Narratives of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Institutional Responses: The Refuge for the Destitute

Edited by
Peter King

ROUTLEDGE

NARRATIVES OF THE POOR IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Volume 4

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INTRODUCTION

The Refuge for the Destitute was one of a several late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century charities that targeted specific categories of the London poor. Opened in 1806 it aimed not only to rescue, and provide refuge for, destitute men and women but also to reform them. It therefore offers an interesting case study of the methods and evolving agendas of the many philanthropic initiatives set up during this period. However, it has been selected for detailed scrutiny in this volume mainly for a rather different reason. From 1812 onwards most of its committee minute books have survived and, until recording practices became more perfunctory in the later 1820s, those books contain an extremely valuable collection of pauper narratives.[1] These are the brief life stories extracted from the destitute and/or delinquent men and women who either applied to the Refuge or were referred to it by other agencies (primarily the courts). The aim of this volume is both to reproduce a few of the Refuge's formal printed reports – some of which contain selected life stories designed to prove its effectiveness to the public – and to offer the reader transcriptions of the most interesting hand-written narratives that survive in its archives. This comparison of both the public and the private faces of the Refuge provides the opportunity not only to follow the gradual evolution of the institution from refuge to reformatory, but

1. The Refuge has only briefly been discussed by historians. Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969–73), vol. 2, pp. 444–5; Wiley Sanders (ed), *Juvenile Offenders for a Thousand Years* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 96–9; Margaret May, 'A Child's Punishment for a Child's Crime: the Reformatory and Industrial School Movement in Britain, 1780–1880' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1981), pp. 230–5; I. Watson, 'The Glorious Refuge', *The Hackney Terrier*, 31 (1993), pp. 2–5; Heather Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), pp. 95–100; Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 192–5. The Refuge's archives are held in the Hackney Archives Department (henceforth HAD) D/S/4/1–30 and 58/2/12. Their assistance in publishing these narratives is gratefully acknowledged, as is the financial help given by the Scouloudi Foundation and the Open University as well as the research assistance of Esther Snell.

also to analyse and contextualize the large collection of manuscript pauper narratives that its archives have preserved.

The Refuge for the Destitute 1806–30: a brief history

The initial impetus for the Refuge's creation came from an Anglican clergyman, Edward Whitaker. After coming across a starving boy recently released from prison, he called a meeting in July 1804 at the St Paul's Coffee House. That meeting appointed a temporary committee of nine, which included three Anglican ministers and two members of a prominent family of bankers and merchants, the Forsters – as well as a lieutenant colonel, and a clerk at the Exchequer Office.[1] Among these groups it was the Forsters, with their deep involvement in the well-connected banking house of Lubbock, Forster and Co., who played the most influential role in this initial period. Thomas Furly Forster had many powerful contacts, as did his brother Edward Forster Junior, who became joint-treasurer in November 1804 and remained highly active in that and other roles until his death forty-five years later. By March the following year Zachary Macaulay, a prominent member of the Clapham sect who, like Thomas Furly Forster, was an ardent slave trade abolitionist, had joined the Committee.[2] The Duke of York also agreed to act as President at this point and by the end of 1806 the Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, had been persuaded to become a vice-president, and a larger committee of thirty had been appointed. This included three MPs – one of whom was the Dorset prison reformer William Morton Pitt – two lawyers who went on to become prominent judges and legal writers, an army officer, another Exchequer clerk, the Lord Mayor's chaplain and four other Anglican ministers. The committee also contained several commercial men with wide philanthropic interests, such as the banker and West India merchant Thomas Boddington, who had helped to found the School for the Indigent Blind in Southwark and was also an active supporter of the Magdalen Hospital. By the end of 1806, having attracted more than 300 subscribers, including fifteen MPs, the committee was able to rent premises and begin admitting

1. HAD D/S/58/2/12; the other Anglican clergymen included the Chaplain of the Magdalen Hospital.

2. Lubbock, Forster and Co. were Ricardo's bankers. The two Forsters on the original July 1804 committee were Thomas Furly Forster and Benjamin Meggot Forster. The latter then disappeared, while Edward joined (HAD D/S 58/2/12). These three brothers all appear in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter referred to as *ODNB*) primarily because of their scientific work. On Zachary Macaulay see *ODNB*, and on his role in the Anglican and evangelical Clapham Sect which was involved in a wide range of causes, see Ernest Howse, *Saints in Politics. The Clapham Sect and the Growth of Freedom* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953).

inmates. It also published its first printed report at this point and included in it the newly agreed rules of governance that were to form the basis for the Refuge's operations for several decades.[1]

