind of respect - albeit grudging in many cases - because of their wealth and consequent position in society and access to power. The members of the class most familiar to the working class were all in positions of authority: teachers, doctors, factory owners, clergymen, charity workers and even, perhaps, some shopkeepers. Moreover, many of these not only accepted their status and its appendages but actively propagated the philosophy of their suitability to occupy their position.

"The Political outlook is curious just now. Amongst other things it appears that the law of hereditary is being ignored. It seems to be agreed that our hereditary Politician must of necessity be incompetent. It is very much as though the Village Carpenter should be regarded as unfit for his work because his Ancestors for generations back had held that position. As a matter of fact the only People born to the trade of Politics are to be found in the House of Lords and may, therefore, be presumed to know as much of it as those who have tumbled into it by the force of circumstance in later life"¹⁶.

Such clergymen as The Reverend G.N.H. Tredenick - the writer of this article - although on occasions appearing eccentric were, nevertheless, influential: he himself was vicar of Christchurch in East Sparkbrook

¹⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Walter Chinn p.33.

¹⁵ Ibid., number 20 Mr. Franklin pp.10-11.

¹⁶ Rev. G.N.H. Tredenick vicar of Christchurch in The Parish Magazine March 1910.

which maintained National Schools in the Northern element of this study. Hymns such as "All Things Bright and Beautiful" with the verse which included the lines of "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate" served to further reinforce the image of the wealthy being divinely ordered to lead¹⁷.

Others of the middle class resented and in their turn feared the organisation of labour, revelling in the defeat of workers bonded together in trades unions.

"The surrender of the engineers...is now complete. They have been defeated hip and thigh and the masters have conquered...It ought to be a lesson to other unions. The capitalist has more at stake, but the working man never takes this into consideration. Then, again, how much better off after all is a workman with more money and less hours of work. Does his wife get the difference? Not one man in a thousand hands any surplus over to his wife for the benefit of home and children. The bulk goes in drink. The recent police statistics of Birmingham have clearly proved that with increased trade and consequently good wages there are more rows and assaults on the police than usual"¹⁸.

Thus, not only was it right that the middle and upper classes should rule but it was also good for the working man for that to be so and for him to remain working long hours for little wage.

A variety of factors, therefore, conspired to ensure that the working class of West Sparkbrook would remain very largely within their own locality insensible as to the actual life-style of the middle class living so closely to them. Furthermore, the very nature of Victorian and Edwardian society ensured that respect was accrued from station as much as from personal qualities, and was shown by the working class when in contact with the middle class.

¹⁷ Hymns Ancient and Modern: standard edition (1924) Hymn number 573.

¹⁸ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, vol VI February 1898 p.399 "Stinger".

"I used to walk up here [Belle Walk, Moseley] when all these was fields.

If you met anybody. 'Good Morning'.

Raise your hat. Always raise your hat"¹⁹.

Moreover, the increased contact which resulted from the nature of certain professions whose members could regularly and readily be found in working class districts - the likes of teachers, clergymen and doctors - did not engender any familiarity between the classes. Indeed they often emphasised already potent divisions between them for such professionals were:

"People we had to live up to in them days. We respected 'em. Call 'em sir every time"²⁰.

However, respect did not necessitate fawning nor did it mean a cowed and subservient working class. Society in this period was highly ordered, finely structured and working class children were, in the main, taught to respect all older people whatever their class. Yet what did result was a bonding of the inhabitants of West Sparkbrook, a feeling of wanting to "mix among me own"²¹, of a reliance based on community, of an independence fostered by class. Notwithstanding their physical proximity West Sparkbrook and its middle class neighbours were socially and culturally poles apart.

One group of the working class was, however, fully aware of the differences between the ways of life pursued in these distinct districts. Domestic servants - whether domiciled in the house of their employment or in West Sparkbrook itself - witnessed the standard of living of the wealthy. Yet, this knowledge was just as likely to strengthen their class consciousness and sense of belonging as it might be to dissipate it.

¹⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 1 William Chinn p.34.

²⁰ Ibid., number 11 Mr. Curtis p.8.

²¹ Ibid.

"That's where mother went for a while. She had an aunt as lived in Chantry Road [Moseley]. Well, this aunt went and got mother to be a sort of maid of all work for her, to help out in the house and all like that. And she used to tell mother that the house they was living in cost £2,000!... That was a tremendous amount at that time of day.

'£2,000 without a bit of carpet!' the old girl used to say. Mother stopped there for some time with her but she couldn't get on with her 'cus it wornt in mother's limit. I mean they lived a different sort of life, obviously"²².

Even within the area on the Stratford Road, which socially appertained to East Sparkbrook, houses were being sold at the turn of the century for over a £1,000, which would have represented over twenty year's wages for a labourer living in nearby Studley Street earning 18/- a week. For those of the middle class living in West Sparkbrook, their possession of wealth was as likely to lead to as casual an attitude towards money as for those living outside its boundaries.

"Miss R. has had a great deal of trouble with regard to her new house. Found sanitary arrangements all wrong! She says she has had to spend £200 on the place....I have a nice job on hand - three cases of typhoid fever in one house!"²³

In contrast to the respect which was nearly always shown towards members of the middle class in personal relationships, the working class once amongst themselves and within their own neighbourhood felt free to air their true feelings. These might still be respectful but amongst the poor especially, it was believed that accents were exaggerated so as "to be different from the toffs who they derided as 'lah-di-dah'"²⁴. Terms popular when used to refer to the middle class were often pejorative and were also applied to any of the working class who were unfriendly and did not take part in the communal aspects of working class life which were so essential to that class. "Toffee-

²² Ibid., number 2 Walter Chinn p.34.

²³ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department MS 110 43. Documents regarding sale of 147, Stratford Road. Letter of August 5th 1896.

²⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.7.

nosed", "stuck up", "hoity toity", "big-headed" and other phrases emphasised the distinction between the working class, 'the salt of the earth', and the middle class and nicely inverted social status gained by way of wealth into a position which was not truly desired by the real people. The middle class might be wealthy but wealth did not buy happiness or friends; they might have education but that did not mean they had commonsense; they might own the factories but it was the working man who produced the national wealth. Moreover, this inflation of 'homely' virtues and the importance attached to them by strengthening class solidarity - accompanied by an absence of knowledge of middle class life - prevented the working class of West Sparkbrook from exhibiting overt resentment of the middle class. Envy there certainly was as most, despite any protestations to the different, would have welcomed freedom from want. Yet, blatant class hatred was rare.

"....we didn't know no different. I mean I was only a kid at school. But I've never resented people....You can't really judge people by the outside of a house can you?"²⁵

Thus, for most working class inhabitants of West Sparkbrook visits to those middle class districts contiguous to its boundaries were rare; communication of a social kind was largely restricted to nearby working class areas. Of these, Balsall Heath and Highgate - both to the West of the railway - were most clearly connected to the subject of this study: children of the locality attended schools in these neighbourhoods and many of its workers were employed in the factory areas of Highgate. Socially, however, Balsall Heath was the closest in character to West Sparkbrook: it was an outer area of working class housing attracting mostly the upper sections of that class. Moreover,

²⁵ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes p.3.

its development had also resulted in the presence of various elements of the working class within the area, enfolding within itself pockets of poverty.

Importantly, neither district was - despite external appearances - uniform in their social composition. The working class residents of West Sparkbrook were not a monolithic whole in which all of its members shared the same experiences, live the same type of life and worked in comparable jobs. Instead, as Robert Roberts has indicated for England as a whole, there existed within the working class of the period under review:

"....a stratified form of society, whose implications and consequences have hardly yet been fully explored"²⁶.

The working class of West Sparkbrook embraced a wide variety of lifestyles, beliefs and attitude; some were complementary to each other, others were not. These divisions, this stratification of working class society was widely recognised within the class as a whole. Each stratum covered a particular range of income, residence and occupation and embraced a way of life which, whilst including elements shared by the class as a whole, was specific to itself and its position.

"We have spoken of the labour 'middle' class. There is an upper and lower stratum, too; for not only does society at large resolve into the three great divisions we know as upper, middle and lower classes, but each of these again separates itself into minor sub-divisions, and these again into others. There is not only an upper, middle and lower class in labour generally, but even in every trade, and almost in every factory and workshop"²⁷.

For the purposes of this study, because of the far reaching and decisive implications of the economic divide of the working class as shown by Booth and Rowntree, I have included labours 'middle' within the

²⁶ Robert Roberts, op cit. p.13.

²⁷ Pictures of The People: Drawn by One of Themselves, no IV. "How They Live" (cont'd) June 12th 1871.

upper working class, distinguishing from the skilled artisan as a sub-division termed the 'generality'. Equally, it must be emphasised that the strata of the working class bounded together as just that - as E.P. Thompson has argued - and did not form an amalgam of working classes²⁸.

The main way in which the divisions amongst the working class manifested themselves were residential, just as one of the main schisms between middle and working class was also based on residence. Equally, this residential segregation was largely the most readily observed indication of the horizontal separation of the working class based on income. The wage packet of the head of the household - whether man or woman, although vastly more likely to be the former - determined the amount of rent which could be paid for a house. A decent, regular income enabled a family - if the head of the household so wished - to live in roomier, more modern accommodation situated in a 'better' road. Significantly, within West Sparkbrook it was residence which denoted status; whether or not a family lived up to the mores demanded of them as a result of their address was another matter. As shall be examined later, deployment of income was an important factor within both the upper and lower working class.

Nevertheless, the street or road in which a family lived indelibly affected its character and position within the working class as perceived by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Within West Sparkbrook lived not only the highest reaches of that class but also the lower levels of the poor; between the two easily discernable extremes lay a medley of roads amongst whose inhabitants there were fine and at times barely obvious distinctions. Such were present, however, and moreover were recognisable by the local community. A family belonged to its road or

²⁸ E.P. Thompson: The Making of The English Working Class (Pelican, 1975) p.10.

street of residence, it came 'out of' that place and the subjective opinion of the road transferred itself to the family

"Studley Street was rough. Queen Street was roughish. That was the difference between Highgate Road and Studley Street; the dog rough and Highgate Road... Alfred Street was reasonable. Colville Road was a bit better. You're moving away from that area. Better houses. Water on. Gas on. Electric on. Services were laid on. Colville, Leamington, Brunswick were all about the same. Gradually getting to Church Road. No back Houses. Brighton Road was beautiful. Bay windows. Clifton Road not so bad. Runcorn Road a touch better. It was like in a wave. Runcorn Road was always a nice road and Brighton Road was even nicer again. Towards Moseley. They had servants. White Street was pretty low. Kept pigs in one of 'em. Roughish. Ombersley Road? Nice. Oldfield Road not so good. Highgate Road, back houses. Turner Street and Tillingham Street? Pretty reasonable"²⁹.

The words and phrases employed to describe the social standing of the roads of the district indicate a highly discriminating judgement: 'dog rough'; 'roughish'; 'pretty reasonable'; 'reasonable'; 'a bit better'; 'a touch better'; 'nicer' and the ultimate in accolades 'beautiful'. More modern houses, those normally commanding the highest rents, were obviously situated in those roads which had been most recently formed. At the pinnacle of the roads of West Sparkbrook was Saint Paul's Road which was regarded as:

"....rather 'better' than the other roads round there - at least by its residents. Certainly it was very quiet and the houses had bay windows and front gardens"³⁰.

Those who lived in this road were amongst the best paid and most regularly employed of the working class of the district: engine drivers; coach painters; gunmakers; pattern makers; piano tuners; bus drivers. They had "steady going jobs....and they could keep things in ship shape, the fact that they'd got more money than most"³¹. The heads

²⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. T. Sleath and Mr. S. Doughty pp.33-36.

³⁰ Leslie Mayell: Further Memories of Birmingham (Lodenek Press 1982) p.7.

³¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Walter Chinn p.34.

of household of such families were joined by those who might be termed middle class: agents; accountants; head waiters; short hand experts and even those on a private income³². Whilst most of the road's inhabitants, whatever their occupational status, thought of themselves as working class, a few found problems in classifying themselves, straddling the border between upper working and lower middle class as they did and avoided allegiance to the working class:

"....I don't think mother quite did because grandfather had always worked for himself and so had father. But the other members of the family worked....My aunt was a tailoress.... She worked at the bespoke tailors...My other aunt was one of the first short hand typists in Birmingham..."³³.

Despite the opinions of such as these, the majority of the residents of Saint Paul's Road believed themselves to be working class and furthermore were perceived as such by the inhabitants of West Sparkbrook. The unique position of the road was acknowledged but it was part of West Sparkbrook in a way that those roads commensurate in status with it in North Moseley were not; the people of Saint Paul's Road were:

"....still working class. They was slightly, just a bit better. I aint going to pinpoint Saint Paul's Road too far, but they was coming up towards the boundary. But they'd still be amongst the whole Sparkbrook area"³⁴.

Residence in the road was a manifestation of admittance into the highest echelons of the upper working class. Vitally, income was a prerequisite of that entry, for only the highest paid and regularly employed could afford the rental of houses such as those in Saint Paul's Road. Yet, if by managing his income skillfully and deploying it so that more was spent on rent than on food, clothes, fuel and entertainment, a labourer somehow succeeded in renting a house in the road

³² Occupations for Saint Paul's Road taken from The City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. The Educational Census MS 229 Book number 303.

³³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 13 Mrs. Atkins pp.2-3.

³⁴ Ibid., number 20 Mr. F. Franklin p.10.

then his address would have offset, to an extent his occupation, and ensured a limited admittance into the upper working class. Residence, not necessarily the type of employment, specified status.

Naturally, few labourers managed to 'raise themselves above their station' so far as to aspire to residence in Saint Paul's Road. Those who lived there almost universally:

"....had better jobs and had more money....Still working people but had this better job and had more money to spend"³⁵.

The houses in the road were larger than most in the district; they had "proper bay windows, proper pavements in front of them, a bit of garden"³⁶. Gardens at the rear of a house were common but entry at the front was, normally, directly off the road. The possession of a front garden was a definite indication of high status as was the number of rooms in a house. A few of those in Saint Paul's Road boasted eight rooms - including four bedrooms; front and back rooms; and kitchen and back kitchen. An even smaller number had the facility, indeed the luxury, of a bathroom.

Directly below this road in status came Ombersley, Kingsley and Runcorn Roads and whilst all three were decidedly upper working class "if you lived in Saint Paul's Road you were very much better than anyone that lived in Kingsley Road"³⁷. Still the residents of these roads were "a bit better class"³⁸, they were "posher" and lived more "sedate"³⁹ lives. Once again the standard of housing and type of structure set the tone of the road.

"Ombersley Road was a high class road because it was a different class of house"⁴⁰.

³⁵ Ibid., number 11 Mr. Curtis p.9.

³⁶ Ibid., number 6 Mr. S. Doughty p.26.

³⁷ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel p.6.

³⁸ Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.4.

³⁹ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.43.

Following these come the roads of the generality of the upper working class. In size the houses in these roads were similar to the majority of those in the roads just discussed; they were six-roomed including; three bedrooms; a front room or parlour; a living room and a kitchen; and all had their own lavatories in the back yard. Heading this group were Woodfield and Chesterton Roads, because some of the dwellings here had front gardens; whilst at the base were those in which there was a presence of housing for the lower working class - as in Turner and Larches Street and Kyrwicks Lane - or else were houses designed for those living just above the poverty line - as in Highgate, Colville and Oldfield Roads. These latter were small, 'two up, two down' buildings and the roads were "rougher"⁴¹.

"Our avenue had bay windows, eight houses. But only small, only two bedrooms and no kitchen, only a pantry"⁴².

The development of West Sparkbrook in which various builders had constructed different styles of housing over a period of time, ensured, moreover, that there would be distinctions within roads based on the type and quality of housing

"And the top end of Saint Paul's Road was always considered better than the bottom....Saint Paul's Avenue was quite nice. They were smaller houses. It wasn't considered as good as the road"⁴³.

The more rooms the house possessed the higher the status of the family who lived there: eight roomed houses, with front and back garden, indoor toilet and bay windows conferred the highest of all; these were at the apex of the edificial pyramid within working class society. A six roomed house with a front garden was superior to one that had just a back garden.

⁴¹ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.43.

⁴² Ibid., number 14 Mrs. Ward talking of Harper's Buildings, Oldfield Road (formerly Henry Street).

⁴³ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel p.11.

"....if the houses hadn't got any front gardens it was tougher than those that had....That gave them that bit of class, that bit of difference"⁴⁴.

Those houses which fronted to the road were always more highly regarded (and therefore so were their occupiers) than 'back' houses, that is a house approached from an entry and lying off the street, and even 'tunnel back' avenue houses. The presence of a seventh room in the form of an attic increased a house's appeal whilst one with two separate windows downstairs was superior to one that had only one window or one which was split into two. The otherwise high status of Woodfield Road was impaired by the presence of a few four roomed houses and a factory near to Highgate Road.

"I mean the top end of Woodfield Road was very nice....but, of course, there was factories - more or less, on one side.... Mind you, the house in Woodfield Road....what we lived in.... was only two bedrooms"⁴⁵.

The presence of back-to-backs in a road drastically lowered its status, however. Wherever such dwellings were present a potent and obvious schism would arise within the road as was the case with Turner Street.

"Differences even from one side of the street to another. We was on what was considered the 'classic' side. The other side was terraces. There were five....The houses were smaller and they had communal toilets and brewhouses"⁴⁶.

On the 'classic' side the houses were larger and accommodated members of the generality of the working class; they were six roomed and had their own lavatory adjoining that of their neighbours in their own or the latter's back yard. In contrast poor families lived in the rows of back-to-backs opposite, their character as much as that of the upper working class determined by their address.

⁴⁴ Ibid., number 13 Mrs. Atkins pp4-5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes pp.12-13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. : p.2.

"That side of Turner Street never seemed quite as 'nice' as our side....And between the pub and Marshall Street were the miserable terraces running to the street in parallel lines..."⁴⁷.

By implication to be 'nice' was not to be poor; it was a sobriquet earned by living in a 'nice' house in a 'nice' road or a 'nice' part of it.

In 1946 out of eight thousand one hundred and twenty houses in Balsall Heath, just under 11% - eight hundred and twenty one - were back-to-backs; forty five years earlier the percentage of that "old fashioned, ill ventilated type"⁴⁸ had been four points higher. Their number was augmented by other poor quality structures which were "the haunts of excessive mortality"⁴⁹; in 1898 a total of 25.5% of houses were let at 3s 6d a week or less⁵⁰. Throughout the whole of West Sparkbrook in the period under study there were only two hundred and eighty one back-to-backs although there were other structures, especially in Queen Street, which were of poor quality. Living conditions in back-to-backs were cramped.

"The one we lived in was a little court....There were six houses, three at the front and three at the back. Had a living room, and a little bit of a - you couldn't call it a scullery - it was just a sink. And two bedrooms that was all. The water was down the year; toilets were down the yard; the brewhouse was down the yard"⁵¹.

Of the back-to-backs of the district 76% - two hundred and fourteen - were in West Sparkbrook I but it was a street in the southern element of the area which was to receive the opprobrium of being the 'roughest' in the district. The dwellings of the poor in the north of the study were

⁴⁷ Leslie Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.6.

⁴⁸ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1901 p.6.

⁴⁹ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1898 p.35.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.35.

⁵¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes pp1-2, describing back-to-backs in Kyrwicks Lane.

not concentrated in any one street or road; rather they were scattered throughout a generally upper working class area. Furthermore, and seminal for the status of the roads involved, these back-to-backs were usually located off the road front, being hidden behind better quality housing. In contrast Studley Street in West Sparkbrook II - regarded as the district's worst residentially and socially - was a street in which this kind of housing was visible - leading directly off the street - and in the majority structurally.

"The only, what we termed the lower class - but we was always happy, we never fell out or anything - was Studley Street. Was the poor area. Was pretty rough down there"⁵².

Studley Street⁵⁴ was short and the poor were dominant here; moreover, the two streets adjoining it were also regarded as 'rough', "Queen Street afterwards" whilst "Alfred Street wasn't too clever either"⁵³. These comprised West Sparkbrook's poor quarter and it is interesting that there is a correlation between poor localities and the use of the term 'street', and a similar one between upper working and middle class areas and the usage of 'road'. Thus Sparkhill was "'superior'....For one thing it had no streets. They were all called roads"⁵⁵. The fall into abeyance of the usage of the term 'street', virtually complete by the 1880's, is, perhaps another representation of the social changes which occurred in the mid-Victorian period whereby the middle and upper classes generally began to value sobriety and moderation. It coincides with a viewpoint which associated poverty, drinking, gambling and streets with the poor, whereas - certainly earlier in the century - members of the middle and upper classes had

⁵² Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.27.

⁵³ Ibid., number 13 Mrs. Atkins p.4.

⁵⁴ Studley Street had formerly been called Victoria Street.

⁵⁵ Leslie Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.13.

also once indulged in over-drinking, betting and had been actively involved - if only providing spectators and sponsors - in violent sports amongst men such as bare fisted fighting. Interestingly street was not the only term to find disfavour, so too did Lane.

"The postal address of Highgate Lane is bad, and has a tendency to drive away some householders to the more congenial and pleasant sounding road"⁵⁶.

Streets and lanes became the preserve of the poor, just as now roads belonged to the more affluent of society. In the back-to-backs of Studley Street and in the inferior housing of Queen and Alfred Streets, lived those families whose heads of household were, in the main "ordinary factory chaps; builders, labourers and anybody as had rough and ready jobs. No posh employment there"⁵⁷. The general poverty of such men was made obvious not just by their address but also by their clothing.

"....they were definitely of the labouring type that lived there. And, of course, in those days they were always referred to as navvies and so, of course, there was always a little touch of sarcasm if anybody was a navvy. Because, of course, in those days they wore corduroy trousers and a leather strap around the knees"⁵⁸.

Their straitened means were further emphasised by their lack of possessions. Whilst even those of the generality of the upper working class living just above the poverty line might possess a "sideboard, six or seven ordinary chairs, table....lino on the floor....a piano and two or three easy chairs"⁵⁹, the poor were distinguished by the paucity of their belongings. Indeed, for those of the working class who thought themselves poor, the sight of real poverty was a sobering experience.

⁵⁶ The Balsall Heath Times, October 4th 1887. Letter from "a resident".

⁵⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. Walter Chinn p.28.

⁵⁸ Ibid., number 13 Mr. Atkins pp.14-15.

⁵⁹ Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington pp.2-3.

"The first to reach home was a fellow who lived in a little two up, two down off Ladypool Road.....he asked us in for a cup of tea. As we entered his home I realised that this was poverty at its worst....A table, a few chairs and that was the lot. No rugs, no lino or carpet and nothing on the walls, only plaster. The conductor had nothing but he could still take two homeless strangers into his house and offer them a cup of tea"⁶⁰.

Studley Street was the residential and social antithesis of Saint Paul's Road.⁶¹ Its character ensured that its inhabitants would be perceived in a different manner to the more scattered and hidden members of the lower working class in West Sparkbrook I.⁶² Moreover, the concentration of the poor in a street of their own ensured a duality of culture within the district, albeit that the one pertaining to the poor was of a minority status.

⁶⁰ Taffy Lewis: Any Road. Pictures of Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Further Afield, 1902-1939 (Trinity Press 1979) p.30.

⁶¹ Appendix 3 indicates my determination of the status of each road of West Sparkbrook based on the quality of housing in each and local perception.

⁶² Appendix 4 lists the back-to-backs of West Sparkbrook according to street.

Chapter Five

Rough and Respectable

Within the confines of West Sparkbrook, Saint Paul's Road epitomised respectability whilst the poor of Studley Street personified the 'rough' of the working class. Indeed for many inside the district and outside it the two terms became synonymous with upper and lower working class. The poor, like their homes, were neither nice nor were they respectable; in contrast the well-paid living in good quality housing were.

"These are scarcely three individuals amongst the illiterate who have the same notion of the term respectable as applied to persons because each considers those only respectable who are his equals or superiors - People are too apt to imagine that riches and honours make a man respectable.....It seems to me that the term is not alone applicable to any person in any one particular station of life. It is applicable to all stations"¹.

It would be more worthwhile to restrict the terms upper and lower working class to descriptions based on the economic division of that class and then to examine the concepts of 'rough' and 'respectable' within the parameters imposed by the living conditions, culture, mores and attitude of each section. Thus, it could then be argued that in each portion of working class society there was a vertical division based on the adherence or otherwise of its members to the general values of the group which were accepted as pertaining to it.

Such a view is dependent on the opinions of the upper and lower working class themselves, as to how they perceived themselves. Moreover, what was deemed 'rough' in the society of the one, whilst not necessarily being considered respectable in the other, might not be frowned

¹ The Birmingham Advertiser, January 8th 1835. Letter off J. Lash of Birmingham.

upon or regarded with disfavour. Yet, it is still important not to totally discard the attitudes each section might have of the other or, indeed, which the middle class might have of each. For whilst generally regarded as being rough, it was recognised that within the lower working class there were varieties of attitude and life-styles.

"The people of the lane are not all alike. Some live in the depth of poverty - drunken, thriftless, dirty - there is no hope for them. One feels that their children and their children's children will be the same. They will never rise. Some families, on the other hand, are clearly on the upward path. The old people are sober and careful. The younger ones do skilled work and when they may move to outlying suburbs....The family is moving to the great middle classes"².

However, all too often a recognition of differences within the poor was reliant on notions of respectability inherent to the class or section making judgement on the lower working class. In this manner the 'respectable' poor were those who were moving upwards socially as well as economically. Thus, for many observers "nine tenths of them perhaps are hopeless or nearly so" although there was present a section which whilst poor were "as good citizens as may anywhere be found. They are honest, self-respecting, worthily aspiring"³.

Within the lower working class itself, nevertheless, there was widespread recognition of a rough element which lived without regard for the general values of that section. This group approximated in many instances to the "sunken sixth" described by John Bright and embraced those who were habitual in a criminality regarded as morally wrong by their class in general, those who infringed against the

² Gwendolen Freeman *op.cit.*, p.84. The author was a collector for a provident bank in the Summer Lane area of Birmingham during the 1930's. This district was arguably one of the city's poorest and toughest.

³ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland number 5.

ethics of their section with regard to sexuality and violence and importantly those who succumbed to their environment and were regarded as wallowing in filth instead of fighting its ubiquity. This latter element was, perhaps, the most amorphous and included those families and individuals whose respectability declined over the years as well as those who simply could not cope. Indeed, many of these latter were those such as the mentally ill and physically or educationally handicapped who in a different age would receive the support of society in general in an organised manner. The poverty of this group was unlike that experienced by the rest of the lower working class in that it was "hopeless, helpless chronic destitution which crushes the sufferer down to a little more than vegetative existence"⁴.

Moreover, such individuals and families were to be found in every street of the poor, their very presence emphasising a division within the lower working class between those who, with regard to other sections or classes might appear rough, but who were, within their own community, considered respectable.

"Birds of a feather flock together and in our village... the few feckless, filthy and friendly tended to live at one end; the prim, prudish and prosperous at the other. Between these two extremes lived a group of middling families and this was where we fitted in. Here...lived a dozen or so families, not yet well off enough to move from their ancestral poverty, nor yet driven into complete squalor....We were never anything but poor, but while we may not have been able to hold our noses in the air, we did try to keep our heads above water"⁵.

This "middling" section, the "generality" of the poor, were distinguished from the inefficient, the aimless, and the unable by a certain pride in self and home. In this respect they shared much in common with the respectable of the upper working class for whom the task of cleanliness

⁴ Thomas Frost: Forty Year's Recollections: Literary and Political (1880) p.224.

⁵ Winifred Foley: A Child in The Forest (Futura 1978) pp.14-15.

was rendered more easy by better living conditions.

Cleanliness, along with the adherence to solid values and the maintenance of clear standards did not mean that those of the poor who struggled against their environment to achieve it were aping the middle class. That is to demean and diminish their self motivated efforts and to imply that positive values were imposed on them by other classes whilst negative ones were inherent to the poor.

"Not all had despaired of change with many making every effort to enable their humble homes to be clean and pleasant in appearance, to do them credit with no modern aids... just soap and water plus 'elbow grease'. A brick tiled kitchen floor and table to be scrubbed; the grate black-leaded and brass ornaments around it polished; with hearth whitened and front step red-ochred....with other chores that made less proud neighbours eye the scene with a mixture of praise and envy....finishing with the outside toilet, having the plank seat scrubbed, although burnt black with the guttering candles of nightly occupants"⁶.

Dress, too, set apart in an obvious manner the sunken from the respectable poor; the deterioration in their morals and living conditions being reflected in their ragged, dirty and often indecent clothing. However poor a family or individual might be the acceptance of - if not always the attainment of - some general social behaviour patterns by which they preserved their self-respect and that of their community, ensured their differentiation from the amoral and the immoral. In contrast to these former whose outlook on life was unstructured and sloppy, whose goal was to negotiate the day with no regard for the morrow, who thought more of satisfying self than providing for their family, were the latter, those who deliberately flouted the ethics of lower working class society. These too could be identified by their dress and the squalid nature of their homes but often they were phys-

⁶ W.G. Chinn: From Victoria's Image: (A Reminiscence in Reflection) p.20. (This is an unpublished memoir of West Sparkbrook which I have in my possession and is available to be looked at).

ically separated from the rest of the poor by their gathering together in certain localities, which achieved as a consequence an unenviable reputation

"All the poor areas are not in a bad and neglected state. The horrors seem to be concentrated in parts, You may walk down Great Barr Street, Palmer Street, Glover Street, Witton Street, Saltley Street and Garrison Lane - a very, very poor area - and you will find less squalor and misery and the reaching of a higher level"⁷.

In those streets and districts of the poor where the population was relatively settled (albeit subject to movement within that area) a community evolved based on family, kin and loyalty to the street of residence which ensured the general acceptance of definite standards and codes of behaviour. However, in those streets or quarters where there was a highly transient population in which individuals and not families were dominant, where permanent relationships were scarce and family life unstable, a similar growth of community and acceptance of moral values was impossible. Criminal and sexually promiscuous behaviour were, as a consequence, widespread and not aberrant as in other poor areas so that, "in some of the obscure neighbourhoods nine women out of ten are fallen and abandoned creatures who haunt the streets at night, and nine out of ten of the men are bullies and blackguards who prey upon them, or consort with them, or are ready for all species of vice and crime"⁸.

Violence and crime were present in all the streets of the poor: there was, nevertheless, a fine and shifting line between brutality and fighting and petty crime and its serious counterpart. In areas of a settled population there were limits to physical violence: men "fought with their fists. You didn't see no knives or guns about in them days"⁹.

⁷ J. Cuming Walters: Scenes in Slumland number 16.

⁸ Ibid., number 6 "Human Documents. Mostly Soiled".

⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 William Chinn p.29.

Despite infringements of these unwritten rules it is significant that they were widely recognised and that any contravention of them was regarded as wrong. By comparison, fighting in the areas of the sunken was often mindless and mob-orientated, the participants glorying not in their 'hardness', their physical toughness but in their ability to destroy their opponent.

".....instantly the bottles loaded with stout were flung with full violence at the copper's head. One of them struck him on the forehead, crushed in the skull and made a wound five inches long. The constable reeled and fell, that was the opportunity for the brave men who were slogging him. The buckle belts flew, the crowd closed on the unfortunate constable, they hit him and kicked him all over the body..."¹⁰.

In the worst districts of the city men sewed razor blades, pennies or broken pieces of slate into the peak of their flat caps which would be used to slash the forehead of a rival, causing him to be momentarily blinded by the rush of blood into his eyes and rendering him defenseless. These "peaky blinders" were considered to be "about on a par with the Birmingham rough of old"¹¹.

Unlike the violent and criminal sunken poor of some parts of Birmingham's central wards, the lower working class of West Sparkbrook had evolved by the late 1880's and 1890's into a comparatively settled community, especially in its poor quarter centred on Studley Street. The rough of the section were not, however, totally excluded particularly in the early stages of the district's development: in 1855 a labourer was attacked and stabbed in Studley Street¹² and during the same decade garotte robberies were common in the Balsall Heath area¹³. Moreover, the movement of 'ticket of leave offenders' into the Studley Street locality in the 1880's had resulted in a spate of burglaries in

¹⁰ Rev. T.J. Bass: Tragedies of Life - A Fragment of Today (1903) p.69.

¹¹ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, volume IV November 1895 p.236, "Stinger".

¹² The Birmingham Journal, June 2nd 1855.

¹³ Ibid., November 8th 1856.

West Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath¹⁴. Significantly, though, as the nineteenth century progressed and families became established in the neighbourhood, intermarrying with each other the behaviour of those who contravened the codes of the poor was increasingly frowned upon. In 1881 George Dingley of Queen Street was summoned for leaving his wife and child chargeable to The Kings Norton Union; in a street where family and kin were such important factors such behaviour was unusual and derided¹⁵.

Indeed, the slovenly, lazy and violent of the area and the condemnation of the poor towards their actions were personified in the case of Walter Kilby "a callous Father" of Highgate Road. This man was prosecuted by The S.P.C.C. in 1891 for neglecting his four children, aged between two and eleven, to such an extent that they were "positively starving". It was reported that although he could obtain work if he chose (he was a carpenter) he was an "indolent, good-for-nothing man" who would buy food for himself and not for his family, who as a result, were helped by neighbours. He treated his wife brutally, having once chased her with a razor¹⁶. The significance of the case is not so much that the offendant was jailed for three months with hard labour, but rather in the actions of his neighbours. This unacceptance of overly violent behaviour and neglect of children was reflected in the case of Thomas Holder of Kyrwicks Lane who, on returning home "tipsy" and finding his tea not ready, "conducted himself most violently". He took up the tea kettle filled with scalding water and tried to strike his wife who was only saved from injury by the intervention of their son-in-law. A large crowd then "marked their indignation at the

¹⁴ The Balsall Heath Times, January 21st 1882.

¹⁵ The Balsall Heath Times, September 24th 1881. Report of the proceedings at Kings Heath Police Court.

¹⁶ The Birmingham Daily Post, October 31st 1891. Report of the proceedings of The Birmingham Police Court.

prisoner's conduct by throwing stones at the door of the house and in other ways". When Holder produced a knife whilst holding two of his children, "many of the bystanders thought that he meant to do some injury" to them and so crowded round the window to the house at which point one of them was stabbed¹⁷.

One other index of status within the lower working class was gender orientated and was determined by the sexual behaviour of women. Those who were sexually promiscuous were classed as fallen and though most overt prostitution was restricted to definite parts of the city, it was not totally absent from the Studley Street locality.

"And this woman was a shouting out all over the road that this bloke had lived off her body....'Been living off my body'"¹⁸.

However, it is important to note that whilst pre-marital sex might be frowned upon it was not viewed in the same manner as sexual license and though "shotgun" marriages might be common, the woman partner might remain respectable, even if of a tarnished variety.

Nevertheless, whilst recognising that there was an element within the poor of West Sparkbrook which consisted of the feckless, the filthy, the brutish, the immoral and the uncaring and whilst acknowledging that the attitudes of the generality of the lower working class could be shared by the respectable of the upper working class, it is still necessary to be aware of the cultural differences which separated the two sections and which reinforced the economic division of the class.

E.P. Thompson has argued that class has:

"....fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomize its structure. The finest meshed sociological net cannot give us a pure specimen of class...."¹⁹.

¹⁷ The Birmingham Journal, October 30th 1858.

¹⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker pp.2-3.

¹⁹ E.P. Thompson, op cit., p.9.

Such a description is as true for differences within a class as between the classes. Notwithstanding this, there are a number of tests based on both subjective and objective criteria which can help to determine an individual or families position within working class culture. These tests cannot in any sense be seen as laws, immutable and all determining. Rather they are guides which - when taken in conjunction with other factors such as self-image, income, residence, schooling and in certain cases religion and ethnicity - can help give an insight into that individual's or families standing within the working class; a standing which must necessarily affect and be reflected in beliefs and life-style. Equally, the tests are rendered ineffective if applied at random points in a family's existence: rather they must be observed as part of a complex range of relationships and customs over many years.

What then are these tests which can help in finding out the social differences between the upper and lower working class, as well as assisting in the examination of rough and respectable within each? Firstly, there are those related to income: whence it was derived; how much and how regular was it; how many members of the family were involved in raising it. Secondly, there are those based on residence: where did a family live; what size was the house; what rent did they pay; how many families shared the house; how many of the family had their own rooms; were the bedroom's occupants determined by gender; did the house have its own toilet. Thirdly, there are those questions which result from an analysis of the deployment of income: did the father drink and how often; did the mother drink and how often; did the father or mother bet and if so how much; did the children receive pocket money and if so how much; did they receive Christmas and birthday pre-

sents and if so what were they; did the family have holidays; did the family use the pawnshop and if so how often; did the family make use of credit in shops and how often was meat eaten. Finally, there are those questions relating to the attitudes of the family: what kind of accent did its members have; were they churchgoers; did the children go to Sunday school and if so for what reasons.

Opposite are examples taken from oral interviews of the type of answer which would be solicited from the interviews depending on their position within the working class. Obviously, the three examples are just that; there would of course be very many variations. However, they do indicate the cultural and environmental differences between the two sections of the working class; differences which were, naturally, at their most readily observed between the rough of the lower working class (the sunken) and the ultra respectable of the upper working class.

"Between the aristocracy of industry and the unfortunate herd who crowd the lowest rungs of the ladder there is a very wide gulf. Many a lot is less enviable than the skilled artisan or foreman....He lives on the skirts of the town....in a neat house containing a parlour, sitting room and kitchen with two or three bedrooms and outhouse complete....He has his little garden edged with green. You will see plainly there is a rivalry among his neighbours which shall have the smartest windows, the brightest knocker or the sunniest doorstep. Look between the window pane and you will see a room neatly arranged, pictures on the walls, a bright carpet on the floor, a little bookcase over the sideboard and, perhaps, a piano. How different from the close, stifling yard reeking with indescribable filth, where the 'true proletaires' are condemned to pass their lives"²⁰.

Therefore, it is now necessary to examine in detail the difference between the two sections as they related to deployment of income and culture and which gave solidity to the economic division of the working class.

²⁰ Pictures of The People: Drawn By One of Themselves. no.IV "How They Live" (cont'd) June 12th 1871.

Aids In Determining Differences Between
The Upper and Lower Working Class

	Lower Working Class	Upper Working Class "Generality" "Higher"	
Father's Job	Blacksmiths Striker	Brass Caster	Postman
Mother work?	Yes: servant then wardrobe mistress	No	No
Children's Part-Time Job	Yes. Variety. Papers, Mint, Horse Manure etc.	No Errands	No Help in house
Children's Pocket Money	No	Yes	Yes
Children's Birthday/ Christmas Treats	No No	No Yes Apple, orange, penny	Yes Yes
Type of house and number of rooms	Back-to-Back Three	Terraced Six rooms	Terraced Eight rooms
Own Toilet	No. Shared	Yes	Yes
Father Drink/ How often	Yes, as often as could afford	Yes. Daily	Yes. Sunday lunch and supper
Mother Drink/ How often	Yes. When could drink with women	Yes. With Father	No
Father Bet	Yes	No	No
Accent	Broad Brummie	Normal Brummie	Middle Class Brummie
Use of Pawnshop	Yes. Weekly	No	No
Use of 'Strap'	Yes. Weekly	No	No
Children have toys	No	No	Yes
Sunday School/ reasons	Yes For Trips	Yes. Compulsory	Yes. Compulsory
Furniture	Sofa, Bed, Table, few chairs	Furniture in every room	Well Furnished
Holidays	No	No. But younger sisters did	Yes. Rhyl annually
Outings	Day trips	Day trips	No, except Sunday School
Meat / Frequency	Most Sundays. Once or twice a week	Every day	Every day
Self Perception	Working Class	Working Class	Working Class
Father's Politics	Tory	Liberal	Tory
Children. Number in Family (Live)	Three	Five	Three
Number of children die	Two	None	None
	Interview No. One	Interview No. Five	Interview No. Twenty One

Chapter Six

The Separateness of The Poor Quarter

By the 1890's, in the wake of the intensive house building of that decade and as a result of the absorption of The Balsall Heath Local Board within Birmingham in 1891, the local perception of the poor quarter centred on Studley Street experienced a change in emphasis. Previously, it had been a peripheral area of a small local authority separated by The Watkins' Estates from the rest of West Sparkbrook II. Indeed, it was connected closely only with Thomas and Mole Streets which approximated in status to Studley and Queen Streets. Thus, the poor village of the study remained isolated physically, impinging on the rest of Balsall Heath only when its sunken element infringed respectability in a criminal or violent fashion; in general its inhabitants could then easily be forgotten or dismissed. In the 1890's this changed: the quarter was now bounded to the West, South and East by roads of the upper working class; the Ladypool Road had now become a centre of major shopping activity common to both sections and - with qualifications - certain poor children attended school with the offspring of the upper working class. The poor quarter was now more visible, it encroached more obviously on the district as a whole, a consequence of which was the general acknowledgement as to the roughness of its inhabitants as a result of a contrast determined by a greater degree of contact between the two sections of the working class and of relations with the middle-class

"....the agitation might result in the change of the conditions in which many of the dwellers in Slumland live today, it could never result in that only change which could really be satisfactory, namely, the change in the people themselves. We know by only too sad experience in our own parish, that it is quite possible to remove the inhabitants of slumland from their dilapidated dwellings to houses,

which, so far as they themselves are concerned leave nothing to be desired when the tenants enter them, but which become in a very short time, houses, indeed, when judged from the outside, but slums of the most terrible description when seen from within...."1.

This lumping of the poor, irrespective of differences within the lower working class, into a blanket definition of rough became most obvious with relation to the inhabitants of Studley Street. Thus - in what might otherwise appear to be a paradox - parallel with an increasing awareness of the poor of the locality arose a desire to avoid them, to restrict them to their quarter and to ensure their separateness from the upper working class society of West Sparkbrook in general. This extensive wish to exclude the poor was justified by an emphasis on their negative qualities, on those of their characteristics which were seen by the respectable of the upper working class to be anti-social: their predilection for gambling, fighting and drinking; their liking of noise; their dirtiness and their smelliness. It was really like "as if the rif raf all swept into Studley Street"².

Little attention was paid to the positive attributes of the poor of the district: their strong sense of community based on family and kin; their concept of communal self-help; and their interpretation of respectability. Thus, little regard was made to the cultural divisions within the working class and to the fact that the customs of the poor might have validity within their own community. The upper working class were dominant in both terms of numbers and socially; it was their conception of respectability which was pre-eminent and morally right. There was no acceptance that:

"A man's necessities are those of his station....Absolute necessity is one thing; and the necessity which custom has

¹ St. Paul's Parish Magazine, August 1901.
Studley Street was included within the Parish of St. Paul.

² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H. p.7.

made is another; but it is as perilous a thing mostly to break the laws of custom as those of nature"³.

The custom of the poor was deviant from that of the upper working class and as such was wrong misguided, and delinquent. It was their customs which brought them into poverty, and it was them which maintained them in it. This prevalent view of the poor was strengthened by a positive avoidance of Studley Street by many of the upper working class so that ignorance further engendered dislike and fear.

"I don't recall that I ever ventured down Studley Street. A kind of myth had grown up about it. For most of us Studley Street was 'different'. It was a street to be ignored rather than feared"⁴.

Yet, for many of the inhabitants of West Sparkbrook the street and its residents were feared: indeed the preceding quote - in spite of the opinion expressed - indicates that by the very use of a verb such as "to venture" which implies a hazardous or daring undertaking at which the venturer is at risk. In much the same manner as the central, slum wards of Birmingham could be compared with 'Darkest Africa' so too was Studley Street - and to a lesser extent Queen Street - unknown territory within West Sparkbrook. Furthermore, fear was enhanced by a lack of knowledge of the poor of the district as well as an insensibility towards their living conditions and an unwillingness to understand or accept their values. Therefore, the higher the stratum of the working class the more likely was there to be an adverse reaction to the people of Studley Street; conversely the lower strata of the generality of the upper working class were more likely to have social relations with the poor of the locality and a greater knowledge - and hence reception of - their life-style. Members of the

³ Pictures of The People: Drawn By One of Themselves. number II
"How They Live" May 29th 1871.

⁴ Leslie Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.9.

upper working class living in nearby roads of high status deliberately kept away from the street, despite their proximity. Closeness did not induce mutual relations nor understanding.

"The police never went down there on their own. Only in two's. I ventured down Studley Street on one occasion and some lout was lounging on the wall. I kept away from him... I was a chump to go down there at all. He advanced on me and said.

'What do yoh mean by knocking our kid about?' I didn't know his kid and said so. He looked me up and down and must have decided to leave me alone. I went on my way rejoicing. We were all afraid to go down Studley Street"⁵.

Moreover, this fear was strengthened the further away from the street that a family or an individual lived. At the bottom of Studley Street, near to the junction of Queen Street was Faulkes' coal yard. The most direct way for most people to approach this yard was from the Ladypool Road walking the length of Studley Street. However, for some this proved to be too daunting and so a more circuitous route was taken "down Highgate Road and along Queen Street"⁶. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognise that the development of the reputation of Studley Street into a separate quarter which was to be bypassed was not solely the responsibility of the upper working class of the district and their activities. The poor of the street revelled in the awe in which their fighting men were held; they boasted that "there was nobody rougher in Sparkbrook or Sparkhill than Studley Street"⁷ and that whilst they might be "poorest as far as money was concerned"⁸ they were definitely foremost in toughness.

This emphasis on physical prowess was common to the poor wherever their location; it was perhaps more exaggerated with regard to Studley

⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.3. This man lived for sixty seven years in Ombersley Road, which is the extension of Studley Street across the Ladypool Road; this was the only occasion he ever went down the street in those years.

⁶ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. p.7.

⁷ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.16.

⁸ Ibid.

Street because of that street's unique nature within West Sparkbrook and its isolation from other streets of a like nature. Certainly, however, the lower working class in general exhibited a pride in a roughness very different from that discussed in Chapter 5; it was a devotion to a sense of rough which was important within their community, which boosted their self-esteem by denying any wish to change or improve in a manner desired of them by other classes. The poor were rough because they were not perfected or corrected in the manner of other classes; they were more elemental in character; they had no pretensions and were down to earth; they were simple in that they were neither elaborate or complex not affected or pompous, rather they were sincere and easy to understand. In short they were 'rough and ready'.

"Well, when you talk about rough people they could be damn good hearted people...I mean, more or less hand to mouth living in them days. I suppose they classed them as rough because they lived a rough life. You'd never got nothing to throw away. But, I mean, there was nothing a matter with the people. They was good hearted and genuine"⁹.

Such a definition of rough and the praise of its attributes was easily extended to the sense of rough when fighting. Rough here, though meaning tough or hard, also embodied all the qualities associated with a physical nature when contrasted to the intellectual: "Them as can, do; them as can't talk about it". Indeed, the very fact that Studley Street had once been called Victoria Street also aroused a perverse pride:

"....whether they thought it was no compliment to the Queen... so they'd better change it 'cus it did get to be such a scruffy hole that they didn't want her to be associated with it...so they altered it to Studley Street"¹⁰.

Crucially, this name change did not involve a substitution of road for street whilst its timing - in January 1898 - is, perhaps, indicative

⁹ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes p.4.

¹⁰ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.25.

of this altered vision of the district's poorest and roughest quarter¹¹.

The existence of back-to-backs in any street of West Sparkbrook ensured a deterioration in status of that street and determined that, in the opinion of the upper working class, a rough element would be present. However, the separateness of Studley Street was emphasised and indeed enabled by the dominant position of the poor within it. It was this factor which distinguished the lower working class of its locality from those elsewhere in the neighbourhood. In small numbers and given a decidedly minority position the poor of the district might be rough but they were not necessarily ruffians.

"One particular section up Larches Street was similar to Studley Street. They were poor people but not ruffians. There were two or three houses which were back houses. But we weren't frightened to go up there like we were Studley Street"¹².

Only part of Turner Street - with a significant population of the lower working class living in back-to-backs leading directly off the street - was to arouse anything like the emotions which the poor of Studley and Queen Streets did in the upper working class of the district. However, it could not rival the opprobrium or condemnation of its rivals, nor the fear that they engendered. Significantly, it was the name of the street - not necessarily individuals or families, for they would remain shadowed by the reputation of their address - which aroused such strong emotions; if the poor were taken away "from the street, it was different"¹³. It was the gathering together of the poor in numbers sufficient to pose a threat which induced anxiety and a disapproval of their life-style.

A form of social apartheid existed, therefore, in West Sparkbrook which was experienced in schooling, shopping, leisure and which, most

¹¹ The change occurred on January 12th 1898.