Whitaker had wanted to call the resulting institution 'An Asylum for Outcasts', and although the title was soon changed to 'The Refuge for the Destitute', it was indeed, initially aimed at 'Outcast London', or as Edward Forster put it in 1811, at 'the most miserable of mankind'. The Refuge was not, however, as indiscriminate as this would seem to imply. The opening paragraph of its first printed account defined its aims much more precisely as 'to provide places of refuge for persons discharged from prison or the hulks – unfortunate and deserted females, and others who from loss of character, or extreme indigence, cannot procure an honest maintenance, though willing to work'. In addition, it announced that when funds were available, it might also 'afford temporary relief to any distressed objects until parochial or other assistance can be obtained'.[2] This description fits fairly closely with the nature of the applicants being either admitted or given small-scale outrelief by the Refuge committee when its records first become available in 1812. However, as the institution grew during the next decade the main sub groups that it focused on began to change as part of a broader transformation in its operations. This change was largely ignored in the printed 'Accounts' distributed to potential and existing subscribers. The 1818, 1821 and 1831 Accounts, for example, described the key target groups in almost exactly the same words as the 1806 Account had done, adding only that 'persons discharged from penal confinement, are considered the primary objects of this institution'. However, by 1818 there are clear indications that the backgrounds from which the 'objects' (as the refuge termed its clients) were being drawn were changing, and that those who had already undergone sen-

1. See list in *A Short Account of the Institution called the Refuge for the Destitute* (1806; this volume, pp. 3–6) – henceforward *A Short Account*. William Morton Pitt (1754–1836), MP for Dorset, was also involved in the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor. The lawyers were Stephen Lushington (1782–1873) and James Allen Park (1763–1838) – see *ODNB*. Lushington was called to the bar in 1806 and also became a Whig MP that year. He rose to be Admiralty court judge. An Anglican but not an evangelical, he was also extremely active in the movements to abolish both slavery and capital punishment – S. Waddams, *Law, Politics and the Church of England: The Career of Stephen Lushington 1782–1873* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 26–30. Park was also an Anglican. Called to the bar in 1784, he was appointed to the bench of the Court of Common Pleas in 1816. On Boddington see Stephen Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London's Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement, 1786–1791* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), pp. 64–75.

2. 'An Account of the Refuge for the Destitute, originally established at Cuper's Bridge, Lambeth, but now removing to Middlesex-house, Hackney Road, Shoreditch', *The Philanthropist*, 1 (1811), pp. 244–51 (this volume, pp. 59–65).

tences of imprisonment were by no means the dominant group. In 1818 only a fifth of the females and two-fifths of the males that were admitted had 'suffered punishment by imprisonment' and amongst both males and females a similar proportion had been referred to the Refuge either by the Old Bailey or by a magistrate's court as an *alternative* to formal imprisonment. The gradual evolution from refuge to reformatory had begun.[1]

The Refuge went through a number of different developmental stages during the first half of the nineteenth century, but the 1810s and early 1820s was a key formative period during which several interrelated changes took place. First, subscriptions to the Refuge increased very rapidly. By 1821 there were about 2,000 subscribers, including many lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, earls and viscounts – not to mention 60 clergymen, 6 bishops, 36 MPs, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, Liverpool (all three of whom were vice-presidents). The Refuge had also persuaded Spencer Percival, Liverpool's predecessor as Prime Minister (who was assassinated in 1812), to become a vice-president, and in the early 1810s it certainly needed all the elite connections it could muster. Following the move to new premises in 1811, the Refuge had to reduce the number of inmates it admitted because it was seriously short of cash and deep in debt. The Accounts make it clear that even though the number of subscribers was increasing, donations and subscriptions were not sufficient to fill the gap, nor was the income derived from the labour of the inmates, despite the growing number of washing contracts being taken on.[2]

Fortunately opportunities to acquire the extra income and financial stability that the institution so badly needed gradually became available during the 1810s. As I have explored in more detail elsewhere,[3] the judges of the Old Bailey started to use the Refuge quite frequently in the early 1810s as an alternative to a formal sentence. By mobilizing a procedural loophole – the respited judgement – they ensured that an increasing number of offenders, the great majority of whom were juveniles, were informally placed in the Refuge. In doing so they clearly hoped that young and relatively deserving offenders might be reformed, or at the very least that they would avoid the training in vice which the courts believed was the usual result of a term in a prison. Similar attitudes amongst some of the magistrates responsible for committal hearings in the metropolis meant that they also sent growing

1. *A Short Account* (1806, 1818, 1821, 1831).

2. *A Short Account* (1821), for subscribers; and HAD D/S/58/2/12.

3. Peter King, 'The Development of Informal Reformatory Sentences for Juvenile Offenders in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in *Crime and the Law in England 1750–1850: Remaking Justice from the Margins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ch. 4.

numbers of offenders to the Refuge as an alternative to placing them in prison to await formal trial. By 1818, therefore, just over a third of the inmates admitted to the Refuge had come from these two sources.[1]

The committee was not slow to see the potential usefulness of the semi-formal role they were gradually developing within the criminal justice system. Using both this, and the fact that a much smaller number of offenders were being committed to the Refuge as a condition of a post-trial pardon, they began to make increasingly serious overtures towards successive governments in the hope of securing a parliamentary grant. A deputation visited the Duke of York and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, was approached by the Forsters and a formal memorial – which was effectively a grant application – was sent to him in February 1813. This not only pointed out that through the Refuge 'no small proportion of the National expenditure is saved, by their substituting restraint and reform for punishment', but also highlighted its semi-official role as a reformatory where 'in numerous instances' the 'judges and magistrates of the realm … had deemed it expedient' to send offenders. This argument finally bore fruit in May 1814 when the government made its first grant to the institution, enabling it to pay off the loan it had been forced to take from the Forsters.[2] Within four years the Refuge was in receipt of a large grant which more than doubled its overall income. Although these themes were rarely discussed in the Refuge's public appeals to subscribers, some of which are reproduced here, they played a central role in its private correspondence with the government, and in particular in its annual application for the renewal of its grant. Year after year the committee stressed the very large proportion of inmates who had been sent by judges and magistrates or had received royal pardons. It had clearly realized what a strategic role this work might have in securing the Refuge's finances. 'From the exertions of the institution in protecting and affording suitable provision to those, whom the judicial and executive magistracy of the Realm have thought expedient to refer to it', the committee noted in 1814, 'much advantage has been, and is likely to be derived'.[3] By emphasizing this aspect of its operations in its private dealings with the government, the Refuge succeeded in doing what many other contemporary charities failed to do – it obtained a regular and substantial grant income. At the same time, by continuing to emphasize to the public throughout the 1810s and 1820s its role in relieving the distress of the deserving but destitute men and women of the metropolis – a theme

1. *A Short Account* (1821), pp. 8–10.
2. HAD D/S/4/3, pp. 127–30, and D/S/58/2/12.
3. HAD D/S/4/4, pp. 3–7.

which dominated the opening mission statement reproduced at the beginning of all its public printed appeals – it attempted to ensure a continued flow of private funds, and, at least for the period under study here, it was largely successful. It was only in the late 1820s and early 1830s that a combination of declining subscriptions and a reduction in the government grant forced the committee to rethink and develop new strategies.[1]

The more secure financial basis established by the Refuge during the 1810s played an important part in both stimulating and facilitating two other major changes in the nature of its operations. First, the institution expanded substantially, doubling in size between the early 1810s and the later 1820s.[2] In 1815, at Lord Sidmouth's suggestion and possibly as a condition of obtaining a more permanent grant, the male and female sections were completely separated. New premises were obtained at Hoxton and a male refuge was established there, while the original Hackney Road site became a female-only institution.[3] In 1818 a Temporary Refuge was opened first for males and then for females with the aid of the recently formed Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders (PDS). This new link with the most substantial philanthropic body working in the field not only brought substantial cash inputs but also resulted in an influx of new blood into the management of the Refuge. The prison reformer William Crawford and energetic Quaker philanthropists such as Samuel Hoare and Peter Bedford began to play important roles. The more active members of the Refuge's committee were appointed as 'Visitors' and by 1821 six of the eight visitors on the male side, including the influential Whig MP Henry Grey Bennet, were also members of the PDS, while on the female side they included Thomas Furly Forster, who was one of the vice-presidents of the PDS and a founder member (along with Crawford, Hoare and Bedford) of the Committee for Investigating the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis.[4]

This growing involvement of men who had been active in bringing the problem of juvenile delinquency to the forefront of public debate almost certainly accelerated a second change that was becoming visible by the mid-1810s – the Refuge's growing concentration on young offenders. At its

1. HAD D/S/4/6, p. 276; *A Short Account* (1818, 1821, 1831).

2. Based on numbers of inmates (not admissions) in *A Short Account* (1818, 1831).

3. Edward and Thomas Furly Forster where asked by the Refuge's committee to consult Lord Sidmouth about this in February 1815, see HAD D/S/4/4, p. 101.