¹² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. . H. . p.8.

¹³ Ibid., p.9.

importantly, induced conflicting visions of the sections of the working class and their customs and habits. The poor of the Studley Street locality were as separate from the prevailing culture of the area as much as they were in terms of residence and income. They were distinguished from the rest of the lower working class of the neighbourhood by a variety of factors which facilitated the social partition of the district as well as making certain the environmental and cultural isolation of their quarter.

Chapter Seven

Cultural Dissension: Drink

The existence of 'The Gate' beer house in Studley Street to a great extent accentuated the social segregation of West Sparkbrook and enhanced the estrangement of its poor quarter from the community in general. Very often, the estimations of the district's upper working class inhabitants towards the poor of their area were dependent on their accepted attitude towards drink and what were felt to be its resultants and associates: brawling; gambling; wife-beating; impecuniousness and the destruction of family life.

"No copper would go down Studley Street on his own. The police come up Ombersley Road frogmarching 'em from 'The Gate'....It was rough because more boozers lived there. In the early 1900's 'The Gate' was a proper old country pub with blinds always down at night. The doorway was flush to the street. There was always the sound of revelling by night; shouting, arguing, singing. It was a bit of a hell hole. The Studley Street people were poor and half of 'em were pigeon fanciers.....Drinking led to poverty; poverty led to squalor. When the drink is in, the wit is out....The people were all of a class. Queen Street was the next worst"¹.

It became the accepted and dominant view in the neighbourhood that the poor of the area spent their money unwisely; that they preferred to fill the coffers of the brewers to filling the stomachs of their families and furnishing their homes. This attitude was not peculiar to West Sparkbrook; it was national in its scope. Moreover, many socialists regarded the over indulgence of the poor in drink as another example of "all of the vices of the poor - even to their Toryism"² coming down to them from the upper classes. Yet, it was widely acknowledged - and the research of Brian Harrison has tended to verify this - that the proclivity of the upper and middle classes for drink,

¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough pp.1-3.

² P. Snowden M.P.: Socialism and The Drink Question. (The Socialist Library - VI, London: Independent Labour Party 1908) p.19.

as well as that of the upper working class, had decreased with the advance of the nineteenth century, vanquished by the agitation of the temperance movement and especially by the actions of the 'counter attractionists'³. A variety of factors - many induced by the latter - combined to effect this change: the rise in the quality of drinking water and milk; the increasing popularity of non-intoxicating drinks and cordials such as tea, cocoa and ginger beer; the successful attack on alcohol as an efficacious restorative; improved working conditions and the factory movement; the gradual replacement of St. Monday by the Saturday half day; the growth in athletic sports and the decline in vicious pastimes; and the consequent substitution of the ro-tund, John Bull type figure as the epitome of health by that of the more slim and trim athlete of the newer sports⁴.

However, whilst this reform in the drinking habits of the more affluent classes was so marked that it was regarded as "one of the greatest, if indeed...not the greatest" changes that English society had witnessed, it remained true that the lower working class were more conservative in their attitude towards drink⁵. Class segregation in drinking habits had become most obvious between 1820 and 1870 so that whilst the upper and middle classes were drinking less alcohol of a lower strength and largely in private, the poor were increasingly drinking in public houses and beer houses, a fact which was facilitated by the decline in home brewing. This development was as noticeable in West Sparkbrook as anywhere in the country. By the 1890's the licensed premises of the district were located overwhelmingly in the older and poorer streets: as Map I indicates, at the turn of the century

³ Brian Harrison: Drink and The Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872 (Faber and Faber Ltd. 1971).

⁴ Ibid., Chapter 14 "Drink and English Society in the 1870's".

⁵ Ibid., Chapter 14 p.314.

there were twenty six public houses and beer houses in the neighbourhood, all situated along roads formed before 1870; seven were placed in and directly around the poor area; four more were strung out along the Highgate Road with another nine in West Sparkbrook I; five were located on the former estate of The Freehold Land Society, although significantly three of these were grouped near the poorer White Street and Upper Brunswick Road; and one was very much solitary on the borders of the area and Moseley⁶. Thus, only three of the premises could be found in decidedly upper working class roads.

Three types of premises licensed to sell drink were present in the neighbourhood: public houses, which had a full license and could therefore sell spirits; beer houses, which could only sell beer to be consumed on the premises (the establishment of these had become increasingly popular since 1830); and off licences - known locally as 'outdoors' - which had a license to sell beer to be drunk off the premises. Between 1830 and 1869 beerhouses could be opened without reference to the control of magistrates; however, the curtailing of that freedom and the resultant unwillingness of magistrates in Birmingham and its environs to grant any new licenses of this kind ensured that this type of licensed premises was restricted to those streets formed before 1870. Thus, the growing association of the lower working class with drink coincided with the concentration of the poor in the older localities of those urban areas which had grown as a result of The Industrial Revolution. Streets were not only indelibly connected with poverty but also with beer houses, outdoors and drunkenness.

⁶ Appendix 5 lists the public houses and beer houses of West Sparkbrook.

Indeed, of the sixteen beer houses of West Sparkbrook only one, The Talbot in Highgate Road, was established after 1869 (previously the premises had been occupied by a butcher). This manifestation of social change was accentuated in the neighbourhood by the restrictions on land use imposed by estate owners who sold their property in the late nineteenth century. No public houses or beer houses were established on either of The Watkins' Estates and only two outdoors; whilst on the Smith Ryland Estate no licensed premises at all were allowed:

"The shop on the corner there, Birchwood Crescent, it was built for an outdoor, but they won't allow an outdoor on Ryland-Smith's property"⁷.

One consequence of the limiting of beer houses was that the larger breweries of Birmingham - who were increasingly concerned in owning licensed premises - were forced to adapt existing houses into public houses or, indeed, to newly build such premises⁸. In West Sparkbrook three new establishments were granted full licenses after 1869: 'The Crown' at Hertford Street in 1895, which in 1888 had been a grocer's; 'The Victoria' at 189-193, Stratford Road in 1884 which had, until the previous year, been a grocer's; and 'The Cottage of Content' at 51, Kyrwicks Lane. Two beer houses also became public houses: 'The Brewers Arms' in Highgate Road in 1882 and 'The Brighton Hotel' on the corner of Ladypool Road and Brighton Road, at the border with Moseley, in 1881. The situation of this latter in a very upper working class area contiguous to a middle class one ensured that the attempts of the builder - William Charley - to obtain a full license were strenuously resisted locally. An application by Mr. Charley before The Kings Heath Licensing Sessions in 1878 had precipitated a memorial, contain-

⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. L. Brown p.10.

⁸ A. Crawford and R. Thorne: Birmingham Pubs: 1890-1939 (Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, The University of Birmingham in association with The Victorian Society, Birmingham Group 1975) pp.3-4.

ing the names of one hundred and fifty people residing within three hundred yards of the proposed hotel, which urged the magistrates to refrain from granting a license⁹. This particular application was unsuccessful, however, it is interesting that it was granted in 1881 following the election of Mr. Charley to The Balsall Heath Local Board¹⁰.

Ostensibly, West Sparkbrook ranked favourably amongst the working class districts of Birmingham with respect to the ratio of licenses to people: in 1896 the city had altogether one license for every two hundred and fifteen people (men, women and children) compared to one for every one hundred and ninety three in East London and one for every one hundred and seventy six in Sheffield¹¹. Given an estimated population of twenty six thousand for the area of this study the ratio for the neighbourhood was a very commendable one license for every three hundred and ninety four people. However, this ratio masked vast discrepancies within the district: if a ratio was taken for those parts of West Sparkbrook I formed before 1870 as well as Highgate Road, Studley, Queen and Alfred Streets it emerges at one license for every two hundred and twenty four people¹².

Facts abounded to confirm the connotation of the lower working class with drink: the statistician Leone Levi calculated that two thirds of the nation's yearly drink bill of £162,000,000 in 1899 was accounted for by the working class¹³. Local clergymen in West Sparkbrook believed that:

⁹ Birmingham Daily Gazette, September 29th 1878.

¹⁰ The Balsall Heath Times, October 8th 1881.

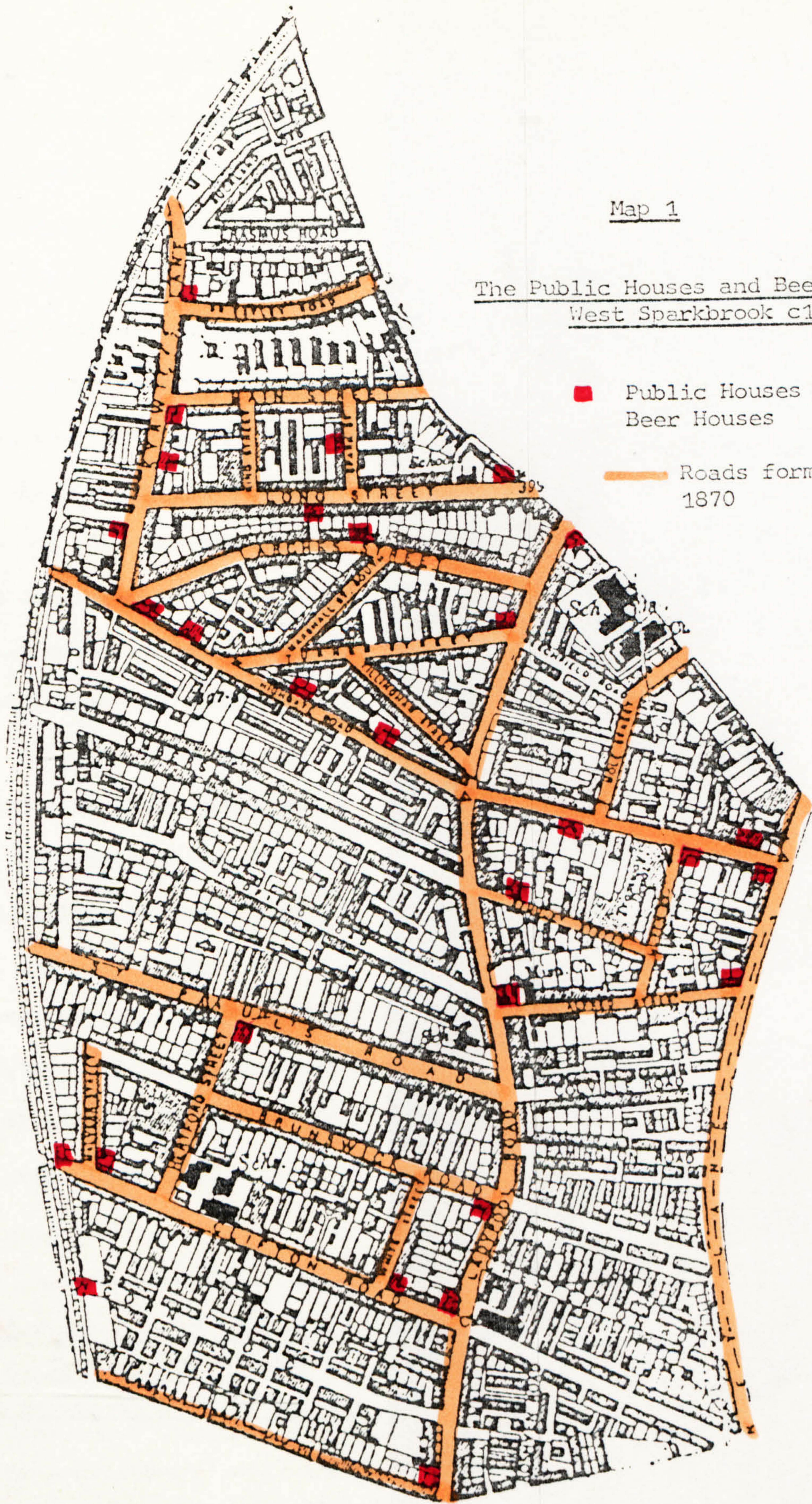
¹¹ Standish Meacham: A Life Apart: The English Working Class 1890-1914 (Thames and Hudson 1977) p.122.

¹² For population figures see Appendix 6.

¹³ Joseph Rowntree and A.J. Sherwell: The Temperance Problem and Social Reform (1899 pp.9-10 cited in Standish Meacham op.cit. p.124.

Map 1

The Public Houses and Beer Houses of
West Sparkbrook c1900



■ Public Houses and Beer Houses

— Roads formed before 1870

"One of the greatest evils we have to contend against in our district is that of DRINK. Any measure which helps to stem this evil will be a great blessing....First and foremost comes the earlier closing of Public Houses on weekday evenings....Then there is the cutting down on the number of licenses....It means....a great deal of money saved by the people for better uses and a great lessening of the temptations which the over large number of Public Houses cannot but offer"¹⁴.

Whilst there was a grudging acceptance that the working man had a right to a moderate amount of drinking it was, nevertheless, felt necessary to restrict and control his habit. Arthur Chamberlain exemplified this attitude: during his term as Chairman of The City's Licensing Magistrates he encouraged a fall in the number of licenses of forty a year from 1898 to 1903¹⁵. Another Chamberlain, Austen, although in favour of Sunday closing believed that public houses should open for such times as was necessary for "working men to get their dinner and supper beer"¹⁶. The activities and influence of the temperance reformers in Birmingham ensured that the city "was exceptional in curbing the local power of drink at this time"¹⁷.

Still, the poor were seen as drinking too much; their reliance on alcohol appeared excessive and pervasive, an integral part of their way of life and their "standard of living. First thing in the morning Dad's mother would go to the outdoor for two pennyworth of gin before breakfast"¹⁸. Yet, did all the poor drink and if so was their poverty a direct result of their drinking in excess or rather did they tend to drink only when they could afford it and then as a result of their poverty, as a means of escape?

¹⁴ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, April 1908.

¹⁵ A. Crawford and R. Thorne, *Op cit.*, p.8.

¹⁶ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, volume I June 1892 p.4.

¹⁷ Brian Harrison, *Op cit.*, p.347.

¹⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H., p.10.

"After the squalor from which so many men came there dwelt within a tavern all one could crave for - warmth, bright lights, music, song, comradeship....But, above all men went for the ale....Beer was, indeed, the shortest way out of the city"¹⁹.

As with so much which pertained to the culture and customs of the lower working class, attitudes and actions were - to a great extent - determined by the nature of their housing. Back-to-backs and other cheap housing - despite the improving efforts of many of the poor - were never able to assume the mantle of home in the same manner as a six roomed house with all the acknowledged facilities, such as separate toilet and running water. Instead, the dwelling became, very often, a receptacle in which the poor ate and slept with family and community life revolving around the street. Thus, whilst the house was generally the pivot of upper working class family life the poor preferred "the informal collective life of the street, pub and market"²⁰.

The public house and beer house were often the only buildings within the street which offered a change from the dreadful conditions in which many families lived; furthermore, they formed an essential element within that street's public and community life, so that "it was unusual...to find strangers using" them as they were "mostly occupied by regulars who remained loyal to their chosen meeting place"²¹. Moreover, those who did not drink became - to an extent - separate from the mainstream of street life, excluded from many of its aspects.

"Me Grandad was a teetotaller. He never drank. He hardly knew anyone that lived in Studley Street. You can't imagine that. You know, you'd have to tell him who they was and where they lived because he used to have his gardens and he never went out anywhere"²².

¹⁹ Robert Roberts, op cit., pp.93-94.

²⁰ Brian Harrison, op cit., p.321.

²¹ W.G. Chinn, op cit., p.64.

²² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.9.

Consequently, the licensed premises of West Sparkbrook tended to be judged in relation to the nature of the street in which they were situated and to the status of that street. Thus, it was considered that at 'The Gate' in Studley Street "all the ruffians drank"²³; whilst at 'The Turner's Arms', located in that part of Turner Street which was not 'nice', "there was a great deal of drunkenness and singing and shouting especially on Friday and Saturday nights"²⁴.

Not only was it assumed that the poor drank too much but their manner of drinking was different: they were raucous, rollicking and thought to be semi-riotous. In contrast, the public houses (these generally being of a higher status than beer houses) which were frequented by the upper working class were appropriate to the social status of their customers; whilst, in a further difference to the beer houses favoured by the poor, they tended to draw their clientele from a wider area, given that there were fewer licensed premises in upper working class localities. Exemplifying this distinction was 'The Cottage of Content' which "has for thirty years been the resort of men connected with the composing room of 'The Daily Post'"²⁵. Its landlord, Mr. Grigg, had owned twenty butchers shops in Birmingham and was now a director of The Birmingham and District Hide Company. His pub had three rooms: 'The House of Lords'; 'The House of Commons' and 'The Kitchen'. Debates were held in The House of Commons under the direction of a Chairman, or Speaker, who was normally Mr. Hall the doorkeeper at The Stipendiary Courts, and two dozen seats were reserved for habitues²⁶.

²³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 . Mr. H. p.7.

²⁴ Leslie Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.6.

²⁵ The Dart, July 12th 1901.

²⁶ Ibid.

The public houses popular with men of the upper working class often were distinguished by factors other than purely beer; although 'The Prince of Wales' or 'Hoods' in Runcorn Road, run by the same family for over thirty years, was renowned for its "home brew beer"²⁷. Thus 'The Australian Arms' "was very well known because they had an excellent angling club" which had won "dozens and dozens of trophies, cups and shields"²⁸. At 'The Clifton' there was "free bread and cheese, Sunday dinner time"²⁹, a practice favoured by other local landlords, too. Indeed, it is important to note that even the beer houses in the poorer streets were not just drinking 'palaces', that they fulfilled a certain function in the community other than that associated with beer and men:

"Studley Street had a good football team at 'The Gate'. And we'd have a team from 'The Oak'....Of a Saturday you'd go and get a pitch anywhere...You'd be average age up to fourteen's....It was in 'The Argus' of a night. Form a little club. At 'The Lion' it was 'The Rovers', 'The Red Lion Rovers'"³⁰.

Yet, by and large, the beer houses of the poorer streets were inextricably associated with over-drinking, brawling and all the rough aspects of the lower working class. Nevertheless, not all the men living in the poorer streets drank, and of those that did not all drank heavily. Indeed, it was very often a well paid, skilled man who was more likely to be a heavier drinker given his greater income. The poor, even if they so wished could not drink every dinner time and night because of their poverty.

"You couldn't buy too much on the limited income he'd get. But...he used to like his pint....Not every night. Didn't run to it, 'cus he hadn't got the money"³¹.

²⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 17 Mrs. Jones p.8.

²⁸ Ibid., number 13 Mr. Atkins p.2.

²⁹ Ibid., number 7 Mrs. Merriman p.7.

³⁰ Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.31.

³¹ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.45.

Income determined the extent and often the nature of a man's drinking. A limited wage would usually lead to a 'binge', normally of a weekend, whilst the drinker of the upper working class could afford to indulge his habit daily if he so wished and yet still maintain the outward trappings of respectability with regard to housing and perhaps a less noticeable drunkenness.

Obviously, there were those within the lower working class who drank to the utter disregard of the condition of their family, but for most so long as the family had been provided for - no matter in how rudimentary a fashion - a drink, especially at a weekend, was seen as an entitlement. This was particularly true of Sunday dinner time drinking.

"He'd toff hisself up on a Sunday morning, and if he'd got a suit a bit better than the one he worked in...the old billycock³²...And...have a wash and comb and...'e'd got a big moustache, a military moustache. And he used to keep on rolling it till 'e'd got the two ends like a couple of bayonets, you know. And his old clay pipe used to come out, and the watch as he used to have stuck into his waistcoat pocket, the old turnip...And the old mon used to get his turnip out, see what time it was. And he used to go when they opened up, about 12 o'clock. And make his way steadily round to 'The Gate'...You'd 'a' thought 'e was the Duke of Studley Street!"³³

Indeed, Sunday dinner-time drinking was a ritual to all of the working class who drank, whatever their status and whether they drank at home or not. Yet, for the lower working class man this session more than any other involved an emphatic escape from his surroundings, a withdrawal - for a while - from his environment. On a weekday or Saturday drinking session, he would most likely be dressed in his working clothes; Sunday provided an opportunity for him to disassociate himself from work and the regularity of his normal life, to forget his

³² A billycock was a bowler hat.

³³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.46.

debts, his problems and his worries and enjoy a drink with no thought of returning to work and to the tribulations of slum life. All this could be left to Monday's dawn.

"The biggest tragedy of our old man's life happened last Sunday. He put the clock the wrong way. And he come up here ['The Crown'] with the idea of thinking it was 1 o'clock and instead of that it was 2 o'clock. So, the old man had to go back home"³⁴.

What distinguished the upper and lower working class with respect to attitudes towards men drinking was the emphasis on moderation that the members of the former generally evinced. Heavy drinking and alcoholism were not restricted to the poor but such behaviour amongst the upper working class was not customary, nor was it acceptable. Amongst the lower working class, heavy drinking and a man's abilities to 'hold his pint' were often the custom, they were not aspects of bad behaviour rather they were yet another example of the poor man's excelling in physical and elemental matters. It was in reaction to the dominant view of the upper working class that there occurred a vertical, cultural split within that section, between those who adhered to its customs and those who flouted them.

"Dad drank. Yes he did. A bit too much. Couldn't pass it, see? As he got off the tram and then there [The Prince of Wales] for a drink and he'd forget to come out. Used to have to fetch him out...He'd rather give it away in the pub. Flash it. Bring out a £10 note, you know.

'Oh yes, you can have that'.

Oh, pounds. If my Dad had given his children more money instead of spending it in drink in the pub we'd have been better off"³⁵.

If the vices of the lower working class were attributable to an over indulgence of many of their members in drink, so too were those of the upper working class who defied the strictures of the section to which they belonged and refused to moderate themselves in keeping with

³⁴ Ibid., number 20 Mr. Franklin p.8.

³⁵ Ibid., number 17 Mrs. Jones pp.8-9, 16.

their respectable address. The heavy drinker, whatever his status, was characterised by a lack of responsibility to and interest in his family; his life was dominated by beer - if he was poor - or beer and spirits if he was more prosperous.

"He drank pretty well. We didn't get much from him. On a Saturday he'd give mother what he'd got left.

'See are, better see what you can do with that'. He'd be drunk as a bob-owler³⁶. Some mornings he'd stop off at the pub going to work to have a rum and coffee to buck him up and he'd stop there all day....Many a time he's come home and mother's cooked a meal - she never cooked for him till late at night, and if he was late she'd warm it in the oven. She's brought his dinner in, took his boots off and he's thrown his dinner and said:

'Greedy buggers, them that eat and drink'³⁷.

This kind of behaviour was beyond the limits generally tolerated by the upper working class. It was seen as inherent to the poor but was regarded as wrong and aberrant by the higher strata of the working class. Aberration must not, therefore, be confused by absence: rather such action was seen as typical of the behaviour of the poor, of their lack of concern for their families and was, thus, doubly indefensible.

Furthermore, the segregation of the classes with regard to drinking was also noticeable within the working class. In an association not to be construed too heavily the poor had their beer houses; the generality of the upper working class had their public houses and the upper strata of that section had their outdoors. Obviously, outdoors were more prevalent in poorer districts and they were popular with all sections of the working class. However, many of those who lived in the roads of the 'highly respectable' and who enjoyed a drink in moderation paralleled the trend of the middle class in drinking in private.

³⁶ A bob-owler is colloquial for a moth.

³⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. W. pp.1-2, 10.
This interviewee has already been quoted but expressed a wish to remain anonymous when talking about his family.

"...my father liked a glass of beer, but he wouldn't go and sit in a pub....If he was away on holiday, alright, he would go in and have a half pint, fair enough. But he liked a glass of beer with his supper, but he would fetch it...."³⁸.

This tendency again exemplified the stratification of working class society, emphasising the attraction of the home for the upper working class, the comforts of which outweighed any attractions the public house might have; and also once more exposing the reliance of the more prosperous on the family unit based on the place of residence as opposed to the lower working class dependence on the family unit based on the street of residence. Importantly in the poor street, the outdoor was another extension of that street to which a thirsty parent might "send the children...with a jug to go and fetch a pint. Then they passed an Act...that they'd got to have it in sealed bottles...to make sure the kids couldn't have a swig"³⁹.

Attitudes to drink were thus a sure index not merely to station but also a clear indication as to the relevance of the cultural division between the upper and lower working class. Moreover, they plainly delineated a partition within the former based on an adherence or otherwise to custom.

³⁸ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel p.8.

³⁹ Ibid., number 13 Mr and Mrs. Atkins p.5.

Chapter Eight

Cultural Dissension: Gambling

In the same manner and during the same period that the temperance movement "insulated an elite from temptation"¹ so too did legislation discourage the upper class from gambling in excess and in the process effected a transformation in the lifestyle of that class. During the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth century, in particular, no strongly marked segregation of the upper and lower working classes had been obvious with respect to attitudes regarding drink or gambling. Indeed, the over indulgence of many of the upper class in both activities is well recorded; The Regency rake was no aberration or deviation, rather he was an extreme example of a noticeable trend. However, the early years of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of a reaction "against the aristocratic style in gaming-as in dress, leisure and morality, heralded by Wilberforce, the Clapham Sect and ultimately by Utilitarianism and moral evangelism"² which affected the attitudes and actions of its members. This reaction was recognised and abetted by a number of Parliamentary measures: in the 1820's state lotteries were banned following a recommendation of a Select Committee in 1808; and in 1845 was passed an Act which can be regarded as so far reaching in its social implications that it induced "the withdrawal of the upper classes from popular forms of gambling in preference for the Stock Exchange"³. The Act itself decreed that gambling debts - the ruination of many a family's wealth - were no longer to be enforceable by law; at the same time - in Clause 2 -

¹ Brian Harrison, op cit., p.318.

² D.M. Downes, B.P. Davies, M.E. David, P. Stone: Gambling, Work and Leisure: A Study Across Three Areas (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1976), pp.34-35.

³ D.M. Downes, op cit., p.36.

it attacked those games, such as hazard or roulette, which were favourites of the upper class.

The acceptance by law makers that there were two forms of gambling, one where the house owner kept the bank and in which there was a dead pull against the players and the second, betting such as at Tattersall's where individuals bet with each other but no-one held a 'bag' against all comers, reached fruition with The Betting Houses Act of 1853. This proved to be the death knell for the kind of gambling once popular with the upper class and hastened the expansion of the more socially acceptable betting with other individuals on horse races. However, The Act had also to address the problem - acknowledged in the previous decade - of the "moral and social inconveniences"⁴ posed by the gambling of the poor. Betting houses had attracted a growing clientele of servants, apprentices and workmen who:

"took their few shillings to these places, and the first effect of their losing was to tempt them to go on spending their money, in the hope of retrieving their losses and for this purpose it not infrequently happened that they were driven into robbing their masters and employers"⁵.

The process whereby gambling was to become associated with the working class and especially the lower working class was now well under way as was the reaction of 'the governors' to this habit of 'the governed'.

Despite the banning of betting houses it was to be impossible to contain the upsurge of betting amongst the urban working class. Moreover, whilst legislation might ban most of the older, brutal sports the acceptance by the upper class of horse racing ensured that this

⁴ Minutes of The Select Committee on Gaming 1844. Paragraph 859 pp.74-75. The report of The Commissioner of The City Police Forces cited in D.M. Downes, op cit., p.34.

⁵ Hansard 3rd series. Volume 8718 Column 129. Speech of The Attorney General in 1853 when The Betting Houses Act was passed without debate.

would be a form of leisure activity which could cater for the betting urges of the working class. Indeed, horse racing was to become almost synonymous with betting; it was "not a freak of language that the words 'bookmaker' and 'welsher' crept into the popular speech in the early 1860's"⁶, rather it was a manifestation of changes in society. Industrialisation had resulted in a new dualism of work and leisure based on the concept of time⁷ and horse racing, just as association football later, was to be a major beneficiary of this social transformation. Publicans were amongst the first to grasp the affects of this modification: many adapted rooms for entertainment, the precursors of the music halls; whilst others encouraged horse race meetings to attract trade to their premises⁸. Significantly, it was the proprietor of 'The Angel', Mr. Whitworth, who inspired The Sparkbrook Races in an effort to counter the decline of his inn as a popular resort of Birmingham's upper class.

Nevertheless, betting on horses was very largely restricted to 'on-course'; that is occurring only at a race meeting where bookmakers could legally accept bets. Although bets were placed with bookmakers, the transaction was still of a very personal nature with individuals betting with each other on the chances of a particular horse winning a race. Most betting 'off-course' - that is away from race courses and in the streets - was reliant on games of chance between working class men.

"The railway arches in Kyrwicks Lane will soon be recognised as the happy hunting ground for those roughs who spend Sunday playing pitch and toss and kindred elevating pastimes. As early as 6 o'clock on a Sunday morning the game begins and is carried on at intervals until dusk, when beery pugilists come upon the scene and proceed to settle their differences"⁹.

⁶ Guy Chapman: Culture and Survival (Cape 1940) p.80.

⁷ B. Harrison, op cit., p.330-331.

⁸ Brian Harrison, op cit., p.324.

⁹ The Dart, September 8th 1882 p.5.

Whilst pitch and toss and various card games which involved gambling remained widespread until the inter war years (and in some cases after) the last decade of the nineteenth century saw them all superseded by the advent of off course betting on horse races. This was facilitated by the establishment of the starting price in 1889-90¹⁰ which fixed the odds against each horse winning a particular race with regard to the prices generally available from bookmakers on-course at the time of the 'off' (the start of the race). Thus, a 'punter' - customer - in any part of the country could now bet with off-course bookmakers on any horse they 'fancied' knowing that a fixed odd which was national would be available for his selection if it won. The odds - dependent on the stake - determined how much a customer would win; for example a horse which won at 2 to 1 would secure for the punter winnings of 2/- for each 1/- staked. Indeed, the beginnings of the starting price made possible the existence of 'street bookies' but possibility was translated into fact by the transmission of the odds via newspapers. This led to the anomaly that whilst newspapers might fulminate against gambling and its effects on their front pages, they relied for their sales on the racing information given on their back pages¹¹. New publications had already come into existence to cater for the rise in interest in horse racing in the mid century: The Sporting Life had appeared in 1859 as a weekly becoming daily by 1882; these publications, however, received a massive boost to their sales with the arrival of the starting price and the consequent growth of 'the tipster' who

¹⁰ P.J. Waller: Town, City and Nation England 1850-1914 (Opus 1983) p.106. The transmission of the odds was facilitated by the introduction of the Exchange Telegraph System.

¹¹ D.M. Downes, op cit., p.38.

"... 'dangled the carrot' with 'stone-blind' certainties. Familiar to the old timers were 'Captain Coe', 'Lanaway' and 'Mark Dizzey' with 'Victor's Double' and 'Whip's Three' and others followed in anticipation of swelling the kitty. 'Secret' information was always available through the old troach drop seller, who wrapped his tip around a stick of rock, with the assurance that you had the first past the post for a penny with a new suit and some holiday money to follow"¹².

Off course betting became big business, a 'growth industry' employing bookmakers, their 'runners' (those who took bets for bookies) and tipsters whilst providing a major leisure activity for the urban working class in particular. A House of Lords Select Committee in 1902 reported that five million pounds was then being spent on gambling¹³, most of it illegally off-course. Since The Betting Houses Act of 1853 gambling such as pitch and toss had been left under the jurisdiction of local Watch Committees who in general had outlawed it. However, local variations and the massive expansion of off-course betting in the 1890's led to a call to introduce national legislation which would make illegal street bookmaking. In 1906 this piece "of class legislation of the worst type"¹⁴ was passed so that it was thus possible for the upper and middle classes to bet legally off-course on credit whilst although the working class "could bet by cash on-course,....cash betting outside was illegal"¹⁵. Many of the middle class believed that not only was the legislation necessary it was the only means of curbing the gambling instincts of the poor, especially: "...betting was legally wrong and to officially recognise it any way would be fatal...."¹⁶. However, if the object of the Act was to cause the demise of street bookmaking it was sadly ineffective.

¹² W.G. Chinn, op cit., p.91.

¹³ Donald Read: England 1868-1914 (Longman 1979) p.105.

¹⁴ D.M. Downes, op cit., p.39: speech of Rt. Hon. Clough in Committee Stage. Hansard 1906 volume 167 column 1162.

¹⁵ Donald Read, op cit., p.105.

¹⁶ The Moseley Society Journal, 1894-95 December 1894 p.336 "Local Gossip by Paul Pry Junior". (Report of a discussion at The Moseley Social Club as to whether bookmakers should be taxed. The proposal that they should be was defeated by eight votes to four).

Betting on horses off-course proved impossible to eradicate. The poor, in particular, were addicted to it as it provided not only a form of entertainment for a small outlay but also the possibility of escape from their environment - if only for a short while.

"Many a time we've gone out to 'The Empire' or 'The Tivoli' on what he's [Dad's] had for a winner. Went down and got his winnings. He'd buy something for Ma. He'd tek me to the theatre, 'cus she wouldn't go to the theatre"¹⁷.

Large wins were made possible by the growth in popularity of 'multiple' bets, that is bets in which a punter made a number of selections and where, if his first horse won, the stake would be multiplied by the odds of the starting price and the whole passed on to the next selection. Thus, by means of betting in doubles (two horses) and trebles (three horses) a punter could, for a slightly increased outlay, increase substantially his potential earnings. Those who opposed betting on humanitarian grounds, fearful of the consequences of heavy betting on the limited finances of a poor family, recognised the appeal to the lower working class of this possibility.

"To tell him that if he loses he will be ruined is not final, since he will reply that if he wins he will be enriched and every now and again a working man does win, and thereby acquires in one moment a lump sum of capital that would be accessible in no other way"¹⁸.

Bookmakers became familiar figures in the streets of the poor, for like licensed premises the bookmaker tended towards the localities of the lower working class. Moreover, in most cases the 'bookie' himself was of that section of society and whilst Robert Roberts has seen him as an outcaste that is only true in relation to working class society in general; amongst the poor there were very few outcastes by reason of occupation other than perhaps prostitutes and pimps and habitual crim-

¹⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. L. Brown pp.36-7.

¹⁸ Lady Bell: At The Works (1906: 1911 Edition Relsca) p.359.

inals. Betting might be illegal but it was not regarded as morally wrong and therefore the bookmaker himself - although the nature of his job was illegal - was not immoral in the same way as were the sexually promiscuous. Furthermore, becoming a bookie did not entail the passing of exams or entry through apprenticeship; it was egalitarian in that anyone could become a bookie so long as they themselves were conversant of betting and had perhaps a small sum of money which provided them with a bank in case they suffered any losses. Very often, therefore, a bookie would - when he first started - have another job which subsidised his bookmaking until it became profitable.

"Studley Street was where your Grandad started bookmaking... there was Dot Ingram, your Grandad and me talking in Studley Street. Nack Carey and Bill Preston was the bookmakers and this kid come round with a tanner bet and Grandad says:

'They've just gone. Where they've gone we don't know'. He went to tek this tanner bet to the house. He'd gone out and they was telling your Grandad about it and so he said 'Gie it me'.

That's how he started bookmaking. It went down"¹⁹.

By the early years of the twentieth century the street bookmakers of West Sparkbrook had become established in the poorer localities of the district: Studley Street and its quarter were served by Alf Chinn from Studley Street itself; the poorer parts of West Sparkbrook I by Horace Foster; and the lower - poorer - section of Stoney Lane by 'Jocky Powell'²⁰. Their number was continually augmented by a stream of working men and barbers who saw in bookmaking an easy opportunity to make money, but who all too often were disappointed in their hopes.

"Our old mon was getting on pretty well, he was feeling his feet so he started to mek a book. And the old woman used to come up here to 'The Wrexham'²¹ and tek a few bets. Well, he never got really fully established, never got enough money

¹⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 1 Mr. William Chinn pp.4-5.

²⁰ Map I indicates the location of the established street bookmakers of West Sparkbrook.

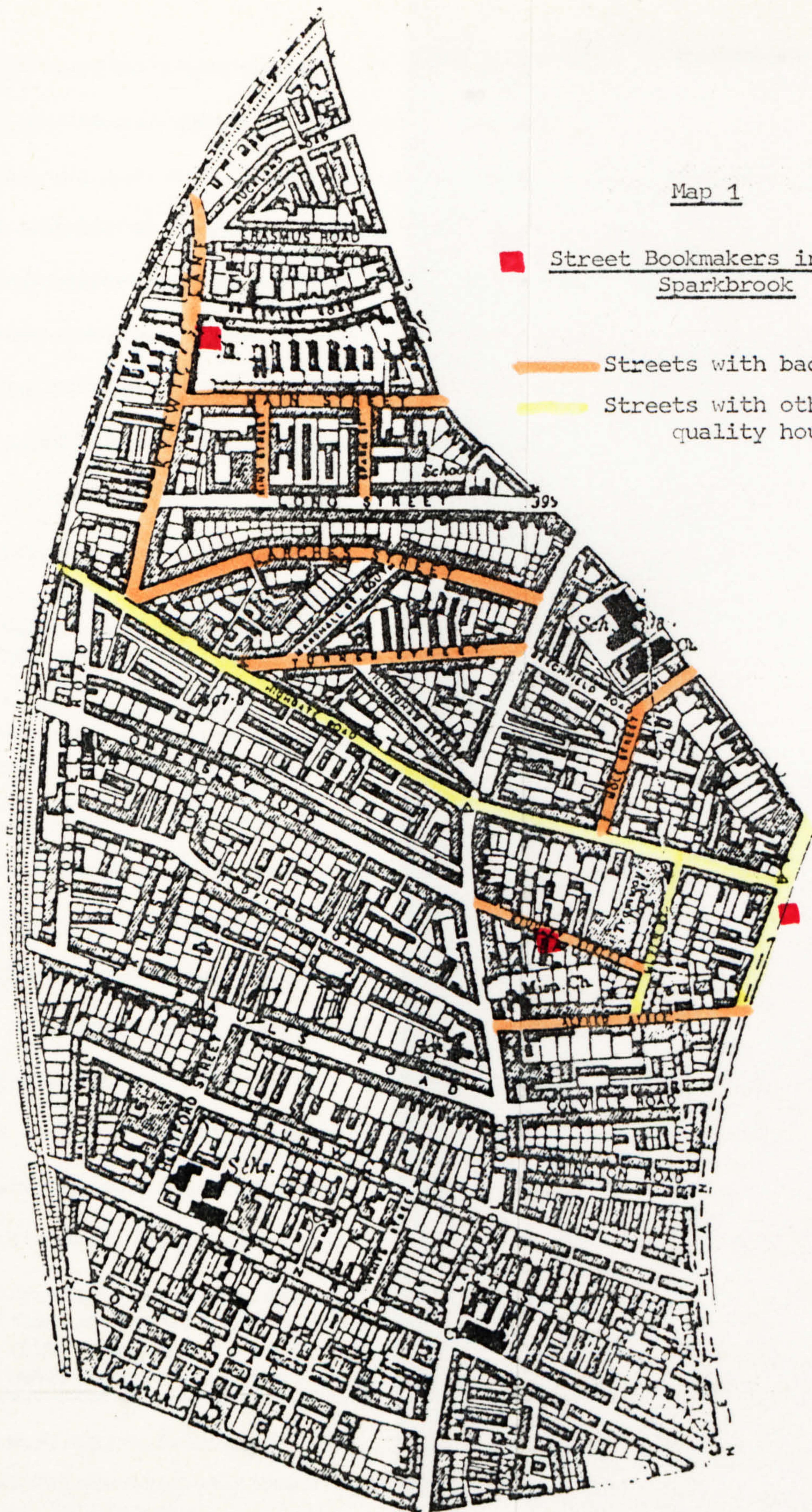
²¹ 'The Wrexham' was the local name given to 'The George Inn' because the brewery who owned it sold Wrexham Ales.

Map 1

■ Street Bookmakers in West Sparkbrook

— Streets with back-to-backs

— Streets with other poor quality housing



behind him. But anyway there was a big race in France on the Sunday and whether the favourite²² won it or not I don't know, but they'd all backed the bleedin' thing with our old mon. It finished him"²³.

Those bookmakers who survived did so as the result of a combination of factors: a bank sufficient to meet any early losses; favourable results; a good position in an area where gambling was popular; and the possession of a certain standing within the community. This latter was most important because - given the illegal nature of the activity - it was essential that the relationship between bookmaker and punter was based on trust. Moreover, trust arose from knowledge; a knowledge of the bookmaker, his reputation, his honesty and his ability to pay and a reciprocal relationship of the punter. Thus, whilst the lower working class was more likely to bet than the upper working class it was also true that the conditions conducive to bookmaking and betting were more vigorously present within poorer quarters. It was essential that the activity, if it were to survive, was carried out in a community based on kin, which focused on the street as a centre of communal life and in which the dominant characteristic was of a sense of belonging to and loyalty to that community.

An example of this trust was the manner in which punters signed their bets with a 'nom de plume' or 'moniker', by means of which they were identified if the bet was successful.

"...they used to put initials on the bottom and they'd come for them initials. But you got to know everybody as had a bet with you. And if your name was Joe, if you came for Joe and I'd got a Joe on the list, I'd know him. I'd say:

'Who's sent you for this?'

'Joe'

If it was a big amount you'd say:

'You'd better tell him to come himself. I aint paying you out'

²² The favourite is the horse in a race which has the shortest odds and is thus 'favoured' to win.

²³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. T. Sleath p.24.

Not when he'd got five bob to come. You wouldn't have any
silly bugger come up and say
 'The money orf Joe'
or 'The money orf Bill'
You wouldn't stand for that.
 'Tell him to fetch it hisself'
or tell 'em
 'Write us a exactly a copy then'
or say
 'What'd you write it on'
If you paid 'em, you had to pay the right un, wouldn't you?"²⁴

Winning bets were logged down on a large sheet, with the amount the punter had to collect next to his moniker. Indeed, this aspect of signing the bet was as much part of the activity as was selecting the horses which a punter fancied. Most people used their first names enhancing them by various suffixes; for example one or more crosses or the addition of the customers age as in 'Rose 60'. Other signatures related to an attribute of a punter, his or her nickname, their job or nationality: hence 'Jack The Fish'; 'Tommy The Coalman'; 'Paddy The Leaf'; 'Miffy' and others. Still more related to sporting heroes or were just regarded as being lucky. However, the signing of bets and the general prevalence of trust between bookie and punter did not preclude 'sharp practice': a bookie could - and at times did - disappear with his takings, never to reappear to pay out winning customers; equally punters could be resourceful in maximising their chances of winning by dishonourable means. Significantly, however, whilst a welshing bookie was decidedly declaimed, the activities of a 'cute' punter - whilst not totally approved of - were not regarded with quite such opprobrium, perhaps even grudgingly admired for his audacity. Moreover, the bookie had only himself to blame for being gullible or for being caught un-

²⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr. Froggat pp.4-5. Mr. Froggat was a street bookie in the Saltley area in the 1920's and 1930's although he was brought up in Studley Street and remembers Alf Chinn taking bets in that street in 1911-12. Thus his recollections are as true for the period before The First World War as for the inter war years.

awares. This was part of the hazards of 'the game'.

"There was the bookie Powell who had the bookies up the opening by 'The Lion and Lamb' in Stoney Lane...And just round the corner was the other one....But he was barmy as they made 'em. They used to give 'em the bets and he used to stand behind the door, see? I've seen 'em come in, get to know the first winners with the paper - 'cus you only got to know 'em by the paper then - and they used to write the bets out. And one of 'em'd go to the door with the bet and the other'd throw this bet through the window onto the settee...he used to put the bets on the sofa. Used to throw 'em through the window. And 'cus they'd double up"²⁵.

Yet, if betting for cash off-course was illegal how then did street bookmakers proliferate and flourish, *flouting* the law in such an obvious fashion? For in its early days the activity was carried out completely on the street: bookies stood in entries with look-outs posted whilst punters would pass by and slip them their bets. Payment would also be done on the street, and all this in daylight in full view of the general public. Activities of this kind could only survive on a regular basis in those streets of the lower working class where - if the police were not regarded as an enemy they were seen as unwelcome intruders - and in which the community were united and committed, if only tacitly, in an illegal operation.

"...the seeds of police ambivalence towards their role in regulating gambling were well and truly sown in their perception of the difficulties of prosecution where public collusion, either in a positive sense or actual collusion, or the negative one of 'not informing' occurred..."²⁶.

Very quickly many policemen became involved in ignoring street betting through an awareness of their inability to stamp out the practice and - in some cases - because they were bribed by the bookie to do so. Although "police - gambler collusion does not officially emerge as a factor of any significance...it is generally accepted that many policemen were bookies' runners"²⁷. However, it must be stressed that

²⁵ Ibid., number 3 Mr. G. Brown p.15.

²⁶ D.M. Downes, op cit., p.33.

²⁷ D.M. Downes, op cit., p.23.

there is a fine but nevertheless distinct line between participating actively in an illegal activity, as a policeman would do if he acted as a runner - and the taking of bribes to avoid noticing that activity. In West Sparkbrook there is no evidence of the former but much oral evidence of the latter. Indeed such evidence by the nature of the operation must be oral as the police would be the last to officially recognise corruption within their ranks. Furthermore, it is also likely that whilst senior officers might ignore a constable's bribes they were less likely to do so if he was accepting bets. Moreover, within the lower working class the bribing of a police officer was not regarded as morally wrong and whilst the officer might be derided for his duplicity many saw the bribe as a 'perk' of the job, similar to a publican giving a policeman free drinks.

"He [Alf Chinn] used to grease 'em. Old Darkie James, Robinson. A bit of silver. Half a crown, something like that"²⁸.

The amount of the bribe to induce the officer to disregard illegal activities, or more often to avoid being in the locality of such activity, varied according to rank. However, senior officers and magistrates did pose a problem. They were aware that street bookmaking was rife in the poorer quarters and demanded arrests. To satisfy both superiors and avoid alienating the bookie and a welcome source of additional income, the local policemen would alert the bookie as to when a raid was planned against the district's bookies. It was then up to him as to how he reacted to the information and invariably the response was standard.

"I can remember the different blokes being caught and took to the police station. My brother was took once. He stood up for somebody while he was out of work. The regular bloke who took the bets, he says to me brother:

²⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.14.

'Will you stand up, 'cus the coppers are coming'
He got £3, I think. Went to the station and was bailed out.
About £20, or £10 for the fine. Christ £3 was a lot of
money"²⁹.

The necessity of finding someone who was prepared to be paid to pretend to be the bookie was a result of the policy of local magistrates who tended to jail someone after three convictions for street bookmaking. Equally, such a practice could once more only have happened regularly and successfully in a lower working class quarter where no stigma was attached to such a conviction and where there was a pool of men willing to earn quick and easy money (the bookie, obviously, also paid the fine).

Of course, not all police officers even of a lowly rank were susceptible to bribery and various devices were used to trap those engaged in bookmaking.

"Me Dad was a policeman...me sister can remember this....
going up to me Dad. He was all dressed up in women's clothes.
She ran up to him and said
'Eh, Dad? What are you doing?'
And what he was trying to do...was some form of disguise to
catch the street bookie. They used to wait in entries to
catch the street bookie...and they would spend a couple of
days or so trying to catch him"³⁰.

Inevitably, as beat officers became promoted so did the bribery extend with the police-bookmaker relationship becoming regularised, interrupted only by those officers who were officious or seeking promotion.

One other problem which the bookie had to contend with which is also difficult to evaluate is that of 'protection'. It is likely that in Birmingham this was small scale dependent on the nature of the area in which the bookie operated, the notoriety of local gangs and the physical toughness of the bookie himself.

²⁹ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker pp.7-8.

³⁰ Ibid., number 18 Mr. Ebury p.5.

"I remember Dad telling me that a couple of mates of 'The Tyseley Terror'³¹ came in the shop³². They said there was a dollar³³ coming back off a non-runner³⁴ that he'd had. Dad told 'em there was nothing for him. They went away. A couple of nights later the old mon seen 'The Tyseley Terror' in 'The Lion'.

'Alright Alf'

'Alright Bert'

'Oh, Alf about that non-runner the other day, it worn't with you it was with Wilson's'

'Ar, alright Bert'

They'd tried it on with Wilson. There worn't no non-runner but he was scared of 'em so he paid. But they never bothered the old man again"³⁵.

Once established in a community, very often living in that community, the local bookie became a significant character. He might be resented by some and be the object of jealousy of others because of his financial superiority but he was, nevertheless, a figure who belonged. In turn the bookie was acutely aware that his living was derived from the losses of his customers and neighbours and to avoid his alienation from them it redounded on him to appear as often as possible as a benefactor. Furthermore, assistance was also a means of remaining loyal to your class.