4. *Report of the Committee of the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders* (London, 1818) and *Third Report* (London, 1821); *A Short Account* (1818); *Report of the Committee for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis* (London, 1816), p. 2; *Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter *PP*), 1819, vii, p. 151.

inception the Refuge's remit was not age-specific[1] and as late as 1815 only half of its residents were under twenty. However, this changed very rapidly in the second half of the 1810s and by the mid-1820s the Refuge was essentially a juveniles-only institution. More than ninety-five per cent of the males were under twenty and the overall focus was increasingly on those in their mid-teens.[2] From 1815 onwards the Refuge clearly responded to growing popular, judicial and governmental concern about juvenile delinquency by increasingly specializing in the restraint and reform of the young – whether they had been sent straight from the courts as an alternative to a prison sentence or had already served a term of imprisonment.[3]

It took a considerable time for this new emphasis on juvenile offenders to be fully reflected in the Refuge's printed pamphlets. It was not until 1832 that the opening mission statement was changed so that the emphasis on juveniles was fully recognized. Suddenly in that year the history of the Refuge was rewritten. Gone was the old opening sentence – used for a quarter of a century – focusing on providing a place of refuge for several non age-specific groups. Instead the new opening emphasized that the Refuge 'was founded … with the design of counteracting the progress of youthful delinquency, by providing an asylum for young persons of both sexes'.[4] In reality, the internal records of the Refuge suggest the young did not become central to the institution's operations until the later 1810s, when it effectively became Britain's first partly state-funded juvenile reformatory, but in 1832 the management clearly thought it was in its interests to re-spin its history in that direction.

This change in emphasis did not mean that the Refuge was only dealing with juveniles by the 1820s. Both the male and the female sides continued to offer assistance to many older applicants, as the age range of those whose narratives have survived indicates. However, that assistance usually took the form of material help outside the institution, and/or a very brief period of residence, whereas the vast majority of the juvenile delinquents referred by the courts were subjected to up to two and a half years under a rigorous reformatory-style regime. Despite its new focus on juvenile offenders, the Refuge continued to operate at a number of levels throughout this period. For example, it offered short-term assistance – clothes, money for temporary maintenance, or

1. *A Short Account* (1806), this volume, p. 5.
2. King, 'The Development'.
3. Peter King, 'The Rise of Juvenile Delinquency in England, 1780–1840: Changing Patterns of Perception and Prosecution', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), pp. 116–66; S. Magarey, 'The Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Labour History*, 34 (1978), pp. 11–27.
4. Compare *A Short Account* (1831 and 1832).

the purchase of tools – to some much older offenders who had recently completed long sentences on the Hulks.[1] The Refuge also continued to take many referrals from the jails, and developed links with the magistrates and newly formed criminal reform societies of counties such as Kent and Surrey. On another level, a considerable number of women who had lost their place through dishonesty and/or had fallen into prostitution, continued to be offered residence as a means of restoring their character and future employability. However, by the early 1820s those who had simply 'gone on the town' without having committed an indictable crime were increasingly referred to other specialist institutions such as the Magdalen, the London Female Penitentiary or the Guardian Society.[2] By 1824 the Refuge's annual report was emphasizing that it intended to apply its provisions 'to criminal objects only', and although their definition of a 'criminal object' remained flexible, especially if a charitable sponsor was offering to pay for an inmate in the Temporary Refuge, there can be little doubt that the institution had gradually changed its core mission.[3] Although it kept the title 'Refuge', by the early 1830s it had become primarily, although not exclusively, a reformatory.

This is not necessarily surprising. From the start its founders had conceived of its mission in terms of both rescue and reform.[4] Moreover the early nineteenth century witnessed the high point of optimism about the capacity of institutional intervention of various kinds to reform those whom society labelled as deviant. By moving its core emphasis from the destitute to the delinquent, and by increasingly focusing on a particularly emotive subgroup of delinquents – juveniles – the Refuge was able to shore up its finances while at the same time ensuring that its sphere of operations continued to be highly relevant to one of the major social issues which preoccupied contemporary commentators. Since the first charity in this field – the Philanthropic Society, formed in 1788 – refused to admit children who had reached their teenage years, the Refuge's governors could rightly claim to be the first institution to tackle the main age group around which fears about juvenile crime tended to cluster.[5] Nor were they slow to do so. By the early 1830s the Refuge's printed reports were claiming that '4,100 juvenile outcasts have received maintenance and instruction within its walls'. By 1840 the committee was boasting that 'they may lay claim to the credit of having been the first to rouse the attention of the British public to the vast