"If a party came up...like the Coronation, street parties...I paid for that. I didn't think about it, I just did it. Like when we had bonfire night...Old Copey had...the newsagents... and he used to sell fireworks....All of what he had left. Well, Copey could buy twenty quid's worth and if he only sold two quid's worth I'd have ten...I used to go round and give all the kids fireworks so they had a good do...They all bet with you and you used to do all these little things. Part of the job, I suppose"³⁶.

31 The Tyseley Terror, Bert Goldsby, was a local tough, leader of a gang in the south side of Birmingham in the 1920's.

32 By the late 1920's many street bookies had come off the street and were taking bets in front rooms, or shops and pubs.

33 A dollar is slang for five shillings, taken from the period when there were four dollars to a pound.

34 A non-runner is a horse entered for a race but withdrawn before the off so that any bet on that horse becomes void with the stake being returned to the punter.

35 C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 24 A.W. Chinn p.7.

36 Ibid., number 9 Mr. Froggat pp.7-8.

Betting, like heavy drinking, had during the nineteenth century become increasingly associated with the lower working class and was an example, perhaps, of the conservatism of that section. In contrast the higher the stratum of the working class the less likely was its members to bet and the more likely it was that betting was strongly disapproved of. Indeed, whilst many of the elite of that section might drink occasionally and in moderation, betting was completely unacceptable, it was anathema.

"No, my father never bet nor nothing. Oh, he'd think that that was wicked"³⁷.

Religious or not, the higher strata of the working class saw betting as another manifestation of the faults pertaining to the poor and as another cause of their poverty. Like drinking and fighting it was to be declaimed as a vice, not praised as an example of 'earthy' values. Thus, whilst in fact a large portion of the generality of the upper working class might bet - it was estimated in 1914 that 80% of the working class gambled³⁸ - the visibility of betting and the gathering of bookies in the streets of the poor, ensured that in the perception of the upper working class in general, gambling belonged to the poor in a manner it did not to other sections and classes in society.

³⁷ Ibid., number 7 Mrs. Merriman p.25.

³⁸ R. McKibbin "Working Class Gambling in Britain 1880-1939" in Past and Present number 82 (1979) p.154.

Chapter Nine

Cultural Dissension: Attitudes to Violence

As the nineteenth century progressed so too were the poor becoming ever more associated with habits and activities in which the upper class had also once indulged but which were now considered socially unacceptable. The innate conservatism of the lower working class abetted by a lifestyle determined, to a great extent, by environment and economic circumstance ensured the cultural divergence and ultimately dissension of that section from the rest of society. However, it is significant that whilst the upper class were in general the subject of a sustained and successful campaign to alter their way of life aspects of their previous conduct survived, but in private. The upper class, fearful of the poor in the wake of the French Revolution, afraid of their numbers and pressurised by the ascendancy of a strident middle class, withdrew from public:

"There was a time when high and low feasted together at one table, the only distinction being that the dependents were seated a step lower....Nothing much more formidable than a salt cellar divided the entire lives of the gentry and the common people. There was difference enough in the quality and, doubtless, in the quantity also enjoyed by each of mental and bodily provision....But still all lived, as it were, at one common board and each could see how the other fared"¹.

Doubtless, there was an exaggeratedly euphoric view of the degree of participation of the upper class in the lives of the poor during this halcyon age fixed sometime during the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, the potency of the image is maintained sufficiently by fact to argue that the aristocracy and gentry had once been closer to the poor. The later eighteenth century saw the upper class begin to withdraw from patronising a number of activities (a process completed by

¹ Pictures of The People (Drawn by One of Themselves) : number 1 "The Contents of The Portfolio" (Birmingham 1871).

the mid nineteenth century) which they had once shared in common with the lower working class: Punch and Judy shows; bare fisted boxing; fairs and a variety of brutal sports; and, of course, drinking which became "essentially class bound" and gambling which "was increasingly associated with it"². Those inns which had once boasted tea gardens which had attracted the upper sections of society were the most severely affected by this change whereby "in this country no person, above the rank of a labouring man or artisan, would venture to go into a public house to purchase anything to drink"³. However, the transformation had ramifications for society in general and in particular for the poor and the manner in which they and their life-styles were viewed. In contrast to those vices which were regarded as inherent to the poor - slovenliness and laziness - arose a new triumverate of sins: heavy drinking and gambling were now to be joined by violence as characteristically working class and specifically lower working class in nature.

During the nineteenth century brawling and especially gang violence were viewed with increasing disfavour, tinged not a little by a certain fear on the part of the rulers that this violence amongst the poor might someday transcend the slums and affect society in general. Poor districts were avoided and in them "in the darkness these slum-dwellers can shout and riot and indulge in their coarse play, and quarrel over their drink and brawl over women and so pass away the time much to their taste"⁴. Yet, one hundred years previously, fighting and the cult of "masculinity"⁵ which many ascribe exclusively to

² Hugh Cunningham: The Making of Leisure in The Industrial Revolution (Croom Helm, London 1980) p.186.

³ B. Harrison, op cit, p319 quoting G.R. Porter in 1852.

⁴ J. Cuming Walters Scenes in Slumland number 2 "A Second Glance Around".

⁵ Walter B. Miller: "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency" in The Journal of Social Issues volume XIV 1958 number 3 pp.5-19.

the poor were not seen as quite so sectional. In the eighteenth century there existed the "Mohocks" who were a "class of aristocratic ruffians infesting London streets at night"⁶ and "town and gown" disturbances in Oxford and Cambridge were regular occurrences in the early years of the nineteenth century especially. However, the withdrawal of the upper class from public expressions of violence into the private world of fox hunting, shooting and games at public school, coupled with the fact that middle class aggression (at least by adolescents) was also channelled into legitimate forms, whilst they "escaped the long arm of the law not because they were subject to any less strict authority, but because they were under the control of the school and university"⁷, made certain the connotation of the poor with violence. The gathering of the youth of the lower working class on the street ensured their visibility to the forces of law and order, as did their rejection of the constraints which other classes might wish to impose on their culture.

It is debateable how far masculinity, "whatever its specific cultural definition" can "be achieved without some form of explicit antagonism to society"⁸. Yet, that relevant to the upper and middle classes was more controlled whilst that of the poor remained overt and more elemental and thus, even today, more frightening. Furthermore, whilst amongst the lower working class there was (and is) a high value placed on "masculinity, violence and loyalty" qualities which are "extremely resistant" to social change⁹, "in middle class upbringing, physical

⁶ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (Oxford 1984) p.651.

⁷ John R. Gillis: Youth and History (Academic Press 1974) p.181.

⁸ Olivia Harris reviewing The poetics of Manhood: contest and identity in a Cretian mountain village by Michael Herzfeld (Princeton University Press) in The Times Higher Educational Supplement February 28th 1986.

⁹ Public Disorder and Sporting Events The Sports Council/Social Science Research Council (1978) cited in Home Office: Committee of Inquiry into Ground Safety and Control at Sports Grounds: Final Report Chairman Mr. Justice Popplewell. Command 9710 p.53, 5-39.

forms of aggression are less encouraged as acceptable social behaviour"¹⁰. It is, therefore, necessary to view violence within working class and especially, lower working class society, within the parameters of environment, culture and social change in nineteenth century England. Violence of any kind, let alone violence in poor quarters, was not a phenomenon novel to the mid nineteenth century; however, what was different was the way in which it was perceived¹¹. This changed perception was increased by new policing methods; The Birmingham Police Act of 1839 had established a local constabulary under The Home Office which was transferred to the council in 1842. Nationally, by 1857 the whole country was covered by local constabularies.

In Birmingham by the late 1870's - as in other cities - lower working class violence was seen as becoming out of control:

"...ruffianism became so rampant that the lower end of Summer Lane became a very dangerous quarter. It was no uncommon thing for the police to be stoned there and often severely handled. The Harding Street Gang was referred to in The House of Commons....during the discussion of the Aston Riots"¹².

There was, however, the increasing presence and potency of gangs becoming firmly established in poorer localities and evincing a strong loyalty to their neighbourhood. As populations became more settled in most lower working class districts and as kinship extended within them, "traditional" working class society¹³ evolved; the genesis of firm local gangs, as opposed to the fluctuating collections of 'roughs' earlier in the century can be, perhaps, seen as a result of this evolution.

Boys and young men in such districts "used to walk about in gangs:

¹⁰ Ibid., p.54; 5.46 . 5.

¹¹ Finlay McKichan: "Constabulary Duties: The Lives of Police Constables a Century Ago" in History Today September 1980 p.38.

¹² The Birmingham Gazette and Express, September 19th 1907. "I Remember.....". The Aston Riots occurred in October 1885 when a large mob of Liberal - or rather Chamberlain - supporters broke up a Conservative political rally at The Aston Lower Grounds. Interestingly, it emerged that both parties had hired gangs of 'roughs'; The Tories as stewards and The Liberals to deliberately break up the meeting.

¹³ Eric Hobsbawm places this evolution of traditional working class life between 1870 and 1900. E. Hobsbawm: Industry and Empire (Penguin 1964) p.164.

Charles Henry Street; Summer Lane; Studley Street"¹⁴. Furthermore, throughout England, they could be identified by a collective yet distinctive uniform: bell-bottomed trousers with a buttoned vent in the leg; colourful neck scarves; a specific type of flat cap; boots, sometimes toe-plated with iron; ornamental leather belts also used in fights; and a 'donkey fringe' haircut¹⁵.

The local gangs, in many respects, were more to be feared than the 'rough' of old. They were more organised and had a focus for their aggression; that being the defence of their street and of the members of their gang: "The boys gather together and hold the street; if anyone ventures to pass through it they rush upon him, knock him down and kick him savagely about the head...the boys regard holding the street with pride"¹⁶. The activities of the peaky blinders in Birmingham were regarded as so violent that "The bloodthirsty savages in the Solomon Islands are gentlemen"¹⁷ in comparison. It is against this background that the poor of Studley Street need to be viewed.

"I can remember my old man telling me that when he was a kid the coppers stood in two's at each end of Studley Street watching 'em play toss the ha'penny¹⁸ outside 'The Gate'. They was too scared to come down Studley Street"¹⁹.

The upper working class of West Sparkbrook believed that at 'The Gate' - and by implication in Studley Street - "there was always trouble"²⁰

¹⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 1 William Chinn p.1.

¹⁵ G. Pearson: "Hooligans in History" in History Today May 1984 also: The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, volume VIII p.114 August 1899 and T.J. Bass: Tragedies of Life - A Fragment of Today (1903) p.69; J. Cuming Walters, op cit., number I.

¹⁶ Walter Besant East London: (Chatto and Windus 1901) p.177 cited in G. Pearson: Hooligans: A History of Respectable Fears (Macmillan 1983) p.84.

¹⁷ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, volume VIII December 1900 page 290 "Stinger".

¹⁸ Toss The Ha'penny was pitch and toss, a gambling game where two coins - usually halfpennies - were thrown against a wall and bets were taken as to whether when they landed they would show both tails or heads (evens) or one of each (odds).

¹⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 24 A.W. Chinn p.2. The interviewee's father was born in 1891.

whilst the poor, bereft of money and material possessions revelled in the fact that "other streets were frightened to come down Studley Street"²¹.

This affirmation of 'belonging' began early:

"I mean the kids used to fight one another with bleedin' sticks, props and all sorts. One street against another. We used to have battles. Chesterton Road...and the Studs, Studley Street. They used to come armed with line props, garden forks. They used to meet in combat. Studs, undoubtedly, were the king pins. They might put the poison down in a coffee house somewhere

'We'll have a go tomorrow night. Get your sticks sharpened up'.

They used to come walking up Stoney Lane. March up there. The Studs were the king pins"²².

The poorer the street, the more pronounced was the sense of loyalty of its residents to that street and the more likely it was that such loyalty was expressed physically through fighting. Lower working class youth culture was organised around the neighbourhood or street gang. Today that culture manifests itself most obviously in football hooliganism but this too is just a continuation of lower working *class loyalty* to territory so obvious in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods when it was also true that the attachment of the middle class to locality was "more likely to be temporary and whose lives are more mobile"²³. In contrast "working class youths and adults have a strong attachment to place"²⁴.

Studley Street, however, was a strongly settled and markedly organised lower working class community. As a result, aggression and violence existed within certain confines of acceptability, bounded by notions of fair fighting (discussed in Chapter Five). To a great extent adults maintained this equilibrium, given the general absence of the police from the street, in a contrast to disorganised neighbourhoods

²¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.13.

²² Ibid., number 20 Mr. Franklin p.11.

²³ Public Disorder and Sporting Events, op cit., p.54; 5.4; 6.

²⁴ Ibid., p.54; 5.4; 6.

where adults "feel less responsibility for guiding other people's children into the paths of 'good' behaviour, and will ignore deviant acts when they see them being committed, unless they themselves are directly involved"²⁵. However, the distinction between 'organised' and 'disorganised', 'settled' and 'unsettled' communities evaded the notice of most nineteenth century commentators. For them poor youngsters, wherever their street of residence, were a nuisance and a potentially dangerous nuisance.

"I think it is time the police took some steps to stop the career of the army of sturdy vagrants who crowd the thoroughfares of the district....I was....accosted by six able bodied young fellows who wanted a copper, and on my refusal their looks convinced me that it might have been a dangerous answer to give in the dusk of the evening in a less crowded thoroughfare"²⁶.

Moreover, being a member of an organised community did not necessarily preclude the use of unacceptable levels of violence, particularly if an outsider was the object or if it was directed against someone who had infringed accepted codes. In Studley Street lived:

"Them Careys. They was all in the army. They was all six footers. Three or four on 'em. And I can remember one day I saw them fighting opposite old lady Warwick's shop, just the top of the terrace there. And a bloke lay there and they was kicking him. 'Cus don't forget all them kids was in the army and they must of all come home together. One of the brothers had been out on the Sunday gambling and they'd give 'im a bleedin' good turn over. So, when they got this fellow in Studley Street they give 'im a bleedin' good turnover. Them was the Careys"²⁷.

Overcrowded living conditions in densely populated streets inevitably enhanced social conflict whereas in the roads of the upper working class the presence of 'space' or 'room' diminished it.

²⁵ Eleanor E. Maccaby; Joseph B. Johnson; Russel M. Church: "Community Integration and the Social Control of Juvenile Delinquency" in The Journal of Social Issues volume XIV 1958 number 3 p.39.

²⁶ The Balsall Heath Times, April 22nd 1882 "Parlour Tattle".

²⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr. Froggat p.2.

However, in the neighbourhoods of the poor poverty not only induced conflict it localised it, making it specific to a certain section of society and prevalent to the districts in which they lived. It was the break out of this violence from the slums which made lower working class aggression a major social factor, and exacerbated the fears of the middle class.

"The word 'Hooligan' made an abrupt entrance into the common English usage during the hot summer of 1898, in the wake of an excessively rowdy August Bank Holiday celebration in London which resulted in large numbers of people being brought before the courts on charges of disorderliness, drunkenness, assaults on police officers, street robberies and fighting"²⁸.

Moreover, specifically it was the aspect of violence against the police which was to be the cause of most dismay amongst the middle and upper classes. From 1857 police officers had become an increasing and obvious presence in poorer localities; this presence was resented and in many districts attacks - often vicious - against the police became common place. In 1871 there were over three thousand assaults on officers of The Metropolitan Police Force; a figure of around one assault for every three constables²⁹. Birmingham, at the turn of the century presented an even more violent aspect: in 1901 there were five hundred and ninety five constables³⁰ and in 1899 there had been five hundred and fifty seven convictions for assault on the police; a figure of nearly one assault for every constable.

Indeed, the 1890's saw the number of assaults peak at five hundred and sixty four in 1898 (the year of the 'Hooligan') and something of a panic in official circles. However, it would appear likely that far

²⁸ Geoffrey Pearson: "Hooligans in History" in History Today May 1984.

²⁹ Finlay McKichan, op cit., p.40.

³⁰ The Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday February 5th 1901. Report of statement The Chief Constable was to make to The Watch Committee.

Table 1 : Assaults on The Police

in Birmingham 1890-99

Year	Proceeded	Convicted
1890	433	410
1891	380	358
1892	403	378
1893	449	409
1894	492	442
1895	409	349
1896	589	433
1897	587.	562
1898	623	564
1899	585	557

From C.A. Vince: History of The Corporation of Birmingham Volume 3 pp.228-229 and 232.

from the slums of Birmingham being more violent - they had always been so - local and national authorities were more aware of such violence, as was, most certainly, the man in the front line - the police constable. This fact did not assuage the outrage of the city's middle class who wished to see the authorities:

"...stamp out 'Peaky Blindism', a dangerous element in Birmingham. The bell-bottomed fraternity has reigned far too long, and the assaults committed on the police and citizens have not been sufficiently met by the magistrates who have been far too lenient"³¹.

In 1899 a new Chief Constable, Charles Haughton Rafter, formerly of The Royal Irish Constabulary was appointed. Two years later he reported that he required two hundred and twenty more constables to fill up existing beats, add more beats which were urgently needed and to complete the staff necessary for the effective working of the detective department. Indeed, Her Majesty's Inspector of Police had already informed The Watch Committee that "Birmingham was much under-policed"³². The recommendations of The Chief Constable were approved and it was decided to gradually increase the size of the city force until in 1908 it would number nine hundred and twenty men³³. As early as 1872 The Metropolitan Police Commissioner had acknowledged that:

"...the town's populations do not afford a large supply of men over the required standard in height (5'7") who are willing to take police duties; most of our recruits are taken from the country districts"³⁴.

It is likely that the preponderance of non locals - especially of officers from rural areas - exacerbated hostility to the police in lower working class quarters. In the case of Birmingham, the new recruits

³¹ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, volume 8 page 114 August 1899.

³² The Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday February 5th 1901. Report of statement The Chief Constable was to make to The Watch Committee.

³³ The Birmingham Daily Post, Wednesday February 6th 1901. Report of The Watch Committee.

³⁴ Finlay McKichan, op cit., p.38.

into the city's police force in the first decade of the twentieth century were further distinguished by nationality.

"....and they were nearly all Irish coppers at the time. Charles Haughton was Chief Constable....and his recruits come from Ireland and they were all big, broad Irish blokes. They didn't know hay from a bull's foot, but it didn't matter to him. They could carry out a job that he wanted them to; a bit of order. Never mind about being educated. They used to come round, a couple of 'em...if they found a disturbance at 'The Gate' or any other pubs...and they used to wear a cape rolled up...on their belt....They'd find out who the culprits was and give 'em a warning, get 'em out the road and say 'Off home!' If they didn't comply with the coppers' orders they used to set about them..... they hadn't used to use their truncheons, they used to use their capes"³⁵.

The advent of the "Irish mates"³⁶ of Chief Constable Rafter did not mean the demise of violence in Birmingham; rather it ensured that, by walking always in two's at least, the police would not be quite such the object of violent behaviour. Moreover, the confidence of the upper working class in the police did not encourage them to visit areas they had once shunned. Instead, the fact that the police had to walk in two's down Studley Street for their own safety enhanced the reputation of the street and emphasised its separateness³⁷.

³⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 W.G. Chinn p.30.

³⁶ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. . p.8.

³⁷ I have been unable to locate, as yet, records of The Police Courts of Birmingham and surrounding districts and thus it is difficult to give statistical evidence of the nature of crime in the streets and roads of West Sparkbrook. Furthermore, whilst local newspapers give reports of the police courts they are neither full or comprehensive.

Chapter Ten

The Role of Women

If one central theme united both the upper and lower working class and indicated a mutual adherence to an aspect of culture relevant to both sections, it was the fact that whilst the husband "was supposed to be the boss of the house"¹ in reality it was the wife and mother around whom the family revolved. "Well, we never used to say much to Dad. It was always Mom, used to go to Mom for everything"². Physically men could provide tangible proof of their supposed ascendancy yet, whilst generally a father might be respected and loved, it was usually the mother of the working class family who received a little more in the way of affection from her children; "Mother used to get a bit more favour, you know, being your mother, I suppose. But we all had respect for old Dad all the same"³. Emotionally - and very often economically in the case of the lower working class - mothers were essential to the unity of their families ensuring that they would function - at least to an extent - from a sense of co-operation and belonging, rather than as a vehicle in which were briefly gathered a disparate collection of individuals.

Undoubtedly, the pressure of ensuring the survival of the family - often despite straitened means - as well as the inevitable death of some of her offspring conspired, in alliance with the structure of Victorian and Edwardian society which did not set too high a premium on a too open show of affection, to reduce overt signs of a mother's love, "Well, we were kind of rough and ready, not too much affection. Didn't show it, but they was always good to us"⁴. An absence of tender-

¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 10 Mrs. Snow p.4.

² Ibid., number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.11.

³ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.38.

⁴ Ibid., number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.11.

ness, did not, however, result in a lack of caring or of concern.

"I don't think she was naturally very affectionate....She never showed anything, she didn't put love on her sleeve. She was fussy about us, you couldn't go out unless you wanted to tell her where you were going. She expected you back at a certain time. Especially me sisters"⁵.

A plethora of popular songs lauded the working class mother, perhaps praising the accepted ideal as much as the reality, if not more. Many verged on the maudlin but their existence manifested a visible reality within the homes of the working class. Home, indeed, always belonged to the mother, not the father; children spoke of 'going to mother's' not to 'father's' and studies have clearly shown the importance of a matriarchy within the working class based on mother-daughter relationships⁶. However, whilst this is certainly very valid it can tend to obscure the importance of the mother-son relationship within working class, and particularly lower working class families. "She worshipped her lads. She'd do everything for 'em; black their boots, have their shaving gear ready, put their ties on. She did everything for 'em, but not for us girls"⁷. Thus, whilst the family might be dominated by the father and centred on the mother it was she who often ensured that working class society would continue in that vein by her preferential treatment of her sons. A mother-daughter relationship was conceived in the union of a natural affinity induced by a shared gender experience wherein the women of the working class were expected to fulfill an accepted role and perform certain duties appertaining to the home; in contrast the lads "weren't expected"⁸ to. This is not to say that men and boys were all inactive members where the running of the house was concerned; many were not:

⁵ Ibid., number 18 Mr. Ebury p.19.

⁶ Robert Roberts, op cit., p.27 and Elizabeth Bott: Family and Social Network (London 1968 2nd edition); Madeline Kerr: The People of Ship Street (London 1958).

⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 26 Mrs. W. Martin p.4.

⁸ Ibid., number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.7.

"I had to look after me sisters and brothers. On a Saturday morning I would black lead the grate, chop firewood, get coal...I used to make pastry and cakes. I made the Christmas puddings and mince pies...If I didn't do it nobody else would. Me sisters never took to it"⁹.

Despite the participation of many boys in what were termed and considered to be women's tasks the general trend was clear, reinforced by the accepted position of the father within the family; "he wouldn't do anything beneath his dignity. I never remember him scrubbing a floor. We did. Do the mairding. Me father wouldn't"¹⁰. Men, and their sons, had a role different from that of women and daughters and the accepted version of it was that they only performed those domestic chores consistent with their manhood and reliant on strength or skill; tasks such as fetching coal (although girls did this as well) and mending shoes. However, the doting of many mothers on their sons did, in many cases, ensure the forging of a close and intimate bond between the two. Phrases such as "your best friend is your mother" emphasised the connection yet the relationship was ultimately endangered by a son's marriage whereas that of a daughter enhanced her union with her mother.

A constant theme in the praising of a mother was her self sacrifice, her self denial. In particular, this was relevant to the mothers of the lower working class family who "live more exacting and self-denying lives than probably any other group in the community.... What food comes into the house is given to the children or the husband, while they themselves go on from day to day in a state of semi starvation"¹¹. It was the sacrificing of her own interests and welfare for those of her family which clearly marked out the role of the mother of the working class family from that of the father and ensured the appreciation of her children. Nevertheless, whilst mothers of both the

⁹ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. pp.3 and 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., number 3 Mr. Les Brown p.28.

¹¹ City of Birmingham Health Department "Report of Industrial Employment of Married Women and Infantile Mortality" p.19 in The Report of The Medical Officer of Health for Birmingham 1909.

upper and lower working class shared certain characteristics their position was delineated by the attitude of both sections to a married woman working

"Not many women did go to work. The poorer ones took in cleaning, did washing. It wasn't the done thing once they married"¹².

The fact of a working married woman was often another index of poverty and further exposed the cultural divide apparent within the working class. In fact, many women in Birmingham did work, there was an "abnormal number"¹³ of them and this, in particular, emphasised the extent of poverty within the city. It was reported that, in 1893, the number of girls aged between ten and fifteen who were employed was 19% higher than the national average, with the number of girls aged between fifteen and twenty who were working being a staggering 79.9% higher than the national average¹⁴. By 1912 there were around sixty five thousand working women in Birmingham the pay and conditions of service of whom contrasted "unfavourably with towns and districts like Manchester, Leicester and The Potteries"¹⁵. As might be expected in this circumstance the majority of working women were working class¹⁶. Indeed, low wages characterised unskilled women's work in the city: the average wage for a girl of seventeen in 1901 was 10/- a week, 4/- less than the amount necessary for her "to keep herself healthy and respectable"¹⁷. More-

¹² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.8.

¹³ J.H. Muirhead, op cit., p.4.

¹⁴ The Victoria History of The Counties of England (edited by R.B. Pugh. The Univeristy of London Institute of Historical Research 1964) Volume VII The City of Birmingham p.176.

¹⁵ J.H. Muirhead, op cit., p.4.

¹⁶ In 1901 there were over four million working women in England and Wales all but 300,000 or so in working class jobs. D.C. Marsh: The Changing Social Structure of England and Wales (London 1967 p.126) cited in Standish Meacham, op cit., p.95.

¹⁷ E. Cadbury, M. Cecile Matheson and G. Shann: Women's Work and Wages (1906) pp.148-9 cited in J.H. Treble: Urban Poverty in Britain 1830-1914 (Methuen 1983) p.46.

over, the average weekly earnings of a woman over twenty one in Birmingham's cycle and bedstead industries were, in 1905, 10s6d and 11s6d respectively¹⁸.

Yet, whilst most women's work was unskilled and low paid not all working women could be termed lower working class; many young, single women who were employed belonged to the upper working class. Obviously, their jobs were usually commensurate in status to their position in society:

"My first job was at Sidney George's...Half a crown a week, open letters. Kind of office girl, training me up for it... Mom didn't like me there because I wasn't there to go and shop with her....Then me sister said I'd got to go...and train in the sewing trade"¹⁹.

The availability of work for children and teenagers in Birmingham ensured that many upper working class parents encouraged their offspring to leave school; indeed it made "any further rise of the school-leaving age" beyond fourteen "extremely unpopular even among the higher grades of labour"²⁰. However, once these girls married it "wasn't done" for them to carry on at work; "I mean....if anybody got married, they got married and looked after the home"²¹.

Of course, the assertion of such an absolute truth did not totally reflect the reality. Yet, it was indicative of a powerful and pervasive force apparent within upper working class culture, namely that it was right and proper for a woman to stop working once she married. Despite this, there were a few occupations - generally associated with the female sex and also, very often, with the home - which were considered socially acceptable for a woman to be involved in after her marriage. Both these criteria were especially apparent with regard to

¹⁸ Ibid., p.121 and 232-4.

¹⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 17 Mrs. Jones p.1.

²⁰ J.H. Muirhead, op cit., p.4.

²¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 21 Miss Abel pp.1-2.

nurses, midwives, dress makers and the like and also in respect of many shopkeepers, where the front room of the family residence was the shop and from which were sold hosiery, millinery, fancy goods, baby-ware and such like. However, importantly, women were also involved in other retail outlets such as bakers, cooked meat shops, newsagents, confectioners, tobacconists, greengrocers and dairy products. Moreover, they were especially significant in the running of off licenses and occasionally a woman was a publican²². Crucially, though, factory work with its connotations with poverty and the lower working class was not acceptable, neither was, usually, a continuance of office work.

Generally marriage amongst the upper working class patently divided a woman's life into that when she was single, living with her parents and usually earning her own money; and that when she was married when she would abandon her job for the responsibility of the home. Indeed, if the home belonged to the mother, so too did she belong to it. "Family life becomes more private and the women are left at the house all day whilst their husbands are at work"²³. The economic sufficiency provided by a regular and decent income of a husband in work was such as to avoid the necessity of the wife finding a job. Consequently, it became a matter of 'caste' as to whether or not a married woman worked.

²² For example, Mrs. Susannah Lyons of "The George Hotel" (1871); Mrs. Hannah Willis of "The Warwick Arms" (1878); Mrs. Emma Dowler of "The Clifton" (1882-1884); Mrs. Elizabeth Shaw of "The Brewer's Arms" (1882-1888); Mrs. Anne Smith of "The Angel" (1888). These and the nature of goods sold by women shopkeepers in West Sparkbrook are taken from Kelly's Directories of Birmingham 1871-1914.

²³ S. Rowntree: Poverty. A Study of Town Life (London 1901) p.109 cited in J.R. Gillis: Youth and History (Academic Press 1974) p.120.

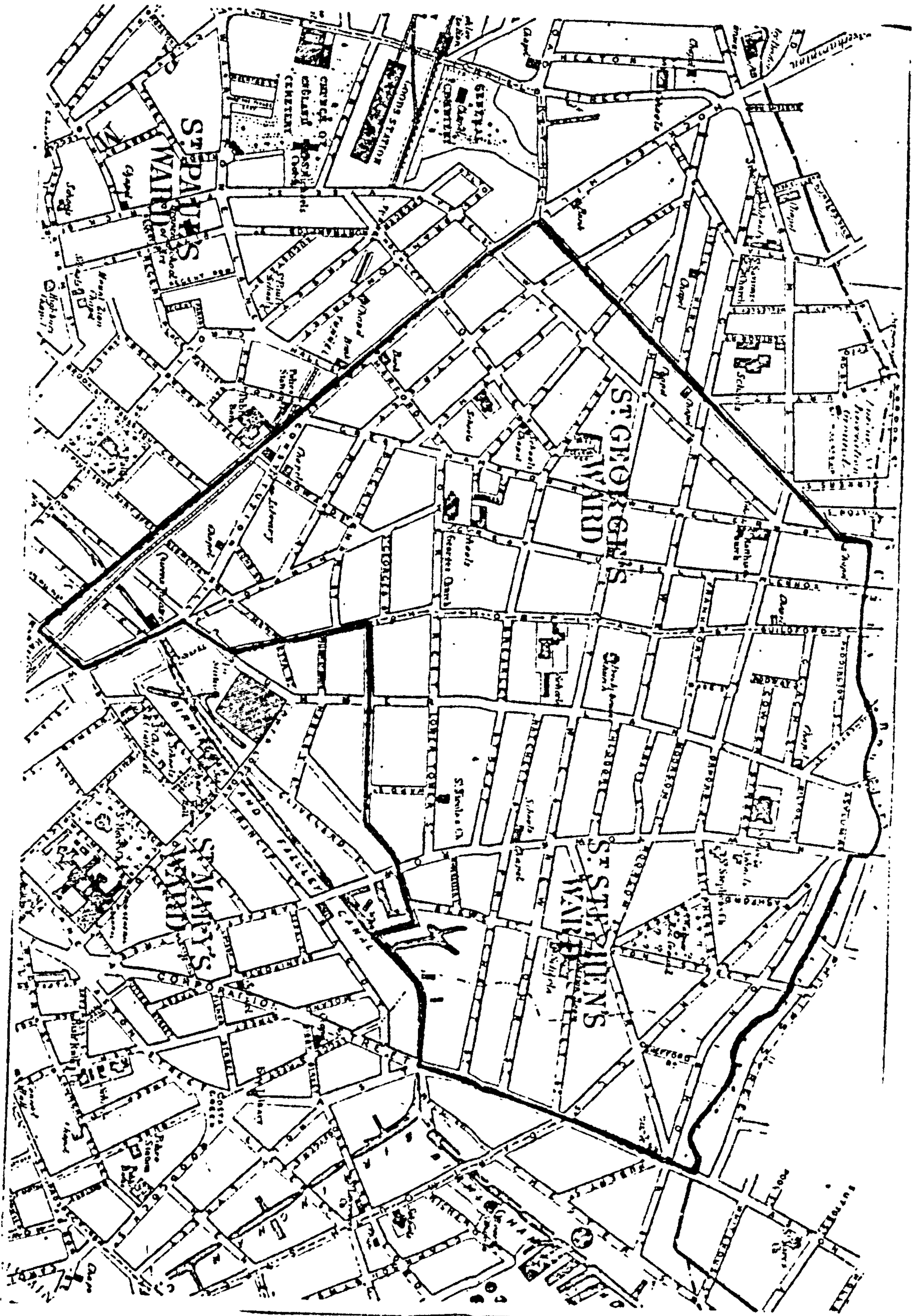
"Among the top half of the working classes, the trend was towards a family strategy somewhat like that of the middle classes....Among the poor and unskilled...the same situation of high mortality and high fertility that had characterised practically the entire working classes was still in effect"²⁴.

Amongst the lower working class a family's standing did not necessarily depend on the ability of the husband to provide sufficient income to allow his wife to remain at home and not to go to work. Married working women were an essential fact of life. According to calculations based on the 1901 census the percentage of married women or widows working in specified occupations was 19% in Birmingham; 17.2% in London; 19.3% in Manchester; 13% in Leeds; and a high of 25.2% in Leicester and a low of 8.4% in Cardiff²⁵. Yet, not for the first time the existence of large and populous middle class districts within the city boundaries masked the extent of poverty inside Birmingham and hindered a more correct statistical comparison with other more wholly working class cities. A survey of women who bore children in 1908 and who lived in the depressed, central slum wards of St. Stephen's and St. George's, showed that 54% of the women worked and suggested that in the poorer districts of Birmingham over 50% of the married women went to work before or after the birth of their child²⁶. It was such high proportions, amongst the lower working class, of married women in employment which aroused the concern and worry of many middle class observers as to the social implications of this occurrence.

²⁴ J.R. Gillis, op cit., pp. 19-20.

²⁵ "Report of Industrial Employment of Married Women..." p.5. The report was commissioned following a letter from The Home Office intimating that The Home Secretary was considering the question of further regulating the industrial employment of women before and after childbirth as a result of The Report of The Physical Degeneration Committee and The Conference on Infant Mortality. The Birmingham Report was based on a survey in The St. Stephen's and St. George's wards (where 63% of the houses were back-to-backs) carried out between January 1st and December 31st 1908 under the direction of Dr. Jessie Duncan and two experienced women Health Visitors.

²⁶ Ibid., p.5.



St. George's and St. Stephen's Wards
(Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1909)

"...the position of women has undergone, and is now undergoing, a great change....Women are entering into competition with men more and more, and their old subordination to and dependence on men is fast disappearing...they act in almost every respect with the same freedom as men....And when these women marry or go to live with a man they do not stay at home and look after the house or children. They turn out to go to work in factory or laundry; the home is neglected and the children, if there are any, are put out to be looked after, or to roam the streets if they are old enough. The modern woman of the poorer classes cannot stay at home; it is too dull, the surroundings too depressing, she likes to get into the lively circle of the factory room"²⁷.

It is likely that, in Birmingham at least and probably elsewhere, these "modern women" were new only in respect of their topicality to a more socially aware middle class. Just as violence had always been present in the districts of the poor but was - in the 1890's - impinging more stridently on the local and national scene, so too had a substantial portion of lower working class women worked, before, during and after The Industrial Revolution. In 1871, indeed, one of the "great social peculiarities" of Birmingham was seen to be "the very general employment of girls and women in nearly-all trades"²⁸. Increasingly, however, from the 1880's the poor were the subject of inquisitive studies with the result that their way of life became more apparent, whilst the middle and upper classes were alerted to any defects in that life-style as judged against the accepted standards of their particular cultures. Many saw the fact of married women working as morally reprehensible, yet the great majority in the Birmingham study who were employed had found a job so as "to supplement the family income"²⁹. Out of seven hundred and seven such women, eighty one were the sole or main source of the family's income; five hundred and fifty six worked to supple-

²⁷ The Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday January 1st 1901. Article headed "Drunkenness Among Women. Reported Alarming Increase". Quote of Mr. Wheatly, General Superintendant of St. Gile's Christian Mission.

²⁸ The Post Office Directory of Birmingham, 1871 p.8.

²⁹ "Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women..." p.4.

APPENDIX A.*Private and Confidential.*BIRTH INQUIRY FORM.

No. of case _____ Date of first visit _____
 Sanitary district _____ Date of last visit _____
Mother. Name _____
 Address _____
 Age _____ Race and nationality _____
Living with husband: Living apart. Widowed. Unmarried.
 General health. *Good. Indifferent. Bad.*
 Character of Confinement
Doctor. Midwife. Institution.
 Previous History. No. of Miscarriages _____ Still Births _____
 Children born alive _____ Now living _____ Died in 1st year of life _____
 Description of work before present pregnancy _____
 Other information _____
 Work during pregnancy. How long ceased before birth _____
 Precise occupation _____
Carried on at home. In factory or workshop. Elsewhere.
 Weekly earnings _____ Nature of work. *Heavy. Light.*
 Special conditions _____
 Work after birth. Resumed _____ weeks after birth.
 Why resumed _____
 Precise occupation _____
Carried on at home. In factory or workshop. Elsewhere.
 Weekly earnings _____ Nature of work. *Heavy. Light.*
 Special conditions _____
Child. Full Name _____ Date of birth _____
Male. Female. Legitimate. Illegitimate. Firstborn. Premature. Full Time.
 Condition at first visit _____ at last _____
 If death occurs, age at death _____ Cause of death _____
 Feeding during first six months of life.
 Breast entirely for _____ weeks.
 Artificial food partly since _____ Why _____
 Artificial food entirely since _____ Why _____
 Nursing. *By Mother. By other person at home. Put out, where*
Father. Occupation _____ Weekly earnings _____
 Race and Nationality _____
 Health. *Good. Indifferent. Bad.*
Home. Rent _____ No. of rooms _____
 Condition _____
 No. of family at home _____ Weekly income of family _____
 No. of lodgers _____
Remarks _____

From The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham 1909
 (Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women p.23.)

ment the family income; and only seventy expressed a preference for industrial work³⁰. Moreover, 15% of the husbands in the survey were unemployed following a period of trade depression which again exposed the precarious employment of unskilled men in a city whose industries were, all too often, "notoriously, perhaps necessarily, cyclical"³¹.

In particular, the study emphasised the necessity of so many married women of the poor working when it observed that, in those families surveyed, where the woman did not work average wages for the family were 23s1d a week as opposed to 20s1d where the woman did work³².

Poverty determined whether a married woman worked or not. On average such women earned 8s5d a week, although those who were casually employed or worked at home fared worse (averaging 4s7d) than those who worked in factories who on average earned 10s1d a week³³. Thus, especially during a husband's period of unemployment, "even the small amount shown in the above average earnings of his wife enabled many to tide over a period of great poverty"³⁴. The higher wages in a factory encouraged the majority of working women to seek work there: 70.5% of the employed women in the survey worked in factories and workshops compared to 20.5% in the home and 9% elsewhere³⁵. However, for some older women or for those with babies work outside the factory was preferable as it allowed them to determine the extent of their labour. Flexibility did not though imply an exclusion of hard work in occupations such as that of the wardrobe mistress (who dealt in second hand clothes acquired in middle class areas) or of the woman who took in washing.

³⁰ Ibid., p.4. 1212 homes were visited regularly during 1908: A total of 1503 live children were originally included in the survey but after deductions for a variety of reasons a total of 1212 mothers remained.

³¹ J.H. Muirhead, op cit., p.2.

³² "Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women..." p.11.

³³ Ibid., p.11.

³⁴ Ibid., p.11.

³⁵ Ibid., p.11.

"I used to run home from school on a dinner time and collect it [washing]. And then she would wash it while we were at school. And after school I would deliver it. She'd wash for anybody that wanted washing done. Anybody that was at work, or working part time or was even bleedin' idle and had enough money to get our mother. 'Cus the washing used to be done in a tub with a maid or a dolly. Great big chunk of wood on the end of a handle. And then mother used to bang it, bang it, bang it. And the wringer. Our poor Mom had her fingers caught in the wringer and smashed 'em"³⁶.

There was little rest for a lower working class woman; mothers "worked all their lives"³⁷. Without their additional and essential income many families must have been inevitably drowned in the tide of pauperism, to be rescued by the dubious landing of the workhouse. In many cases the extra earnings of the married woman were "an important influence in the prevention of poverty, which is the one great cause of infant mortality"³⁸. However, the necessary nature of a mother working obviously militated against her breast-feeding her baby when she returned to work quickly after the birth. Breast-feeding was an important factor in reducing infant mortality³⁹; yet only 27% of those mothers who returned to work and whose babies lived to twelve months managed to feed their infants in this way compared to 75% of non-working mothers⁴⁰. It proved impossible for Dr. Robertson, Birmingham's Medical Officer of Health, to reconcile the dilemma of whether a married woman of the lower working class should return to work after her baby's birth and earn vital wages or to lose that income and breast-feed her baby. Finally, he concluded that neither mattered because as long as "great poverty exists the infant suffers from a want of nutrition"⁴¹ and it was poverty which had "the greatest effect of all on

³⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. Doughty p.6.

³⁷ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.37.

³⁸ "Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women..." p.8.

³⁹ Chapter One p.29.

⁴⁰ "Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women..." p.16.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.19.

the progress of the child"⁴².

One important result of pregnancy on a working woman was her realisation that a birth affected her employment and thus reduced the family income. The law stated that a woman should not knowingly be employed from four weeks before her confinement was due, although in the Birmingham study it emerged that one hundred and forty women from the sample had continued working till within a week of their expected confinement⁴³. In spite of this and the lack of "fuss and bother"⁴⁴ at most births it was still true that, if only for a few weeks, a mother must be absent from her job. It is, therefore, unsurprising, that it emerged that in families in which the mother did not work there was a larger number of children⁴⁵. Nationally, a number of factors were, in conjunction, encouraging a fall in the birth rate: couples were tending to marry later and it was the twenty to twenty four age group of women who were most likely to be fertile⁴⁶; and there was an increasing willingness to use contraceptives⁴⁷. Indeed, this tendency was becoming ever more apparent amongst the upper working class in Birmingham as in "certain populous artisans suburbs, such as Balsall Heath and Bordesley" the birth rate was "still a low one"⁴⁸.

⁴² Ibid., p.22.

⁴³ Ibid., p.19.

⁴⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 William Chinn p.62.

⁴⁵ "Report on Industrial Employment of Married Women..." p.9.

⁴⁶ The Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p.11.
98% of women who married in this age group bore children as opposed to 77.5% of women in the twenty five to twenty nine age group.
(Dr. Robertson quotes the figures of Dr. C.J. Lewis).

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.11.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1909 p.10.

However, the birth rate amongst the poor remained higher than that of other sections of society⁴⁹, whilst a lack of education and finances generally excluded the widespread use of contraceptives. Indeed, in a forlorn effort to reduce their fertility many women in lower working class districts were to be seen "with children dragging at their dry breasts, a practice which was prolonged because they believed that if they kept a child to the breast until it was three years old they wouldn't become pregnant again"⁵⁰. In most cases, the matter of limiting families in a lower working class area devolved upon a woman and many relied on the use of "abortificients"⁵¹.

"One morning Alfred Benny went out leaving his wife energetically cleaning the floor. He returned from work to find her in bed and dying. The cause? Why, another baby, of course, and she 'had not wanted it' and 'had taken something'... She died that night. And he had not even known the other child was coming"⁵².

Thus in West Sparkbrook, the Studley Street locality was further distinguished by the size of its families⁵³ and by the fact that so

⁴⁹ For example in 1905 the central, lower working class wards of Deritend and St. Stephen's recorded rates of 34.9 and 34.8 respectively in comparison to Balsall Heath where the rate was 27.0 and middle class Edgbaston and Harborne where the rate was 19.7. Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1909 p.10.

⁵⁰ Kathleen Dayuss, op cit., p.2.

⁵¹ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, 1905 p.20.

⁵² Gwendolen Freeman, op cit., p.16. There were a number of ways to induce an abortion without necessarily resorting to a back street abortionist: pills; violent activity; hot baths; drinking water in which copper coins had been boiled; and sitting above water in which had been placed 'slippery elm' which was supposed to draw the foetus from the womb.

C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 28 Mrs. L. Perry p.8.

⁵³ In the absence of statistics from the 1901 and 1911 censuses I am reliant on oral evidence for this fact. However, given the nature of the street and the poverty of its inhabitants I think it fair to adhere to the view that families in this area were generally larger than elsewhere in West Sparkbrook.

many of its married women "worked at the laundry"⁵⁴ or at home. Indeed, in contrast to the central wards of Birmingham where factories were plentiful the main local source of employment in West Sparkbrook for married women working away from the home was in laundries; the Birmingham Steam Laundry in Highgate Road and that of H.T. Woodham and F.R. Richard in Turner Street. Also of significance for female employment were Howard Baker and Co., pinafore manufacturers, again of Highgate Road; and The Patent Shroud and Frilling Co. in Tillingham Street⁵⁵. Nevertheless, whilst the prevalent view in the district was that women should not work after marriage, amongst the poor the fact of a woman not working was a matter of differentiation, a matter of comment.

"She [mother] did say when she visited me father's house, when he took her home, she said to his sister,
'Where do you go to work'.
'I don't work. I'm mother's companion'"⁵⁶.

Equally, whilst marriage for the upper working class entailed the woman (in general) shedding off her old life for one bounded by the home, that of the lower working class did not; for the women of this section their wedding only changed the emphasis of their role, not its nature. Marriage for them did not mean an end to work only that its income would be directed towards the family they built with their husbands not that of their parents.

Yet, if a lower working class woman lacked material comforts and security, to a certain extent she was more independent than the woman of the upper working class. Obviously, such an independence was greatly affected by economic circumstance. Even so, and despite the fact that

⁵⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.14.

⁵⁵ Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1908.

⁵⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. Les Brown p.28.

her wages would all too often be spoken for before she had earned them, consumed by the necessity to pay off debts and buy food, it was still true that - at the outset at least - the money "was her own. She was entitled to what she made....Dad might fiddle an extra bob or two if she was a bit flush"⁵⁷. One result of this limited independence was that, if any money remained after the needs of the family were satisfied, a woman might determine her own form of entertainment

"The women used to get together in a place they used to call The 'Duck Pen'. It was a separate part of the pub where the women used to congregate...a few of the old timers used to get together....And they used to go in there and for a copper they'd get some Dunville's whiskey and a plunger...and a slice of lemon as well...and they'd have a couple if they could afford it. Sit down and chew the fat"⁵⁸.

All beer houses popular with the lower working class had a section in which, by custom, the women congregated. The terminology might change depending on the area of Birmingham concerned⁵⁹ but its existence was universal. Wherever the poor lived "it was a regular thing.... for the women to go in for a drink"⁶⁰. This fact of women drinking on licensed premises caused much apprehension amongst the middle class and was the cause of much opprobrium from the upper working class. It was believed that married working women of the poor not only neglected the home whilst they were at the factory in the day but compounded their neglect by leading "as far as their resources allow, the Gay Bohemian life of the beer saloons and other resorts"⁶¹. However, within lower working class society in West Sparkbrook there were limits to a woman drinking on her own. Rarely did young, single women drink in beerhouses, or indeed young married women. Those women who

⁵⁷ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn pp.38-39.

⁵⁸ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn pp.48-49.

⁵⁹ In Aston this section was called 'The Cow Shed'.

⁶⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes p.5.

⁶¹ The Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday January 1st 1901. Article "Drunkenness Among Women....".

drank regularly and amongst other women were normally older and married. As much as their husbands they found solace not only in drink but also in the companionship found in beerhouses. Moreover, they too celebrated the ritual of weekend drinking.

"Yes. She used to like a drink, I tell you...Sunday night it used to tek her about an hour, hour and a half to get spruced up to go to the corner to have a pint...doing her hair out, you know, plaiting it and coconut oil on it to give it a gloss...Her used to have these two plaits on either side of her head...And her used to put her stays on and pull 'em tight....so's her could sit in the pub and look nice and shapely and have a couple of halves with her playmates, with her neighbours"⁶².

Brian Harrison has seen the 1820's as the time from when "women were excluded from the public house"⁶³. It is apparent that in Birmingham the lower working class woman was not. So long as she conformed to a certain status and age it was not seen as wrong that she drink in a beerhouse, albeit in distinct portions of the premises; "My gran, my mother, old lady Carey sat on the right by the window"⁶⁴ Many of the women of the generality of the upper working class also drank in public houses and beerhouses, again, however, according to the standards of their section. Once more it was only a married woman who could go drinking if she was to conform to the accepted attitudes of her portion of the upper working class and then never without her husband; "only with him...she never used to go in without Dad. Every weekend they used to go out together"⁶⁵. Amongst the more affluent of the working class it was felt that "only the very oldest or them that was on the game"⁶⁶ drank in a public house on their own.