1. See the following narratives 1/54, 75 and 211; 4/9, 82 and 128.
2. For these institutions see the glossary; *PP*, 1828, vi, p. 182.
3. *A Short Account* (1824), p. 17.
4. *A Short Account* (1806), links the two words 'protect and reform' (this volume, p. 6).
5. *An Account of the Nature and Present State of the Philanthropic Society* (London, 1804), p. 9.

practical importance of providing efficient remedies for the serious and widespread evil of juvenile delinquency'.[1]

Inside the Refuge – changing internal regimes

As the core mission of the Refuge changed so too did some parts of its internal regime. Because it began as a refuge rather than a reformatory, the original accent was non-coercive. The 1806 Account, for example, tempered references to the importance of strict conformity to the rules with the statement that 'Lenient, persuasive and encouraging measures only will be adopted'.[2] Neither corporal punishment nor solitary confinement was allowed.[3] Since at this point most inmates had entered voluntarily, dismissal from the institution remained the most important sanction, the alternatives being the withdrawal of privileges, the imposition of a more limited diet or demotion back to the least desirable occupation – the woodshed. Partly with a view to encouraging voluntarily admitted inmates to stay, the diet they were offered was relatively generous. As late as 1816 the Refuge was tendering for large amounts of beef, mutton, pork and other meats. Access to and from the institution was also relatively open at first and the accent was on rewards rather than on punishments. A significant proportion of earnings was given back to those who had conducted themselves well, and grants of clothing and money were usually made at discharge.[4]

As the institution took increasing numbers of inmates from the courts under what were effectively informal reformatory sentences, and as public opinion on penal matters hardened in the 1820s, the internal regime of the refuge became stricter. By 1818 the phrase about only using lenient and encouraging measures had been quietly dropped from the Refuge's printed report. The inmates' diet was the subject of a major retrenchment during the 1820s, when it was pointed out that prisoners in a nearby prison were kept for half the cost, and from the mid-1810s onwards it took on many of the attributes of a jail. Bars were put in place, exits were strictly controlled and by 1828 the superintendent was openly stating that the Refuge was 'like a prison' and 'quite secure, surrounded with walls'.[5] Access to the Refuge

1. *A Short Account* (1832), p. 6; HAD D/S/58/2/12.
2. *A Short Account* (1806), this volume, p. 5.
3. *PP*, 1819, vii, p. 157.
4. HAD D/S/4/4, p. 381; *A Short Account* (1818), this volume, p. 15.
5. *A Short Account* (1828); HAD D/S/4/7, p. 123; and 24 April 1827; *PP*, 1828, vi, p. 181; *PP*, 1831–2, vii, p. 115. Many inmates still absconded – HAD D/S 4/23, pp. 12, 43–4, 101.

for outsiders was also increasingly restricted and although well-behaved inmates were sometimes allowed out for day visits, they were effectively imprisoned in the Refuge for the rest of the time, despite the rather dubious legal foundations on which their confinement was based.[1] Discipline undoubtedly became harsher. Withdrawal of privileges and the imposition of bread, gruel and water diets remained potent and much used weapons, but in 1821 the so-called 'Black Hole' was constructed, in which particularly troublesome male inmates were kept for up to a week in solitary confinement and total darkness.[2] In October 1822, for example, three male offenders were subjected to this punishment after attempting to escape, and on the female side inmates were also put in solitary confinement for up to a week.[3] Rewards were still used, of course. In the late 1820s a sixth of the earnings of male inmates were returned to them once they had settled satisfactorily in their apprenticeships, but the reward system became less automatic and more competitive.[4]

Other elements of the regimes in both the male and the female Refuges changed much less drastically but almost everywhere there is evidence of a deterioration in conditions from the inmates' point of view. Work was seen as central to the inmates' routine throughout this period. For the men this initially took the form of a tough work regime in the woodshed followed, once they had shown they could behave well, by transfer to a workshop to pursue a trade. This could involve training in carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, book-binding and cabinet-making, while other trades tried out for shorter periods included hemp and flax-dressing, brush-making and basket-making. By the 1830s the growing demand for firewood and the rising profitability of that part of the Refuge's operation meant that an increasing proportion of the male inmates, and especially those housed in the Temporary Refuge, were employed in the least skilled occupation available.[5] On the women's side the original aim had been to provide a variety of work opportunities such as knitting, spinning, making household linen etc. However, as the Refuge gained a growing number of contracts to do the washing of other institutions such as Christ's Hospital, its much greater profitability

1. On the legal position, see King, 'The Development'.
2. HAD D/S/4/23, p. 309; D/S/4/5, 20 March 1819; *PP*, 1828, vi, p. 182.
3. HAD D/S/4/23, p. 32; D/S/4/7, p. 17.
4. *PP*, 1828, vi, p. 185; After March 1827, each week the six best-behaved female inmates would have a shilling added to the amount given them on release. A further six received six pence each. The rest got nothing. HAD D/S/4/7.
5. *A Short Account* (1818), this volume, p. 15; (1832), p. 14; HAD D/S/4/1, pp. 16, 30, 61, 82, 116; D/S/4/24, p. 426; *PP*, 1828, vi, pp. 184–5.

meant that washing came to dominate the employment of almost all the fully fit females in the Refuge.[1]

Throughout this period the core of the Refuge's rehabilitation strategy continued to involve taking inmates in for between one and two and a half years and then finding them a suitable work situation. This might be as a servant, an apprentice (premiums being paid in this case) or simply as an employee – potential masters/employers being carefully selected. Equally it might involve a return to friends or family if they were considered sufficiently respectable and could offer the inmate a viable means of making a living.[2] As an alternative, some young men were fitted out for sea service if they showed any willingness to follow that way of life. By the later 1820s and early 1830s significant numbers of both males and females were being encouraged, via the Refuge's growing contacts with the Colonial Office, to emigrate to various destinations including the Cape of Good Hope and Australia.[3] In part as preparation for their return to the outside world, the moral and practical education of the inmates was by no means neglected. They were subjected to a fairly heavy diet of religious services throughout this period. The Refuge's Anglican chaplain was instructed to provide morning and evening prayers every day and two sermons or lectures at each establishment every Sunday.[4] After work the inmates were increasingly provided with opportunities to obtain a more general education. A new schoolroom was opened in 1819 and systematic attempts were made to ensure that both male and female inmates acquired basic literacy skills as well as religious knowledge. Around 1820 the Refuge's printed reports began to foreground the fact that 'schools are opened daily for the young and ignorant, wherein they are taught to read, and an opportunity is afforded to everyone as the evening returns, of making progress in writing and arithmetic'. However, the pupils were not always cooperative and the enthusiasm of the staff clearly fluctuated. On discovering in 1827 that 'reading and religious instruction have of late been less attended to than formerly', the governors

1. HAD D/S/4/1, p. 8 – the weaker ones were employed in needlework, p. 92; *A Short Account* (1818), this volume, p. 38, indicates a quarter of the Refuge's income came from washing.

2. Some were discharged back to their parishes, particularly if they proved too ill to get work. Others were dismissed or absconded. See HAD D/S/4/23, p. 131, on the £5 premium paid when apprenticing out.

3. Temporary Refuge residents were particularly likely to be fitted up for sea service, see HAD D/S/ 4/6, pp. 415–16. On early emigration to the Cape of Good Hope and Honduras, see D/S/4/1, pp. 70–1, and D/S/4/24, pp. 460 and 499; L. Rushen, 'The Refuge for the Destitute and Female Migration to Australia', *Hackney History*, 10 (2004) pp. 11–18.

4. HAD D/S/4/6, p. 431.

were forced to hire a teacher from a neighbouring school to come in for an hour and a half each day.[1]

The heart of the inmate experience – the physical conditions under which they lived, the nature of staff-inmate relationships and the culture that developed among the inmates themselves – remain much more difficult to evaluate and the inmates' post-admission views about the institution are almost never recorded. In the early days of the Refuge when most inmates had been admitted voluntarily it is notable that, if threatened with expulsion, many pleaded to be allowed to remain, while those who had left or been dismissed sometimes came back asking for a second chance. The Refuge also made much of the fact that many female ex-inmates came back every year for an annual 'festival' and gave small sums of money to the institution.[2] Too much should not be made of these claims however. The Refuge's buildings were hardly purpose built. The Hackney Road premises had been a mad house. The male Refuge was an old sugar house with low ceilings. The inmates there slept in hammocks and there were often more than twenty to a room. By the later 1810s they wore uniforms and their days were tightly regulated and work-orientated. There were outside areas for relaxation but the brief periods available for recreation were increasingly constrained by the demands of work, daily prayers and school instruction.