⁶² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.48.

⁶³ Brian Harrison, op cit., p.47.

⁶⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.9.

⁶⁵ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes p.5.

⁶⁶ Ibid., number 6 Mr. T. Sleath and Mr. S. Doughty p.6.

Indeed, the higher the status of the road in which a family lived the more unlikely it became that a woman would drink in licensed premises even with her husband.

"And I think it was really men that drank then, not women.... They might if they were with their husbands, but a woman on her own certainly wouldn't go to a pub in those days"⁶⁷.

Many women, as with many men, even if they did drink preferred to do so at home; "she never went out for a drink....Our Dad...sometimes... he'd bring her a stout back"⁶⁸. However, what does seem to be absent in West Sparkbrook - probably because of the freedom allowed certain lower working class women to frequent beerhouses according to the codes of behaviour of their own culture - was the "stair head drinking clubs"⁶⁹, again of which Brian Harrison talks. Yet, it is obvious that for many women drink fulfilled exactly the same function as it did for men. Indeed, for those women of the upper working class especially, who did not go out with their husbands entertainment was restricted to walks along the Ladypool Road, to gossip with neighbours or to perhaps a visit to the picture house or circus. For most such families:

"Mom was always there. Some nights he'd [father] have one or two nights out now and again, with his friends. But mother never. She was always with us. She never left us. Mom was always at hand"⁷⁰.

Yet, if perhaps the lower working class woman enjoyed a little more freedom than her upper working class sister (again subject to provisos dependent on economic circumstance) it was equally true that violence was more likely to break out in an open manner between her and her husband. Fighting between men and women is always more easy to distinguish amongst the poor than it is amongst the upper working

⁶⁷ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel p.10.

⁶⁸ Ibid., number 14 Mrs. Carrie Griffiths p.5.

⁶⁹ Brian Harrison, op cit., p.47.

⁷⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 12 Mrs. Curtis pp.5-6.

class because of the different nature of the society of each. Violent behaviour between man and wife of the upper working class was unacceptable and deviant and therefore likely to be hidden if it occurred. Amongst the poor in contrast "fighting between a husband and wife was commonplace. You never interfered"⁷¹. However, the difficulty of fully hiding the effects of a fight, in the shape of bruises and black eyes, must have ensured that amongst the upper working class where a man was inclined to assert his mastery over his wife he did so not by overt physical superiority but by the threat of that superiority.

"Mother used to take his boots off and his muffler....He'd sleep down on the couch. He used to kick the door at the bottom of the couch...That was the life then. I think mother used to feel it a bit. She tried to educate us and bring us up a bit different"⁷².

Financial dependence, children, the absence of somewhere else to go if she left and the pressures of society ensured that the upper working class woman, particularly, would remain with a husband who was more a tyrant than a companion. Occasionally - and often as the result of drink - physical violence did occur.

"He only hit me mother once. They were rowing when he was drunk because he hadn't come home with any money for Mom. So he punched her and she sat by me and I thought if he touches her again I'll kick him. He didn't touch her again"⁷³.

Nevertheless, such incidents would appear to be rarer amongst the upper working class. Amongst the poor, although difficult to do so it is necessary to attempt some distinction between the fighting that was considered "commonplace" between man and wife and was a feature of many lower working class households and that violence between the two sexes amongst the 'sunken' of the poor. Such a differentiation is obviously

⁷¹ Ibid., number 24 Mr. A.W. Chinn p.5.

⁷² Ibid., number 5 Mr. W. pp.9-10.

⁷³ Ibid., number 17 Mrs. Jones p.16.

dependent on subjective criteria, many arising from the divisions extant amongst the poor discussed in Chapter Five. However, if the violence of the 'residuum' was generally brutal and occurred outside the parameters normally limiting that violence amongst the lower working class, so too could wife beating, amongst those regarded as rough by the poor themselves, tend to assume a different character.

"Now, I ask again, 'What are Englishmen made for'...Woman was made to be the sport of ignorant loafers, to be battered and hided by dirty pygmies...to be cudgelled like an ox by a big, cowardly coon called 'husband'. She is the neglected, shamefully treated, half-starved, half-clad overworked slave... who must ever minister to her 'master's' wants....

If Englishmen...would...treat her in a manner becoming her character the moral and social condition of the working classes, especially, would speedily experience a gratifying change"⁷⁴.

Within unsettled and disorganised lower working class communities wherein resided the "inefficients" who could never "be made to compete on equal terms with their fellows"⁷⁵, the criminal and the sexually promiscuous, short term and unstable relationships were more common than in settled areas. Moreover, the dominance of the single male, of the transitory common law husband ensured that in such communities it was difficult to establish a matriarchy which to an extent regulated the lower working class in organised localities. Consequently, a lower value was placed on mothers (and therefore women in general) in contrast to their lauding elsewhere which thus enabled wife-beating (or more correctly, woman beating) to occur without infringing any accepted moral values. That is not to argue that wife beating amongst families in settled and established lower working class communities could not be overly violent and aimed at destroying a woman's spirit.

⁷⁴ The Birmingham Journal, April 28th 1855. Letter from an American.

⁷⁵ Report of The Medical Officer of Health of Birmingham, for 1911 p.4.

It could. Nevertheless, in such areas many women were strong characters, essential - as I have argued - to the family economically and emotionally and just as the working class in general was not cowed or subserviant to the middle and upper classes, neither was, necessarily, the lower working class wife to her husband. Violence between a man and wife was accepted amongst the poor where it was deviant amongst the upper working class.

"It was not uncommon to see a regular in the 'Duck Pen' sporting a lovely 'shiner' to wear it like a medal with a sense of pride after enquiries by the 'girls' for details, just,

'One off the b... old man'
Black eyes seemed to be a status symbol to be lost count of with many a total approaching a score"⁷⁶.

Women were not always passive victims. "Her could fight like a mon"⁷⁷ was a phrase often used in connection with strong willed and physically powerful women who did not allow men to dominate them without resistance. Moreover, such women "daynt pull hair...I've seen the old lady with her fists up - behind the door - ready to hit the old mon when he walked in from the pub"⁷⁸. A woman who could fight with her fists was as much a figure to be proud of as a father who was renowned for his fighting ability.

"Tek anybody on,...Dad...had his dinner, went up to 'The Wrexham' to have a drink. And he hadn't been out long and his lip was bleedin' and the old girl says,

'Who's done that?'

There used to be a gang in 'The Wrexham'...So, Mom says to me,

'Come with me son'.

We went up...and when she got to the corner she opened the door and looked in...This one brother as hit the old mon, he come...onto the pavement and mother hit him - Bump. Down he went. And he wouldn't get up to have another one. And her went to the door to pull his brother out, but he wouldn't come out when he could see what had happened. Her was never afraid of the old mon"⁷⁹.

⁷⁶ W.G. Chinn, op cit., p.21.

⁷⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.57.

⁷⁸ Ibid., number 25 Mr. W.G. Wood p.20.

⁷⁹ Ibid., number 2 Mr. William Chinn p.50.

Violence was always ready to erupt in lower working class communities as much between men and women as between men themselves. Living conditions ensured that the woman, the mother of a poor family was as important as the man and this engendered in many a certain independence of spirit and mental and physical strength which enabled them to survive the vicissitudes of slum life. The appreciation by her children of the lower working class mother arose from a knowledge of her sacrifices and of her continual toil for her family inside and outside the home; that of the upper working class mother by her children from an understanding of her continual assertion of the family and the home over her own interests and pleasures, of an awareness "that she'd got enough to do all the week round in the house"⁸⁰. If the role of the two differed its focus did not, that of maintaining the unity of the family.

⁸⁰ Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.19.

Chapter Eleven

Separate Schooling

One vital factor which might have been supposed to lessen the cultural division of the working class within West Sparkbrook was that of schooling. It has been widely argued that by mixing together children of different classes, nationality and religions in a single educational establishment, social intercourse can be enhanced and the schisms evident within society diminished. In the subject of this study the poor were a small minority and it might therefore be expected that their children and those of the upper working class attended the same schools, a fact which would encourage younger generations to be less susceptible to the prejudices which affected their parents. Indeed, in East Sparkbrook - a generally middle class area with a significant number of roads inhabited by the upper working class - the local school, Montgomery Street, drew children from:

"...one area what they called 'working class'...At the top end...such as by Christchurch...there were huge houses where people kept servants...people with money. So we had that type, the working class child and the children of widows"¹.

Before the 1870's and the onset of compulsory education for children, whilst the middle class sent their children to private schools, religious schools were attracting those of the working class (there were, as well small 'dame' type schools which attracted children of the upper working class). In particular, it was the schools of The Church of England run by "The National Society"² which were prominent, motivated by the desire to instil the principles of The Established Church amongst the lower classes whilst, at the same time, inculcat-

¹ Taffy Lewis, op cit., p.9. (Mr. Lewis was born in 1902).

² The National Society For Promoting The Education of The Poor in The Principles of The Established Church.

ing in them a sense of morality and discipline which would strengthen the existing social order. This type of school served a wide area and a dispersed population and in it could reasonably be expected to be found children of both sections of the working class. With the advent of compulsory education and Board Schools a new element was added. In Birmingham and its environs these schools were heavily connected with the dominant Liberal ethos of the city and - given the Liberal flavour of the local School Boards - came to be seen as providing a non-denominational schooling which could encourage a certain social mobility. Consequently, and over a period of time it would not be surprising if church schools tended to attract the lower working class child whilst Board Schools found favour with upper working class parents. However, another tendency became apparent which could, in certain schools, offset this assertion. It became increasingly felt that Board Schools were neighbourhood schools and that - whilst, perhaps, attracting children from outside their immediate locality - they 'belonged' to the district in which they were placed.

"If a well-to-do ratepayer thinks proper to send his children to a Board School, let him do so, but at the same time he should be required to send such children to the nearest school, and not one set apart for a distinct class"³.

In West Sparkbrook each element of this study possessed two schools, one Board and one Church of England: Stratford Road Board School and Christchurch in the North; and Clifton Road Board and Ladypool Road National⁴ in the South. It is, therefore, interesting to discover in the light of the preceding comments whether or not the economic and residential segregation of West Sparkbrook was reflected

³ The Balsall Heath Times, January 21st 1882.

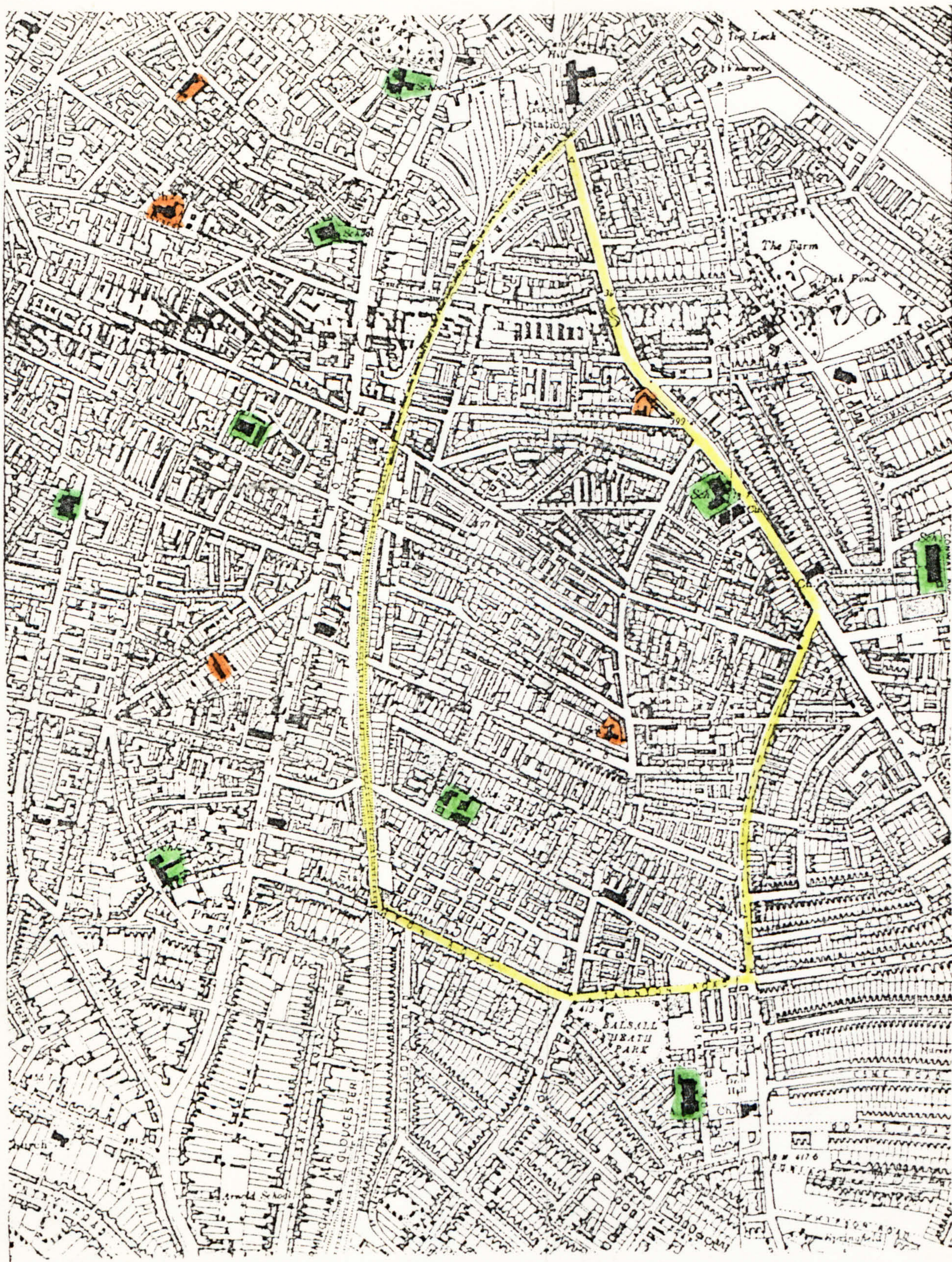
⁴ The naming of this school causes a few problems as it was known by various other names. However, I have adhered to that given by the Local Education Authority in 1901 which explains both location and affiliation.

in the social composition of these schools. An examination of the relevant 'Educational Census Books' of The City of Birmingham makes such an assessment possible⁵. However, in order more fully to validate the information provided by the inquiry, a number of schools outside West Sparkbrook need also to be included. These are those schools situated in adjacent areas at which the children of the district might reasonably be expected to attend for reasons of parental choice or proximity to the family home, rather than because of a previous address or out of an overtly religious preference⁵. Thus, National or other schools under the aegis of the Church of England are included, whilst Roman Catholic and Jewish Schools are not⁶; firstly, because it seems clear that a child's attendance at a National school was not necessarily the result of the parent's religious or denominational choice, as was the case with the other two; and secondly, because the numbers involved make the inclusion of some national schools outside the actual area desirable. In all, fourteen schools from inside and outside the area are included although one of them, Dennis Road School can - because of its situation - be fairly regarded as a 'local' West Sparkbrook school. Therefore, percentage attendances of children from a certain road at a given school are based on the total of children from that road attending the schools in-

⁵ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department MS 229. The books each cover a small area and give the schools attended by each child living in the roads of that area. Other information, such as changes of address and parent's occupations, is also included and The Books are, thus, a valuable primary source.

Appendix 7 lists the schools and Map 1 shows their location.

⁶ I have also excluded Special Schools from the survey.



Map 1

Schools Relevant to the Schooling of West Sparkbrook

- The boundary of the Study
- Board Schools
- National or Church of England Schools

(All Maps in this section from The Ordnance Survey Map 1921
scale 6" to 1 statute mile)

cluded in the survey. Finally, only those children born before or during 1905 are counted⁷.

Ladypool Road National

Of the five local schools this was the first to be opened, in 1857, serving the eastern portion of The Parish of Saint Paul's, Balsall Heath. It was followed in 1871 by Christchurch and by Clifton Road Board in 1878; in 1885 by Stratford Road Board and lastly by Dennis Road Board in 1896. However, before these latter had been built the four other schools had become established, according to local perception, in an order of merit. Sound schooling and a good education had become inextricably bound up with class and social status and each school - as did those others included in the survey - became increasingly associated with and related to the residential segregation of the area. This effect was most pronounced - as might be expected from the evidence presented in earlier chapters - in West Sparkbrook II. In this locality the school least popular in the preference of the upper working class parent was that which attracted a high percentage of the children of the poor; the local National School became generally avoided because "most of 'em from Studley Street went to Ladypool Road School"⁸. At this school the linking of a religious education with the poverty of its pupils was at its most obvious, as

⁷ This is because a The Books are not consistent in the dates they cover and b from 1909 the intake for Ladypool Road National was drastically lowered. Thus, given that many children started school as young as three in the period under review, 1905 was the last year in which children were born whose choice of school was not affected by this reduction in intake. Most of the books begin in 1907/8 and thus the information provided is basically of children attending school from the mid 1890's to 1908. Finally, if a family - because of moves - is included in The Books more than once for the same road then the children are only counted once, although included twice if the move is to a different road.

⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. T. Sleath p.32.

was another factor which might disincline the attendance of the children of the respectable upper working class; the fact that "the lads and the girls sat in the same class, mixed together"⁹.

Yet, from the location of the school, only yards from the district's highest status road - Saint Paul's Road - and also very close to the poorer quarter, it was exactly here that a social mix of upper and lower working class children might have been expected¹⁰.

Such was not the case. The late 1880's and early 1890's saw Ladypool Road National shed completely its former function as a school serving a large area and become 'localised' in its character. This was achieved as the result of two factors: firstly, the culmination of the urbanisation of West Sparkbrook and secondly, as a result of the first, the erection of new schools to cater for the district's rapidly rising population. In 1888 a total of 17% of the pupils lived outside the study area; by 1893 this had dropped to 3.8%. Indeed, between 1888 and 1908, 86% of the children at the school came from West Sparkbrook II alone¹¹.

However, whilst the school became localised it did so only in respect of a certain number of roads near to it. An examination of the roads of residence of the school's pupils (from The Educational Census Books) indicates that those roads where 10% or more of the children attended Ladypool Road National were all situated close by¹². Yet, in not all the roads nearest to the school did 10% or more of the children

⁹ Ibid., p.32.

¹⁰ Map 2 shows the position of the school.

¹¹ These figures are taken from City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department Ladypool Road National (Mixed) Bemrose's School Register Series: School Register of Admissions Progress and Withdrawal .

¹² These and following percentages (unless stated) are based on figures taken from City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department The Educational Census Books MS 229. I have available the individual figures for each road of the district if these are required.

Map 2

The Position of Ladypool Road
National School



attend the establishment¹³. If the roads and streets closest to the school are classified according to the local perception of their respectability and the social standing of their residents, then a clear and significant division emerges. It becomes obvious that those roads from which the highest proportions of children attended Ladypool Road National were those of the poor or of the lower ranks of the generality of the upper working class. Thus, 38% of the children of Studley Street¹⁴ and 25.8% of those of Alfred Street¹⁵ were pupils at the school, compared to a mere 7% of those of Saint Paul's Road¹⁶ and a near non-existent 1% of those of Kingsley Road¹⁷. Moreover, the actual numbers of children accentuates the results of the division: seventy nine from Studley Street; forty three from Alfred Street; twenty seven from Saint Paul's Road and merely one from Kingsley Road. Again, only in Studley Street did the highest number of children attend Ladypool Road National; in Alfred Street it came second (a higher number going to Clifton Road Board) whilst Colville Road¹⁸ was the only other road in which the school came second in terms of numbers attending it. Indeed, apart from these roads and Leamington Road¹⁹, in no other road in West Sparkbrook was attendance at the school higher than one in five of the children.

Furthermore, if an examination is made of the attendance of those children living in the roads of the higher sections of the upper working class, then a social split within those roads becomes evident. In

¹³ Table 1 gives the proportions of the nearby roads.

¹⁴ MS 229 Book number 17 (censused between 28/2/08 and 12/9/12).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ MS 229: 303 (censused between 24/10/07 and 17/12/15).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ MS 229: 358 (censused between 19/8/07 and 3/2/16).

¹⁹ MS 229: 44 (censused between 24/8/07 and 11/7/12).

Table 1 : Attendance at Ladypool Road National
Percentage of Children of School Age in
Each Neighbouring Street Who Attended
The School

Street/Road	Status	%
Saint Paul's Road	Highest Status Upper Working Class	7.0
Kingsley Road	High Status Upper Working Class	1.0
Ombersley Road	High Status Upper Working Class	5.7
Woodfield Road	High Status Upper Working Class	2.9
Ladypool Road	Generality of Upper Working Class/Shopkeepers	15.4
Leamington Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	18.4
Colville Road	Low Status Generality of Upper Working Class	19.3
Oldfield Road	Low Status Generality of Upper Working Class	14.8
Alfred Street	Lower Working Class	25.8
Queen Street	Low Status Lower Working Class	14.8
Studley Street	Lowest Status Lower Working Class	38.0

Note:- Percentages in this and following tables used in this chapter are rounded to the nearest tenth of a decimal point. Thus, the percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% exactly.

Saint Paul's Road, Ombersley Road²⁰, Ladypool Road²¹ and Leamington Road between 45% and 56% of the children who were pupils at Ladypool Road National lived in 'back' houses; that is in houses considered socially inferior because they did not 'front' onto the road itself. A similar effect was noticeable even in those roads of the generality of the upper working class not too distant socially from those of the poor: in Colville, Highgate²² and Oldfield²³ Roads between 41% and 58% of the children attending the school lived in back houses²⁴.

By the 1890's, Ladypool Road National had quite definitely crystallised into the school of the poor and of those of lower social standing within the upper working class. Moreover, the years in which children from the district's four roads of the highest social standing (Saint Paul's Road, Ombersley Road, Kingsley Road and Woodfield Road) were most likely to be pupils at the school, coincided with or directly followed periods of frenetic house building activity, when a resultant influx of population was likely to place a strain on the accommodations of local schools and lessen parental choice of school. Between 1888 and 1908 eighty children from Saint Paul's Road attended Ladypool Road National, an average of 3.8 children per year²⁵. However, forty two of them were pupils between 1888 and the end of 1894 - between which years the road was largely developed - an average of six a year, whilst only thirty two children from the road attended the school over the

²⁰ MS 229: 298 (censused between 14/11/07 and 22/10/15).

²¹ MS 229: 358 (censused between 24/8/07 and 17/3/16). The Census only provides figures for that portion of the Ladypool Road in West Sparkbrook II between Highgate Road and Brunswick Road (West side) and Leamington Road (East side). No Books are available which cover Brunswick, Taunton and Roshven Roads for this period, although approximations as to the school attendance of their children can be reasonably made from that of surrounding roads.

²² MS 229: 47 (censused between 22/10/08 and 15/4/12).

²³ MS 229:476 (censused between 20/2/08 and 30/9/15).

²⁴ Table 2 gives a breakdown of this effect.

²⁵ Ladypool Road National (Mixed): School Register....

Table 2 : Attendance at Ladypool Road National
Percentage of School Age Children Attending The
School from Roads of The Upper Working
Class and Living in 'Back' Houses

Road	Status	Total Number	Number Living in Back Houses	%
Saint Paul's Road	Highest Status Upper Working Class	27	12	45
Ombersley Road	High Status Upper Working Class	26	12	46
Ladypool Road	Generality of Upper Working Class/ Shopkeepers	30	16	53
Leamington Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	63	35	56
Colville Road	Low Status Generality	70	33	47
Highgate Road	Low Status Generality	90	37	51
Oldfield Road	Low Status Generality	92	53	58

next fourteen years; an average of 2.7 per year²⁶. This diminishing in the number of pupils living in roads of a very high social standing (high, that is, within the working class) was paralleled by an increase in the number of pupils who lived in roads of a low social standing. Over the same twenty one year period, ninety six children from Studley Street attended Ladypool Road National; an average of 4.6 children a year²⁷. Of these twenty seven were in attendance before the end of 1894, giving an average of 3.9 children a year. In contrast, seventy nine were pupils after this, an average of 5.6 a year²⁸. Indeed, this phenomenon is emphasised when it emerges that the low status White Street²⁹, nearer by far to Clifton Road Board, sent a higher percentage of its children to Ladypool Road National (10%) than the very much closer Saint Paul's Road.

It is apparent, therefore, that before the 1890's upper working class children were much more likely to be pupils at the school than after. Consequently, reasons other than that National Schools were aimed more at the children of the poor need to be inquired into, given that the wholesale transformation in the social composition of the school's pupils occurred during the very decade that Studley Street and its inhabitants began to impinge more overtly on the consciousness of the district's respectable upper working class. Obviously, the objects of the school's governing body did have an important influence on this social composition. A sermon preached in 1857 by The Right Reverend Dr. Wordsworth to help clear the deficits on the school's buildings and those of its sister establishment, St. Paul's Vincent Street, emphasised

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 MS 229: 160 (censused between 8/9/10 and 26/9/12).

this.

"...few districts of the borough have stood in greater need of education than the neighbourhood in which these schools are placed and that few of our prelates have more at heart the religious, moral and social advancement of the poorer classes..."³⁰.

Equally, Ladypool Road National became proud of its record in the field of religious education, although, interestingly, this became more pronounced from the 1890's as its general academic record deteriorated: "The result of the exam in each division was Excellent, the work being above the average"³¹. The Education Act had not forbidden the teaching of religion in Board Schools only that such should not be "distinctive of any particular denomination"³²; yet whether such an omission of denominational religious teaching appealed more to upper working class parents than those of the poor is uncertain. Nevertheless, it would appear that with the building of alternative schools, the strongly religious based education at Ladypool Road National became less attractive to certain upper working class parents; especially as that religious education became increasingly important to the local Anglican clergy, because the Roman Catholics were contemplating the building of schools in Mary Street, nearby in Balsall Heath³³.

"Our headmaster was the organist at St. Barnabas and he liked to see us at Sunday School. He'd got a temper. He used to look for us at Church...Ladypool Road [National]... had...glass partitions and every morning they was all drawed back and we all had to be there for prayers. Used to go to Church, Good Friday, Christmas for carols"³⁴.

³⁰ The Birmingham Journal and Commercial Advertiser, July 19th 1857.

³¹ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. Ladypool Road National: Log Book November 6th 1902. Scripture Report from The Managers. Mr. W.E. Ivens, Assistant Diocesan Inspector.

³² The Education Act 1870 : Clause 14 Section I.

³³ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. St. Paul's Church: Church Council and Executive Minute Book June 16th 1910.

³⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.32. From 1901 Ladypool Road National was within the new parish of St. Barnabas, but remained attached to St. Paul's Church.

Thus, whilst in reference to National Schools I tend to the view that social and locational factors were the most important in deciding a child's attendance at them, it would be most unwise to discount the influence of religion. Indeed, whilst a heavy stress on religious education might, for some parents, have been a negative factor, for others it might equally have been positive despite the opinions of their children.

" course it [Vincent Street] was a Church School. We used to go up there, Monday morning...to St. Paul's Church. Cold. Starving. There wasn't a spark of heating...and old vicar Harris used to get there and moan and groan and put the fear of God up us kids. All in the name of religion...When I got the freedom of the city, I said,
'Yes, I've had enough'"³⁵.

There were, nevertheless, other important influences at work which resulted in a lessening of the number of upper working class children at Ladypool Road National, other than the significance of religion. In 1858 four hundred children from the school were "treated to tea and cake by John Lloyd...of Showell Green in their school rooms"³⁶. It is inconceivable, given the social standing of the district at the time, that all these - or even a majority of them - could have been lower working class. Yet, four hundred was an over large number of children to crowd into a school with only one classroom and with an official accommodation of just three hundred and eighteen. It is, thus, this issue of the building itself which became increasingly important as the century progressed. In 1881 Her Majesty's Inspector declared that the organisation of the school was "not calculated to produce thorough efficiency...The infants...number about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the whole school...They interfere...with the teaching of the older scholars"³⁷. Following a

³⁵ Ibid., number 20 Mr. F. Franklin pp.1-2.

³⁶ The Birmingham Journal, September 17th 1858.

³⁷ The Log Book of Ladypool Road National School. Report of H.M.I. January 1881.

similar complaint in November of the same year the school was divided into two sections: mixed (junior) and infants³⁸.

By comparison nearby Clifton Road Board had an accommodation of eight hundred and sixty eight in three sections - boys, girls and infants - and was enlarged five years after its opening in 1883 and again in 1885 and 1906. Indeed, locally the smallness of the buildings was seen as a reason for the high number of children of the poor at Ladypool Road National. Moreover, by inference, the implication arose that such children belonged at a school whose structure was inferior in quality.

"...and also St. Barnabas' was very much on the small side. And we, as kids, used to say [to the children of Studley Street],

'That's the only place where they've got room for you'³⁹.

Problems of overcrowding and inadequate facilities increased rather than decreased with the years. In 1886 it was reported that "The class-room (which properly holds 30 scholars) is crowded and ill ventilated"⁴⁰. By 1910 matters had so deteriorated that there was talk of clearing the school⁴¹, which indeed was to occur following the school's closure in 1938. Meanwhile in 1913 it was reported that the system of heating at the school was defective; that the boy's yard was a quagmire when wet and coated with dust when not; that more adequate cloakroom provision should be provided for the girls and that the proportional accommodation of the two departments needed adjusting⁴².

³⁸ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. November 30th 1881.

³⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 13 Mr. Atkins p.14.
St. Barnabas' was one of the school's alternative names.

⁴⁰ Ladypool Road National Log Book. Report of H.M.I. October 18th 1886.

⁴¹ St. Paul's Church: Church Council and Executive Minute Book June 16th 1910.

⁴² Ladypool Road National Log Book. Report of H.M.I. February 21st 1913.
After 1908 the Infant's Department was larger than that of the Mixed.

These problems of the structure and of inadequate facilities affected the teaching at the school. Although all schools at this time taught on the basis of the importance of 'the three r's' newer establishments had an advantage in that they had the facilities to teach other subjects. Certain schools catered for cooking whilst at Stratford Road "we used to have our own manual...Then we used to go to Newton Road for our science lesson"⁴³. Furthermore, whilst the structural straitjacket of Ladypool Road National's building precluded the provision of such facilities, the quality of teaching of the basic subjects was the subject of considerable complaint. By 1885 "making all due allowances for the difficulties of the mixed school its present position must be considered critical"⁴⁴. The following year it was reported that "the children are inaccurate and careless to an extent rarely seen in the present day"⁴⁵.

For a time the appointment of a new headmaster reversed the trend and increased the quality of teaching so that, six months after Mr. H.C. Hall took charge, the school was reported as making "satisfactory progress"⁴⁶. The following year the situation had so dramatically improved that it was believed that the school had been raised from "inefficiency to superiority"⁴⁷. However, by this date such a change could do little to improve the standing of the school in the view of the local community. Crucially, the nadir of its teaching fortunes had been reached in the 1880's at precisely the time when large numbers of roads for the upper working class were being cut and houses being built along them. For the parents of such families who were concerned

⁴³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes pp.5-6.

⁴⁴ Ladypool Road National Log Book. Report of H.M.I. November 1885.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. October 18th 1886.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. October 22nd 1888.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. October 19th 1889.

with the quality of their children's education, Ladypool Road National proved no competition with the newer Board schools of the district. Moreover, whilst Clifton Road Board drew away from the school pupils who lived on the former estate of The Freehold Land Society, Ladypool Road National was left as the nearest school to the poor quarter of West Sparkbrook.

Yet, it was not long before the inadequate assistance of the school's managers to the efforts of its headmaster rendered his and his successor's task impossible. The school remained overcrowded with children of all ages being taught in one large room and a small classroom⁴⁸. Two bazaars were held (in 1888 and 1892) to help raise money to renovate the buildings⁴⁹ but this did not affect the basic teaching problem at the school.

"I find it extremely difficult to carry on the work of this school with the meagre staff allowed me by the managers..... I have had to group sts 3 & 4 together and also sts 5 & 6"⁵⁰.

This grouping meant the teaching of seventy children together; "you'd got to be in a class two years. Hadn't got seven, they'd got six. They'd got seven at Stratford Road"⁵¹. By 1903 whilst the school's religious education was "among the best in the diocese"⁵², "violation of Art 73 of the Provisional Code continues"⁵³. Moreover:

"The Children just above the babies will need much more skilful teaching if they are to enter the upper department in a good state of preparation. Singing, needlework and drawing below the First Standard are barely satisfactory...There has been some dislocation of staffing due to the illness and resignation of a teacher"⁵⁴.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. October 31st 1892.

⁴⁹ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, April 3rd 1895 p.348.

⁵⁰ Ladypool Road National Log Book April 3rd 1902.

⁵¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 4 Mr. W. Remington p.36.

⁵² Ladypool Road National Log Book. Report of The Diocesan Inspector 1903.

⁵³ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. November 3rd 1903.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. November 3rd 1903.

It became obvious that more than the school being understaffed it was not attracting teachers of a similar skill as many of those at nearby schools. Furthermore, the depressing state of Ladypool Road National obviously communicated itself to the staff as frequent absences of teachers were a matter of regular entry into the Log Book⁵⁵. Teaching became increasingly difficult and unproductive.

"I never knew anyone who attended or had attended the little school. There was a kind of vagueness about it....I vividly remember Mr. Irwin, a harsh teacher we had at Stratford Road...getting annoyed by an answer that I gave that seemed to him particularly stupid.

'You trying for grammar School?' he shouted contemptuously. 'The only grammar school you'll go to is Ladypool Road Grammar School'. Obviously, the school didn't rank highly among members of the teaching profession"⁵⁶.

In many respects the position of Ladypool Road National reflected the problems of some modern schools in the inner cities beset by inadequate facilities and at times a high turnover of uninterested teachers. What distinguished this school was that during the period under review it was situated in an outer city area of the upper working class but one in which were exhibited some of the problems, in respect of its poor quarter and its inhabitants, which are relevant today. A consequence of poor teaching was that, in an age when school discipline was already strong, certain of the staff exceeded the bounds of acceptability when administering punishment. This was not to be reflected in The Log Books for Clifton Road Board School.

"...Miss Noyse...she used to like to thump you in the back if you didn't do anything right...Elsie Pardon run home and told her mother she'd had a thumping in the back. Her mother come up and caused a proper rumpus at the school. The headmaster had to be fetched out"⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ Ibid., April 25th 1913.

⁵⁶ Leslie Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.12.

⁵⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.31.

In 1912 the headmaster had "occasion to speak to Miss Noyse about the excessive amount of punishment in her class"⁵⁸. Five years previously a Miss Pettyfer was the subject of complaint of a parent over banging her child about the head, despite having no permission to administer corporal punishment⁵⁹. The same teacher was spoken to again following another parental complaint after which the headmaster observed that "the child certainly appeared to have been knocked about and there was a black bruise on the right arm"⁶⁰. Of course, not all the teachers at the school behaved in this manner; "Miss Sumners...was a staunch believer in not hitting little children...Miss Perian, she was nice"⁶¹. Nevertheless, the school did become associated with an excessive use of force in discipline and this trend had been observed as early as 1876 when "the teachers were again spoken to about punishing the children"⁶².

Nearly every school in the district had its share of children of the poor; at none, however, were they seen as the dominant element as they were at Ladypool Road National. As at other schools steps were taken to assist such children: in 1887 a soup kitchen was started to provide dinners for them⁶³; in 1895 the father of one pupil gave one hundred loaves for distribution amongst the poor children⁶⁴; and in the same year the headmaster "sent a list of the names of those children who have no father and whose fathers have no work, to the vicar for charitable purposes"⁶⁵. However, by 1911 - unlike at other schools in and around the area - there were so many lower working class children

⁵⁸ Ladypool Road National Log Book January 24th 1912.

⁵⁹ Ibid., October 14th 1907.

⁶⁰ Ibid., October 15th 1907.

⁶¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.31.

⁶² Ladypool Road National Log Book September 18th 1876.

⁶³ Ibid., January 20th 1887.

⁶⁴ Ibid., February 15th 1895.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

in attendance at Ladypool Road National that the absence of those who received charity resulted in a:

"Poor attendance this morning owing to children going to Police Book and Clothes"⁶⁶.

Ladypool Road National, the school of the children of Studley Street, was West Sparkbrook's worst academically, and structurally. What then was seen as the district's best school?

Tindal Street Board

Of the twenty roads of West Sparkbrook II covered by The Educational Census Books, fourteen had children in attendance at Tindal Street Board. This was a school, erected in 1880, with an accommodation of eight hundred and eighteen in three departments (Boys, Girls and Infants) situated across the Moseley Road out of the district in Balsall Heath. None of the streets of the lower working class are included amongst these fourteen roads. Apart from Runcorn Road⁶⁷, the four roads of the district from which 10% or more of the children attended Tindal Street Board, were precisely those four roads closest to Ladypool Road National where attendance at that school was less than 10% of the children⁶⁸. Indeed, for only Runcorn Road could Tindal Street Board be seen as either the nearest or one of the two nearest schools⁶⁹. Moreover, the other four roads - Saint Paul's, Ombersley, Kingsley and Woodfield - were not only closer to Ladypool Road National but were also nearer to Clifton Road Board. Tindal Street Board was:

"...considered, now this sounds big headed and I don't mean that at all, but it was considered better than Clifton Road or Dennis Road...Tindal Street was a good school. Clifton Road is the nearest school"⁷⁰.

⁶⁶ Ibid., January 20th 1911. This refers to a police charity which gave free boots and jumpers to children of the poor.

⁶⁷ MS 229: 516 (censused between 26/9/13 and 10/2/27).

⁶⁸ Table 3 gives the attendances at Tindal Street.

⁶⁹ Map 3 shows the position of the school.

⁷⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 21 Miss Abel p.2.

Table 3 : Attendance at Tindal Street School

Percentage Attendance of School Age Children from The Roads
of West Sparkbrook II at The School

Road/Street	Status	%
Saint Paul's. Road	Highest Status Upper Working Class	18.4
Kingsley Road	High Status Upper Working Class	43.9
Ombersley Road	High Status Upper Working Class	14.2
Runcorn Road	High Status Upper Working Class	37.8
Woodfield Road	High Status Upper Working Class	19.4
Chesterton Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	0.8
Clifton Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	5.8
Hertford Street	Generality of Upper Working Class	2.8
Ladypool Road	Generality of Upper Working Class/ Shopkeepers	3.6
Leamington Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	2.1
Malvern Street	Generality of Upper Working Class	9.0
Colville Road	Low Status Generality of Upper Working Class	1.1
Highgate Road	Low Status Generality of Upper Working Class	0.7
Oldfield Road	Low Status Generality of Upper Working Class	3.7
Alfred Street	Lower Working Class	0
White Street	Lower Working Class	0
Queen Street	Low Status Lower Working Class	0
Studley Street	Lowest Status Lower Working Class	0

A massive 43% of the children of Kingsley Road attended Tindal Street Board whilst three times as many children from Saint Paul's Road attended this more distant school than attended Ladypool Road National, situated almost on the corner of their road. For the parents of the highest reaches of the upper working class of West Sparkbrook II the former school attracted whilst the latter repelled. As early as the 1880's it was noticed that in many instances children of the more affluent had "to pass other Board Schools in order to attend Tindal Street"⁷¹ and it was in this decade that the popularity of the school with the upper working class became firmly rooted. It appeared that from its opening a clique of liberals who dominated The Kings Norton School Board⁷² had determined that Tindal Street Board should be reserved for Balsall Heath's children of the middle class, (who were still prominent in the district during the 1880's)

"...it [Tindal Street] is attended almost solely by the children of the middle class...several of the scholars being the sons and daughters of gentlemen. There are few, if any, poor children in attendance...the Board have recognised the social superiority of the children by refusing to admit into their school any of their numerous free scholars all of which are at the neighbouring Board Schools at Mary Street and Clifton Road...the greater portion of the cost of educating these children of the middle and upper classes was defrayed by rates to which even the poorest householders contribute.

The average fee in schools of this kind should be 9d a week"⁷³.

Such an occurrence was not unique to Balsall Heath; Her Majesty's Inspectors had stated in 'The Blue Books' of 1881-82 that "there are parents of middle class rank who do not hesitate to place their children in a Board School...each of these better class children...costs the rate

⁷¹ The Balsall Heath Times, January 21st 1882.

⁷² The schools of West Sparkbrook II and Balsall Heath were part of this Board until the annexation by Birmingham in 1891.

⁷³ The Balsall Heath Times, January 14th 1882. Report of The Monthly Meeting of The Kings Norton School Board. The quote is from a letter sent by The Education Department to the clerk of The Board following a report of one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. The fees at Tindal Street were 1d, 2d and 3d, as at others of The Board's schools.



Map 3

The Position of Tindal Street Board School

— The boundary of the study.

from £8 to £19"⁷⁴. One result of so many middle class children attending Tindal Street Board was that "the guinea quarterly seminaries in the neighbourhood have...been practically emptied..."⁷⁵. Moreover, soon after the school had been opened - around September 1880 - middle class children had been transferred from The Board's other two schools in Balsall Heath (Mary Street and Clifton Road) to Tindal Street Board as a matter of deliberate policy. Not all the inhabitants of the district objected to this form of selection based on class.

"It is well known that the upper and middle classes inhabitants are the people who pay the school board rates...; on the other hand the schools are used extensively for the education of children of parents who care little as to whether they attend school or not, pay no rates and are not renowned for cleanliness, in fact, were it not compulsory, would bring up their children in the same ignorance as they have revelled in...I contend if there had been any endeavour.. of any members of the School Board to separate the children, every praise is due to them"⁷⁶.

Although the discriminatory policy of The Board did not survive, the association of Tindal Street Board in its first years of existence with the middle class, with 'respectability' and with a good education, ensured that the school became esconced as the 'best' of West Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath. As the 1890's saw both districts become increasingly upper working class in character so too did the social composition of the school's pupils alter from largely middle class to chiefly upper working class, although being mainly derived from the higher reaches of that section. Thus, this process evident in the 1880's occurred whilst Ladypool Road National was becoming increasingly unpopular and unappealing to the very families for whom Tindal Street

⁷⁴ Cited in a letter of Lawrence Tipper to The Balsall Heath Times, December 23rd 1882.

⁷⁵ The Balsall Heath Times, January 14th 1882. Letter from The Education Department to the Clerk of The Board dated December 5th 1881. The Department quotes the comments of Her Majesty's Inspector who visited the school.

⁷⁶ The Balsall Heath Times, June 24th 1882. Letter off H. Collings of Moseley Road.

Board was proving such a magnet. Indeed, in 1882, it was felt that there should be an inquiry into what children had been admitted to Ladypool Road National and St. Paul's, Vincent Street and who had been refused admission to Tindal Street Board, in the belief that such children were free scholars, children of the poor⁷⁷.

The popularity of Tindal Street is emphasised and the reasons for it accentuated when an examination is made of the attendance of children from the district's four most respectable roads already reviewed, at other schools in Balsall Heath. Apart from Sherbourne Road Board - which I shall discuss later in this chapter - such attendance was slight. At Mary Street Board it was as follows: Kingsley Road 6%; Ombersley Road 2.4%; Saint Paul's Road 3.6% and Woodfield Road 1.9%⁷⁸. In the case of each road, children in attendance at the school could be accounted for by previous address in most cases⁷⁹. The avoidance of Mary Street Board can only be explained in the light of the evidence provided that in the early 1880's free scholars in the district were deliberately sent to the school and to Clifton Road Board and that a certain stigma, social and educational, remained connected to the both. Indeed, apart from attendance at Tindal Street Board, Sherbourne Road Board and to a lesser extent, Conway Road Board, the fact of children living in West Sparkbrook II attending schools outside the area could greatly be explained by the factor of previous address.

"My older brothers and sisters always went to Vincent Street. Then the old people left. Come to Brunswick Road...then they graduated to Colville Road. But...I'd still got to go with my brothers and sisters to Vincent Street"⁸⁰.

The elitist nature of Tindal Street Board was only augmented by the fact that the attendance of so few of the pupils from those roads of

⁷⁷ The Balsall Heath Times, March 25th 1882. Letter from J. Smith.

⁷⁸ MS 229: 309 (censused between 7/5/08 and 8/6/16).

⁷⁹ Table 4 indicates this correlation.

⁸⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 20 Mr. F. Franklin p.1.

Table 4 : Attendance at Mary Street Board

Where Attendance of School Age Children Could Be Accounted
for By Previous Address of Family

Road	Number of Children	Previous Address
Kingsley Road	six	4 x Balsall Heath Road 2 x Edward Road
Ombersley Road	Eleven	4 x Hallam Street 2 x Mary Street 1 x Knutsford Street 1 x Lincoln Street
Saint Paul's Road	Fourteen	8 x Mary Street
Woodfield Road	Four	1 x Balsall Heath Road 1 x Tindal Street 1 x Wenman Street

high social standing in West Sparkbrook II could be explained by the family's previous address.

Dennis Road Board.

This, the last school to be opened of those included in this survey, proved second only to Tindal Street Board in the order of merit of schooling of West Sparkbrook II and Balsall Heath. Two factors proved important in establishing the school in this position; the first was its modernity and the resultant superiority in structure, facilities and teaching, especially when compared to the woefully and totally inadequate Ladypool Road National.

"I went to Dennis Road and then I went to Yardley Grammar. I went...and my brother did because it was a new school. The local people said that Tindal Street school was an excellent school and the...girls next door went there. But mother said

'No, I'll get you into Dennis Road if I can because it is a reasonably new school'⁸¹.

The second factor contributing to the popularity of Dennis Road Board was that of its position which enhanced the appeal of its modernity. Accommodating six hundred and sixty children in its mixed department and three hundred and sixty in its infants, the school was located just south of this survey in an upper working class outshoot of West Sparkbrook II in the generally middle class North Moseley⁸². Thus, those pupils at the school who came from the area of this study were mostly from nearby roads of a high social standing amongst the local working class, or else were attracted by its newness from more distant roads of a similar social status⁸³. West Sparkbrook's poor quarter was too far away from the school for its children to be of any significance in terms of attendance. Indeed, no children from Studley

⁸¹ Ibid., number 13 Mrs. Atkins p.35.

⁸² Map 4 indicates the position of the school.

⁸³ Table 5

Table 5 : Attendance at Dennis Road School
Roads in West Sparkbrook II From Which 5% or More of
The School Age Children Were In Attendance At The School

Road	Status	Location	%
Saint Paul's Road	Highest Status Upper Working Class	Closer to Clifton Road and Ladypool Road National	8.9
Kingsley Road	High Status Upper Working Class	Closer to Clifton Road Board and Ladypool Road National	5.1
Runcorn Road	High Status Upper Working Class	Close to Clifton Road, Tindal Street and Dennis Road	16.7
Chesteron Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	Close to Clifton Road and Dennis Road	31.1
Clifton Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	Lower section close to Dennis Road	29.9
Ladypool Road	Generality/Shopkeepers	Closer to Ladypool Road National	17.4
Leamington Road	Generality of Upper Working Class	Closer to Ladypool Road National	20.5
Colville Road	Low Status Generality	Closer to Ladypool Road National	13.9

It is likely that a high percentage of the children from Taunton Road, Roshven Road and the southernmost section of Ladypool road (all not covered by The Educational Census Books) attended Dennis Road Board which was nearby to all three.

Street were pupils at the school during the period under review and only seven from Alfred Street with a further three from Queen Street⁸⁴. One result of this absence of poor children at the school was a strengthening of the view that the school was a good one and a reinforcing of the opinion that such schools were reserved for the better off of the working class

"I wornt clever enough. I went to Clifton Road. It [Dennis Road] was high tie

'Good morning sir'

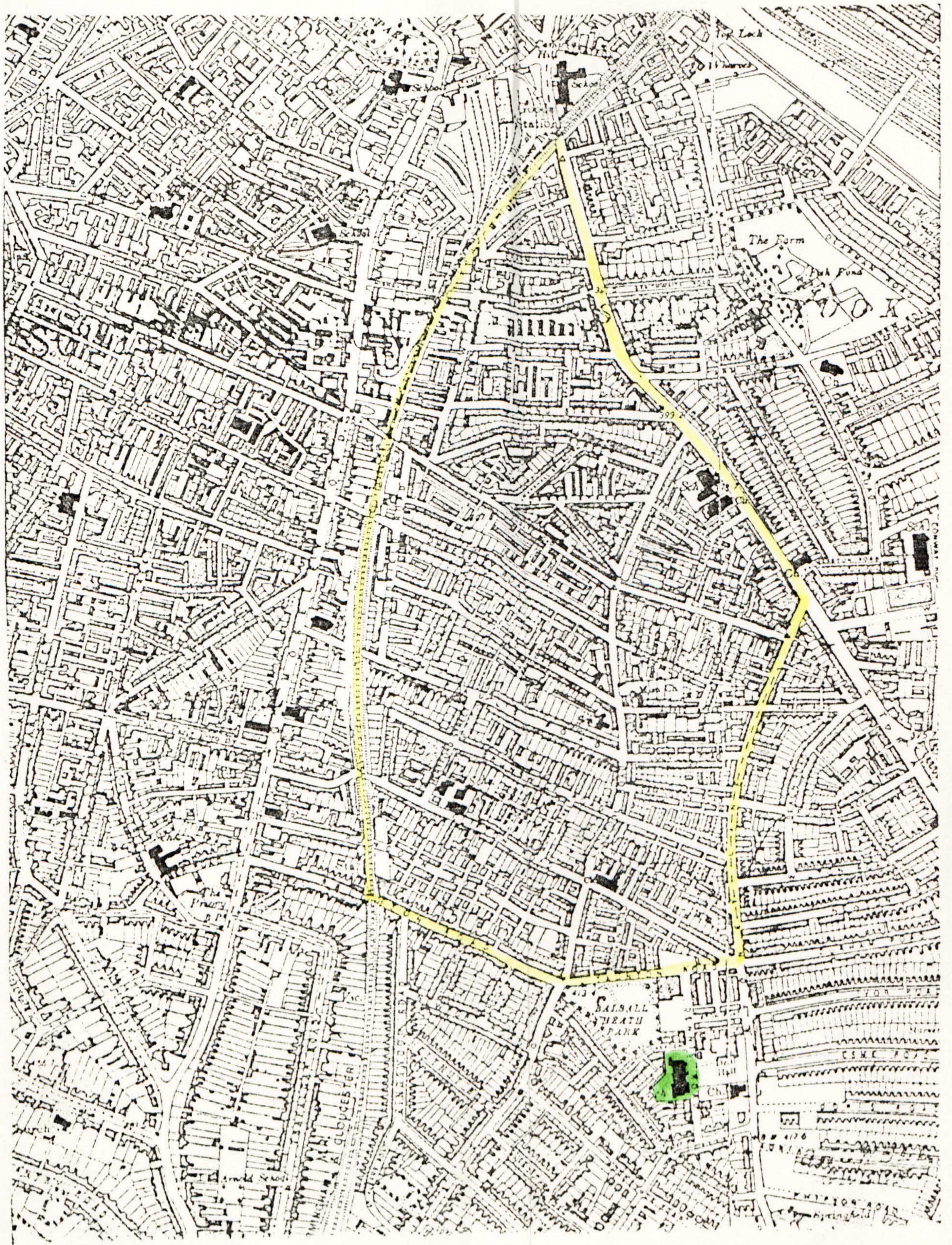
You'd got to be dressed nicely and uniforms. You couldn't have one if you was poor"⁸⁵.

However, it is obvious that there was no deliberate policy to exclude the children of the poor as there had been at Tindal Street Board in the 1880's. The upper working class background of the great majority of the children at Dennis Road Board was due to its situation and to the fact that some of the parents of that section who resided further away were prepared to actively seek their children's admission at the school, out of a concern for the quality of education available there. Indeed, at a time when teachers in general and headmasters in particular were regarded as middle class the appeal of Dennis Road Board was emphasised by the fact that "me headmaster Mr. White...his two sons went to that school as well"⁸⁶. Moreover, the preceding oral evidence is, to an extent, invalidated in fact - although not, vitally, in perception - as the interviewee's younger brother was in attendance at Tindal Street Board.

⁸⁴ MS 229: 17 (censused between 27/2/08 and 19/9/12). Because of local perception and street loyalty I have included Ten House Row in Queen Street despite its inclusion in Stoney Lane in The Educational Census Books.

⁸⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. Les Brown pp.9-10.

⁸⁶ Ibid., number 7 Mrs. Merriman p.14.



Map 4

The Position of Dennis Road Board School

Clifton Road Board

The educational and social standing of this school reflected the background of the majority of its pupils who were of the generality of the upper working class. Clifton Road Board was situated amongst a cluster of roads of that section and "the gt majority" of pupils "reside close at hand"⁸⁷. In a distinct contrast to the situation prevalent at Ladypool Road National the roads around Clifton Road Board sent a majority of their children to the school: 77.6% from Malvern Street⁸⁸; 68.8% from White Street; 67.9% from Hertford Street⁸⁹ and 51.9% from Clifton Road itself - the lower portion of which lying between the Ladypool Road and Stoney Lane was closer to Dennis Road Board⁹⁰. Thus, unlike Tindal Street Board, Clifton Road Board was very much localised:

"Talking for meself I can honestly say that I don't think that any other kid from our street attended Clifton Road School...Most of the kids in my class came from White Street, Brunswick Road⁹¹, Clifton Road, Brighton Road"⁹².

Yet, whilst Clifton Road Board drew the majority of its pupils from roads nearby, two factors conspired to lessen the localisation of the school. Firstly, the size of the buildings ensured that there would be places available for children living further away but still in the district. Thus, given the restrictions imposed at Tindal Street and Dennis Road Boards by their popularity and their consequent inability to accommodate all those children whose parents wished them to

⁸⁷ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department, Clifton Road School: Log Book. Report of H.M.I. October 2nd 1880.

⁸⁸ IIS 229: 160 (censused between 17/9/08 and 25/9/12).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Table 6 makes a comparison in the school attendance between the roads nearest to Clifton Road Board and those nearest to Ladypool Road National.

⁹¹ Brunswick Road is absent from The Census Books but given its position, it is likely that over 50% of the children from the road attended Clifton Road Board.

⁹² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.21.

Table 6 : Comparison in School Attendance of
School Age Children Living in Roads Nearest to
Clifton Road Board and Roads Nearest to Ladypool
Road National

Nine Closest Roads To Ladypool Road National	% at Ladypool Road National	Nine Closest Roads To Clifton Road Board	% at Clifton Road Board
Alfred Street	25.8	Brunswick Road*	55.0
Colville Road	19.3	Chesterton Road	41.7
Ladypool Road	15.4	Clifton Road	52.0
Leamington Road	18.4	Hertford Street	67.9
Oldfield Road	14.8	Ladypool Road*	35.0
Ombersley Road	5.7	Leamington Road	30.8
Queen Street	14.8	Malvern Street	77.6
Saint Paul's Road	7.0	Runcorn Road	36.1
Studley Street	38.0	White Street	68.8

The figures for Brunswick Road and Ladypool Road between Leamington and Brunswick Roads are estimates.

attend the schools, it was inevitable that there would be a significant proportion of children from the higher reaches of the upper working class at the school. Indeed, 38.3% of the children of Saint Paul's Road were pupils at Clifton Road Board. The second factor which reduced the extent of the school's localisation was the presence of a substantial minority of lower working class children which had first occurred in the 1880's because of the deliberate action of The Kings Norton School Board⁹³. Thus, whilst by the end of October 1882 there were no free pupils at Tindal Street Board, at least a fifth of the scholars at Clifton Road Board were such children⁹⁴. In the period covered by The Census Books, 20.5% of the children of Studley Street and 28.8% of those of Alfred Street attended the school.

It was the presence of children from such streets which was, eventually, to offset the fact that the school was "so favourably circumstanced"⁹⁵ and which accounted for the low standing of the school, placed only above the dismal Ladypool Road National in the local order of merit. The numbers of lower working class children were to be a continual source of difficulty for the teachers at Clifton Road Board. Thus, although in general the standard of teaching was high - in 1888 it was described as "very good"⁹⁶ and in 1912 the headmaster and his staff were reported as being "strenuous workers... doing their best to put progressive methods into practice"⁹⁷ - it was still true that:

⁹³ Discussed in relation to Tindal Street Board.

⁹⁴ The Balsall Heath Times, October 14th. Report of the meeting of Kings Norton School Board.

⁹⁵ Clifton Road School: Log Book. Report of H.M.I. October 2nd 1880.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. October 16th 1888.

⁹⁷ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. on the Boy's Department November 21st 1912.

The Holborn Series.

QUEEN VICTORIA

AND

HER PEOPLE.

BY

REV. C. S. DAWE, B.A.



LONDON:

THE EDUCATIONAL SUPPLY ASSOCIATION, LTD.,

4, HOLBORN VIADUCT.

Miss Chinn
14-8-1903
Richard Alfred Chinn
June 22/1897
Clifton Rd School
is present to Carl Chinn
14-8-1903

This book and examination of what was going on in
when I was about 10 or 12 years old from Clifton Road School.
The photo of my mother who was one of the first
pupils at the school. However she went to a private
school & paid 2^d a week, when Clifton Rd was built
she then went there -
The school mistress was Miss Grace who I think
was the first headmistress there.

School Prize from Clifton Road Board School, June 22nd 1891.

"There is 1 drawback which seems to be a continual worry to us all and that is in every class in the school there is a small proportion of badly educated children taking up a good share of the attention of the teacher, more in fact than they ought to have"⁹⁸.

These badly educated children were invariably those who attended irregularly and these in turn were inevitably the children of the poor.

Their continual absence was accounted for by parental neglect⁹⁹ and the fact that some had no shoes to wear, whilst others had nothing to eat; "these poor children are the failures throughout the school"¹⁰⁰. Some of these children aged seven had only the intelligence of four year olds¹⁰¹.

The problem of irregular attendance was alleviated, somewhat, in 1891, when school fees were removed, which also helped lessen "friction between parent and teacher"¹⁰². However, it was not eradicated given the essential nature of children's earnings from part time jobs to the survival of lower working class families. One other difficulty faced Clifton Road Board, that being of the building itself. Although not nearly as inadequate as that belonging to Ladypool Road National it was still true that:

"The working conditions are somewhat unsatisfactory. There is no space for assembly, singing etc. and the partitions while they darken the rooms are not by any means sound proof"¹⁰³.

There was not a separate room for each class which made "teaching very hard work, each class trying to make itself heard above the rest"¹⁰⁴.

Indeed, in 1881 nearly one hundred children had been present in the one class, a fact which provoked the truism that "in such a class individual

⁹⁸ Ibid., March 8th 1889.

⁹⁹ Ibid., August 19th 1887.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., February 1st 1889.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., August 19th 1887.

¹⁰² Ibid., September 4th 1889.

¹⁰³ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. on the Boy's Department November 21st 1912.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., June 26th 1885.

attention cannot be given"¹⁰⁵.

Nevertheless, three enlargements to the school before 1914 did relieve the problem of overcrowding. What they could not increase in line with the size of the school was its social and educational position in the local order of merit of schooling. In many respects Clifton Road Board did witness a mingling of the sections of the working class within its confines. However, such a situation served only to lessen its attraction to the parents of the higher reaches of the upper working class and despite many of their children having to attend the school because of a lack of accommodation at more popular schools, it remained true that the joint attendance at Clifton Road Board and Ladypool Road National - the two school's of West Sparkbrook II - remained in the minority in the roads of these families: 45.3% of the children of Saint Paul's Road were pupils at the schools; dropping to 27.2% of those of Woodfield Road: 26.5% of those of Ombersley Road and 26% of those of Kingsley Road. Clifton Road Board was unable - despite the benefits of its position and the high standard of teaching of its staff - to remove itself of the stigma afforded to it by the presence of a large number of pupils of the lower working class.

Sherborne Road Board

In the early 1880's there was a deficiency of over five hundred and fifty places in The Kings Norton School Board area; the great majority of these were within the district of The Balsall Heath Local Board¹⁰⁶. As a result another school was built in this latter area, at Sherbourne Road, which opened in 1889 with an accommodation of one thousand four hundred and sixty two - by far the largest in the district - ranging from

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Report of H.M.I. October 15th 1831.

¹⁰⁶ The Balsall Heath Times, December 2nd 1882 a letter off J. Carr a member of The School Board.

Map 5

The Position of Clifton Road
Board School



Infants to Seniors¹⁰⁷. The school was not, therefore, pronouncedly localised in its character; it served as a kind of 'overspill' establishment and though closing in 1897 it did have significance for part of West Sparkbrook II. Of the six roads of the locality from which 10% or more of the children were in attendance at the school, two were of a high social standing amongst the district's upper working class; one was of a low status amongst that section and three were lower working class in character¹⁰⁸. Thus, superficially, it would appear that in a situation similar to that relevant to Clifton Road Board - which exhibited certain aspects of being an 'overspill' school within West Sparkbrook II - there was a mixing of children from all the sections of the working class at Sherbourne Road Board. However, a more detailed examination of the figures relating to attendance at the school tends to prove that, within the confines determined by the school's building, locational and social factors were significant.

All of the above six roads - apart from White Street - are in the Northern portion of West Sparkbrook II, whilst those roads in West Sparkbrook I which sent over 5% of their children to the school were clearly in the south of that element. Yet, within Ombersley Road, particularly, the influence of social determinants on schooling appear to be as important as those of location. The road lies exactly opposite Sherbourne Road across the Moseley Road and thus its upper sections were nearer to that Board School than those of West Sparkbrook. Yet, only 16% of the children from Ombersley Road who attended the school lived in this portion¹⁰⁹. A comparable situation to that evident in Saint Paul's Road with regard to attendance at Ladypool National is evident: 55% of

¹⁰⁷ Map 6 indicates the location of the school.

¹⁰⁸ Table 7.

¹⁰⁹ I have taken the upper section to end at number 76 (even side) and number 77 (odd side).

Table 7 : Attendance at Sherbourne Road Board

Roads Where 10% or More of The Children

Were In Attendance at The School

Road	Status	%
Ombersley Road	High Status upper working class	21.4
Woodfield Road	High Status upper working class	11.2
Highgate Road	Low Status generality of upper working class	19.2
White Street	Lower working class	12.4
Queen Street	Low Status lower working class	16.1
Studley Street	Lowest Status lower working class	24.5

the children from Ombersley Road who attended Sherbourne Road Board lived in back houses. Thus, the character of the pupils at the school was similar to that of those of Clifton Road Board; drawn chiefly from the middle and lower ranks of the upper working class and from the poor.

Conway Road Board and Occupational Influences on Schooling

This school was situated in that part of East Sparkbrook most similar to Saint Paul's Road in housing and social composition. The school was surrounded by roads of a very high status upper working class character nearby to a middle class area.

"Conway Road used to look down on us at Christchurch"¹¹⁰.

Conway Road Board was significant in the school attendance of two roads: Stoney Lane and Ladypool Road. That of the first can be explained by proximity; that of the latter (or rather, that section in West Sparkbrook II) could not. From this portion of the road 7.8% of the children were pupils at Conway Road Board, an apparently small percentage but one which becomes significant when it emerges that the highest percentage attendance was 16.7% and this at the equally distant Dennis Road Board. It would, therefore, appear that social factors were involved.

I have argued that address was crucial in determining a child's school and that residence was the means whereby the economic and social standing of the families of West Sparkbrook were judged. Thus, whilst Ladypool Road National was definitely regarded as the school of the children of Studley Street and by implication of the poor, it was not necessarily viewed locally as the school of labourer's children. Occupation was not seen as the determinant, although, obviously, ultimately it

¹¹⁰C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes p.27.



Map 6

The Position of Sherbourne Road Board School

The boundary of the study

normally was. Indeed, the ranks of the poor cannot be seen as exclusively made up from the unskilled; deployment of income could affect a skilled man's ability to rent a house in a road commensurate with his earnings and lead him and his family to be included amongst the lower working class if they lived in their roads. Of course, the great majority of the poor were unskilled but the preceding point needs to be made.

Nevertheless, in one instance occupation and not residence would appear to be the crucial factor in deciding a child's school. Along the Ladypool Road, Highgate Road and the Stoney Lane a number of shopkeepers lived on the premises and a striking contrast emerges between the schools attended by these children and those of other residents. Children of shopkeepers along the Ladypool Road were markedly more likely to attend schools regarded as amongst the 'best' than were children of the remainder, three times as many of the former attended Dennis Road Board and eight times as many Tindal Street Board. Children from families whose head of household was not a shopkeeper were more likely to attend Christchurch, Clifton Road Board, Stratford Road Board and Ladypool Road National. Indeed of the four shopkeeper's children who attended the latter, two were children of a palmist, an occupation which was not as socially acceptable as that of a butcher, or a draper or a baker for instance¹¹¹.

Highgate Road was not regarded as such a high quality shopping centre as the Ladypool Road, neither was it so popular. This and the road's position explain the differences apparent between the school attendance from this road and that of the children of the Ladypool Road.

¹¹¹Table 8 gives the comparisons.

Shopkeepers are defined according to Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1908 and then related to the relevant Educational Census Books.

Table 8 : Comparison of Schools

Attended by Children of Shopkeepers and
Non-Shopkeepers Living in Ladypool Road

School	% Attendance Children of Shopkeepers	Children of Non- shopkeepers
Christchurch C of E	2.0	12.3
Clifton Road Board	4.0	9.7
Conway Road Board	4.0	9.1
Dennis Road Board	34.0	11.0
Ladypool Road National	8.0	16.9
Sherbourne Road Board	0	5.8
Stratford Road Board	10.0	18.2
Tindal Street Board	10.0	1.3
Upper Highgate Street Board	4.0	2.6
Secondary Schools	5.5	0.7
Private Schools	6.0	5.2

Again there is a contrast in the school attendance of those children whose family had a head of household who was a shopkeeper and those whose was not. However, in the matter of Highgate Road, Tindal Street Board and Dennis Road Board are replaced by Stratford Road and Upper Highgate Street Boards. Due to distance and availability of places certain socially popular schools were unavailable to accommodate the children of shopkeepers of Highgate Road and therefore it was a matter of avoiding the least socially acceptable which were Christchurch, Sherbourne Road Board and Ladypool Road National¹¹².

Occupation and residence were also apparent in the attendance of children at private schools and secondary schools. Those children who were pupils at the former were a tiny minority of the total of West Sparkbrook . In the 1880's the policy at Tindal Street Board had ensured that middle class children would find accommodation there:

"The great majority of the children attending Tindal Street School are those of parents who pay rents of £25 to £40 a year, who, if the school were not kept quite select, would be sent to private schools"¹¹³.

By the 1890's the working class nature of West Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath ensured that attendance at private schools would remain small. Nevertheless, there were a number of these in and around the locality - most run by women - the pupils of which, not unexpectedly - came from the most highly respectable roads of West Sparkbrook II where attendance at Ladypool Road National was the lowest. A total of fifty eight children attended private schools, twenty six living in Saint Paul's, Kingsley, Woodfield and Ombersley Roads, with a further fifteen living in Ladypool and Runcorn Roads. Almost 50% of these pupils attended one school, that of Miss Griffiths on the Moseley Road. In addition, other

¹¹²Table 9 gives the comparisons.

¹¹³The Balsall Heath Times, January 14th 1882 "Parlour Tattle".

Table 9 : Comparison of Schools Attended
By Children of Shopkeepers and Non-Shopkeepers
Living in Highgate Road

School	% Attendance	
	Children of Shopkeepers	Children of Non-Shopkeepers
Christchurch C of E	9.9	17.0
Clifton Road Board	3.7	5.5
Dennis Road Board	3.7	0.6
Ladypool Road National	8.7	14.8
Sherbourne Road Board	6.2	20.8
Stratford Road Board	42.0	17.6
Tindal Street Board	3.7	0.2
Upper Highgate Street Board	12.4	7.0
Secondary Schools	0	0.6
Private Schools	2.5	0.7

teachers offered their services privately for the instruction of specialist skills such as short hand typing, or playing the piano.

With regards to secondary education, the numbers of children attending schools catering for this were obviously affected by the fact that state supported secondary education was not introduced until after 1902. Nevertheless, The Educational Census Books show that no children from Studley or Queen Streets were involved in secondary education with only one each in White Street, "another rough quarter"¹¹⁴ and Alfred Street. As might be expected such education was more common in the roads of the upper working class where attendance at Tindal Street Board was highest: in Woodfield Road 1.9% of the children were in secondary education; in Kingsley Road 2%; in Saint Paul's Road 3.4% and in Ombersley Road 3.5%. A six roomed house not only denoted status it also afforded the opportunity for a child to study quietly, whilst the crowded conditions of the housing of the poor accentuated their educational disadvantages.

"....if you wanted to do anything in the way of homework or anything like that in the kitchen, you'd had it. I mean, there used to be four or five sitting around the table, the old oil lamp in the middle. What chance had a young boy who wants to improve his education got to sit down at a table like that. It's enough to discourage you, you see...You couldn't get no pleasure out of it. You couldn't give of your best in conditions like that. I mean if you'd got different conditions and a little bit of talent...you could draw it out"¹¹⁵.

Moreover, it was neither encouraged or expected by lower working class parents that their children should continue their education: "Never thought of stopping on at school. When you left school you got a job the next morning"¹¹⁶. The nearest grammar school to the district was at King Edward's Camp Hill, at the northernmost extremity of this study¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁴C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.13.

¹¹⁵Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.27.

¹¹⁶Ibid., number 9 Mr. S. Froggat p.18.

¹¹⁷Map 7.

Between the children of West Sparkbrook and those of the grammar school there was a great deal of overt antagonism fuelled by the one manifestation of class resentment evident in the district.

"We used to have some pretty rough fights with the kids from the grammar. They got off the train at Camp Hill to walk to the grammar and 'cus we resented them and they looked down on us"¹¹⁸.

Of course, there was a certain rivalry between the children of the various schools of West Sparkbrook itself which became most obvious when one school had a day off and some of its pupils would try to disrupt proceedings at those that remained open¹¹⁹. However, loyalty in the district was based on road of residence not school and in the case of antagonism against grammar school children a wider loyalty to the working class was evinced by the children of both sections of West Sparkbrook.

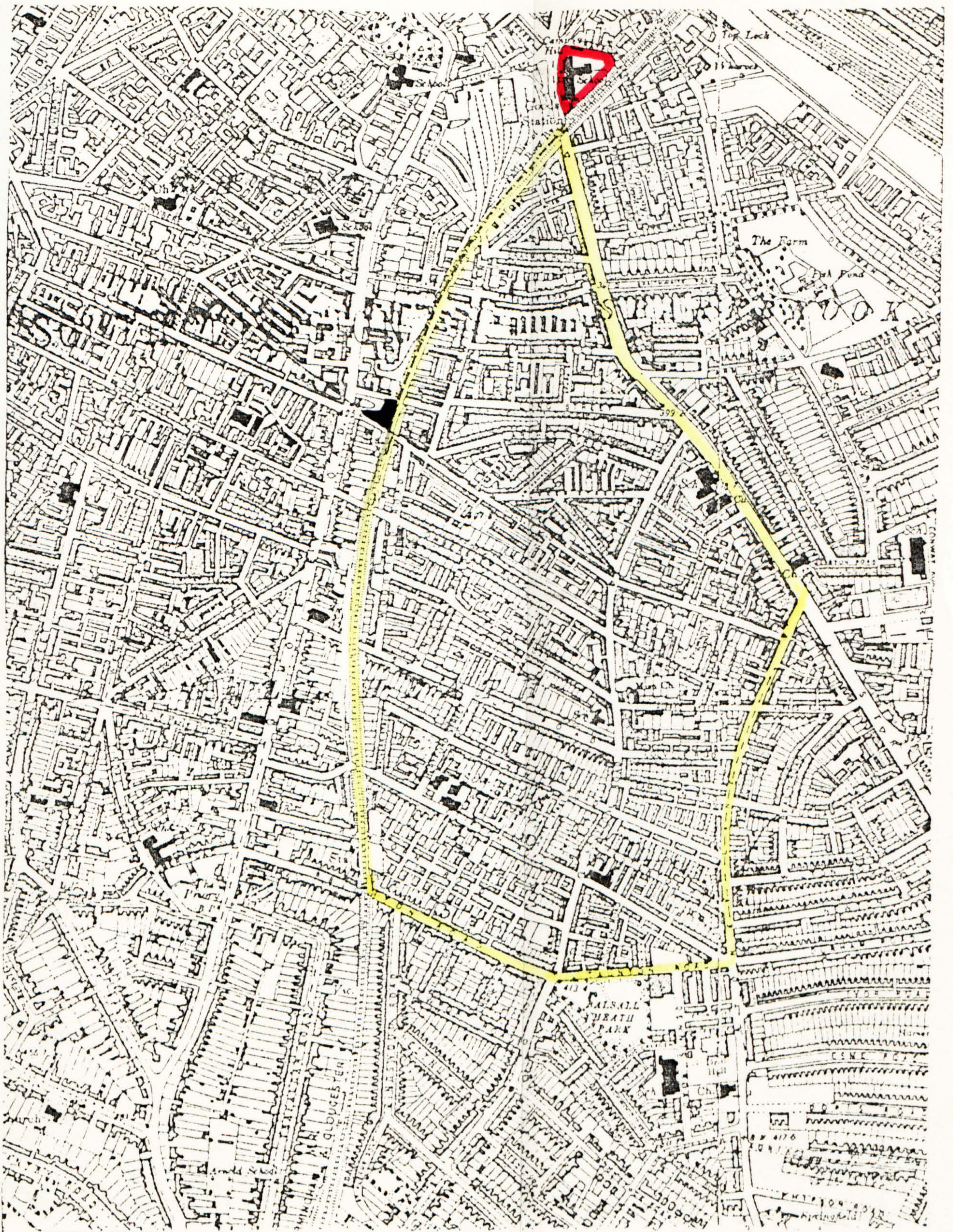
"...we used to wait for the grammar cats, as we used to call 'em, till they was coming down with their caps on. And we'd lay in wait and 'ammer 'em. Or try to. And they'd try to 'ammer us. Usually, they used to run 'cus they was slightly upper. All we wanted to do was do 'em. I suppose 'cus they'd got more than we'd got. We resented 'em slightly"¹²⁰.

The pupils of the grammar school were mostly middle class outsiders who had to pass through working class territory to reach their school. Thus an opportunity was afforded to working class children in general, not necessarily those of the poor, to assert their supposed physical superiority over the children of the more affluent.

¹¹⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. P. Weakes p.21.

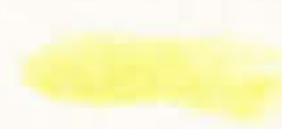


¹¹⁹ Ladypool Road National: Log Book October 5th 1908.

¹²⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 (supplement) Mr. Doughty p.15.



Map 7

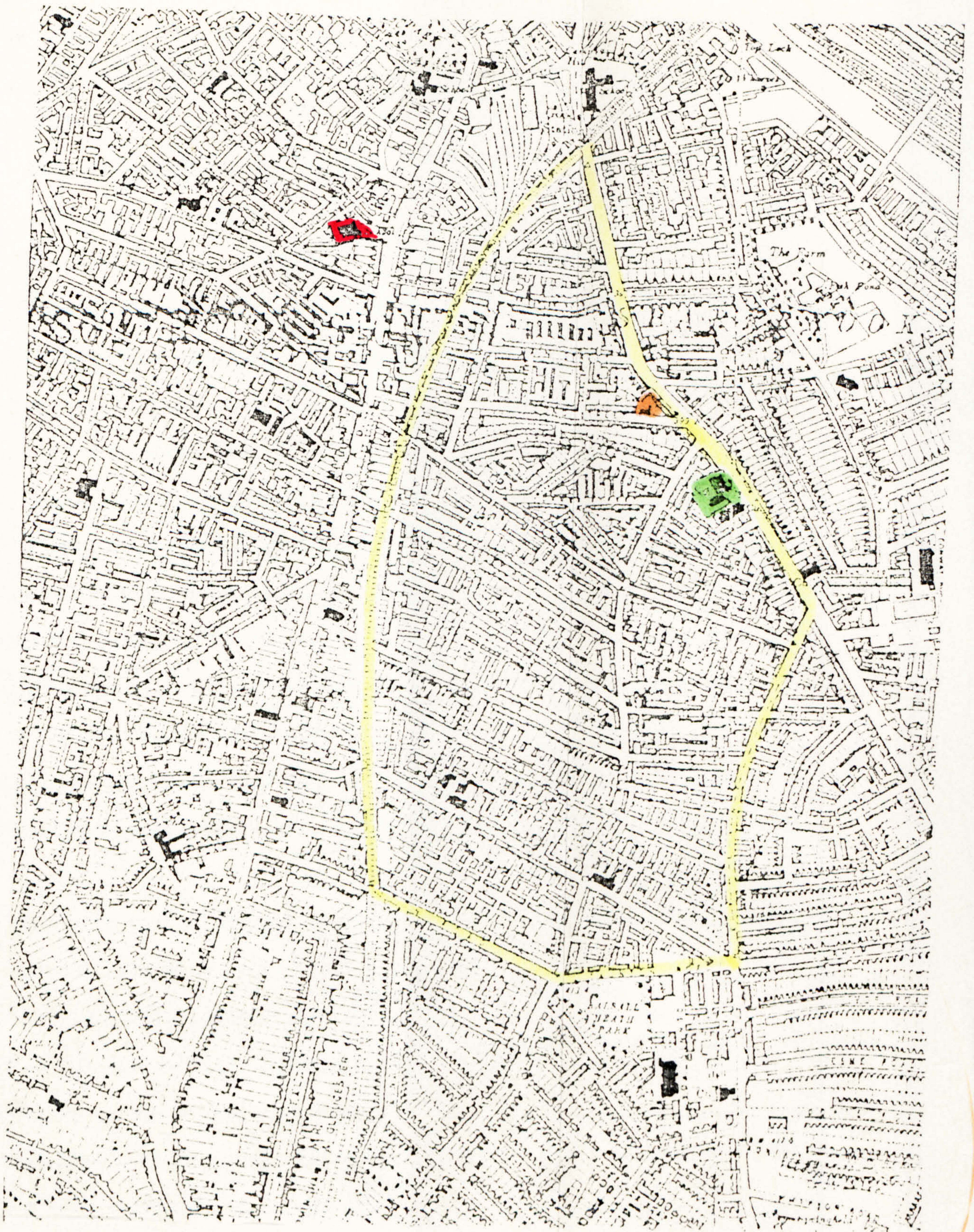
The Position of King Edward's Camp Hill Grammar School

-  The boundary of the study
-  The School
-  Camp Hill Railway Station

Schooling in West Sparkbrook I

The type of school in this element exactly balanced that of West Sparkbrook II: a Church of England school - Christchurch -; a Board school - Stratford Road; and another Board school - Upper Highgate Street - out of the area whose position was analagous to that of Dennis Road Board. However, whilst this latter was regarded as part of West Sparkbrook, the former was not. Nevertheless, despite obvious similarities in the number and type of school in and around the locality, significant differences emerge when the school attendances of the two districts are compared. Of the sixteen roads of West Sparkbrook I, in only four of them does the combined attendance at Stratford Road Board and Christchurch fall below 50%. Moreover, if attendance at Upper Highgate Street Board is included then in no road does the attendance at all three schools together fall below 63% of the children. In contrast, of the twenty roads of West Sparkbrook II for which figures are available in only eight does attendance at Clifton Road Board and Ladypool Road National jointly rise above 50%. Even if Dennis Road Board is included the number of roads only reaches twelve.

Part of this discrepancy can be accounted for by the accommodation at the relevant schools: Stratford Road Board had room for nine hundred and eighty one infants (one hundred and thirteen more than at Clifton Road Board) and was enlarged in 1893 and 1898; Christchurch could accommodate five hundred and sixty five children (two hundred and forty seven more than at Ladypool Road National). Thus, given a smaller population in the northern element of this study, it was more realistic to expect that this higher accommodation allowed more local children to be enrolled as pupils at the two schools. Indeed, this is emphasised by



Map 8

The Position of Schools Relevant to The Schooling of West Sparkbrook I

- The boundary of the study
- Stratford Road Board School
- Christchurch Church of England School
- Upper Highgate Street Board

the fact that Clifton Road and Stratford Road Boards occupied similar positions within the schooling of their respective areas, whereas Christchurch and the very much smaller Ladypool Road National did not. Both Board schools were local, but attracted pupils from throughout the element of the study to which they belonged; to a certain extent Christchurch did the same¹²¹. Thus, although this latter was not regarded as "a very big school"¹²² it remained true that Christchurch had a solid base of support in all the roads nearest to it, not just a section of them. This was obviously helped by the more homogeneous nature of the population of West Sparkbrook I which was not so starkly polarised as that of its southern neighbour.

Furthermore, Christchurch did not attract the same kind of opprobrium as did Ladypool Road National, which further emphasised the view that despite the fact that Church of England Schools were aimed more at the poor, this did not necessarily mean that they were all dominantly lower working class in character¹²³. Moreover, in West Sparkbrook I the poor were a dispersed minority, more readily assimilated by an upper working class less elite in its tendencies than that of Saint Paul's Road. Nevertheless, despite the absence of a firm apartheid of schooling determined by residential segregation, there was still a local order of merit of schooling.

"Christchurch was a small, dreary building and those of us who went to Stratford Road school regarded those at Christchurch as inferior socially and intellectually"¹²⁴.

¹²¹ Table 10 compares attendance at Christchurch and Ladypool Road National.

¹²² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. Weakes p.6.

¹²³ Although it must be emphasised that Christchurch, though a Church of England School, was not affiliated to The National Society.

¹²⁴ L. Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.15.

Table 10 : Comparison of Attendance of
School Age Children Living in Roads Closest to
Christchurch and Ladypool Road National

Roads Nearest to Ladypool Road National	% Attendance at Ladypool Road National	Roads Nearest to Christchurch	% Attendance at Christchurch
Alfred Street	25.8	Auckland Road	22.1
Colville Road	19.3	Erasmus Road	20.0
Kingsley Road	1.0	King Street	45.3
Ladypool Road	15.4	Kyrwick's Lane	20.3
Leamington Road	18.4	Larches Street	29.5
Oldfield Road	14.8	Long Street	52.7
Ombersley Road	5.7	Main Street	48.2
Queen Street	14.8	Marshall St. South	47.3
Saint Paul's Road	7.0	Priestley Road	23.6
		Spark Street	49.2
Studley Street	38.0	Stratford Road	10.3
Woodfield Road	2.9		

There is, however, little evidence to justify such a supposition, although the belief in it is important. Children of the poor and of the very poor were well in evidence at Stratford Road Board: "some of the kids used to walk about in bare feet, at school if they were in before eight they could get free bread and jam and coffee"¹²⁵. Indeed, the poor of West Sparkbrook I were joined by a substantial number of those of the poor quarter based in West Sparkbrook II: 35.6% of the children of Queen Street (the highest total in that street) went to Stratford Road Board; with 21.8% of those of Alfred Street and 9.5% of those of Studley Street.

"It was certainly true that the Studley Street children I knew in my infant's school days seemed scruffier, raggeder, dirtier and smellier than most"¹²⁶.

Thus, in many respects Stratford Road Board approximated in character to Clifton Road Board; most of its pupils were of the generality of the upper working class but they included a significant number of those of the poor. Indeed, an examination of the attendance figures pertaining to Turner Street - the most sharply divided road of West Sparkbrook I - reveals little evidence of the children of the poor predominantly attending Christchurch whilst those of the upper working class attended Stratford Road Board¹²⁷. Perhaps the reason for the different attitudes towards the two schools was based on tone; that despite the presence of lower working class children Stratford Road Board encouraged the reading of Shakespeare, Longfellow and books such as "What it is to be a Gentleman"¹²⁸. The tenor of the school was such as to emphasise the qualities of the upper working class whilst accentuating the faults of the poor.

¹²⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H. p.3.

¹²⁶ L. Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember p.9.

¹²⁷ Table 12.

¹²⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.7.

Table 11 : Comparison of Attendance of
School Age Children Living in Roads Closest to
Stratford Road Board and Clifton Road Board

Roads Closest to Clifton Road Board	% Attendance at Clifton Road Board	Roads Closest to Stratford Road Board	% Attendance at Stratford Road Board
Brunswick Road	55.0	Beechfield Road	57.6
Chesterton Road	41.7	Ladypool Road	58.4
Clifton Road	52.0	Larches Street	35.4
Hertford Street	67.9	Marshall Street South	39.9
Ladypool Road	35.0	Mole Street	65.2
Leamington Road	30.8	Stratford Road	44.5
Malvern Street	77.6	Tillingham Street	51.8
Runcorn Road	36.1	Turner Street	41.6
White Street	68.8	Stoney Lane	35.7

"There were posts in the roads then which were originally for horses, but which became focal points for the unemployed to read The Sporting Buff. One boy at school, when asked what the posts were for, said,
'For loungers to lean against'"¹²⁹.

The position of Upper Highgate Street Board was mostly comparable to that of Sherbourne Road Board, serving as an 'overspill' for the children of the area. The school had an accommodation of one thousand one hundred and sixteen and there is little evidence to suggest that attendance at it was based on reasons other than locational. Upper Highgate Street Board was as near to Auckland, Erasmus and Priestley Roads and Kyrwick's Lane as were the two schools of West Sparkbrook I itself. This could not be said of that section of the Ladypool Road from which the highest percentage of pupils attended Dennis Road Board. Indeed, attendance at the four schools of Highgate relevant to this study could all be explained by proximity¹³⁰. In Kyrwick's Lane such pupils were:

"Not from our end of the Lane....from the other end of the Lane....they would probably go to Upper Highgate Street 'cus they were that end, see?"¹³¹.

A total of 46.8% of the children of Kyrwick's Lane attended the four schools in Highgate¹³²; 51.5% of those of Erasmus Road¹³³; 63.7% of those of Auckland Road¹³⁴ and 47.2% of those of Priestley Road¹³⁵. Indeed, this high attendance at schools outside West Sparkbrook I emphasised the remoteness of the latter three roads especially, which were already seen as distinct, as being "towards Camp Hill"¹³⁶.

¹²⁹ Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough pp.7-8.

¹³⁰ Upper Highgate Street; Moseley Road (also known as Chandos Road); St. Patrick's and St. Alban's.

¹³¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 22 Mr. P. Weakes p.6.

¹³² MS 229: 214 (censused between 19/3/08 and 25/4/12).

¹³³ MS 229: 804 (censused between 1/7/09 and 28/8/27).

¹³⁴ MS 229: 1184 (censused between 24/6/09 and 1/11/12).

¹³⁵ MS 229: 1415 (censused between 1/7/09 and 15/9/23).

¹³⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. S. Doughty p.12.

Table 12 : School Attendance of
The Children of Turner Street

	Stratford Road Board	Christchurch C of E	Other
All of Turner Street	86	55	67
Children Living in Terrace Rows	25	16	11
Rest of Street	61	39	56

Figures are Numbers of Children.

This importance of locational factors on the schooling of West Sparkbrook I is further emphasised when an examination is made of the school attendance of the children of Highgate Road. The road bisects the study and is thus centrally placed to most of the schools discussed in this chapter. If the road is divided into that section west of the Ladypool Road and that east of the Ladypool Road the importance of location becomes evident¹³⁷. In this latter the most popular school was Stratford Road Board with 35.6% of the children attending the school compared to 15.1% of those in the western section. Equally, a further 9.6% of the children attended schools in the adjacent districts of Sparkhill, Greet and East Sparkbrook compared to only 2.9% in the former Highgate Lane section. The most popular school here was the nearby Sherbourne Road Board, attracting 21.8% of the children as opposed to 11.8% of those of the former Thomas Street portion; whilst the schools of Highgate were also well attended. Percentage attendance at Christchurch and Ladypool Road National was very similar given the central position of both schools relevant to the two sections of the road¹³⁸.

What evidence there is in West Sparkbrook of the social status of residence markedly affecting schooling is provided by the figures of school attendance for the children of Stratford Road. The population here was largely middle class; well-to-do shopkeepers, managers and the odd doctor and professional person. A total of 8.9% of the children of the road attended private schools with a further 2.9% in secondary education¹³⁹. Of the thirteen children taught at private schools, nine were the children of shopkeepers; two of a surgeon; and

¹³⁷ The former Highgate Lane and Thomas Street.

¹³⁸ Table 13.

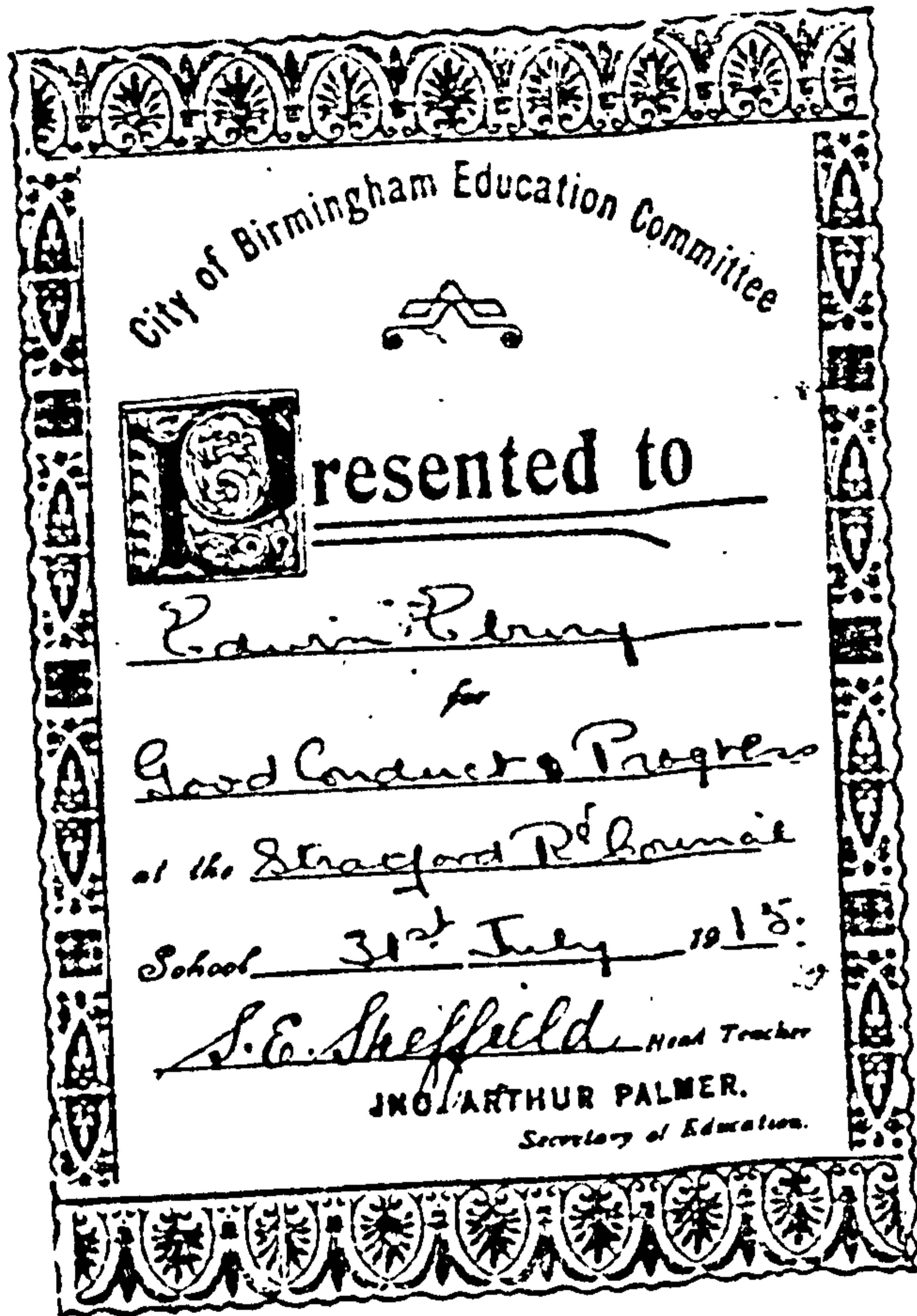
¹³⁹ MS 229: 201 (censused between 27/5/09 and 24/5/21).

Table 13 : Attendance at Schools of
School Age Children Living in Highgate Road

School	Total Highgate Lane	%	Total Thomas Street	%
Christchurch C of E	73	16.2	28	15.7
Clifton Road Board	23	5.1	10	5.6
Ladypool Road National	65	14.5	25	14.1
Sherbourne Road Board	98	21.8	21	11.8
Upper Highgate St. Bd.	43	9.6	5	2.8
Other Schools				
Highgate and Balsall Heath	58	13.0	5	1.2
Schools in Great Sparkhill, East	13	2.9	17	9.6

one of a manager.

An examination of the schooling of West Sparkbrook II demolishes the theory that children mainly attended the nearest school to their residence and that in the school different sections of the working class might mix. The situation prevalent in West Sparkbrook I where the population was less polarised socially than in the southern element of the study and where location was largely the deciding factor in determining a child's school, only emphasises this fact. Where the extremes of the working class were obvious and relevant as in West Sparkbrook II, residential segregation clearly affected schooling. Moreover, whilst this might have been expected with respect to National schools, the position of the district's Board schools and their respective status educationally and socially could not have been. Rather than enhance social fusion, the separate schooling of West Sparkbrook II accentuated social division and perpetuated existing disadvantages. The children from the poorer homes tended to be taught in the least well equipped and staffed schools, whilst those of the upper working class were more likely to be taught in more modern buildings with better facilities and a more interested staff. Schooling conspired with birth to maintain the existing schism of the working class in West Sparkbrook by which the poor were imprisoned in their poverty.



School Prize for Good Conduct
at Stratford Road Board School
(courtesy of Mr. Ebury)

Chapter Twelve

Leisure and The Responsibilities of Children

It is arguably with regard to the responsibilities of and attitudes towards children that the difference in life-style between the upper and lower working class was at its most accentuated. Indeed, if a child is deemed to be a "person who has not reached age of discretion"¹ and if this latter is taken as that time when a person becomes fit to manage his or her own affairs², then it is debateable how far the young of the poor can truly be regarded as children in the accepted sense of the word. Of course, the offspring of the lower working class, in general with those of other sections and classes in society, were subject - within the family - to the rule of their parents. Nevertheless, it very often redounded on the sons and daughters of the poor to manage their own affairs, to a great extent independent of the adults of their families. Obviously, this independence was determined by and limited by economic circumstance, but this did not lessen its significance nor the value of the earnings of the young of the poor to the survival of their families.

"I've come home from school...and gone down home and there'd be nothing in the pantry...and the old girl'd say:

'Ar, go and get a couple of quires of Mails'.

And her used to gie us a couple of coppers to go up town... Corporation Street...and we used to go and buy a couple of quires of Mails and run through the town. Ha'penny they used to be...And you'd run 'em round the town till you'd sold 'em. You'd run back home...gie the old girl her money and her'd say:

'Alright, step up to Duggins'...and get a loaf...Get up The Lane and get a quarter of Rosemary Lard, from Redferns'.

...It was in the window in a big, round, flat tin with a rosemary leaf on top...And her'd cut you a piece orf and slap a bit of this lard on and a bit of pepper and salt...

¹ The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Oxford 1984) p.160.

² Ibid., p.276.

And you'd bet your bloody life you was enjoying it. You'd earned it"³.

An investigation of 1908 found that nationally 9% of all school children worked outside school hours; this figure did not include half-timers nor the children of the very poorest who raised money by their own devices rather than through the means of a recognised job⁴. Within the central wards of Birmingham there were a great number of tasks associated with industry which could be performed by the light, small fingers of children. Indeed, "for the sheer misery...of laborious and underpaid labour in which children are forced to participate as long as their little fingers can move and their eyes keep open, it is in the kitchens of the squalid homes in the courts and the closes that we must look"⁵. The kind of industrial outwork at which children were most useful was repetitive, long drawn out and poorly paid: wrapping up hairpins in paper, ten to the paper, with one outside to hold the pack together at $2\frac{1}{4}$ d for one thousand; 1d a day to bend tin clasps around safety pins which worked out at $\frac{1}{2}$ d a gross; carding a gross of safety pins at $2\frac{1}{2}$ d a gross if there were nine pins of different sizes on each card rising to $4\frac{1}{2}$ d a gross if there were fifteen pins and 5d if there were eighteen pins; varnishing penholders at a $1\frac{1}{2}$ d a gross; carding hooks and eyes and papering pins and sewing buttons onto cards, the wages for which could only be calculated by "infinitesimal fractions of pence"⁶.

³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.19. With each quire of the local newspaper bought, the owners gave one free to the sellers. This was their profit.