Inmates reacted to this tight regime in various ways. Some close friendships clearly developed and on a couple of occasions the Refuge authorities were presented with persuasive evidence that intimate sexual relations had arisen between female inmates. Moreover, fragmentary evidence of other forms of inmate solidarity can also sometimes be found in the committee minutes. Communal rebellions against unfair masters were not unknown. More frequently, inmates or lower officials are recorded as having smuggled alcohol, letters and even unauthorized visitors onto the premises. In 1815, for example, it emerged that at least five female inmates had set up a regular trade exchanging the Refuge's soap and clothing for gin.[3] Others inmates responded by absconding as soon as a suitable opportunity offered itself, and female escapees occasionally took large quantities of other people's washing with them when they left. In 1822, for example, the fifteen-year-old inmate Ann Tyrell was tried at the Old Bailey for stealing a huge bundle of clothing, and was sentenced to transportation despite her engaging plea that 'I was kindly protected there, and if I was permitted to return I would behave with

1. HAD D/S/58/2/12; D/S/4/7, p. 227; D/S/4/1, p. 8; *A Short Account* (1821), p. 19.
2. HAD D/S/4/6, p. 417; *The Times*, 26 July 1822.
3. *PP*, 1828, vii, pp. 184–6; *PP*, 1819, vii, p. 157; *PP*, 1816, v, p. 169; HAD D/S/4/7, p. 64; D/S/4/4, pp. 18–19 and 260; D/S/4/23, pp. 57–8; footnotes to narratives 1/98 and 102.

great propriety'. Inmate experience is almost impossible to recreate but as the Refuge became a juvenile reformatory, few of whose inmates were there voluntarily, physical conditions may also have deteriorated. By the early 1830s even the annual reports openly admitted that the premises were becoming dilapidated, and as subscriptions continued to decline and the government grant was reduced the Refuge almost certainly found it difficult to maintain the inmates' living standards.[1]

Running the Refuge – management and external relations

Although the funding of the Refuge changed from an almost total reliance on voluntary contributions in its early years to a situation in which the government's grant and the earnings of the inmates' labour became its key sources of income, its managerial structure remained remarkably stable during this period.[2] While the twice-yearly General Courts, which all substantial subscribers were entitled to attend, continued to have general oversight and to appoint a committee of thirty to run the Refuge, in reality decisions were usually made by a much smaller group. The weekly meetings held on both the male and female sides were rarely attended by more than a handful of individuals, and a small group of active committee members, who were usually appointed to the role of visitors, therefore became key figures. So too did the treasurer Edward Forster, who often chaired the committees on both the male and female sides, and Robert Crosby, the secretary and chaplain for almost all of this period.[3] The committees of both the refuges, and the sub-committees of visitors that they sometimes appointed to review specific policies, clearly made important changes on a number of occasions. However, it was probably the informal interactions between the treasurer, the chaplain and the superintendents of the two

1. HAD D/S/4/23, p. 309; *Old Bailey Sessions Papers* (hereafter *OBSP*), January 1822, Case of Ann Tyrell; *A Short Account* (1831).

2. In 1811, 86 per cent of its income came from voluntary sources – subscriptions, donations, legacies and collections after sermons etc. By 1817, inmates' earnings comprised 37 per cent, and by 1819 the government grant contributed around 50 per cent. Even when reduced to £3,000 in the early 1830s, the grant still accounted for a third, while inmates' earnings (£2,500) made only a slightly smaller contribution, see *A Short Account* (1818 and 1831), this volume, pp. 38, 54, 56.

3. Crosby became 'Chaplain, Superintendent and Secretary' in 1811, HAD D/S/58/2/12; *A Short Account* (1812), p. 2. From 1815 onwards, when two separate establishments were set up, each with their own superintendent, Crosby became simply 'Chaplain and Secretary' for both. He remained in post for fifteen years, see HAD D/S/4/6, p. 431.

establishments that did most to shape the type of regime the inmates were subjected to throughout this period.

This small group of active officers and committee members also played a vital role in the Refuge's development by building up good relations with a number of other bodies. As we have seen, they were very successful in encouraging the Old Bailey judges and many local magistrates to refer cases to the institution.[1] With the help of their influential vice-presidents and subscribers, they also managed – through timely changes in policy – to develop a very fruitful relationship with the Home Office. At a lower level, good connections were also established with the governors and chaplains of many of London's prisons and hospitals, and with parallel philanthropic institutions such as the Magdalen Hospital and the London Female Penitentiary. The multiplicity of Poor Law authorities in the metropolis made it much more difficult to develop fruitful contacts in this sphere. However, the Refuge was not slow to put pressure on these authorities when the committee thought it necessary, since the workhouse accommodation and out-relief financed by the parishes remained a very important resource for the destitute throughout this period.[2] The Refuge's managers also developed increasingly useful links with other philanthropic enterprises. In particular the opening of the two Temporary Refuges in 1818, with capital largely provided by the Prison Discipline Society, facilitated a new financial strategy which involved charging other charities or charitable individuals specific weekly fees to cover the costs of maintaining the particular inmates whom they had sponsored. By the early 1820s, for example, the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity had the right to nominate potential Temporary Refuge inmates provided that it paid seven shillings per inmate per week. Similar arrangements were also made with the PDS and with a growing number of provincial associations such as the Kent Criminal Reform Society. A small number of individual inmates were also referred on similar terms by the magistrates of other Southern and Midlands counties, while a considerable number of inmates were financed directly out of the pockets of members of the Refuge's own committees.[3]

1. King, 'The Development'.

2. Elaine Murphy, 'The Metropolitan Pauper Farms, 1722–1834', *London Journal*, 27 (2002), pp. 1–18; Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 125–49.