⁴ Nettie Adler "Child Employment and Juvenile Delinquency" in Gertrude Tuckwell (ed) Women in Industry (London, 1908) p.132 cited in S. Meacham op. cit., p.175.

⁵ Robert Sherand The Child Slaves of England (1905). Article commissioned by The Editor of The London Magazine reprinted in P. Keating (ed) Into Unknown England 1866-1913. Selections from The Social Explorers (Fontana 1976) p.185.

⁶ Ibid., in P. Keating, op.cit., p.186-187.

Within West Sparkbrook itself there were only a very few factories and thus, to a great degree, the part-time jobs of school age children were determined by the absence of industry and their own ingenuity because "if you wanted any pocket money you'd got to go and earn it"⁷.

"I sold lettuces and rhubarb on the corner of our street and Ladypool Road. Mint, It was a good trade to sell mint Saturday morning...Good thing to grow lettuce and rhubarb 'cus you could sell it a 1d a bunch. A bunch of mint 1d. I'd sell firewood...empty boxes from the shops, sell it in bundles for a 1d...In them days you valued every $\frac{1}{2}$ d"⁸.

No job was too dirty, no task considered too menial in the battle to maximise the family's income. In many cases the children of the poor earned their living along the same place as they carried on their social life - the street. Jobs of this type included collecting the droppings from horses to sell as fertiliser for gardens, "used to get a few coppers gathering horse muck. Penny a bucket"⁹; selling matches; holding the horses of delivery men whilst they made their deliveries; or indeed deliberately making their horse bolt so that a friend might stop it and be rewarded¹⁰.

For many of the young of the poor these jobs in the street were the most popular given that they themselves could determine the nature and extent of their work. Thus, afforded a certain freedom of choice, such youngsters relied, more often than not, on their own imagination to raise money to supplement the family's income.

"I also remember being taken into Birmingham and seeing ragged urchins turning cartwheels in the street for coppers"¹¹.

The children of West Sparkbrook did not need to go into Birmingham to earn money in this way. At Greet Mill Hill, nearby, the horse brakes

⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 1 Mr. W. Chinn p.44.

⁸ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker pp.17-18.

⁹ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.44.

¹⁰ Ibid., number 17 Mrs. Jones p.14.

¹¹ Miss Dora Allen My Earliest Recollections of Life at The Turn of The Century (1968) p.1.

hired by the better off to take them to Shirley and Earlswood for a day out, used to slow down which allowed the children of the local poor time to tumble and turn in the hope of receiving a few coppers in return for their entertainment¹².

Nevertheless, there were other jobs more regular in their hours which afforded employment for the young of the lower working class of the district.

"As a schoolboy I had a milk round...tekking milk and the bucket afore we went to school. I used to push the cart from Long Street to Malvern Street for some woman who only wanted half a pint. Carry the bucket and it used to rub against me leg. And the kids at school used to edge away from me 'cus of the milk. 'Cus in them days we used to wear corduroy trousers and they always stunk a bit. But when the milk got on 'em they was vile"¹³.

Long and hard labour was also the lot of latherboys at local barbers shops; these would work twelve hours on a Saturday to earn 1/- or perhaps 1s6d¹⁴. In the summer holidays other boys would find employment in local beer houses where, usually aged twelve or thirteen, they would work for upto nine hours a day steaming out the casks, bottling and labelling and scrubbing out the coppers after a brew by climbing inside on ladders holding buckets of silver sand.

For many middle class people the large numbers of lower working class youngsters earning a living 'off the street' was indicitive of their unwillingness to secure an apprenticeship or indeed to take up any kind of employment in factories or workshops. Instead, they were regarded as multitudes who "loaf about most of the day and pick up a living selling newspapers" and for which the appeal of "living in the streets" was "irresistible"¹⁶. Yet, it would seem that the majority

¹² W.G. Chinn, op.cit., p.44.

¹³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. S. Doughty p.34.

¹⁴ W.G. Chinn, op.cit., p.44.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.74.

¹⁶ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, volume IV October 1895 p.17.
Letter from "A Manufacturer".

of children engaged in the kind of job just discussed had no choice in the matter. Moreover, once established in such highly marginal, unskilled, irregular work it became almost impossible for them to escape it even after leaving school. This in turn ensured the future poverty of them and their families. Furthermore, the job prospects of the lower working class child were blighted by their lack of education, induced by an absence from school forced on them by their part time jobs.

"Great many absent this week. Some children, and these are generally the free scholars, are absent half the time, others are worse, they only attend now and then"¹⁷.

A few youngsters successfully maintained a job as well as receiving "bronze and silver medals for good attendance"¹⁸. For most, however, the task of achieving this balance proved too difficult.

"W . Hobbs came at 9.33 this morning, after the Registers were closed and was sent home again. Since his admittance at February 24th he has never been early in the mornings, generally getting in at 9.20 or from that to 9.30 a.m. I understand that he sells papers for his father"¹⁹.

The poor school attendance of many such children hindered their ability to escape their poverty, although in the short term their income from their part time jobs did stave off starvation and hold at bay the spectre of the workhouse. Poverty induced a vicious, self perpetuating cycle; "you had to scratch for everything you got. You didn't get it for nothing. It was hard collar"²⁰. Indeed, many of the children of the lower levels of the generality of the upper working class were also to be found working before and after school, at weekends and in the holidays

¹⁷ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. Clifton Road School: Log Book, March 12th, 1897.

¹⁸ Letter 12/12/83 from Mr. L. Humphries to Mr. C.S.A. Chinn.

¹⁹ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. Ladypool Road National School: Log Book, March 9th 1908.

²⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H. p.7.
Collar is colloquial for work.

"I used to work in houses from when I was about ten or eleven. All the housework and a bit of washing, everything...3s6d a week. I went to school, but I used to go straight from school...I used to go all week, Sunday as well. They was upper class people...got the jobs meself"²¹.

However, the higher the status of the family concerned and the greater the income of the head of household, the less likely it was that the children were to be found in part-time employment whilst at school. Instead, outside work was replaced by errands and helping in the home and a wage which belonged very often to the family in general, by pocket money which was spent on the child alone. "The two older sisters next to me...used to give me 2d a week...scrub the kitchen out and scrub the outside toilet"²². Moreover, the running of errands was not necessarily restricted to those of a child's immediate family.

"Well me cousin, older than me...used to do men's trousers... at dinner time, when I come out of school, to her house, collect the things what she made. Take 'em down to Lower Essex Street. Come back, bring her some more to do...go back to school. 1s6d a week. I used to give our Mom a shilling, have sixpence myself"²³.

In contrast to both the children of the poor and those of the generality of the upper working class were those fortunate to be born into the highest stretches of this latter section. For these pocket money was not necessarily the fruit of their own endeavours or indeed the reward for performing certain tasks in and around the home; "... my father used to give me 1/- a week on condition that I went to The Post Office and bought three penny stamps and opened a bank account.... I had to put this three ha'pence in every week or if he found I hadn't, well I had no pocket money"²⁴. A residue of 9d to be spent on pleasure instead of food raised immense possibilities of enjoyment for a youngster, and whilst the possession of such a large sum was generally

²¹ Ibid., number 10 Mrs. Snow pp.3-4.

²² Ibid., number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.11.

²³ Ibid., number 14 Mrs. Carrie Griffiths p.14.

²⁴ Ibid., number 13 Mr. Atkins pp-16-17.

rare in West Sparkbrook it still remained true that upper and lower working class children were obviously divided by the manner in which their money was spent: "errands was how you earned your picture money"²⁵.

In 1912 The Olympia Picture House on the Ladypool Road opened:

"And, of course, the speciality there for the children was the 'Penny Rush' of a Saturday afternoon. If there weren't many kids going the manager used to stand on the top of the steps with a crate of oranges and he would give an orange so that you'd pay a penny to go into the pictures"²⁶.

Between the picture house and 'The George Inn' lay another place of entertainment which attracted the children of the upper working class, this being a small fairground which was "Open six days a week" and was "lit by naphtha flares...they had coconut shies and hoop la's and rifle range and everything"²⁷. This fairground had resulted from the annual encampment of a few gypsy and travelling families on a piece of waste land belonging to the proprietors of 'The Olympia' and was known officially as "The George Show"²⁸. Although most of the families remained migratory, a few settled permanently earning their living from traditional fairground activities.

"Jones' was there, queen of the tribe. 'Cus Jones' wornt the chiefs then....Old Lady Arrowsmith, she was the queen of the tribe. The Arrowsmith's were proper gypsies"²⁹.

Eventually the land was required for building purposes by which time the Jones family had become established as a local greengrocers. Nearby in Walford Road was another fairground, run by Pat Collins, which was also popular but which was replaced in 1909 by a roller skate rink.

²⁵ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. p.4.

²⁶ Ibid., number 13 Mr. Atkins p.30.

²⁷ Ibid., number 13 Mr. Atkins p.30.

²⁸ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department. The Educational Census Books MS 229 number 358.

²⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. T. Sleath p.2.

Entertainment, however, was not necessarily synonymous with outdoors; "I liked reading. I read Westerns...Zane Grey. Paperbacks, anything up to 6d...I used to have all the boy's school magazines: The Gem. The Magnet"³⁰. Yet, for the children of the poor such a connotation was, more often than not, true. Books and comics were expensive luxuries whilst only occasionally could they afford a visit to the pictures. Thus, entertainment for the young of the poor was chiefly of their own making and carried on along the street, although, of course, the games they played were general to all children of the working class. Whatever their economic circumstance, it was widely held that children "had to make our own entertainment"³¹. Many children's games of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries had antecedents dating back to The Middle Ages and most readily split into those based on gender. For girls there was hopping jinny; hop-scotch; skipping; hide and seek; 'tic' and 'Kings Pippin Polka' in which the girls sang about not talking to the boys: The games specific to these latter included tip cat (played with a rounded piece of wood, 'the cat', which was pointed at both ends, one of which was hit sharply by a flat piece of wood, 'the bat'.); kites, which could be bought for 1d or 2d or as easily made from tissue paper, cane and string; whip and top; marbles, played with 'fag' cards as the prize; 'coppers on the bridge', a game of dare where the last boy to run across the road was the winner; and horses, played with two teams, one of which would make a back and the other would have to attempt to place each of its members on the 'horse's' back with separate jumps³².

³⁰ Ibid., Number 4 Mr. W. Remington p.10.

³¹ Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.1.

³² Ibid., number 18 Mr. Ebury (supplement) p.2.

Such street games could occasionally prove dangerous and often appeared a nuisance, so much so that bye-laws were passed to control; "the nuisance caused by boys practicing top-spinning; Tip-cat; stone-throwing; shooting for catapults and using of abusive language"³³.

West Sparkbrook had only one, small public park situated at the borders of the district with Moseley³⁴ and thus its size and location ensured that such bye-laws would be ignored, especially in the poorer streets.

"Long Street, between Spark Street and Stratford Road, we used to regularly play football...A copper'd start to come up from Stratford Road, and there's no way out. And then you'd run up towards Spark Street and a copper'd come down Spark Street"³⁵.

Many policemen stationed locally lived within the district. One detective whose home was in Tillingham Street achieved notoriety amongst the local youth at the turn of the century over his harsh treatment of those he caught contravening the bye-laws with regard to games being played in the street:

"...he used to walk down the middle of Kyrwicks Lane...and he had a stick with him and kids was terrified of him. Mothers used to say 'I'll tell Redman'. and you couldn't punish a kid more so...And he'd flick a kid with his stick"³⁶.

One difference between the games played in the roads of the upper working class and the same games played in the streets of the poor, was that in the former play was more strictly separated into boy's and girl's games than in the latter. This gender division was given added effect by the definite segregation of boys and girls in Board schools: 'we had different playgrounds, and it was a punishable offence to talk to the boys, I got into trouble for talking to my

³³ The Balsall Heath Local Board of Health: Minutes of The General Purpose Committee May 28th 1879 Minute number 61.

³⁴ This was known locally as 'The Little Park'.

³⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. S. Doughty p.41.

³⁶ Ibid., number 22 Mr. P. Weakes p.20.

brothers"³⁷. In the poorer streets children of both sexes played more freely together

"There was as many girls in our street as there were lads. They intermixed with one another, it wornt no sexism. I mean the girl next door to me, she used to go out with us, go apple scrumping...Picking bluebells at Earlswood. Walked as far as Earlswood in them days...We'd play and fight with one another"³⁸.

Despite intensive house-building activity in and around West Sparkbrook, the area remained an 'outer ring' district adjacent to semi-rural suburbs and within walking distance of wholly rural localities. Walking provided a free, effective and enjoyable form of entertainment. Embedded within the urban sprawl of Birmingham the country-side proved a bewitching attraction for many of the children of West Sparkbrook. The nearest and most accessible of these spots were not to be built upon until the later 1920's: Yardley Wood's, 'Happy Valley'; 'The Dell' and 'Moseley Bog' at Moseley and 'The Dingles' at Hall Green .

"...I would get the pushchair with two in and go up to 'The Dingles'. We'd have a bottle of cold tea and bread and jam. There was a cottage on Wake Green Road...which sold sweets and bottles of ginger beer. You could get a ½d cornet"³⁹.

Further afield lay Earlswood and a tram ride away, The Lickey Hills, although all were brought nearer by the hire of a bicycle. Cost generally restricted this means of transport to those youngsters who could afford it but this did not mean that the children of the poor were totally excluded; "Used to have a bike out, 1d for ten minutes... many's the time we've had it out all day and never took it back, left it outside"⁴⁰.

³⁷ Ibid., number 17 Mrs. Jones p.14.

³⁸ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.29.

³⁹ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. pp.3-4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.5.

Days out in the country near Birmingham were the only holiday many urban, working class children enjoyed. For a day they could escape the drab surrounding of West Sparkbrook and for the poor especially visions of rural life - "in the country everything's alright, in the town we used to see all the rough-"⁴¹ transcended the reality. However, for the children of the highest paid of the working class parents might be inclined to take the whole family out to the sea-side for a day.

"We'd leave at two in the morning and get to the seaside for seven o'clock. We'd leave at three. You could get to Scarborough for 3s6d, although the trains were overcrowded. There was no corridors and no toilets"⁴².

Rhyl and Weston-Super-Mare, because of their proximity to Birmingham, were especially popular but Scarborough, Blackpool and Great Yarmouth were also favourites. Bed and breakfast in these resorts cost around 3s6d with a full week's board amounting to 21s6d⁴³. Indeed, a week's holiday was a luxury to which only a few of West Sparkbrook's families could aspire.

"For the first fourteen years of my life Dad used to go to Llandudno...and...when I went to work...we went to Scarborough...We'd buy our own food and the person of the house where you'd stop would cook the food for you"⁴⁴.

Such holidays were beyond the reach even of the generality of the upper working class of the district. However, many of the parents of West Sparkbrook came originally from rural areas and thus trips to these might combine holiday with duty: "Well, my father used to take us down to Monmouth...Cheap Trips...It cost about 2s9d...to see our grandmother"⁴⁵. In other families one child at a time might visit

⁴¹ Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.17.

⁴² Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.9.

⁴³ Ibid., p.9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel pp.15-16.

⁴⁵ Ibid., number 7 Mrs. Merriman pp.29-30.

relatives for an extended holiday, perhaps with relatives of a different social class from the children themselves.

"I used to go very regular to Leicester. Dad used to take me up to the station...give the guard a shilling...And Dad's brother...was rather in a wealthy position...he was a chartered accountant...They'd got a landau and that and a coachman...after being on margerine it used to take me two or three days to get settled into butter...There was cream and custards...She [aunt] also bought me a new outfit. And when I came back...I'd got to fall into the routine again..."⁴⁶.

But for the children of the very poor, holidays - if any - were provided, not by parents but by schools, local shopkeepers or charities such as The Birmingham Society For Providing Country Holidays For Poor Children⁴⁷. Schools sought to bring holidays and trips within the reach of all by allowing parents to pay for them by weekly subscription: a trip in 1910 from Ladypool Road National cost 3s9d, paid at a rate of 1½d a week. Sixty nine children went on this particular trip and "most of the children who went there had never before seen the sea"⁴⁸. Shopkeepers would arrange more local days out, "they'd give us a bottle of pop or a bag of sweets, no money. We had it in kind - as long as you was at school"⁴⁹.

At thirteen a child could legally leave school by passing 'The Labour Exam' which proved "you was proficient at Standard six or seven,...I passed and left school"⁵⁰. Thus from the age of thirteen or fourteen, even a poor youngster might, if he or she was in a regular job - be able to afford some of the forms of entertainment once denied him or her by a lack of money. Nevertheless, the street remained a potent and free attraction, although now it was less likely

⁴⁶ Ibid., number 4 Mr. W. Remington pp.12-13.

⁴⁷ This latter had been founded in 1894. The Birmingham Daily Post February 21st 1901.

⁴⁸ Ladypool Road National: Log Book June 20th 1910.

⁴⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 4 Mr. Remington pp.12-13.

⁵⁰ Ibid., number 11 Mr. Curtis p.13.

to be the street of residence which was frequented as one of the district's busier thoroughfares.

"We used to play in the roads...Up the monkey run. Up Sparkhill, up 'the Hill'. And one was up 'the Mo'; the Moseley Road. We used to bump and have a chat, you know"⁵¹.

Although vital to the entertainment of lower working class youth in particular, their gathering in numbers along the 'monkey runs' of the locality provoked an outcry amongst the middle class.

"Is it not time that something was done by the police to check the rowdyism in Moseley Village on Sunday evenings. The disgraceful behaviour of lads and girls bawling and yelling, to say nothing of jostling and pushing pedestrians off the footpaths is worse now than it ever was"⁵².

Interestingly, the "lively" behaviour of boys attending Camp Hill Grammar who could make things "a little bit 'rusty'" on the local trams was viewed more favourably: "one rather enjoys watching the frolic displayed by the rising generation"⁵³.

One sport which attracted teenage boys of the lower working class especially was that of boxing, which also enabled the successful to supplement their income. In West Sparkbrook there were two rooms where it was possible to train: Albert Smith's in Main Street and that of the Thomas Brothers above a shop on the corner of Ladypool and Highgate Roads: "If you could only go there you was happy, you'd attained 'Thomas'. God Blimey!"⁵⁴. The fee for training at such a place was 6d a week which could be recouped by fighting in the ineptly named 'exhibition matches' which were not as tame as the title would imply.

⁵¹ Ibid., number 14 Mrs. L. Ward and Mrs. C. Griffiths p.6.

⁵² The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, Volume VII November 1898 p.247 'Stinger'.

⁵³ Ibid., volume IV November 1895 "Rover" p.217.

⁵⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. S. Doughty pp.14-15.

"Thirty bob for six rounds. Two quid for eight rounds. Fifty bob for ten. There used to be a queue. And you'd got to fight, and you'd got to put up a good show. If you didn't you didn't go on again"⁵⁵.

The rewards for a good boxer were tangible, in both his prize money and medals. Indeed, these latter often proved a useful addition to the family's finances; "Our Bill had a gold medal...and...with his other medals he pawned 'em...and he got fifteen bob...and Christ knows how many fights he'd had for them medals"⁵⁶.

The childhood and the teenage years of the lower working class young were bounded in their enjoyment by poverty and the necessity of the offspring of a family to work whilst at school. As much as 80% of their part time earnings were contributed to the family⁵⁷. Indeed, the responsibility of the children of the poor was to their family whilst the upper working class child was the responsibility of his family. Part-time jobs, irregular schooling and leisure clearly divided the young of the two sections.

⁵⁵ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., number 6 Mr. S. Doughty pp.22-23.

⁵⁷ J.R. Gillis, op.cit., p.130.

Chapter Thirteen

Diversification in Shopping Habits

Survival for most lower working class families in West Sparkbrook was impossible without recourse to various means of obtaining credit. Chief amongst these were the pawn shop, the 'strap' shop and money-lenders; debt along with bad housing and ill health were the constants of slum life wherever the location.

"For nearly all Bill's money was going to the collectors, who called on the Saturday afternoon to catch him when he had just received his wages. Locking the kitchen door and going to bed was not always efficacious. For sometimes the collectors were cunning and would turn up late in the evening when they were not expected"¹.

Once ensnared within the trap of borrowing and lending the family sank deeper into the morass of debt; reliance on credit became an essential part of the life of the poor and their struggle to make ends meet.

Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that within West Sparkbrook it was not only the poor who had recourse to the dubious salvation of credit. A "worker with a regular job was a satisfied man"², but one who lost that job through unemployment or who was laid off temporarily through strikes, illness or injury would soon become dissatisfied, unable to cope and forced to make use of the facilities previously scorned as belonging to the poor. In this way many of the generality of the upper working class also found it necessary to make occasional and even regular use of the pawn shop and especially the 'strap' shop. At a time when trades unionism was generally weak in Birmingham and given the absence of unemployment benefit, the fear of the loss of a job was potent amongst all the city's working class.

¹ Gwendolen Freeman, op.cit., p.70.

² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.6.

However, for the poor that fear was ever-present whilst for most of the upper working class the sack was more catastrophic in that it heralded a loss of earnings and a consequent loss of status if another job was not quickly found.

"Same as when I was at The B.S.A. and they was on strike... and old whatisname says to the warders

'Put the chains around the gate. When they've got empty bellies they'll come into work'"³.

For the skilled man there were plenty of jobs available in Birmingham whilst the higher sections of the upper working class tended to be characterised by their employment in what were regarded as good, safe jobs, such as postmen or railwaymen. For those, however active in nascent trades unionism and who were regarded as instrumental in instigating strike action, a loss of job through dismissal could become a badge they would wear preventing their re-employment.

"Me Dad was one of the three sergeants that was involved in The Police Strike. He got the sack. He tried to get a lot of jobs and wherever he went he was barred.

'This man is dangerous'.

.....It took him nearly five years to get a job"⁴.

For such families a great reliance came to be placed on the part-time jobs of schoolchildren whilst regular visits to the pawn shop became common. Like the money lender, the pawn shop provided temporary relief and its use could be transitory if the husband soon found work. Moreover, there was an incentive to redeem the goods pawned in that usually they were valuable to the family and if not claimed after a year they would be lost. As Map 1 shows, of the eleven pawnshops of West Sparkbrook⁵, six were located near to streets where there were back-to-back houses whilst five were to be found in areas where lived

³ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.16.

⁴ Ibid., number 6 Mr. S. Doughty pp.2-4. The Police Strike referred to is that of 1919.

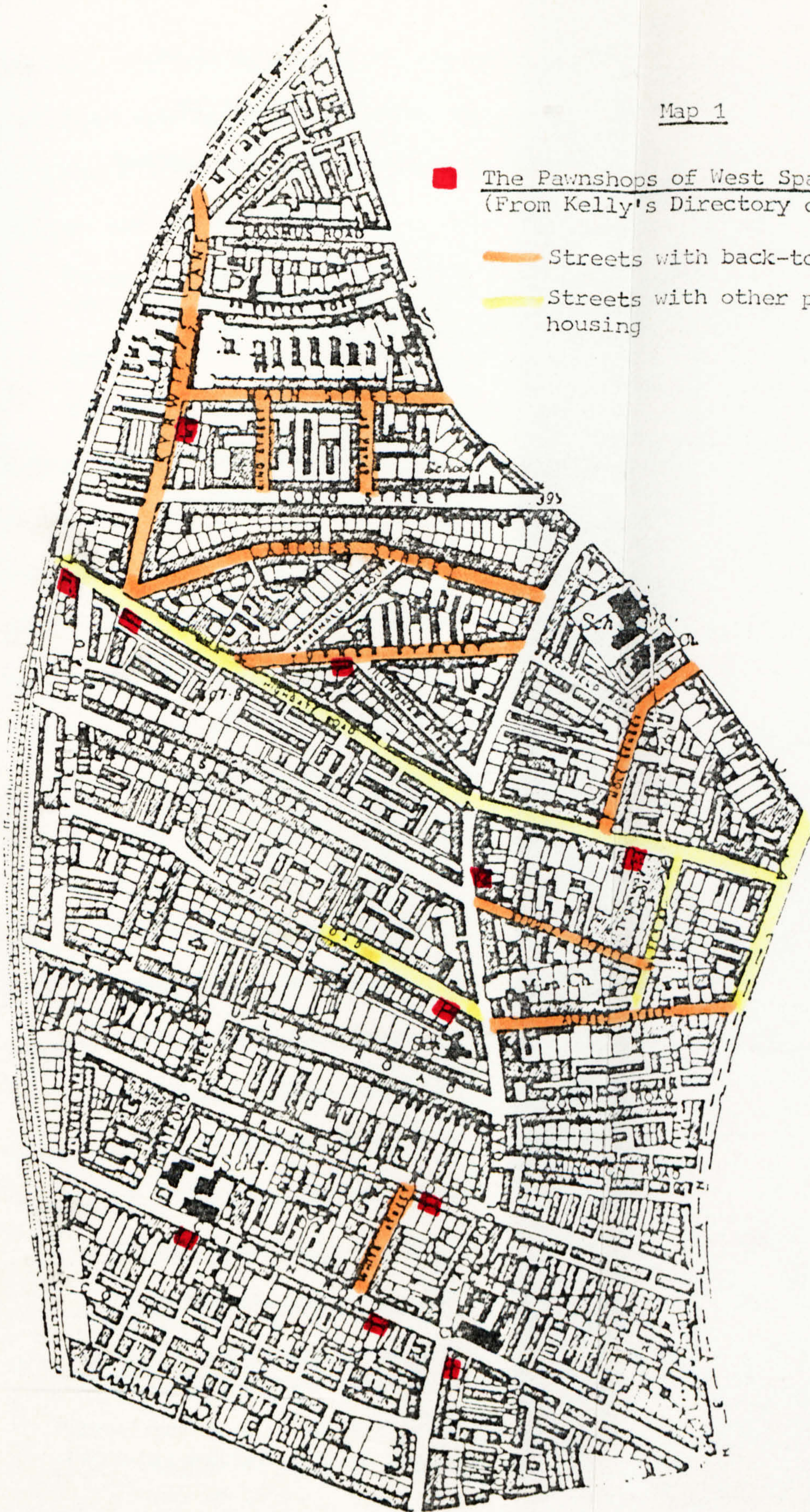
⁵ The Pawnshops are taken from Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1901.

Map 1

■ The Pawnshops of West Sparkbrook
(From Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1901)

— Streets with back-to-backs

— Streets with other poor quality housing



the generality of the upper working class, reflecting the occasional reliance of this section on the pawn shop. As a result of the habit being fairly common amongst the lower sections of the upper working class in the district, the use of the pawn shop did not attract quite the same odium as did over-drinking, gambling and brawling, all with their connotations of being exclusively lower working class in character.

"I know a vicar used to pawn his wooden leg. The Reverend Sir Charles Fox....and his brother was a bishop. He lived with his sister in Alfred Street and it appears he was defrocked....And he used to fetch his wooden leg out of the pawn. Holtom's used to take it regular"⁶.

Yet, antipathy to the habit in respect of an upper working class family could be engendered and that family brought into disrepute if visits to the pawn shop were as a result of the aberrant behaviour of the head of the household; if it was induced by an adherence to a life style which was seen as lower working class in its nature.

If mother run short of money, she'd go fetch him out [the pub] and tell him orf. She'd got no money and sometimes she'd have to go and pawn something....I remember taking me sister's suit to be pawned.

'Don't tell her, whatever you do!'

Now, when she'd got the money she'd fetch her costume out.

'I'll put it back again. She won't know it's been there'"⁷.

At the highest reaches of the upper working class where the families were secure in the regular employment of their head of household, pawning - whatever its reason and no matter how infrequent - was regarded as abhorrent and indicative of degenerate living. The elite of the upper working class attached no qualifications to its use as did the generality of that section. Instead the pawnbroker, just like the beerhouse and the bookmaker, were to be assiduously avoided;

⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 4 Mr. W. Remington pp.35-36.

⁷ Ibid., number 17 Mrs. Jones p.9.

its use was a "horror" to be recoiled from because "we were not Studley Street"⁸.

Amongst the poor, in fact, the use of the pawnshop was habitual, rendered so by the economic stringencies of lower working class life.

"The pawnbrokers? There used to be one on Stoney Lane.... ETTY Bennet's. There used to be a queue outside there Monday morning. All round Studley Street and there, Mother, Mrs. Bird and one or two of the others; they'd go and get a basket carriage from Toombs' and go round the houses in Studley Street and collect the bundles orf the women. And they'd wheel it down the pawn shop...and get in the queue and get as much as they could....Used to get it out of a Saturday for a Sunday and tek it back again Monday"⁹.

It was the regular, weekly visit, pawning and redeeming goods, which marked out the use of the pawnshop by the poor of the district, although amongst themselves this did not cause any stigma. Yet, for the higher reaches of the upper working class of the area it was this which added credence to the vision they already had of the poor, it augmented their notion of their thriftlessness, their inability to organise their lives and their patent unwillingness to live within their means.

Another facility of credit was also seen as exemplifying the vices of the poor, although again this too was readily patronised by the generality of the upper working class when necessary.

"Those families [the poor] usually lived on credit allowed by the local shopkeeper. The first thing to pay was the strap so they could get some more the next week. Then followed the insurance man and the club man with the landlord last"¹⁰.

The extension of credit to a customer relied on knowledge; the knowledge by the shopkeeper of the applicant and her ability to pay (it was always women who applied for credit). It was for this reason

⁸ Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.3.

⁹ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.55.

¹⁰ Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough p.4.
Strap is credit.

that credit was most usually associated with the corner shops of West Sparkbrook which drew the bulk of their custom from the road in which they were located. The proprietor of such a shop "would know who he was letting have it. He knew he'd have a chance getting it back. He'd have to respect you and you'd have to respect him"¹¹. In order to be successful, the operation of such a system required an unspoken but nevertheless powerful, mutual understanding: an awareness by the customer of her reliance on the shopkeeper for credit and by the shopkeeper, in turn, of his or her dependence on the customer for her trade.

"But you'd got to toe the line. Ship-shape. Only a convenience, you see. Monday morning used to come, or Tuesday, and they'd find they'd spent all their dough over the weekend. And for a couple of days they'd like a little bit of this and that on the mace...And they'd got to shoot it in when the old man's wages come in on the Friday, otherwise they'd probably wouldn't serve it to you anymore. Which was only quite fair....If you clear the slate, then have it again for convenience the next week"¹².

Such a system was at its most prevalent and was easiest to operate, obviously, in settled and organised areas, whether upper or lower working class in social composition. Permanent residence was a means whereby a family could elicit ready credit, even if that residence meant movement within the locality. Thus, despite a high incidence of 'moonlight flits' within the poor quarter of West Sparkbrook, it was unusual for a family to move far and therefore out of both self interest and a sense of 'fair play' it was equally unusual for local shopkeepers to remain unpaid if they had granted credit. A customer who did not pay was regarded as a "mongrel" who had tried "to get sommut for nothing"¹³. Moreover, she had not only broken the ties of dependence between her and the shopkeeper, she had also jeopardised the chances

¹¹ Ibid., number 11 Mr. Curtis p.10.

¹² Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn pp.53-54.
On the mace is slang for credit.

¹³ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.54.

of her neighbours and fellow poor to obtain credit.

Despite the ubiquity of corner shops throughout most of the district, like the pawn shop they indicated differences in the life-style of the upper and lower working class of the area. Weekly use was generally confined to the poor, families of the unemployed and the lower sections of the generality of the upper working class, so that the use of credit at a corner shop by families other than those in these categories did result in a certain loss of status.

"Used to be murder towards the end of the week. I used to go to Mrs. Higgs...I used to ask for something and she used to rip a bit of paper orf. Write sommut on it.

'Give this to your Mom'.

I used to give it to our Mom and she'd start bloody crying 'cus she knew bloody well she'd got no money to pay full... And because he come on strike. We was living on our part-time jobs"¹⁴.

An added advantage of a corner shop was that most were of the 'huckster' variety, that is they sold everything and were not specialist in one commodity. Thus a family dependent on them could purchase all their food - and other items - from the one source of credit: "Mom used to have her grocery and pay every Friday night....Noakes' bill, huckster's shop. Sold the lot...Used to sell greengrocery outside"¹⁵. Yet, the corner shop provided more than credit, its presence was pivotal to the community spirit of the road to which it belonged. Whilst groceries were being purchased, news was being passed on, help offered and the process of bonding of the road's families facilitated and rendered more lasting. In a road without a corner shop:

"Who suffers? The mother with children, the aged who lose contact with the corner shop, the loss of community, the vicar who has lost his listening post. This is what a corner shop is"¹⁶.

¹⁴ Ibid., number 8 Mrs. S. Doughty pp.10-11.

¹⁵ Ibid., number 14 Mrs. Carrie Griffiths p.20.

¹⁶ The Spark. Newspaper of The Sparkbrook Association April-May 1977.

For the women of the lower working class and the generality of the upper working class, the corner shop supplemented the beer house if they drank, replaced it if they did not. Both were extensions of street life; the more vital the street the more necessary was the corner shop; the more functions the corner shop fulfilled, the more likely was the street to attain an identity of its own. Consequently, in the roads of the highest strata of the upper working class, corner shops were noticeable for their paucity, absent for the very same reasons which made them essentials in the streets and the roads of the less well off. There were none "in Saint Paul's Road. No. Oh no!"¹⁷, for here the house and not the street was the centre of activity. The difference is exemplified when comparing the shopping facilities of the short and poor Studley Street to the very much longer and upper working class Saint Paul's Road: in 1904 the former possessed a baker, a pikelet baker, a beer house and two other shops; the latter boasted just an outdoor. Similarly with low status Oldfield Road which had twenty one shops of various types - mostly in the lower, poorer section of the road - and high status Ombersley Road - longer than Oldfield Road - which had just six shops, most of these near to its junction with Ladypool Road¹⁸.

A fact which enhanced the appeal of the corner shop for the women of a road was that very often it was run by a woman. If the main shopping roads of West Sparkbrook are excluded (Ladypool, Highgate and Stratford Roads and Stoney Lane) there were, in 1904, eighty six non-specialist shopkeepers in the neighbourhood: thirty of these were women, whilst it is likely that in a number of others where the man

¹⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 21 Miss Abel p.12.

¹⁸ The figures for shops are taken from Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1904.

was named as the proprietor, it was in fact his wife who ran the shop¹⁹. By comparison on the main shopping thoroughfares women were few. Hucksters shops could not afford to be specialist, nor could they set limits on the quantity of foodstuff they would sell as could the shops in busier roads who would not sell a single rasher of bacon, nor an egg, nor $\frac{1}{2}$ d of milk with a 1d packet of tea. However, one item of food was not sold in the corner shops and this was meat (other than bacon). The sale of this was the preserve of the butchers of the district, most of whom were situated along the Ladypool Road. Indeed, the pre-eminence of this road in shopping terms was shown vividly by the number of its butchers: of the thirty one butchers of the district in 1904 fifteen were located on the Ladypool Road; seven on the Stratford Road, five on the Highgate Road; three on the Stoney Lane and a further three away from these four main shopping centres²⁰.

. As a result of their position and the general prosperity of West Sparkbrook, the butchers of the Ladypool Road did not have to grant credit to their customers. However, the absence of refrigerators before The First World War meant that by late Saturday afternoon the butchers shops were left with meat which, if not sold that day, would be spoiled and remain unsold. It was for this reason that the Ladypool Road became famous for Saturday night shopping (as, indeed, did other shopping centres in working class neighbourhoods).

"The butchers shops, they used to open till 12 or 1 o'clock Sunday morning. Knock it out. You'd buy a shoulder of lamb... in them days for about a shilling, 1s3d. Piece of beef for about 18d... 'Cus they sold it to get rid of it, 'cus they didn't open on a Monday. Well they did open...scrub the shop and do the odds and ends...and go the market, pay the bills and the next day they'd bring the meat from the town. They'd got to buy it Saturday morning and they never had fresh meat

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Are you satisfied with your Butcher?

IF NOT, GO TO—

Walton's, 203,
Stratford Rd.,
near Ladypool Road.

OR

367,
Ladypool Rd.,
Near Church Road.

Advertisements from
St. Paul's Parish Magazine
January 1896.

.. Choice ..
Home-killed
Meats,

At Lowest possible Prices.

ORDERS CALLED FOR
EVERY MORNING.


Butchers by
Appointment
to
Her late Majesty
Queen Victoria.

Satisfaction Guaranteed.

<p>Good Family Teas, 1/4, 1/6, 1/8 per lb. Special blend at 1/10 per lb. Highly recommended</p>	 <p>FISHER'S 2/- AND 2/6 TEAS ARE THE BEST 420, LADYPOOL ROAD, SPARKBROOK</p>	<p>Delicious Fresh Roasted Coffees at 1/4, 1/6, 1/8 per lb. Fine French Coffee at 1/- per lb.</p>
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ALL GOODS THE "PUREST AND MOST RELIABLE"
AT STORE PRICES.

W. M. FISHER,
Tea, Wine, and Provision Stores,
LADYPOOL ROAD, Birmingham.

in till the Tuesday. They'd got to get rid of it, at any price. When it came to about 11 o'clock Saturday night... Until he sold out he wouldn't shut the shop... And all the women knew.

'Gie me a shilling for this'

'You must be joking'

and all that... and they'd go down the street and they'd very likely get it for 9d²¹.

This auctioning of meat on a Saturday night was an essential element in the providing of a Sunday meal for a lower working class family; and not only a Sunday meal as the meat purchased might well have to last till Wednesday when the remnants would be eaten for supper. Bereft of the facility of credit, unable to purchase the better joints of meat because of insufficient funds, the poor had no other recourse other than to buy the weekend joint late on a Saturday night when the butcher was forced to sell off what remained of his stock - generally the ceaper cuts - at almost any price.

"They didn't used to do their shopping till 10 o'clock on a Saturday night. They'd be in 'The Wrexham'... Ten o'clock they used to start shaking their feathers and get out to the butchers in The Lane to see what was a going... For about a bob or 15d you'd get what they used to call a saddle of mutton, a great long piece of ribs of mutton; perhaps a beef's heart in there and a lump of pig. Odds and ends, trimmings you know, from the joints, and that should tek you practically through the week. Have a good blow out on the Sunday, cold on Monday, stewed up on Tuesday and then you'd got the best you could till Sunday"²².

Late night shopping on a Saturday, as with credit at corner shops was intrinsical to the lower working class. Circumstance might enjoin any members of the working class to resort to such a device at some time or another but for the poorest it was the regular practice. The reality of the absolute necessity of such devices which made life tolerable escaped the understanding of many of the higher strata of the upper working class, as it did most of the middle class. For

²¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr. Froggat pp.12-13.

²² Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn pp.20-21.

EVERY GOOD HOUSEWIFE LIKES

To spend her income to the very best advantage. We know this, and we stock only the best grade of goods. We cut our prices with a sharp business knife. We do the selecting. We save our customers the worry and vexation so often akin to shopping, and we help them to build up their bank account by saving them money.

A GOOD INCOME

Is easily frittered away if spent on worthless goods, giving no satisfaction and no pleasure. We appreciate the fact that it is the expenditure side that makes or mars our lives, hence our constant care to give value for money.

A GOOD BREAKFAST

makes home happy, sustains one through the morning. See our Butter, Bacon, Ham, and Eggs, with coffee simply delicious.

A GOOD TEA

rejuvenates the tired and weary frame. Our blends are perfection, having been awarded in competitions at the London Grocery Exhibition, one Gold and three Silver Medals.

AND

A GOOD SUPPER

satisfies all. We have a large selection of Lunch and Ox Tongues, Cheddar Cheese from the best dairies, and Biscuits crisp and tempting of every description.

BUTTLER'S, Merchant Tea Blenders,
125, STRATFORD ROAD.

Advertisements from Sale
of Work and Gypsy
Encampment at St. Agatha's
Church November 19th 1903

“What say you to a piece of Beef and Mustard.”

A. ROBOTTON,

NOTED FOR

A-LA-MODE BEEF,
HAM,
AND
TONGUES.

129, STRATFORD ROAD,
BIRMINGHAM.

Agent for Davy's Polony.

these late night shopping was an "addiction", and "an evil and objectionable practice"²³, which provided further evidence of the pernicious habits of the poor. Moreover, the fact that the women of the poor often whiled away Saturday evening in the beer house whilst awaiting the weekly auction of meat, served only to enhance this view and to secure the connection of late night shopping and drink. Thus, the reason the poor purchased cheap joints was not because of poverty but rather because they wasted their money on beer.

"We know why it is that tradesmen are compelled to keep their shops open to such a late hour on Friday and Saturday nights in the poorer districts of a town. It is because so many of the people only think of buying things for the morrow when the Pubs have finally shut their doors. Think what it will mean to the Traders, to the People and even to the over-worked Publicans themselves to have the Pubs shut an hour or two earlier"²⁴.

Not only were the middle class financially secure from such means of shopping, they also "didn't come to the shop. A man or a boy went on a bike...and you had a special book and each week you wrote your order out, gave it to the boy, take it to the shop and it would be delivered the next day"²⁵. The majority of the upper working class, too, could afford to shop during normal hours of business. Financial security again engendered choice: "On Saturday night, now we never did this because we liked a choice...the butchers...would sell off the meat...I was brought up that we had a choice. We went in the morning"²⁶.

The Ladypool Road was the one feature which united the disparate sections of the working class of West Sparkbrook. It pierced the heart of the district becoming as a result the area's artery. Along it mingled the many different elements of the neighbourhood's populace

²³ The Moseley Society Journal, volume IV December 1897 p.492.

²⁴ The Parish Magazine of St. Barnabas, Balsall Heath, April 1908.

²⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 16 Mrs. Johnson p.6.

²⁶ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel p.7.

yet even here could be observed economic division and cultural dis-
sension and not only with regard to Saturday night shopping. Upper
and lower working class did not necessarily patronise the same shops;
one butcher - near to Studley Street "was billed, with a big paper
thing across the top of the shop, 'The Poor Man's Friend'"²⁷. Further
many of the poor bought their fruit and vegetables from hawkers who
lined the side of the Ladypool Road.

"I grew up with the idea that they all came from Studley
Street. Perhaps it was because they looked so poor and wore
caps and white mufflers"²⁸.

It was not the butchers alone who made provision for the poor,
so too did other food shops. Poulterers auctioned chickens and
greengrocers saved the fruit which was bruised to sell off cheaply.

"...up to Westwood's...I went...with a penny, pennyworth of
specs... 'cus any apple or orange that was bruised used to go
in a box underneath...Bananas, apples, oranges, pears. And
some were only just bruised...There was a big grocer's shop,
Heritages,...pennyworth of bits of cheese. This is what we
used to get for our money in them days...to West's and they
used to sell you a pennyworth of stale buns"²⁹.

For the very poor and the least well off of the upper working class
such means as these were essential to eke out a filling diet from
strained finances. A balanced and varied diet was almost impossible
to achieve with bread, potatoes, cheap vegetables and meat forming
the basis of most lower working class meals: "I used to fetch...three
ha'porth of mixed which was approximately 10lb of potatoes, carrots,
onions and parsnips, according to what was in. I used to go then to
the butchers...two pen'orth of stewing pieces and we'd got a meal for
the family"³⁰. Furthermore, for the poor the middle of the week was
the leanest time, funds had run out and the larder was empty and it

²⁷ Ibid., number 6 Mr. S. Doughty p.19. The butcher was Bonehill's.

²⁸ Leslie Mayell The Birmingham I Remember p.8.

²⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews no.12 Mrs. Curtis pp.29-31. Westwoods' was a green-
grocer on the corner of Ladypool Road and Alfred Street; Heritages was
on the corner with Ombersley Road; and West's was a bakers on the corner
of Saint Paul's Road.

³⁰ Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.3.

was up to each member of the family to fend as each individual saw best. For some this meant waiting "outside the factories...and as the people have knocked orf...'Have you got a bit of bread, a bit of bread please"³¹; whilst others "whether it was a bleedin' swede or what, you'd knock it orf"³². Interestingly, petty theft of this scale was not seen as contravening the standards of the poor, hunger over-ruled them; "I seen Fred Derek get the long arm. They was hanging the bacon outside for show and he picked one up...That's how it was in them days"³³.

The poor had to make do as best they could, "see any nub ends on the road, pick 'em up for the old mon"³⁴. Indeed, "mass poverty supported a peculiarly systematic economy. Very little that could be re-used was wasted"³⁵. Poverty induced a way of life in which survival was paramount, a fact which members of other classes found difficult to achieve when faced with not dissimilar problems.

"I have often wished to solve the problem 'How a lady of gentle birth could live on £45 a year'. The following scale seems to me the lowest the lady could live on.

Meat 6d p/day vegetables 9d p/week
Milk 1d p/day washing 1s6d p/week
Tea 5d p/week house 2s p/week
Butter 1lb p/week servant £4 a year
Bread 2d p/day salt etc. - year
Sugar 1lb p/week

When one, however, comes to analyse the above amount...nothing but pity will be felt for the unfortunate lady who might try the experiment...when it comes to a house at 2/- a week rent...pity on the poor, unfortunate lady who has to put up with a house up a court!...For £4 a year it could hardly be expected to obtain a first class general servant"³⁶.

It was impossible for the lower working class family to survive without the aid provided by the pawn shop, the corner shop, the auct-

³¹ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.18.

³² Ibid., number 6 Mr. T. Sleath p.18.

³³ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.11.

³⁴ Ibid., p.10.

³⁵ Paul Thompson: The Edwardians. The Remaking of British Society . (Indiana University Press 1975) p.50.

³⁶ The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, Volume IV November 1898 p.214.
The article is referring to a fund for "Distressed Ladies of Gentle Birth".

ioning of meat and the selling off of damaged food by shopkeepers. Indeed, the frequency of the appearance of butchers meat on a family's table was another indicator of that family's status and prosperity. Moreover, the working class could readily be divided into those who ate meat every day; those who ate meat most days and those who ate the cheaper cuts of meat and that only when they could afford it.

"We had meat every day. Everybody didn't do that; everybody, perhaps, couldn't afford it. We were able to afford it.... And our Sunday morning breakfast was like a ritual, almost. We had a piece of steak with an egg on top...I was brought up like that. I wasn't brought up on porridge and biscuits. Me Dad was very fond of meat. He didn't consider he'd had a meal unless he'd used his knife and fork, as he said"³⁷.

A well off working class family would be provided with a 'proper' breakfast such as bacon and eggs before they dispersed to school or work. The children might take with them jam sandwiches and biscuits and would return to an evening meal of meat and vegetables shared by all the family³⁸. For the generality of the upper working class breakfast might be porridge and a rasher of bacon with a dinner including meat two or three times in the week: bacon trimmings, stews, pigs fry or liver and onions, with cheese and eggs a useful substitute. Tea would consist of bread and jam or dripping³⁹. Food other than this was rare and if a family had wealthy relations the food they ate would be regarded as "fabulous. Jugged hare. and a great big joint. Melt in your mouth"⁴⁰. One result of the economic independence of the majority of the upper working class was their patronising of shops suitable in their tenor to the station of their customers.

³⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 21 Miss Abel p.14.

³⁸ Ibid., number 21 pp.13-14.

³⁹ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. p.11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., number 3 • Mr. L. Brown p.33.

I pr'ythee go, and get me some repast;
I care not what, so it be wholesome food.
Act IV., Sc. III., Taming of the Shrew.

MILLER'S BREAD.

Pure, Wholesome, and Easily
Digested: makes the simplest
meal a pleasure with its de-
licious flavour.

Eat it up all,—if thou lov'st me—
Much good do it unto thy gentle heart!
Act IV., Sc. III., Taming of the Shrew.

STEAM BAKERY,
142 Stoney Lane, Sparkhill.
BRANCH: 185 ANDERTON ROAD. Daily Delivery.

Advertisements from The Programme of The Bazaar of Stoney Lane
Congregational Church, November 25th 1908.



English Bacon only.

Highest Quality
DANISH BUTTER
(NO MARGARINE SOLD).

TEA, blended from
the Original Chests.
TRY THE SPECIAL 1/6 CEYLON.

AT — Breese's,
270 LADYPOOL ROAD, SPARKBROOK.

"...we always used to go to Atkins'...They used to do their own slaughtering...That was a good class shop...Marshalls... was a grocer's next to it. You'd pay perhaps a copper or two more but you got nice stuff"⁴¹.

Good quality shops catering for a generally prosperous working class and an affluent middle class living nearby, abounded on the Ladypool Road. At a bakers on the corner of Saint Paul's Road were sold cream cakes and cream cheese whilst 'The Ryton Field Farm Dairy' on the corner of Taunton Road was "the very essence of cleanliness"⁴² and sold milk, butter, eggs, Devonshire Cream and home cured bacon supplied from the firms own farms. Not only did Westwood's sell "blocks of dates...prunes, cherries, blackberries, strawberries, blackcurrants, redcurrants, gooseberries,...raspberries...mountains of apples and pears, oranges, lemons, and festoons of grapes, green and black. Bananas" but they also sold fish⁴³. Most such products were priced beyond the range of the lower working class of the district's poor quarter. Breakfast for their children was a rarity, other than on a Sunday, so much so that local schools provided free bread and jam and cocoa for such children if they were at school before 8 o'clock . In 1913 a medical examination at Ladypool Road National revealed that some of the children were "poorly nourished"⁴⁴. Those of the poor who were lucky might have bread and dripping of a dinner time, "the first one in the house had the most food. And it was bread and lard"⁴⁵. The same would more often than not be served for tea. Indeed, the existence of a sizeable minority of the poor within an otherwise well off, upper working class district was recognised by certain of the shopkeepers on the Ladypool Road:

⁴¹ Ibid., number 21 Miss Able p.13.

⁴² The Moseley Society Journal, Volume II April 1895 p.133. 'Paul Pry Junior' and ibid., Volume VI January 1900.

⁴³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H. p.7.

⁴⁴ Ladypool Road National Log Book: March 20th 1913.

⁴⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr. S. Froggat p.9.

MILK SUPPLY FOR THE DISTRICT.

Reform Dairy,

TAUNTON ROAD, . . .
Corner of LADYPOOL ROAD.

Advertisements from
The Birmingham and
Moseley Society Journal



Specially fitted with Modern
Dairy Appliances for the
Production and Supply
of . . .

Fresh Butter
*(Free from any
Preservative.)*

Separated Cream
Devonshire Cream

Separated Milk

Sterilized Milk

Butter Milk

and

Other Milk

Products.

1901

*

**EARLY MORNING
DELIVERIES.**

I AM in a position to deliver the above products, also Genuine
New Milk at such times as may suit Customers' requirements.

Customers are invited to inspect my Working Dairy, which
is constructed on the latest and MOST SCIENTIFIC SANITARY
PRINCIPLES and I would point out that the Sterilizing and other
processes are conducted under my own personal supervision.

Proprietor, WM. C. MUSGRAVE.

April 1903

**The Breakfast makes
the Man.**

**POWIS'S
BACON**

Makes the Breakfast.

200 & 210, LADYPOOL ROAD.

"...in those times round Sparkbrook it was rough. I've been in a queue for soup. I used to take the jug and the local grocers on the Ladypool Road used to make a big urn of stew... all us poor kids...used to go up and fetch a jug full back"⁴⁶.

Again, on occasion children of the least well off of the upper working class might also avail themselves of this facility; "we wornt rich... used to get our dinner from The Congregational Hall...Free"⁴⁷.

Yet, no matter how poor, all the families of West Sparkbrook subscribed to the ritual of Sunday, a major part of which was that day's main meal. Of course, the menu differed according to the means of the family. For the better off dinner was invariably:

"A weekend joint...a piece of sparrib of pork...or a piece of beef, leg of lamb, shoulder of lamb. Mother would cook it on the meat jack in front of the fire..."⁴⁸.

Around five thirty dinner would be followed by tea consisting of bread, butter, jam and cakes as well as a salad "done in them days with vinegar... tomatoes and anything that was going"⁴⁹. In contrast both breakfast and tea for the poor would be bread and dripping, varied at the later time by perhaps roly poly or rice pudding⁵⁰. Moreover, the manner in which the dinner itself was cooked also varied from that prevalent among the upper working class.

"...when I was a kid you could go into the pub with your father and mother...and on a Sunday they've took the dinner down to Duggins' [a baker in Studley Street]. If they had a joint they'd tek it...and cook it there. 'Cus in them days there wasn't any gas stoves, you had to do it on the fire. Well, in the summer, if you'd got to light a fire in the morning to cook your dinner it paid you better to tek it to Duggins' and get it done for 2d. You didn't waste the coal, you didn't have to do all the cleaning up, see?"⁵¹

Nevertheless, not always did the ritual of the Sunday joint translate into reality. Extreme poverty and temporary inpecuniousness could lead

⁴⁶ Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., number 6 Mr. T. Sleath p.20.

⁴⁸ Ibid., number 5 Mr. Hubble p.11.

⁴⁹ Ibid., number 12 Mrs. Curtis p.9.

⁵⁰ Ibid., number 9 Mr. S. Froggat pp.11-12.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.16-17.

to a visit to town and Jamaica Row where a sheeps head could be bought (with the eyes left in) or else 'cag mag' - bits of beef, pork or mutton which would be mixed with flour, water and perhaps vegetables⁵². In really straitened means a family might "know what it is to eat a piece of bread and lard, bread and dripping...for Sunday dinner in the old days...with a nobbin of cheese. Glad to get it"⁵³.

A usual indicator as to the general prosperity of a working class district was the number of cooked meat shops in its shopping centres. Whilst this is generally true it was also a fact that the prevalence of such shops - as in West Sparkbrook - did not mean that they were patronised solely by the upper working class who could afford to buy food already cooked. The women of the poor too frequented them as "food she could only buy in tiny quantities. This meant that she paid more in preparation; cooked very little and lived more in the cooked meat shops"⁵⁴. Indeed, for the poor child with a part time job such shops provided a ready source of sustenance as "...they used to sell ½d dips to the kids...they'd cut you a slice of bread and put into the gravy"⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, it was certainly true that the upper working class in general were more able to afford to purchase a proper meal from a cooked meat shop, or indeed to eat one inside a coffee house or refreshment room. This is clear from the fact that such establishments were not confined to the four main shopping thoroughfares of the district but were to be found in solely upper working class parts of West Sparkbrook. In 1904 there were twelve fried fish shops in the district: three along the Highgate Road; two each along the Ladypool Road

⁵² W.G. Chinn op.cit., p.57.

⁵³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.9.

⁵⁴ Gwendolen Freeman, op.cit., p.74.

⁵⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.22.

and the Stoney Lane; and one each along the upper working class Brunswick and Clifton Roads and Long and Main Streets, with one on the socially mixed Kyrwicks Lane. The district possessed nine coffee rooms; four of which were on Stoney Lane, two each on Highgate and Ladypool Roads and one on the high status Ombersley Road, with a refreshment room each on the Stratford Road and Taunton Road. Finally, there were five tripe dressers, three on the Ladypool Road and one each on Oldfield Road and Kyrwicks Lane⁵⁶. The tripe and onion shops of Birmingham were distinguished by the fact that they sold that dish 'dressed' or cooked, not cold as elsewhere⁵⁷, moreover, they also sold cooked cows heels, soft and hard reed (sheep's linings), chitterlings and faggots and peas. Those were made with "pigs fry with the lights...mince all the meat up and bread and sage and onion. And the kell, the melt to wrap them in"⁵⁸.

The variety of shops of this type ensured that the families of West Sparkbrook, wherever their residence, would be able to vary their diet if they could afford to.

"Very often of a Friday night - there used to be a big dairy the top of The Lane...and our Mom used to send me up there with the great big plates of a Friday night...and they used to have a big plate of giblets. They used to kill...the chickens, clean them all out. And you'd get a big plate of that for 8d. Boil 'em, they're beautiful. I used to go and fetch the tripe...Then further along used to be Green's, the fish shop...I used to do this every Monday night...Mom always used to have a tail end of plaice and a pennyworth of chips... Three ha'penny tail of plaice"⁵⁹.

Vitally, the cultural difference between the upper and lower working class of West Sparkbrook was also exhibited in the manner in which a family shopped, where it shopped and when, as well as in the

⁵⁶ Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1904.

⁵⁷ The Evening Despatch "Bits of Old Birmingham" (1913).

⁵⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 14 Mrs. C. Griffiths p.14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., number 12 Mrs. Curtis pp.27-28.

food they ate. The economic division of the working class had ramifications far beyond the immediate income of most families.

Chapter Fourteen

The Church: Leisure, Education and Charity

In the absence of any detailed study specific to Birmingham on the relationship of class to religion, it is difficult to make too solid an argument on the effect social status had on church attendance and other religious observance. Nevertheless, there is much evidence from studies elsewhere in the country to suppose that in Birmingham as in other cities, church attendance was lowest in working class - and especially lower working class - areas¹. Thus, whilst I should not wish to diminish the importance of religion on the church-going minority amongst the working class, I believe the significance of the Church in West Sparkbrook is to be found in those of its functions which affected a wider and larger section of that class; namely through its relationship with leisure, education and charity. No doubt, as Stephen Yeo has observed with regard to Reading, the churches "central business, when they remembered it, was worship and salvation"², yet within West Sparkbrook this central business, as in Reading, often became consumed by the desire "to attract members unlimited"³ by way of those activities attached to the churches which were not necessarily religious in their nature. Moreover, whilst the primary motive of the churches' involvement in these other spheres might indeed have been to secure converts and to break down prejudice against them, much of the work could be "seen as being good in itself"⁴. Thus, in this chapter I shall seek to examine how the cultural division of the working class can be related to these extra religious activities of the church.

¹ See especially Hugh McLeod: Class and Religion in The Late Victorian City (Croom Helm 1974) pp.26-27.

² Stephen Yeo: Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis (Croom Helm 1976) p.52.

³ Ibid., p.2.

⁴ Hugh McLeod, op.cit., p.113.

A multiplicity of churches attached to multifarious denominations were present in West Sparkbrook. The Established Church was represented by: St. Paul's, Balsall Heath, consecrated in 1853 and situated on the corner of Saint Paul's Road and the Moseley Road and which parish included that part of West Sparkbrook II between the Ladypool Road and the railway; St. Barnabas', dedicated in 1905, was conterminous with the rest of that element; and St. Agatha's, whose parish boundaries equated with West Sparkbrook I and which had been formed out of the parish of Christchurch in 1891. In common with many other working class neighbourhoods Anglo-Catholicism was of significance: in the 1920's St. Agatha's was to find fame through its parish priest the celebrated Anglo-Catholic, Father Rosenthal⁵; whilst "at the top of St. Paul's Road there used to be like the Convent with the sisters. I always remember Sister Persis coming to see Ma"⁶. In addition to these three churches and their missions were a number of chapels and churches attached to nonconformist groups: there was a Methodist New Connexion Church at the corner of Ombersley Road and Woodfield Road; a Congregational Church in Ladypool Road and two others nearby in Stoney Lane and on the Moseley Road; a Mission Hall in Turner Street, a Primitive Methodist Chapel in Highgate Road and a Salvation Army Citadel in Priestley Road.

One factor united all these churches - despite their religious differences - in the opinion of many of the district's inhabitants, this being that their congregations were:

"...different from local folk and rather 'posh'. They dressed in sombre clothes, looked prosperous and did a lot of hand-shaking when they met at the entrance gates and when they parted after the service"⁷.

⁵ see C.E. Russel: Rosenthal (1939).

⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. G. Brown p.37.

⁷ L. Mayell: The Birmingham I Remember, p.5 referring to the members of The Turner Street Mission.

Indeed, it was true that most of the district's churches were dominated, at least in their organisation and their officers, by the middle class, although this fact was at its most obvious with regard to those of The Church of England. The President of St. Barnabas' Working Men's Sick and Dividend Society was naturally enough the vicar of the parish, the Reverend J.H. Travers, although he lived out of his parish in Woodstock Road, Moseley. However, the secretary was a Mr. Kingerlee who also lived out of St. Barnabas' in the lower middle class Wilton Road, Sparkhill⁸. Moreover, all the officers of the church's Working Men's Society also lived in middle class roads outside West Sparkbrook: the chairman in Brighton Road; the treasurer in Whitby Road (both these being in Moseley); and the secretary in Durham Road, Sparkhill⁹. This middle class domination of the church was further emphasised by the fact of the curate of the church living in Stoney Lane, Moseley; the secretary in Sparkhill and the organist and choirmaster also in Moseley¹⁰. The situation at Saint Paul's Church was similar to that of St. Barnabas': the vicar and one of his curates lived in Moseley whilst four other curates lived in lower middle class roads in Balsall Heath itself¹¹. Indeed, the high status of Ombersley and Saint Paul's Roads in West Sparkbrook was indicated further by the fact that the church's verger lived in the former and another of its curates in the latter¹².

Even a number of the district's nonconformist churches exhibited an overwhelming influence of the middle class in their founding¹³ and

⁸ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.297.

⁹ Ibid., p.297.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.300.

¹¹ Ibid., p.296.

¹² Ibid., p.296.

¹³ For Example; Stoney Lane Congregational Church was built on land purchased by Scott's Trustees from a fund established for use for Congregationalism, whilst a further £2,000 was provided towards the erection of the church. The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal volume IV October 1895 p.167.

Parish of Balsall Heath

ST. PAUL'S

Working Men's Club

President—
Rev. J. ALLEN BELL, Vicar.

Vice-Presidents—
Rev. W. A. CLARKE, W. COTTON, A. W. CLARKE,
W. H. HANKIN.

Messrs. W. A. CLARKE, B. J. CARTER, W. COTTON,
F. FRANKLIN, W. J. JORDAN, T. MACE,
and others, Organists.

Hon. Secretaries—
Mr. H. JONES, 4, Vincent Street, Balsall Heath,
Mr. F. FORNEY,
Mr. GARDNER, (Vicar's Bible Class for Men),
25, Woodfield Road.

Treasurer—
Rev. T. S. DUNN.

Committee—
Messrs. B. J. CARTER, B. J. CARTER, F. FRANKLIN,
W. J. JORDAN, W. COTTON, W. H. HANKIN, W. A. CLARKE.



There is a _____

Sick and

Dividend Society

IN CONNECTION WITH THE
Working Men's Club.

According to the Rules of which 3d. per
week entitles a Member, when unable
to work through Sickness, to receive a
weekly payment of 5/0.

See Book of Rules.

W. H. PALMER,
Hon. Sec.

551405



Programme for Session,

ENDING 31st MAY, 1901.

This Club, which is open to all Men in the Parish of Balsall Heath, meets on Wednesday and Saturday nights, from 8 till 10.30 o'clock. The Subscription per week is 1d. The Buildings in 5, St. Paul's Road, are composed of Two Club Rooms and a Billiard Room.

Saturday is the regular Club Night, on which all Subscriptions are paid, and when the Members indulge in the various Games provided on the premises, in Chat, and a Social Pipe.

- Jan. 23.—S.P.C., Bicentenary Meeting, Town Hall.
- .. 30.—Smoking Concert.
- Feb. 6.—Whist Drive.
- .. 13.—Lecture by Mr. W. A. Clark, on "Two English Cathedrals."
- .. 20.—ASH WEDNESDAY.

- Feb. 27.—Lecture on "Life of St. Francis of Assisi."
- Mar. 6.—Ditto.
- .. 13.—Ditto.
- .. 20.—Ditto.
- .. 27.—Ditto.
- April 3.—Ditto
- .. 10.—Social Evening.
- .. 17.—Lecture by Rev. T. S. Dunn, on "Rome."
- .. 24.—Concert in Vincent Street Schools, arranged by Mr. F. Forney.
- May 1.—Lecture by Rev. A. W. Cotton, on "Life in India."
- .. 8.—Smoking Concert
- .. 15.—Debate.
- .. 22.—Whist Drive.
- .. 29.—
- June 1.—General Meeting.
- * Open Nights.

A Billiard Handicap for Members of the Club only, will commence on February 9th. Two Prizes will be given.

St. Paul's Working Men's Club Programme
(Session Ending 31st May 1901)

later their organisation. At Ombersley Road New Connexion Church the circuit minister, the secretary, the pew steward and the organist all lived in middle class East Sparkbrook¹⁴. In contrast, many of the officers of The Ladypool Road Congregational Church did come from West Sparkbrook. However, although in 1890 this had been situated in the district's poorest street, at 12, Studley Street, and despite its services having been served "in the streets, on wasteland and in the cottages", none of the church's officers could be termed as living in the streets of the lower working class: the secretary of the Bible class for Men lived in Highgate Road; those of The Mother's Meeting and The Band of Hope in Brunswick Road; and the secretary of the social section in Colville Road¹⁵. Furthermore, the president of the church lived in Woodstock Road, Moseley; the secretary in Avondale Road, Sparkhill; and the secretary of the Sunday School in Tudor Road, Moseley¹⁶.

Thus it would appear that in West Sparkbrook - as in many other working class areas - the churches were likely to be organised around the middle class primarily and the upper working class secondarily, whilst drawing many members of their congregation from this latter section. Indeed, at St. Barnabas' the congregation numbered "upwards of 1,000 mainly of the artisan and middle class"¹⁷. Moreover, whilst even amongst the artisan class the church-goer and especially the regular church-goer was likely to be in a minority, it would seem that many of the standards and codes of behaviour of the upper working class were more conducive to church attendance than were those of the lower working class. The church was seen to be in conflict with many

¹⁴ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.301.

¹⁵ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department.
Sparkbrook Gospel Mission: Report and Statement of Accounts for 1900.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.270.

aspects of the life-style of the poor that were not necessarily deemed as deviant or rough behaviour by themselves but which were regarded as such by the religious; for example in respect of attitudes to drinking, gambling and fighting, a condemnation of such activities was more in keeping with a general rejection of over indulgence in them by the upper working class and a total rejection by a minority of that section¹⁸.

"That was me grandfather, he was very strict he was. He used to preach at one time...He'd get the Bible on the table and read passages from it every time we went...He didn't bet or drink or smoke. I only ever heard him swear once"¹⁹.

It would not be surprising, therefore, if the leisure activities associated with the church - whose aim was to attract members and inculcate sobriety and moderation in the working class - were more likely to appeal to the respectable of the upper working class. The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement was begun with the aim of providing an alternative to the public house and beer house for the working man; by providing him with entertainment such as organ recitals and hymn solos it was hoped to counter the attraction of drink. However, despite the activity of churches such as Moseley Road Congregational, avid in the pursuit of the object of adding "another powerful attraction to their various praiseworthy devices to induce the working men of the district to spend their Sundays in a becoming manner"²⁰, it would be surprising if those other than the 'converted' were reached by such movements. At St. Paul's Church The Working Men's Club - for a subscription of a penny a week - provided debates, lectures, smoking concerts, billiards,

¹⁸ See also Hugh McLeod: "New Perspectives on Victorian Class Religion: The Oral Evidence" in Oral History. The Journal of The Oral History Society, Volume 14 Number 1 1986 pp.36-37 and pp.44-45.

¹⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. L. Brown and Mr. G. Brown pp.37-38.

²⁰ The Moseley Society Journal, 1895 volume II p.339. "Paul Pry".

cards, chess and draughts²¹. There was also a Working Lad's Club²² which met twice a week providing similar activities whilst Penny Reading meetings were seen as another means to reach the working man: "they have had a good number of representatives of the British Working Man, the very class whom these Penny Readings are intended to reach"²³. Moreover, many of those from the lower working class who did attend such functions were probably more likely to do so for the entertainment on offer, and the facilities available, rather than through any avowed religious adherence.

"We used to go to the Mission, of a Sunday. There was a billiard table...that's what brought us there. But if we didn't go of a Sunday afternoon you couldn't go. But if you went you became members sort of thing and didn't pay anything...It wasn't like a proper church service. We used to have a hymn...and a prayer. But we never talked about religion, it was a debate...And they used to play crib and I said

....'Grandad plays crib. He wants to know if he can come: They said yes"²⁴.

As Stephen Yeo has observed for the churches of Reading, there must obviously have been "a felt conflict between organisational and spiritual success"²⁵ with the latter more apparent with the already religious. For these St. Paul's Church provided: Bible Classes for Men; The Mother's Union; Communicant Guilds; The Guild of The Blessed Saviour; a Missionary Association and the Guild of The House of Nazareth²⁶. Moreover, for the committed it was true that the church provided a total community²⁷ embracing both the religious and the secular, although the latter often obviously had religious connotat-

²¹ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.311.

²² Ibid.

²³ The Parish Magazine of St. Paul's, February 1891.

²⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker pp.30-33.

²⁵ Stephen Yeo, op.cit., p.164.

²⁶ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.296.

²⁷ Hugh McLeod: "New Perspectives on Victorian Class Religion..." pp40-41.

ions. The faithful could find fulfillment in a plethora of organisations and activities which catered even for their sporting needs²⁸. This tension between service to the wider community with perhaps little in the way of tangible results (that is in attracting new members) and the firm enforcement of the faith of the religious was also obvious in regard of the educational activities of the churches and chapels of West Sparkbrook. Chief amongst these were Sunday Schools but religious education also impinged on groups such as The Y.M.C.A. and The Y.W.C.A.; The Ojibways (Young Men's Missionary Band); Scripture Union; Girls Friendly Society; Bible Classes for Lads and Young Men; and the temperance group, the Band of Hope²⁹. This latter, especially, confirmed "the affinity of religious organisations for hierarchical disciplining movements, and the felt need to capture youth as it moved beyond the tentacles of Sunday School"³⁰. Nevertheless, it would appear that these organisations were more likely to appeal to the respectable and religious teenagers of the upper working class than the youth of the lower working class.

"I used to sell the penny bricks, I had a little book, sell the penny bricks for the new chapel...I went there to Sunday School and I used to go to Christian Endeavour....but I never went out at night. I wasn't allowed out at night...Me father was a bit religious...had a big bible. He used to bring it down on a Sunday night and we used to have to read a verse out of it"³¹.

For the lower working class teenager, work and hence wages, were - despite the demands on the latter by their families - a liberating experience, enabling them to seek forms of entertainment outside the church. Yet, it is still true that for the school-age children of

²⁸ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.294.
St. Paul's and The Moseley Road Wesleyan Cricket Clubs.

²⁹ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.297.

³⁰ Stephen Yeo, *op.cit.*, p.63.

³¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 7 Mrs. Merriman pp.5-6. This lady was a Congregationalist.

the poor as much as those of the upper working class Sunday School - for a variety of reasons - provided an acceptable and usually welcome leisure activity: "the girls went to Sunday School. That's how we got together"³². Sunday School was 'somewhere to go', it provided 'something to do' on a day otherwise devoid of entertainment for children and it offered a change in routine, a break in the monotony of life, an opportunity to deviate from the tedium induced by urbanisation and industrialisation.

"In Queen Street there used to be a Mormon Church...and we used to play the piece up when we were kids...we used to go in the service and have a drop of wine and a bit of bread in keeping with the nature of the service. Then we used to put our skates on"³³.

However, Sunday School was a vital ingredient in the ritual of Sunday and whether a child enjoyed the experience or not, whether his or hers parents were religious or not, it was still expected that they attend: "Well, it was the done thing. You were just told to go and you went. I mean, you didn't argue the toss about it...Without a question you did it"³⁴. It mattered little to the parents to which Sunday School of which denomination the children went: Anglican parents happily saw their children go to schools run by Methodists, Wesleyans or Congregationalists. Indeed, the cultural division of the working class is apparent in this fact as is that schism between the non-church-going majority of the working class and the church-going minority. For the parents of the poor and of the non-religious it was of no great importance where the children went as long as they attended a Sunday School.

³² Ibid., number 4 Mr. Remington p.19.

³³ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn pp.23-24.

³⁴ Ibid., number 18 Mr. Ebury p.11.

"I went to different Sunday Schools. St. Agatha's, Christchurch, The Congregational, Stratford Road Baptist. We were sent to be out of the way. Sunday afternoon was the only time parents was together. Which one we went to didn't matter"³⁵.

For the poor, in particular, such reasoning was potent living as they did in overcrowded houses where privacy was impossible and where mother and father were unable to be alone. Moreover, for this section there was also, of course, another attraction in sending their children to Sunday School, that of its charitable activities.

"You know The Congregational Hall? Used to go there every Sunday. Got to be there...I got prizes for there.....for regular attendance. At Christmas we had a party, and they used to give you a book, a prize...I've got one 'The Old Curiosity Shop'"³⁶.

Sunday Schools organised trips and treats as well as Christmas parties. They and schools were the main philanthropic agencies providing pleasure for working class and especially lower working class children. On June 24th 1896 St. Paul's Sunday Schools visited Sutton Park; six hundred and thirty children were entertained by the fife and bugle band of the Saint Barnabas' Church Lads Brigade³⁷. Infants were not taken so far afield, often being entertained on 'the six fields' nearby in Stoney Lane, Sparkhill³⁸. Outings were not the only activity: each Thursday a thousand children packed into St. Barnabas' Church to learn the gospel by way of lantern slides³⁹.

However, this fact that "there were two things to it [attendance at Sunday School]: 'up the cut on the coalboat', some midsummer outing; also at Christmas there was a party"⁴⁰; ensured a dilemma for the

³⁵ Ibid., number 5 Mr. H. p.1.

³⁶ Ibid., number 14 Mrs. L. Ward and Mrs. C. Griffiths p.4.

³⁷ The Moseley Society Journal, Volume II July 1896 p.288.

³⁸ St. Paul's Parish Magazine, September 1893.

³⁹ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, April 1908.

⁴⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 20 Mr. F. Franklin pp.2-3.

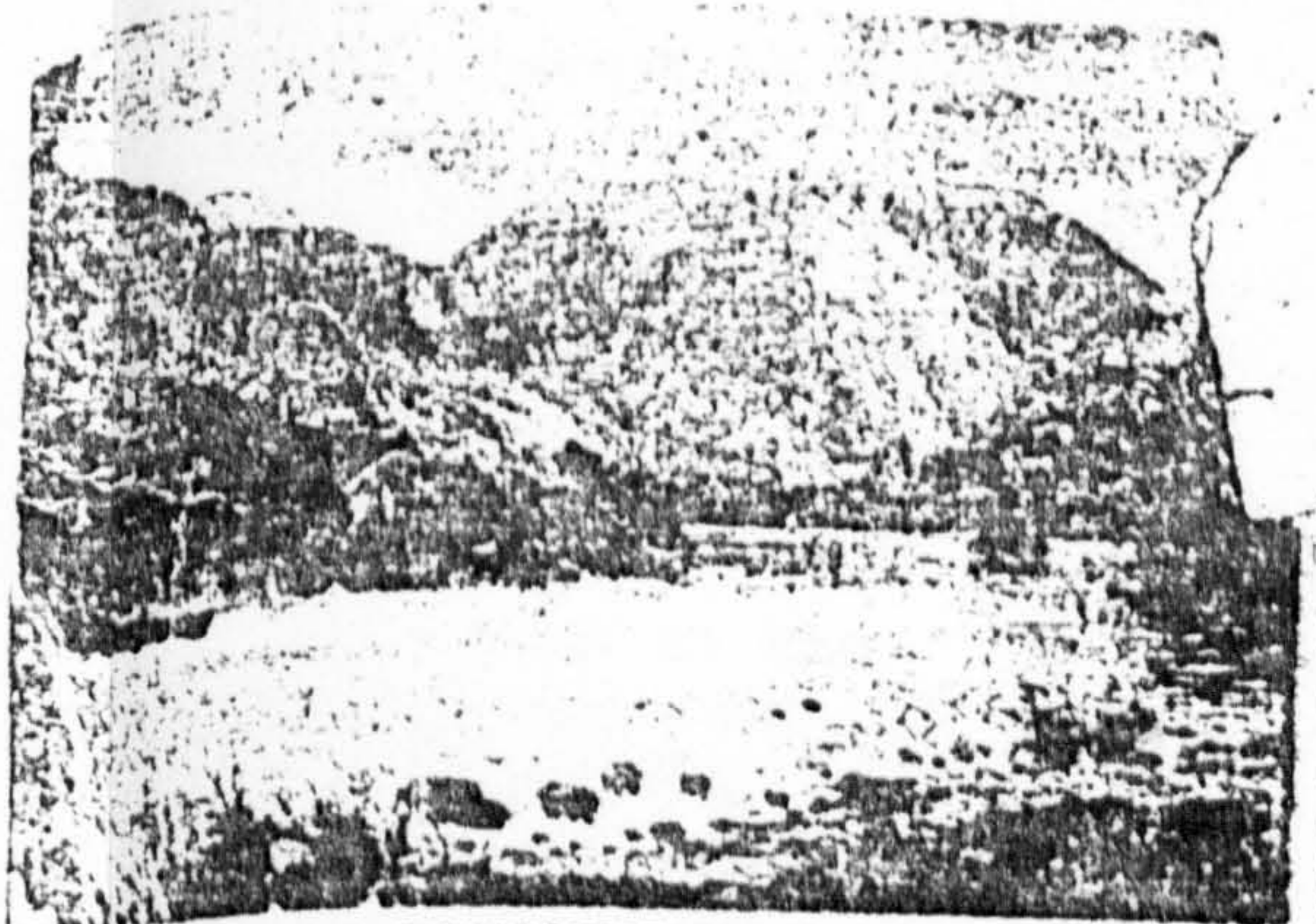


Motto
for
the Year

Herein is Love,
 NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD,
 BUT THAT
HE LOVED US
 AND SENT HIS SON
 TO BE THE PROPITIATION
 FOR OUR SINS.

1 JOHN 4:19

KEESLER BINDER NO. 102 EDITING MANUFACTURE



Wherto hath the Lord helped us,
 He faileth not. 1 Sam. 7:12

Preserved in all the way we went
 To God we give the praise:
 And for the future days content

A
Mountain Daisy
 BY
 EMILY GRACE HARDING

88

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CONGREGATIONAL
 CHURCH

PRIZE.

— AWARDED TO —
Lucy Smith
 REGULAR

Sunday School Motto's and Prizes
from Ladypool Road Congregational
Church, 1919 (courtesy of
Mrs. Lucy Ward)

churches trying to induce religious devotion. In an attempt to counter the attraction of the 'entertainment and charitable' aspects of Sunday School and reassert the religious, St. Barnabas' enforced a new rule, regarding attendance, from 1897.

"We take no children in the afternoon who do not come in the morning, unless they are at work late on Saturday night or home to work on Sunday morning. We don't want sluggards. This is...first, because our school is over-crowded in the afternoon; second, many come for the simple purpose of upsetting others and making a noise..."⁴¹.

As a result most Sunday Schools began to restrict the benefits of attendance in the way of trips to regular attenders: "...I used to have to produce my card with a star on it, to prove that I'd been..."⁴².

Church charity in a wider sense brought the non-church-going majority of the lower working class into close contact with religious organisations. As I have argued in Chapter Thirteen, it was impossible for most of the poor to survive without recourse to credit, a "manual worker's wage was simply not sufficient to maintain a large family"⁴³. However, credit was only one pillar supporting the lower working class family, still in indigent circumstances in many instances. The other was charity. Church charity, though, was not doled out without some regard to the true circumstances of the family applying for it.

"All cases submitted to the Committee have received careful consideration and it is hoped that no really necessitous or deserving case has gone unrelieved; it is quite certain that some undeserving cases have been refused"⁴⁴.

⁴¹ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, December 1897.

⁴² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 20 Mr. F. Franklin p.2.

⁴³ P. Thompson, op.cit., p.21.

⁴⁴ St. Paul's Church Relief Committee. First Annual Report April 23rd 1900 (The Vestry Minutes). At a later date those in need of charity were registered with The City Aid Society to prevent cases "overlapping or the imposters getting help" *ibid.*, April 22nd 1913.

In its first year the St. Paul's Relief Committee helped two hundred and thirty five persons or families, making six hundred and thirty eight orders on tradesmen for grocery, coal, meat, tea and milk at a cost of £93-19-5d. A Christmas Dinner fund saw to the provision of meals on Christmas Day and also of coal and clothing provided from the fund of The Kings Norton United Charities⁴⁵. In following years the numbers of families assisted in these ways fluctuated with the amount of unemployment and the severity of winters.

Furthermore, the church charities were based on the principle - no matter how far divorced from the reality - that the poor should not become over-dependent on charity; that too much assistance would only encourage them to remain in their poverty which had been induced by their attitude and way of life: "We believe that the soup sold to the poor does quite as much good as that which is given away"⁴⁶. A half-penny charge was made for a quart jug. Moreover, the churches in general regarded charity as a form of investment on which they expected a return, this being an appreciative and morally uplifted lower working class, dragged spiritually out of their self-induced 'slough of despond'.

"A bright idea has been carried out during this season of frost, on behalf of the numerous working men whose enforced idleness for six weeks has brought distress and semi-starvation to so many houses in our Parish. The Vicar and Mrs. Murray-Browne have provided free teas on different evenings for some of these...and on two occasions these Teas have been given...before the Penny Readings, to which the men were allowed free admission...After tea they were addressed by the Reverend S.G. Collier and then were left to spend the evening in social conversation...It really was an inspiring sight to see these good fellows enjoying a hearty meal, but the most hopeful thing about these teas in the fact that they have brought one into touch with the men whom

⁴⁵ St. Paul's Church Relief Committee A.G.M. April 23rd 1900 (The Vestry Minutes).

⁴⁶ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, April 1892.

at other times of greater prosperity it would have been difficult to reach"⁴⁷.

A soup kitchen was established each winter by the relief committee of St. Barnabas' Church to cater for the needs of the poor and to alleviate hunger. At St. Luke's Mission - attached to the church - and, situated in Alfred Street, serving the district's poor quarter, twenty five gallons of soup were given out in three quarters of an hour on one Friday alone; "and we should have been glad of another gallon"⁴⁸. Half of a 21b loaf was also given out, but demand often led to a watering down of the soup. 'Warm Garments for The Poor' were also collected but in fact were only given to children⁴⁹. Again at St. Luke's, "crowds of children came"⁵⁰ to a tea for poor children, whilst other soup kitchens were set up solely for these.

Yet, despite the restrictions imposed by the churches on their charity and their desire to achieve moral change in the lower working class, many of the poor decidedly preferred their assistance to that of the Poor Law Unions. Despite an increase in outdoor relief in the 1890's in Birmingham and a realistic understanding that for many of the elderly who were indigent, the workhouse "was a bit of a relief"⁵¹, church charity remained a popular and accessible means of assistance: "I've got a recollection once...of going on the parish. I had to go to the Institute on the Moseley Road and I had bread, tea, sugar"⁵². For those of the upper working class who were unprotected by clubs or friendly societies, unemployment or illness could lead them to a simi-

⁴⁷ St. Paul's Parish Magazine, February 1891.

⁴⁸ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, January 1908.

⁴⁹ Ibid., April 1909 and March 1913.

⁵⁰ Ibid., March 1908.

⁵¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 4 Mr. Remington p.9.

⁵² Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn p.9.
The Institute belonged to The Society of Friends.

lar appeal for help, albeit one that for them was degrading and indicative of a loss of status. Charity, for the upper working class, was not a necessity, an accepted part of life as it was for the poor, it was an unwanted incursion denoting hardship and a resort to the means of survival of the lower working class.

"And there came a time he [Grandfather] had to apply for help...And he went to see the head officer, at The Friends Institute on Moseley Road. And they listened to his tale... and he give his verdict and he said he's very sorry. He said,

'But, if you'd 'a' been a man as drunk and done a lot of gambling and went with women and anything like that, you come to us and we could help. But...you've got all those nice things in your house and when you've sold all them and you've got nothing, you come to us and we'll see what we can do'"⁵³.

According to the view of many of the neighbourhood's upper working class, charity rewarded behaviour and a way of life that was not respectable and infringed against their accepted standards. Thus charity, by its nature and its operation, was biased in favour of the poor who defied the strictures of respectable upper working class opinion.

It is important to be aware that the giving out of charity was not restricted to the churches. Many members of the middle and upper classes sought to help the poor for the same reasons as did the churches: firstly because they wished to affect a change in the behaviour of the lower working class, to improve their moral standing and secondly, because it was right to help those who were less fortunate.

"But there is one feature worthy of much reflection made manifest as a consequence of all this prevailing distress and one that brings prominently to the front that noble element of man's nature that fragrance of life, Charity. It is to see that those who are blest with plenty, and those who have little, are not unmindful through all their own troubles of the urgent and distressing needs of the starving and destitute poor..."⁵⁴.

⁵³ Ibid., number 3 Mr. George Brown pp.18-19.

⁵⁴ The Moseley Society Journal, Volume II February 1895 p.12.

Most non-religious charities were aimed at a certain section of the poor or desired to effect a certain result. The Birmingham Society for Providing Country Holidays for Poor Children struggled along under the patronage of around three hundred of the charitable to bring children of the poor out of the cities into the country on short holidays⁵⁵. Day trips to places such as Sutton Park were organised by The Pentland Robins⁵⁶. The Daily Mail - a local newspaper - organised a Fund which provided jerkins and corduroy trousers for the children of the poor, whilst The Police Aided Association donated hob-nailed boots. Without these it meant that many of the children of Studley Street "used to run about with no boots on their feet"⁵⁷. The habit by many parents of pawning these boots and articles of clothing served only to confirm in the opinion of many of the upper working class the thriftless and degenerate behaviour of the poor. Indeed, the boots and clothing were later to be stamped so that pawn shops would not accept them as pledges⁵⁸.

An orphanage, just out of the district in Montpellier Street (off Kyrwick's Lane), taught the orphans laundry, nursery and household works which were:

"a species of training not only likely to result in advantage to the children themselves but contributing something towards meeting the great and growing difficulty of obtaining qualified domestic servants, brought up in the habits of order, industry and docility, and with the seeds of good sown in their minds, when most susceptible..."⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ The Birmingham Daily Post, February 21st 1901. The Society had been founded in 1894.

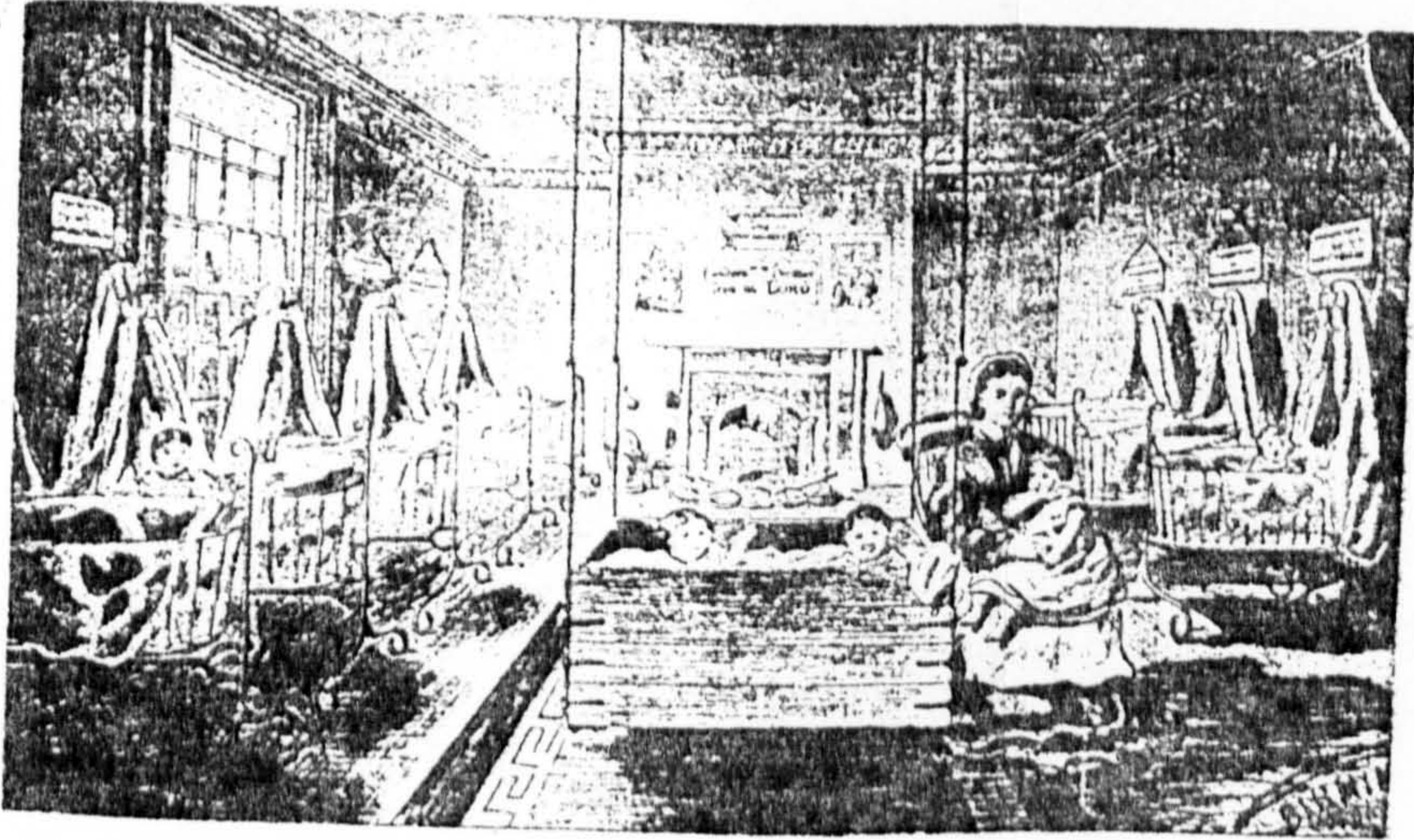
⁵⁶ W.G. Chinn op.cit., p.32.

⁵⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 6 Mr. T. Sleath p.27.

⁵⁸ Ibid., number 15 Mr. Narbrough (supplement) p.2.

⁵⁹ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department: The Creche, Orphanage and Laundry Camp Hill, Birmingham. Report and Balance Sheet 1878 (Half Year Ending Christmas).

"A GLIMPSE OF THE DAY NURSERY."



The Montpellier Street Creche,
Day Nursery and Orphanage.

One organisation which sought to improve the moral well-being of the children of the poor other than by assistance and education within the district, was that of 'The Children's Emigration Homes' established by the M.P., Mr. T.J. Middlemore. Originally, most of the children affected by this goup were from the poverty stricken wards around the city centre, particularly from notorious streets such as Thomas Street, John Street, Old Cross Street and The Gullet. However, as time progressed the children came to be drawn from all other poor quarters of Birmingham, including that of West Sparkbrook: "some of our children who have been received into these homes are now doing remarkably well in Canada"⁶⁰. The reasoning behind the object of the society was simple.

"Birmingham is the worst place for the child of a Birmingham Criminal. Let there be a complete break from their early associations. Let them be taken right away - be seasick, see ice-bergs, learn to talk through their noses of dollars and cents and have their lives turned entirely upside down. The New World is in the fullest sense a new world to them"⁶¹.

The work of this and other societies with a similar aim was regarded by many of the poor as a way "many youngsters from broken homes were assisted"⁶².

Help was not necessarily restricted to those benefiting from the actions of philanthropic organisations; charity could be very personal. In such cases the local vicar often took a leading role as with the appeal that those who needed socks or other articles should allow a local young man, crippled temporarily, to knit them for them⁶³. Or as

⁶⁰ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, December 1899, The article refers, not unsurprisingly, to children from Ladypool Road National School.

⁶¹ "I Remember..." The Birmingham Gazette and Express, June 15th 1907 Mr. T.J. Middlemore M.P.

⁶² W.G. Chinn, op.cit., p.65.

⁶³ The Moseley Society Journal, Volume II February 1895 p.12. Local Gossip by 'Paul Pry Junior'.

with the blind man who became a member of 'The Blind Tea Agency' and from whom the vicar of St. Barnabas' appealed to his parishioners to purchase their tea⁶⁴. Circumstance might even reduce a middle class family to poverty, although in such instances great efforts were made to assist them and prevent their descent into the life of paupers.

"I was glad to see...that the case of the solicitor's widow and her six little children is being taken up again for the purpose of finding them some relief in this distressing case...The whole family have been supplemented by two or three friends, who have provided them with food and shelter to keep them out of the workhouse"⁶⁵.

Yet, what of the working class of the district? Were there similar efforts of class solidarity? For the upper working class especially, income allowed them to organise themselves - if they so wished - into benevolent clubs designed to provide mutual support in times of adversity. Such agencies in West Sparkbrook were based at public houses in high status roads: at 'The Crown' public house in Saint Paul's Road was based 'The Crown Sick and Dividend Society' as well as a court of 'The Four Brothers' of The Ancient Order of Foresters⁶⁶; meeting at 'The Red Lion' on the Ladypool Road was 'The Grand United Order of Oddfellows Friendly Society (Birmingham District)⁶⁷. Moreover, also based at 'The Crown' was The St. Paul's Permanent Money Society⁶⁸. In Sherborne Road, Balsall Heath, a Provident Dispensary - The Sands Cox Dispensary -- had opened in 1882 and at which, for fourteen shillings a year, a man, his wife and family would be supplied with medical care at their home⁶⁹. As with

⁶⁴ St. Barnabas' Parish Magazine, March 1913.

⁶⁵ The Balsall Heath Times, June 24th 1882. Letter off Geo. Thurston.

⁶⁶ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901 p.295.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.303. There was also an organisation 'The Sparkbrook Amalgamated Friendly Societies' (The Moseley and Kings Heath Journal, Volume IV December 1898 p.275).

⁶⁹ The Balsall Heath Times, March 25th 1887.

all such organisations which required regular payments to maintain membership, the lower working class were largely unable to avail themselves of the facilities of care offered. Moreover, even members of the upper working class who did subscribe could find themselves faced with a discrimination based on economic circumstance and ultimately class.

"And the Doctor's bills...The Sand's Cox Trust. We was under Dr. Beard in Moseley Road uptil then and we always went in the front entrance. So me nother took me...so we went to the front door and handed in the card and he said

'Tradesmen's entrance for Dispensary cards'
He wouldn't let us in because we didn't pay. We had to go round the back. I felt bad about that. And me mother did. I don't think we went there again"⁷⁰.

One group which was established by the working class themselves to help avoid reliance 'on the strap' and to encourage self help was the Co-operative Movement. This proved popular for many families in West Sparkbrook, with its shops along the Ladypool Road in the neighbourhood itself and nearby on the Moseley Road.

"...there is a reason why everybody used the Co-op in them days. It was the fact that they got a dividend. And it was quite helpful at times. I mean very often Mom'd go and get £2 or £3 - which was money in them days, out of the dividend. That's why she used to use the Co-op for every little thing"⁷¹.

However, the appeal of the Co-op was likely to be found amongst the upper working class and the thrifty and lucky of the lower working class who were not entrapped in the endless cycle of borrowing and paying back to borrow again. For those who were shackled by such constraints on their economic circumstance, the Co-op, with its lack of credit, was likely to be a facility the poor could not afford to patronise except occasionally. Indeed, the fact that the poor favoured the corner shop and not the Co-op was another cause of complaint of

⁷⁰ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. L. Brown pp.39-40.

⁷¹ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes p.11.

their life-style by the middle and upper working class: "you buy in the dearest market...and you waste what you buy. You might make your incomes go much further by your co-operative societies, but you won't support them"⁷². Moreover, the general weakness of the Labour and Trades Union Movements in Birmingham before The First World War, combined with the strength of Liberalism and later Liberal Unionism in the city and West Sparkbrook induced many of the neighbourhood's inhabitants to avoid the Co-op shops.

"We never used the Co-op. Dad objected to Co-op's taking the livelihood off other shops by them starting the dividend"⁷³.

The communal self help of the poor was poorly documented and rarely recorded. Nevertheless, it was present and significant for without the assistance of neighbours many children must have starved, numerous families must have succumbed to the inexorable advance of poverty. Such help, given the poverty of the lower working class, necessarily excluded financial assistance, yet this was replaced by a giving of whatever was available, especially in settled communities.

"They was all the same people, all the same type. Mind you if I went home from school say dinner time and the kids'd got in earlier than me...there's nowt left for me. You'd go to somebody else's home and say:

'You got anything to eat'

They'd say

'Ar. Sit down. Have some of this'.

Give you what they'd got. It might be only bread and margarine but it was just the same"⁷⁴.

In streets such as Studley Street, bonded through the kin by a loyalty to the street, the poor sought in any manner to help themselves, whether that be through running errands for neighbours⁷⁵, minding children

⁷² Pictures of The People Drawn by One of Themselves (Birmingham 1871) number 1 "The Contents of The Portfolio".

⁷³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H. p.12.

⁷⁴ Ibid., number 9 Mr. Froggat p.22.

⁷⁵ Ibid., number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.55.

whilst a mother was at work⁷⁶ or grandparents bringing up illegitimate children as their own⁷⁷.

It is apparent that whilst the poor in general may have been active participants in 'festive Christianity' - that is adhering to manifestations of popular religion such as the rites of passage and the churching of mothers newly delivered of their babies - organised Christianity had less appeal. Consequently, it was chiefly through their charitable and educational functions with regard to school age children that the churches of West Sparkbrook came into regular contact with the district's lower working class and attempted to effect a conversion - both cultural and religious - of that section. In contrast, whilst church attendance amongst the neighbourhood's upper working class might still have been low, the respectable of that section who adhered to its accepted values were more likely to be receptive to the churches' moral codes and views on how the working class should lead their lives. Nevertheless, economic independence amongst the better off of the working class did ensure that the non-religious need not come into contact with the churches at all (except through their children at Sunday School) and were free from the necessity of relying on church based charity. Indeed, whilst this was essential to the survival of many poor families, as was credit and an intensely localised communal self-help based on the extended family and neighbours, the upper working class were more able to rely on the nuclear family and organisations based not on kin but on class solidarity in a wider sense which was not specific to street or locality.

⁷⁶ Ibid., number 9 Mr. Froggat p.22.

⁷⁷ Ibid., number 8 Mr. Parker p.41. See also Chapter Sixteen.

Chapter Fifteen

Politics

Birmingham politics had a particular character during the period under review. Although this was a period which saw the rapid development nationally of a political labour movement, represented in Parliament by trades unionists, and by socialists from the various groups which merged after 1918 into the modern Labour party, these developments were largely absent from Birmingham politics. In spite of its large concentration of working men, Birmingham did not record a significant labour vote until after The First World War.

Changes in constituency boundaries, combined with the introduction of the ballot makes the detailed examination of voting habits in West Sparkbrook impossible. A study by Christopher Green based on local government returns which are more localised and therefore easier to apply to local voting patterns has been used to attempt to get closer to the local electorate than is possible by studying only Parliamentary elections¹. Nevertheless, what emerges from the study of the politics of this period is that the social and cultural splits in the working class of West Sparkbrook are not carried through into any significant difference in voting behaviour or political allegiance. Before The First World War the two elements of West Sparkbrook lay in different Parliamentary constituencies, which fact reflected their separate nature in the years before Balsall Heath was annexed to Birmingham in 1891. West Sparkbrook I was part of The Bordesley Division and West Sparkbrook II was included in The South Division (formerly it had been part of the constituency of East Worcestershire)². The political history of the area reflected that

¹ Christopher Green: "Birmingham's Politics 1873-1891: The Local Basis of Change" in Midland History, Autumn 1973.

² Following The First World War the two elements were united as part of The Sparkbrook constituency.

of Birmingham in general: first being Liberal and then, following Joseph Chamberlain's decision to leave that party, becoming Liberal Unionist and Conservative in character. Both constituencies to which the district belonged returned Unionist members to Parliament, whilst at a local level the neighbourhood's councillors were also Unionist³. The Southern element of the study lay in Balsall Heath Ward which "has for many years been one of the best organised from the Unionist point of view in the city"⁴. Indeed, in the municipal elections of 1911 only fifty-nine votes separated the Unionist candidate with the most votes from the one with the least, resulting in the party's three candidates being elected whilst the solitary Liberal came bottom of the poll⁵. The Northern element lay in Sparkbrook ward which in 1911 also saw three Unionists elected, relegating to last a Liberal candidate who had Labour and Trades Union support⁶.

Christopher Green takes the view that "despite their Chamberlainite past's the better employed working-class electorate refused to follow Chamberlain into Unionism, since it was tainted with Conservatism"⁷. However, both wards of which West Sparkbrook voters were part were upper working class in general (although with lower working class localities) and it would seem that here, at least, the better employed of the working class did follow Chamberlain.

³ I use the term Unionist with respect to the peculiarities of the political situation in Birmingham after 1886 when Chamberlain left The Liberal Party. By Unionist, I mean either Liberal Unionist or Conservative. Even today, the Conservative parties in Birmingham are known as 'Conservative and Unionist'.

⁴ The Birmingham News, Saturday November 4th 1911. In Birmingham Elections Material 1909-11.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ City of Birmingham Central Library: Local Studies Department: Press cuttings and Birmingham Election Material 1909-11.

⁷ C. Green, op.cit., p.92.

"...the Conservatives were then the worker's party. This was because of Joe Chamberlain's advocacy of Tariff Reform - taxing foreign goods to help industry"⁸.

The dominance of The Unionists was facilitated by two factors: the first, the disarray into which Birmingham Liberalism in general fell after Chamberlain's defection (indeed, the site of The Sparkbrook Liberal Party Club became two shops in the 1890's); and the overall weakness of Labour and Trades Union groups in Birmingham before 1919.

"Dad was Labour! But I've got to say this. There was two parties. Conservative and Liberals...It was all Tory 'cus they were the gaffers...If you voted for them you'd got a job. Those Labour people, if you voted for them you'd got no chance...you'd never get anything orf those b.....people used to say"⁹.

Labour was represented in Birmingham. Greet a district adjacent to West Sparkbrook was regarded as the "stronghold of Labour and Socialists"¹⁰. Yet, within the neighbourhood itself little advance was made until 1919¹¹ by the Labour Movement. For many members of the working class support for the Unionists was seen as self interest. This was not so much the result of overt pressure from employers to vote in a certain manner as a belief that social influence, political dominance and economic power lay with the Unionists, or to a lesser extent the Liberals. "Father hated and detested the sight of Labour. He'd say 'You can't expect the tail to wag the dog'. He was definitely Liberal"¹². For many years the upper working class of Birmingham had, in general, been used to a political union of sorts with the city's middle class in a process with a degree of continuity from the time of The Birmingham Political Union to that of the Liberal Unionists. This

⁸ C.S. A. Chinn Interviews number 15 Mr. Narbrough (supplement) p.1.

⁹ Ibid., number 20 Mr. Franklin pp.9-10.

¹⁰ The Birmingham News, Saturday October 28th 1911. In Birmingham Elections Material 1909-11.

¹¹ In 1919 a Co-operative councillor was elected for Balsall Heath and a Labour councillor for Sparkbrook.

¹² C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 5 Mr. H. p.11.

process was reflected in the dominance of middle class leaders such as Attwood and Chamberlain and found sustenance in the myth of Birmingham in which those elements which were rooted in reality decidedly excluded the poor.

"Dad was Tory. Yes! Red hot. Absolutely! He was a 100% true blue royalist...I think the attitude in those days was that they was only too glad to have a job. And also they realised that their employer, particularly if they were only in a small way, had risked possibly their life savings in order to try and advance a little bit in the social order, and were finding other people jobs. And in those days the work people appreciated the fact. They did not demand that the boss should give them everything so long as they were fairly treated. And, of course, in those days it was much fairer than today because the boss worked side by side with you and did precisely the same job that you were doing"¹³.

Thus, in many respects the culture and standards of the upper working class of West Sparkbrook ensured the dominance of the Unionists locally. The leaders of the party were respected for their business ability, for their financial knowledge, for the fact that 'they had got on' and were thus deserving of respect, of support. Self-help, independence, hard work, sobriety and moderation were all elements in this phenomenon of upper working class political allegiance¹⁴. Yet, what of the poor? Given the social and cultural schism of the working class in the neighbourhood of West Sparkbrook, given the lack of economic cohesion between the poor and the middle class, it might have been expected that the poor differed in their political adherences. In the absence of a detailed breakdown of the voting habits of the district according to polling station it is difficult to judge the allegiance of the inhabitants of the poor quarter with any great ac-

¹³ Ibid., number 13 Mr. Atkins pp.44-45.

¹⁴ Certain areas of Birmingham where the men were regularly employed in secure jobs did evince marked support for the Labour Party before 1914: Such districts were those where trades unionism was stronger as in Saltley and Acocks Green, both 'railway' areas.

curacy¹⁵. Nevertheless, oral evidence tends to support the view that the poor were as Unionist in their political allegiances as the upper working class: "We was all red, white and blue in Studley Street. We was all Tory"¹⁶.

The Unionism of poor districts had been helped in the 1880's by the fact that Liberalism in the city was associated with the employers so that the party of opposition in the first half of that decade was the Conservatives

"For the first time a drift towards Conservatism was apparent in two types of area - the poorest working class wards - St. Mary's, Market Hall, Duddeston, St. Bartholomew's and St. Martin's - and the richest middle class wards - Edgbaston and Market Hall"¹⁷.

By the 1890's the poorer wards of the city were voting Conservative or S.D.F.¹⁸. (Although in the early years of the twentieth century St. Bartholomew's was regarded as a Liberal stronghold). The gradual merging of The Liberal Unionists with the Conservatives ensured that there was a strong base of Unionist support in lower working class areas which was supplemented by a floating vote attracted to it through an absence, in most wards, of a viable labour alternative. Thus, in many families the tradition became to vote Unionist.

"...they was Tories. You know, it followed 'cus the old Tory image...had been in the family for years. We tek it on, the Conservatives, we tek it on because the old mon was a Conservative, 'cus he probably took it orf his Dad..."¹⁹.

The charisma of Chamberlain, the belief that "the Conservatives went in to govern"²⁰, the attachment of patriotism to Unionism, as well as

¹⁵ The poor quarter of West Sparkbrook - Studley, Queen, Alfred and Mole Streets - came under Polling District 11 in the electoral division of Balsall Heath Ward in 1911.

¹⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 29 Mr. J. Stokes p.1.

¹⁷ C. Green, op.cit., p.89. Market Hall was a central ward generally middle class but with pockets of extreme poverty.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.92.

¹⁹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn pp.52-53.

²⁰ Ibid., number 11 Mr. Curtis p.10.

a conscious effort by the Unionists to appear as 'The People's Party'²¹, ensured that many of the poor too would support them. Moreover, most of the rural immigrants into Birmingham came from Anglican and Conservative Warwickshire and Worcestershire²²: "My mother was Conservative because she came from the country"²³. In certain families allegiance to Unionism resulted from a parent's social origins.

"...I remember the times when I've seen the old man make himself sick trying to smoke tea leaves, arter they'd been used. Because he hadn't got tuppence for two pen'orth of twist. Well, he came from a good family as were Tories. He was the son of a rich family. And then the Labour started and...they said that all the trouble was started by the Labour...Everything that the working man's got was got by the Labour. The Tories have always believed in plenty out of work and give the working man nothing.... Grandfather was like him. He'd got an obsession, the miners always cause all the troubles in the world"²⁴.

However, before 1919, West Sparkbrook remained strongly Unionist, partly for lack of a strong opposition. Indeed, even during the inter-war period the wards to which it belonged regularly returned Unionist candidates - such as Mr. Menlove, a shopkeeper on the Ladypool Road²⁵ - as well as a Unionist M.P. - Mr. L.S.M. Amery - between 1918 and 1945.

"When he was standing for Parliament, all the candidates used to have a horse and cart and give the kids a penny or something to go round the streets and sing a song...

'Vote, vote, vote for Colenel Amery. He's the man for you and me. He's been fighting at the front. And for us he's borne the brunt. And he'll frighten Messr's Hurt and Spiers away'

That was the Labour and Liberal candidate"²⁶.

²¹ Birmingham Election Material 1909-11.

²² For an assessment of the connection of Anglicanism with Conservatism see H. McLeod: "New Perspectives on Victorian Working Class Religion: The Oral Evidence" in Oral History: The Journal of The Oral History Society, Vol. 14 number 1 1986 p.36.

²³ Alan Mahar (edited): Memories of Balsall Heath, Highgate and Sparkbrook. Local History From Conversations (T.A.S.C. 1983) p.17.

²⁴ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. Les Brown and Mr. George Brown pp.11-13 and 38.

²⁵ This councillor was first elected in 1922.

²⁶ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 13 Mr. Atkins p.44.

Thus, between 1871 and 1886 (the date of Chamberlain's defection) West Sparkbrook was dominated politically by the Liberals, after which date until 1914 power transferred to the Liberal Unionists. Both periods were characterised by an absence of division within the area's working class with regard to voting habits, as well as a lack of an effective political opposition.

9

Chapter Sixteen

Neighbourhood, Community and King

Hugh McLeod in Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City has discussed the concept of 'neighbourhoods' which formed "the most localised, and probably the most typical base for the individual's conception of the community to which he belonged"¹. The Concise Oxford Dictionary supports his definition describing the neighbourhood as a "district, especially one forming a community within a town or city"². West Sparkbrook was quite definitely a neighbourhood. Although the size of a small town its inhabitants were united by their common sharing of its 'artery', the Ladypool Road, as well as their allegiance to the working class in general. Whilst culture and clothes could separate the members of that class, distancing the upper working class "effectively from the ragged street urchin"³, such a separation was as "nothing"⁴ to that which divided the working class from the middle class. Indeed, for many of the working class who prospered financially class solidarity and antipathy to other classes ensured that they would not ascend in the social order. For example:

"Bookmaking as a vocation led nowhere but to modest wealth, while its social unacceptability inevitably propelled its practitioners back into the class from which they came"⁵.

However, within the wider community of the neighbourhood existed a narrower concept of area, much more strongly localised and homogeneous in its social composition. The term which perhaps best describes this is that of 'quarter' which is defined as a "division of

¹ Hugh McLeod: Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (Croom Helm 1974) p.7.

² The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (Oxford 1984) p.678.

³ P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

⁵ R. McKibbin: "Working Class Gambling in Britain 1880-1939" in Past and Present, number 82 (1979) p.172.

town, especially one appropriated to or occupied by a special class"⁶. Thus, a neighbourhood could enfold within itself a number of related but self-sustaining quarters based on a wide variation of status and determined by residence and location.

"Like Saltley knew nothing about Handsworth. They was all districts. If you lived in Sparkbrook you lived in Sparkbrook. You knew nothing about Sparkhill or who lived there. Only shops, of course. They never mixed. And then if you went down onto Golden Hillock Road you was in another. Then Greet was another area....They never worried about other districts. Lots of little villages. There were five or six streets together, a little community. Well, on the edge of that there'd be another five or six little streets. That'd be a little community and there'd be five or six of them communities making up a district....Different communities. Little communities all boded together"⁷.

Yet, these 'five or six streets' which made a 'little community' did not necessarily, make a quarter; they were more likely to be just a wider extension of residential segregation based on the subtleties of status as determined by the street or road of residence. Such communities could merge gradually and easily into each other. To be viable a quarter had to be distinguished by something other than a connection based on the nuances of status within a closely related group, as, for example, between the groupings of streets of the generality of the upper working class in West Sparkbrook. Thus, within a working class neighbourhood, nationality could denote a quarter, such as The Italian Quarter in St. Bartholomew's in central Birmingham; whilst in upper working class West Sparkbrook poverty distinguished Studley and Queen Streets - and to a lesser extent Alfred and Mole Streets - and ensured that this locality would become a quarter, inhabited by 'a special class'. Thus, implied by the use of this term is the converging on a certain portion of a neighbourhood of those so

⁶ The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Oxford 1984) p.845.

⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 9 Mr. Froggat p.20.

strongly separated from the dominant social composition of that neighbourhood that they were apart from the majority of its inhabitants as a result of culture, religion, nationality, economic circumstance or a combination of these. Therefore, the highest status roads in West Sparkbrook might be grouped together but they did not form a quarter as they were part of the neighbourhood in a way that the poor quarter was not.

The presence of a quarter was the result not just of differentiation but of the fusing of those who were different into a vital and viable community "you sort of bonded, helped one another"⁸. Consequently, poverty could lead to the 'quartering' of a neighbourhood since it ensured the attraction of the poor to the street. In the 'poor' quarter much greater significance was attached to the extended family. The nuclear family tended to be the unit in districts of relative affluence and more commodious living conditions. The binding of the families in the poor quarter of West Sparkbrook was facilitated by a number of factors which welded it into an organised and settled community. These factors included the length of residence in the streets - especially Studley Street - of a number of families which provided the basis for the cohesion of the streets (although such residence was not necessarily in the same house); the adherence of these families to the street so that this became a living entity, the focus of loyalty in a way the roads of the upper working class were not; and finally the inter-marriage of these families to form a kindred which were a "bridge between the individual and the community"⁹.

⁸ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes p.5.

⁹ Michael Young and Peter Willmott: Family and Kinship in East London (Pelican 1977) p.104.

Kinship was vital to the bonding of the families within a street; it brought into distant relationship a multitude of residents and by doing so enhanced the loyalty to the street which was thus also a loyalty to the kin. Studley Street exemplified this process in West Sparkbrook. It was a short street, just two hundred yards long in contrast to Saint Paul's Road which was six hundred and seventy three yards long¹⁰, and it boasted just eighty-one houses at the turn of the century. Between 1881 and 1900 a number of families became established within the street some of whom remained in residence until the houses of the street were demolished nearly sixty years later¹¹. According to The Educational Census Books covering 1908 to 1910 there were five families sharing the surname Warwick; three with that of Jones; three with Stokes and two each with those of Moore; Reeves; Fletcher; Chambers; Harris; Hyde; Beedon; Bashford; Parton and Fawkes¹². Moreover, other families were related by marriage such as the Wheldons, the Derricks, the Stokes' and the Chinns and the Careys and the Prestons.

"Nack Carey...he was related to the Prestons...Alf Chinn married Ada Derrick, then he married the daughter afterwards... They was related to the Stokes'...It was the different families that was intermarried...There was Rounds'...he had about fourteen or fifteen kids. There was another Rounds which was related to them, they lived next door...Then old Lady Carey which was related to Nack Carey which was related to Prestons....Next door was some distant relation to me, we called Granny Gloster...Lennie Hinckley was a kid when his parents died and he was adopted by one of the people in our street, The Reeves',...because, I think, Mrs Reeves was a Hinckley. Kids at different times was adopted if someone died. They was took into the family...As, I say, three quarters of the street was like a clan, like...a community spirit. No kid was neglected. If you hadn't got a crust

¹⁰ Everson's Moseley, Kings Heath and Balsall Heath Year Book, 1901, p.315. Only White, Malvern and Queen Streets were shorter in the neighbourhood.

¹¹ I say 1881 because according to the census of that year only five families had names which were mentioned in The Educational Census Book for the street in 1908. (MS 229: 17) These families were Warwick, Ingram, Faulkner, Cockbill and Hickman.

¹² The Educational Census Books MS 229: 17.

of bread in one house you could get it in the next"¹³.

At St. Barnabas' Church between 1906 and 1914, fourteen marriages took place in which one or more of the partners were residents of Studley Street. Of these marriages, both partners lived in Studley Street in ten cases, three of these living next door to each other; a further three had a partner from elsewhere in West Sparkbrook II and in only one case was there a partner from outside the district, coming in this instance from Balsall Heath¹⁴. In contrast, over the same period weddings which included one or both partners living in Saint Paul's Road and which were solemnised at St. Paul's Church numbered thirty: in only one marriage did both partners live in the road; in fourteen marriages there was a partner from elsewhere in West Sparkbrook II; nine were from Balsall Heath; two from elsewhere in South Birmingham; two from North Birmingham; and two came from outside Birmingham¹⁵. Both samples are obviously small but they are indicative of a trend whereby the poor were "tied to a narrowly defined area by poverty, insecurity and ignorance of the wider world.... The result was extreme parochialism"¹⁶. Within West Sparkbrook not only was "The Little Park...the end of Sparkbrook., Although.... postally it goes on a little bit further it worn't part of The Lane....

¹³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker pp.1-16.

¹⁴ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. Register of Marriages of St. Barnabas' Church. (Studley Street lay in the parish of St. Barnabas') I have followed High McLeod in Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City (Croom Helm 1974) p.18 ref. 32 in excluding all cases where both bride and groom give the same address. My own oral evidence tends to support his third reason for this occurring, that is "one partner was giving the address of the other as an address of convenience" p.18 ref. 32. "Your Grandfather lived in Hick Street but he said he lived in our street so that we could get married in St. Mary's" C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 28 Mrs. Lilian Perry p.3.

¹⁵ City of Birmingham Central Library: Archives Department. Register of Marriages of St. Paul's Church.

¹⁶ Hugh McLeod: Class and Religion in The Late Victorian City (Croom Helm 1974) pp.8-9.

Map 1

● The Moves of The Family of
Mr. William Chinn

(Interview number 1)

c1898-1907



It turned a bit quieter"¹⁷; but for the lower working class of its poor quarter their boundaries were further shrunk within the neighbourhood: "I never went in that park in me life. I dayn't know it was there till I was about ten. Too far away"¹⁸.

The social cohesion of Studley Street and its poor quarter was reinforced by families remaining within the locality. Whilst lower working class families were in general likely to move residence more regularly from an inability to pay the rent, they were likely to do so within the quarter or between their own and other quarters of a similar status.

"We used to move. We left out of White Street to go to Studley Street. We knocked on the landlord there. Studley Street we went to Moseley Road...Then we come from Moseley Road back into Brunswick Road....Then Stoney Lane...and then into Queen Street. Then Alfred Street. Back to Studley Street, then back to Alfred Street. That's how it was in them days"¹⁹.

These nine moves occurred over as many years before the family finally established itself in Alfred Street. Moreover, of the nine moves, six were within the poor quarter of West Sparkbrook, two were into roads adjoining it and one was to another poor quarter in Highgate nearby²⁰. Up to 1910 The Educational Census Books indicate ninety three cases of families in Studley Street who had a previous address. Of these 30% had previously lived at another address within the street; 30% gave a residence elsewhere in West Sparkbrook II with a massive 58% of these living in Queen Street, Alfred Street, Highgate Road and Stoney Lane, the first two of which were in the poor quarter whilst the latter two had pockets of lower working class housing and

¹⁷ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker p.24.

¹⁸ Ibid., number 9 Mr. Froggat p.23.

¹⁹ Ibid., number 1 Mr. William Chinn pp.28-30.

²⁰ See Map 1.

Table 1 : Comparison of Previous Address
of Families Moving into Studley Street
and Saint Paul's Road

Road	Same Road	West Sparkbrook II	Previous Address West Sparkbrook I	Address Adjacent Areas	Rest of Birmingham	Outside of Birmingham	Other
Saint Paul's Road	7.5%	32%	3%	27.5%	15.5%	14.5%	-
Studley Street	30%	30%	6.5%	18.5%	8.5%	4.5%	2%

adjoined it; 18.5% of the moves were from adjacent areas; 6.5% from West Sparkbrook I; 8.5% from elsewhere in Birmingham; and a mere 4.5% were cases of families who had moved into the street from outside Birmingham²¹. Again, the situation in Saint Paul's Road completely counterbalanced that of Studley Street. Out of one hundred and eighty five cases where families moved into the road only 7.5% were from addresses in the same road; 32% were from West Sparkbrook II with 3% from West Sparkbrook I; 27.5% had moved from adjacent areas; 15.5% from the rest of Birmingham with 14% from outside of the city²².

This bonding of the poor quarter was strengthened by the unity of the inhabitants with regard to nationality. The Irish and Italians in the city congregated in sections of the poorer wards in central Birmingham, whilst the Jews were only "a smattering"²³, with a slight concentration in the Varna Road area of Edgbaston and in Moseley. Of course, there were members of these groups in West Sparkbrook but they were distinguished by their rarity: the Italian Maturi family were ironmongers²⁴; the Jewish Parlow family were tailors²⁵, whilst the Galinsky family were drapers²⁶. Nevertheless, the social divisions of the neighbourhood were not as a result of religion or nationality. The 1881 census shows that 45% of the inhabitants of Studley Street were born in Birmingham, this compared with 34.5% in Clifton Road (representative of the generality of the upper working class) and 31.5% in Saint Paul's Road²⁶. One explanation of this fact that the poor were, at the time of this census, more likely to be Birmingham born is that

²¹ The Educational Census Books MS 229: 17.

²² Ibid., MS 229: 303.

²³ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.55.

²⁴ Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1908 and C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 3 Mr. George Brown p.29.

²⁵ Kelly's Directory of Birmingham, 1908 and C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 14 Mrs. Lacy Ward p.21.

²⁶ The 1881 Census.

Table 2 : Immigration into Birmingham
Origins of the inhabitants of
Three Socially Representative Roads
of West Sparkbrook

Road/Social Status	Birmingham	% Born in			Staffs	Rest of Midlands	Elsewhere
		Worcestershire	Warwickshire				
Saint Paul's Road: High Status	31.5%	19.5%	7%	10%	5%	27%	
Clifton Road: Middle Status	34.5%	18.5%	13%	6.7%	14%	13%	
Studley Street: Low Status	45%	20%	9%	4.5%	9%	12.5%	

The inhabitants of the three roads approximate to the highest of the upper working class, the generality of that section and the poor.

Figures Taken From the 1881 Census

as a centre of multiform industry the city attracted skilled men from all over the country who would then be more likely to live in roads of higher status. Without the figures available from the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses it is impossible as yet to draw too many inferences from this phenomenon.

The settled nature of the poor quarters in West Sparkbrook ensured that - given the general avoidance of Studley Street, especially, by the upper working class and the police²⁷ - the street's inhabitants would regulate themselves.

"If anybody got a bit bossy and the rest of the neighbours thought they was putting on an act, you know trying to be funny; about it, there'd be somebody to pull 'em to order. They'd soon be straightened out. They'd let 'em see that they didn't want anybody bossing 'em about. You'd got to toe the line. There was more democracy amongst them in their rough and ready way than there is today"²⁸.

Moreover, the usual absence of the police from the street did not mean that crime against property or individuals (other than in fights) was common. Neither of these was quite unknown but kinship and community did ensure that in a street such as Studley Street the poor would live within the bounds of acceptability as determined by the life-style of the lower working class in general. For the street's inhabitants, Studley Street "was a friendly street. Nobody had got anything. But nobody robbed anybody or anything. Nobody locked the doors, you didn't have to lock your doors. Nothing to pinch anyway"²⁹.

This community spirit meant that the matriarchs of the street, in particular, were guardians of acceptable behaviour³⁰, as well as being responsible for determining certain practices which impinged on

²⁷ See Chapter Six.

²⁸ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 2 Mr. W.G. Chinn p.52.

²⁹ Ibid., number 9 Mr. Froggat p.15.

³⁰ See also Robert Roberts, op.cit., pp.42-43.

the whole community. Thus in the 'brew houses' in which the women of a terrace of back-to-backs would do their washing, 'you couldn't pick your washdays'³¹, whilst toilets, which were usually shared by three families of such a terrace, would 'be cleaned out every day'³² by each family in succession. Moreover, some of the older women would be the repositories of folk-lore and folk medicine, essential ingredients in the lives of the poor.

"In the area I lived in as a child the call was often heard for the need of 'Mother' Minton, who, no doubt, had her counterpart in other localities. At all hours a quick response found her at the bedside in illness, accident, confinement or even death to render aid...."³³.

The upper working class might have their clubs and societies but the poor had their kin and neighbours. In this respect Studley Street is similar to the Bethnal Green observed by Michael Young and Peter Willmott in the 1950's³⁴. Moreover, the poor 'looked after their own' even if, perhaps, moral codes had been contravened.

"This woman was named Mrs. Field and she...was a daughter to Mack Carey. And she had a daughter out of wedlock and this daughter was married. She lived in Studley Street. She says to Granny Gloster:

'Have you seen our May'.

And old Granny Gloster says:

'Who do you mean your May?

You mean your mother'.

'No, you silly old so and so, our May'.

'May's your mother whatever you're talking about'.

The baby was brought up by the Granny and she always thought the old Granny was her mother and her mother was her sister"³⁵.

Furthermore, by belonging to a tightly knit, highly localised community the poor found comfort and support to such an extent that some who could afford to move out of a poor quarter did not do so, fearing their material gain would become a distinct communal loss. "I suppose me

³¹ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 14 Mrs. Carrie Griffiths p.8.

³² Ibid., number 22 Mr. P. Weakes p.13.

³³ W.G. Chinn, op.cit., p.45.

³⁴ Michael Young and Peter Willmott: Family and Kinship in East London (Pelican 1977).

³⁵ C.S.A. Chinn Interviews number 8 Mr. Parker pp.40-4.

father and all the other adult people, they got into, I won't say a clique, but they got that used to one another that they never thought of leaving. The community spirit was terrific"³⁶.

In contrast, the cultural and social emphasis in the roads of the upper working class was very different: the nuclear family superseded the kin; the house was dominant over the street; and the neighbourhood replaced the quarter.

"They'd got a different outlook on life, shall we say. A little bit different outlook on life. It isn't that they wouldn't do anybody a good turn, or anything like that.... But people were a bit proud, shall I say. Took pride in themselves and very respectable"³⁷.

Moreover, the upper working class were often more reserved, more formal as a result of their non-adherence to the street. This reserve was not necessarily snobbishness, as the poor would see it, but arose out of a lack of intimate communication with and knowledge of other families in the road of residence: "...not often did you find women neighbours calling each other by Christian names, unless they'd been friends since childhood. It was only Mrs So and so, always...In those days they were very formal"³⁸. Moreover, economic independence ensured that the upper working class could not only generally eschew the practices of the poor, but they could also condemn them.

"But my Dad - and he was not alone in this view,
'What you can't pay for, don't have....Save up for it
till you can pay for it'.
And that was a very strict and strong ruling I was brought
up with"³⁹.

Vitally, many of the cultural differences which separated the upper and lower working class in West Sparkbrook were essential in determining the concept of community relevant to each section. In this

³⁶ Ibid., number 22 Mr. Weakes pp.4-5.

³⁷ Ibid., number 13 Mrs. Atkins p.3.

³⁸ Ibid., p.4.

³⁹ Ibid., number 21 Miss Abel p.16.

sense culture and community are indivisible. Income largely decided residence; residence determined status and status influenced lifestyles to such an extent that culture and communal life were the means whereby the economic partition of the working class gained relevance and influenced what was regarded as acceptable or not, what was deemed deviant or not. West Sparkbrook between 1871 and 1914 exemplifies this process of economic and cultural division within a working class which was yet united in a wider class solidarity in respect of other classes.

Chapter Seventeen

Conclusion

The basic idea that emerges from this thesis is that the working class of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras cannot be regarded as solidly uniform in character. Rather than being an indivisible whole whose members shared similar attributes, aspirations and inspirations, I believe that the working class did not lack individuality nor was it monotonous in its composition and life-style. Instead, it was a vital, fluctuating class neither static nor moribund, but alert and changing, united - despite internal divisions - by a class consciousness, an awareness of belonging and a pride in allegiance. The divisions within it, however, were significant and far reaching in their consequences.

"I am a working man...my idea of a working man is an artisan, a good workman not connected to or belonging to a set of rowdy blackguards, who are a disgrace and bring disgrace"¹.

The most obvious and important split within the working class was between its upper section and its lower, poor, section. This partition was based on income, occupation, residence and hence status and was widely recognised by the working class of the period under review. An investigation into the anatomy of West Sparkbrook between 1871 and 1914 does, I believe, emphasise the relevance of this division as well as signifying the impact of that schism on culture and community which augmented and made potent what was originally an economic partition. In many respects the neighbourhood was unremarkable: it was the scene of no national events; it possessed no outstanding industry; indeed it was not remarkable in the accepted sense of the word as it did not stand out from its peers. Yet, if we accept that all too often,

¹ The Birmingham Daily Gazette, October 16th 1885. Letter off a working man condemning lower working class 'roughs' who had been used to disrupt a Conservative meeting at the Aston Lower Grounds in that year (the infamous 'Aston Riots').

"society and social problems are seen from the top downwards"² and that the task of the social historian is "to counterbalance this perspective with the view from the opposite direction"³, then the society of working class West Sparkbrook is significant. Moreover, it was then the scene of remarkable events if the life of each individual, the story of each family, the record of each community is deemed worthy of recognition and of being remarkable in itself. Historians such as E.P. Thompson and Paul Thompson have shown the way in this writing of history from "the bottom up"⁴; they have indicated its importance and I hope this thesis does credit to these and other social historians, such as Dorothy Thompson, who have been my guides.

It is very tempting after years of research and writing to see revealed in your thesis some startling historical fact, hitherto unobserved, which will shatter the academic world by its discovery and imprint itself on historical interpretation. I cannot, however, claim this, yet I would like to emphasise a number of issues which I believe arise out of my thesis and are significant. Firstly, is the relevance of the division of the working class as discussed above. Secondly, is the intrusion of that division into locality and community; housing; schooling; shopping habits; reasons for attendance at Sunday School; attitudes towards charity; marital behaviour; attitudes towards drinking, gambling and fighting and the roles and responsibilities of men, women and children. As a result of this intrusion, the upper and lower working class of West Sparkbrook differed to a considerable extent in culture, in beliefs and in interpreting what was regarded as accepted behaviour and what was "deviant". The one factor which united all those

² P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Harvey Kaye in The Times Higher Educational Supplement, January 31st 1986. Article on E.P. Thompson.

aspects of life-style which exemplified the separation of the two sections was the adherence of the poor to the street and that which belonged to the street, whilst the upper working class were more likely to be centred on the nuclear family and based on the home.

Beer houses, street bookmakers, many children's part-time jobs as well as the community in the widest sense were to be found along the streets of the poor. In streets such as Studley Street intermarriage between resident families and the establishment of those families within the street ensured a vital yet organised and settled community. By a further contrast with the way of life of the upper working class emerges the fact that each member of a lower working class family, whether adult or child, male or female, was essential to the survival of that family. If the women of the poorest families lacked a certain femininity and the protection of the lives of those higher up in the social scale, they were held in their own communities in a greater respect than their more "fortunate" sisters and enjoyed a greater degree of independence if they worked. The role of the married women of the poor especially was vital to the survival of all. If lower working class children seemed to have very little of the "short holiday of childhood" because of the need for their earnings and their labour, they gained experience and self-reliance which children in higher social groups may sometimes have never achieved. In neighbourhoods and quarters where the poor organised themselves based on family and kin a community spirit sought to balance the rigours of poverty and make life tolerable. Yet, there were negative factors to the independence of women and children: the absence of mothers from their babies whilst at work could prevent them breast feeding their children which might then increase the possibilities of the infant dying. Moreover, for children their enforced absence from school as a result of

their part-time jobs, as well as their attendance at schools which were inferior in both structure and teaching to those attended by the children of the upper working class, ensured that such children would, more often than not, remain shackled by their birth in poverty. Importantly, education was not offered to all in the same form in West Sparkbrook in the period under review.

A third issue which I believe emerges from my research and which is connected to the first two is that of the need to re-examine the concepts of rough and respectable. Certainly, these terms have validity but they need to be applied with sensitivity and the understanding of the cultural difference between the upper and lower working class. Such terms cannot and should not be used indiscriminately so that the affluent in society are automatically the respectable whilst the poor are inevitably the rough. Instead their relevance is to be found in an examination of what was acceptable and of what was deviant behaviour according to the perception of the members of each section of the working class. The standards, values and codes of the one cannot be inexorable in their verity whilst those of the other are certain in their wrongness. Life-styles need to be judged according to class, status, economic circumstance, beliefs and attitudes rather than just by a blind adherence to a steamroller usage of the terms rough and respectable. What might constitute rough behaviour to the respectable of the upper working class of West Sparkbrook was not necessarily so for its poor. Further, what was true for the neighbourhood might not necessarily be so for others.

A fourth issue I should like to emphasise is the widespread nature of poverty in Birmingham in the period under review as well as the problems faced by the poor of the city. I regard one of the most

important facts to emerge from my study to be the separation of the city's poor from the mainstream of civic and social life in Birmingham. Especially significant is the fact that this separation was as valid and far reaching in its consequences for the lower working class in their minority in West Sparkbrook, as it was for those in their majority in the central wards of Birmingham. Standish Meacham has entitled his book A Life Apart: The English Working Class 1890-1914⁵. I believe that the experience of the poor in Studley Street in particular, demands that title be amended somewhat and that "A Life Apart" is relevant to "The English Lower Working Class". For it was these who were denied full participation in the body economic, the body politic and the body social of England. The upper working class to a greater or lesser degree were admitted to a limited membership of these whilst the poor were excluded. In the poor of Studley Street can be discerned how the lower working class of England could challenge their exclusion by a bonding together, by a forging of a community spirit so that within their own settled and organised neighbourhoods and quarters they could defy adversity and poverty and assert a triumph of the communal over hardships.

⁵ Standish Meacham, op. cit.

Appendix 1

List of Streets, Roads and Lanes in the survey as at 1900

Alfred Street	Tillingham Street
Auckland Road	Turner Street
Beechfield Road	White Street
Brunswick Road	Woodfield Road
Chesterton Road	
Clifton Road	
Colville Road	
Erasmus Road	
Hertford Street	
Highgate Road	
King Street	
Kingsley Road	
Kyrwicks Lane	
Ladypool Road	
Larches Street	
Leamington Road	
Long Street	
Main Street	
Malvern Street	
Marshall Street South	
Mole Street	
Ombersley Road	
Oldfield Road	
Priestley Road	
Queen Street	
Roshven Road	
Runcorn Road	
Saint Paul's Road	
Spark Street	
Stoney Lane	
Stratford Road	
Studley Street	
Taunton Road	

Appendix 2

Changes in Road Names

Original Name	Final Name	Date
Avery Road	Runcorn Road	December 11th 1897
Fulham Road	Leamington Road	Late 1890's
Henry Street	Oldfield Road	Mid 1890's
Highgate Lane	Highgate Road	1882-1883
Ladypool Lane	Ladypool Road	September 1883
Thomas Street	Highgate Road	December 1897
Victoria Street	Studley Street	January 12th 1898

Appendix 3

Residential Segregation: Road Status in West Sparkbrook I

This appendix is based on the 'respectability' of the roads - and hence their residents - as perceived locally.

Ultra Respectable:	Stratford Road
Highly Respectable:	Ladypool Road
Respectable :	Beechfield Road
	Auckland Road
	Erasmus Road
	Priestley Road
	Marshall Street South
Respectable with Poor Sections:	Long Street
	Larches Street
	King Street
	• Spark Street
	Main Street
	Kyrwicks Lane
	Turner Street

Appendix 3a

Residential Segregation: Road Status in West Sparkbrook II

Ultra Respectable:	Saint Paul's Road
Highly Respectable:	Kingsley Road
	Ombersley Road
	Runcorn Road
Respectable :	Chesterton Road
	Woodfield Road
	Ladypool Road
	Hertford Street
	Malvern Street
	Clifton Road
	Stoney Lane
	Roshven Road
	Brunswich Road
	Taunton Road
	Leamington Road
	Colville Road
Respectable with Poor Sections:	Highgate Road
	Oldfield Road
Poor :	Alfred Street
	White Street
	Queen Street
Very Poor :	Studley Street

Appendix 4

The Number of Back-to-Backs by road in West Sparkbrook

West Sparkbrook I

King Street	16		
Kyrwicks Lane	34		
King Street/Spark Street	26		
Larches Street	14		
Long Street	16		
Main Street	44		
Tillingham Street	5		
Turner Street	25		
		Total	214

West Sparkbrook II

Alfred Street	9		
Brunswick Road	8		
Ladypool Road	4		
Studley Street	46		
		Total	67

Appendix 5 : The Licensed Trade in West Sparkbrook I

Road	Public House	Beer House	Number of Outdoors	Date Road was Cut. pre or post 1870
Auckland Road			2	Post 1870
Beechfield Road			1	Post 1870
Erasmus Road			1	Post 1870
Highgate Road	The Australian Arms The Brewers Arms	The Lion and Lamb The Queen's Arms The Green Dragon The Talbot The Malt Shovel The Junction	4	Pre 1870
Kyrwicks Lane	The Cottage of Content The Stratford Arms	The Hereford Arms The Railway		Pre 1870
Main Street			2	Pre 1870
Marshall Street South			1	Pre 1870
Mole Street			1	Pre 1870
Larches Street		The Beehive	2	Pre 1870
Long Street	The Warwick Arms		2	Pre 1870
Spark Street		The White Hart		Pre 1870
Stratford Road	The Victoria The Angel			Pre 1870 Pre 1870
Tillingham Street			1	Pre 1870
Turner Street		The Turners Arms		Pre 1870

Appendix 5 a: The Licensed Trade in West Sparkbrook II

Road	Public House	Beer House	Number of Outdoors	Date Road Cut. pre or post 1870
Alfred Street			1	Pre 1870
Upper Brunswick Road			3	Pre 1870
Chesterton Road			1	Post 1870
Clifton Road	The Railway	The Gladstone Arms The Prince of Wales	4	Pre 1870
Hertford Street	The Crown		1	Pre 1870
Kingsley Road			1	Post 1870
Ladypool Road	The Brighton Hotel The George Inn	The Red Lion The Clifton	1	Pre 1870
Oldfield Road			2	Pre 1870
Ombersley Road			1	Post 1870
Queen Street			1	Pre 1870
Runcorn Road*		The Victoria	1	Pre 1870
Saint Paul's Road			1	Pre 1870
Stoney Lane		The Royal Oak		Pre 1870
Studley Street		The Gate		Pre 1870

*The Victoria was situated in the former Saint John's Road portion
of Runcorn Road.

Appendix 6

The Population of West Sparkbrook I

Road	1881 Census		Average per household	No. of houses according to Educational Census	Estimated Population 1910
	No. of houses inhabited	Population			
Auckland Rd	84 (9)	445	5.3	105	557
Beechfield Rd	29 (4)	137	4.7	71	334
Erasmus Rd	83 (15)	489	5.9	96	566
King Street	30 (3)	127	4.2	35	147
Kyrwicks Lane	141 (6)	601	4.3	212	912
Ladypool Road	62 (7)	292	4.7	116	545
Larches Street	149 (16)	719	4.8	170	816
Long Street	141 (13)	653	4.6	157	722
Main Street	118 (15)	573	4.9	157	769
Marshall St Sth	52 (14)	235	4.5	66	297
Mole Street	55 (19)	278	5.1	121	617
Priestley Rd	67 -	332	5.0	74	370
Spark Street	30 -	123	4.1	33	135
Stratford Rd	89 (23)	454	5.1	142	724
Tillingham St	54 (13)	290	5.4	65	351
Turner St	102 (2)	465	4.6	126	580
Total	1286 (159)	6213	4.83	1746	8442

The 1910 figure does not take into account houses which may have been unoccupied (shown in brackets for 1881)

Estimated Population	Population: Kelly's Directory 1925
8442	80 54

Appendix 6(a)

The Population of West Sparkbrook II

Road	1881 Census		Average per Household	No. of houses according to Educational Census	Estimated Population 1910
	No. of houses inhabited	Population			
Alfred Street	52 (12)	271	5.2	75	367
Brunswick Road	119 (28)	657	5.5	376	1839
Chesterton Road ¹	-			175	856
Clifton Road	225 (45)	1092	4.9	440	2152
Colville Road	-			123	602
Hertford Street	33 (6)	170	5.2	53	259
Highgate Road ²	279 (46)	1298	4.7	295	1443
Kingsley Road	-			60	293
Ladypool Road ³	71 (5)	334	4.7	176	861
Leamington Road	-			116	567
Malvern Street	39 (2)	222	5.7	51	249
Oldfield Road ⁴	76 (18)	403	5.3	320	1565
Ombersley Road	-			246	1203
Queen Street	72 (5)	300	4.2	77	377
Roshven Road	-			66	323
Runcorn Road	-			343	1677
Saint Paul's Road	72 (9)	334	4.6	211	1032
Stoney Lane ⁵	20 (7)	111	5.6	72	352
Studley Street	61 (2)	288	4.7	81	396
Taunton Road	-			72	352
White Street	31 (15)	169	5.5	45	220
Woodfield Road ⁶	34 (4)	143	4.2	152	743
Total	1184 (204)	5792	4.89⁷	3625	17,728

¹ This and other roads with no population in 1881 were not formed at that date.

² Highgate Road: The figures for 1881 are an amalgamation of Highgate Lane and Thomas Street.

³ House figures for Ladypool Road from The Educational Census are up to Clifton Road from the Highgate Road.

⁴ The figures for Oldfield Road are for Henry Street.

⁵ House figures from the Educational Census are up to Leamington Road only on the west side.

6 The 1881 figures for Woodfield Road are for Highgate Crescent.

7 The actual average per household if taken from the average per household of each street is 5.0. However, because I have rounded this latter to the nearest decimal point I have taken the figure provided by dividing the total population by the total number of houses as being more accurate. This, therefore is the figure I have used for my estimated populations.

N.B. The 1910 figure does not take into account unoccupied houses which are shown in brackets for 1881.

Estimated Population
17,728

Appendix 7 : Schools Included in Chapter 11, Separate Schooling

Board Schools

School	Situation
Clifton Road Board	West Sparkbrook II
Conway Road Board	East Sparkbrook
Dennis Road Board	North Moseley
Mary Street Board	Balsall Heath
Moseley Road Board	Highgate
Sherbourne Road Board	Balsall Heath
Stratford Road Board	West Sparkbrook I
Tindal Street Board	Balsall Heath
Upper Highgate Street Board	Highgate

National or Church Schools

Christchurch C of E	West Sparkbrook I
Ladypool Road National	West Sparkbrook II
St. Alban's	Highgate
St. Patrick's	Highgate
St. Paul's, Vincent Street	Balsall Heath

Bibliography

I Primary Sources

i Oral Evidence

ii Unpublished

iii Newspapers

a Newspapers, Journals and Church Magazines

b Newspaper Series

iv Published Materials

a Concerning Birmingham

b Concerning Other Places

v Directories

vi Censuses

vii Private Papers and Letters

II Secondary Sources

i Books

ii Articles

iii Reports

Apart from Oral Evidence and Published Materials Concerning Other Places, most Primary Sources are to be found in The City of Birmingham Central Library Local Studies and Archives Departments. In such cases, where applicable, a reference number follows the source.

i Oral Evidence

Date of Interview	Name	Interview number	Date of Birth	Road/District of Residence Relevant to Thesis
3/6/85	Miss Abel	2	1914	St. Paul's Road, West Sparkbrook II
16/1/84	Mr. Atkins	13	1906	Highgate Road, West Sparkbrook II
16/1/84	Mrs. Atkins	13	1909	St. Paul's Road, West Sparkbrook II
24/2/84	Mr. George Brown	3	1905	Highgate and Dennis Roads, West Sparkbrook II
24/2/84	Mr. Les Brown	3	1900	Highgate and Dennis Roads, West Sparkbrook II
17/3/84	Mr. Buck Chinn	24	1932	Studley Street, West Sparkbrook II
10/3/84	Mrs. Sylvia Chinn	26	1936	Whitehouse Street, Aston Brook
16/10/79	Mr. Walter Chinn	2	1898	Several moves, mostly Studley Street West Sparkbrook II
16/10/79	Mr. William Chinn	1	1893	Several moves, mostly Studley Street West Sparkbrook II
2/10/79	Mr. Curtis	11	1903	Chesterton Road, West Sparkbrook II
9/10/79	Mrs. Curtis	12	1903	Studley Street and Ladypool Road, West Sparkbrook II
8/2/84	Mr. Doughty	6	1907	Long Street, West Sparkbrook I
12/1/84	Mr. Ebury	18	1909	Turner Street, West Sparkbrook I
10/6/85	Mr. Franklin	20	1906	Colville Road, West Sparkbrook II
23/8/81	Mr. Froggat	9	1903	Marshall St. South and Studley Street, West Sparkbrooks I and II
11/1/84	Mrs. Griffiths	14	1911	Oldfield Road, West Sparkbrook II
10/3/84	Mrs. Harris	27	1913	Paddington, London
8/4/84	Mr. H.	5	1906	Turner Street, West Sparkbrook I
2/12/83	Mrs. Johnson	16	-	Parents both from West Sparkbrook II
11/1/84	Mrs. Jones	17	1891	Runcorn Road, West Sparkbrook II
18/12/83	Mr. Manton	19	-	Family from Hertford Street, West Sparkbrook II
10/3/84	Mrs. Martin	26	1925	Whitehouse Street, Aston Brook
20/12/83	Mrs. Merriman	7	1896	Roshven Road, West Sparkbrook II
1/3/84	Mr. Narbrough	15	1897	Ombersley Road, West Sparkbrook II
1/3/84	Mrs. Narbrough	15	1898	Chesterton Road, West Sparkbrook II
15/1/84	Mr. Parker	8	1911	Studley Street, West Sparkbrook II
5/9/85	Mrs. Perry	28	1914	Whitehouse Street, Aston Brook
11/10/79	Mr. Remington	4	1900	Alfred Street, West Sparkbrook II
8/2/84	Mr. Sleath	6	1908	Colville Road, West Sparkbrook II
3/10/79	Mrs. Snow	10	1905	Highgate and Eton Roads, West Sparkbrook II
11/1/84	Mrs. Ward	14	1910	Oldfield Road, West Sparkbrook II
28/5/85	Mr. Weakes	22	1908	Kyrwicks Lane, West Sparkbrook I
8/3/86	Mr. Wood	25	1915	Whitehouse Street, Aston Brook

ii Unpublished

Abbreviations

C.L.A.D. = City of Birmingham Central Library Archives Department.

C.L.L.S.D. = City of Birmingham Central Library Local Studies Department.

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