3. Sanders, *Juvenile Offenders*, p. 97; HAD D/S/4/1, p. 34; D/S/4/6, pp. 455, 488–9, 582, 607; D/S/4/7, pp. 8, 46, 88. The Kent Criminal Reform Society, the Guildford Society and the Surrey Association all placed individuals in the permanent establishment. Some set up their own Asylums – *The Times*, 17 November 1826.

By 1831 about fifteen per cent of the Refuge's income came from the fees paid to it in this way but, because it was dependent on the successful delivery of specific services to particular nominated individuals, this source could not fully compensate for the decline in individual subscriptions that was becoming increasingly evident at this time. The public, who increasingly perceived the Refuge as a government institution, was tending to direct its charity elsewhere and there was also an unhelpful controversy in the newspapers about why private subscriptions intended for the destitute were now being focused almost exclusively on delinquents.[1] Questions were also being asked about the effectiveness of the Refuge's reformatory regime and about the relatively high cost of maintaining its inmates. More importantly the comfortable relationship the institution had enjoyed with the Home Office during Lord Sidmouth's decade in office (1812–22) changed drastically under his successor Robert Peel. By 1824 Peel was questioning the Refuge's managers about every aspect of its operations. Considerable 'retrenchment' followed but during both of Peel's periods as Home Secretary (1822–7, 1828–30) the Refuge's government grant was permanently cut by £1,000.[2] The Institution adopted various strategies to deal with the consequences of this, including a brief period of involvement in a female emigration scheme financed by the Colonial Office. However, by the later 1840s, after a proposed merger with the Philanthropic Society had failed to materialize, the government grant was finally withdrawn altogether, and the Male Refuge had to be closed.[3]

Ironically, the Parliamentary Acts of 1854 and 1857, which were designed specifically to encourage the development of juvenile reformatories and industrial schools and to formalize the kinds of sentencing policies long practised by the London courts when they unofficially referred offenders to the Refuge, came just too late. The male Refuge closed a few years too early to benefit from this sea change in government policy and its failure at this point may explain why historians have focused so much more attention on the Philanthropic Society.[4] There can be no doubt, however, that the refuge played a more central role in the develop-

1. *A Short Account* (1831); *The Times*, 20 January 1826, 30 January 1835.

2. *The Times*, 27 January 1826; HAD D/S/4/6 pp. 411–17 and 425–34. The Refuge's grant rose from £2,000 in 1818 to £5,000 in 1819–26. It was £4,000 in 1827–9 and £3,000 from 1830 on – HAD D/S/58/2/12.

3. Rushen, 'The Refuge'; *The Times*, 1 February 1845. On the Philanthropic Society see L. Radzinowicz and R. Hood, *A History of the English Criminal Law and its Administration from 1750*, 5 vols (1948–86), vol. 5, pp. 160–1; HAD D/S/58/2/12; Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) HO 45/1000.

4. Radzinowicz and Hood, *A History*, vol. 5, pp. 172–8.

ment of the reformatory idea in the 1810s and 1820s than any other British institution. By the mid-1820s it was admitting an average of 180 inmates a year, more than seven times the number being taken by the Philanthropic Society.[1] Even if it had not left such a fascinating collection of pauper narratives, the Refuge of the Destitute, both as a place of asylum for the poor and as an early juvenile reformatory, would be well worthy of study. However, since its officials and admission policies played such an important role in shaping those narratives, an outline of the history of the Refuge is also a vital part of any attempt to understand the significance of those documents, as the discussion of the making of the pauper narratives on pages 67–75 makes clear.

The Refuge narratives and the analysis of the lives of the poor

While the printed accounts it distributed to the public offer a range of insights into the ways the Refuge chose to present itself, and into the personnel, management and finances of the institution (see pages 3–65), it is the narratives found within its internal records that offer the greatest range of insights to historians. The process that created these documents was complex and multi-layered. It involved many filters and for this reason the introduction to the narrative section of this volume subjects that process to careful analysis. However, despite their brevity, and our awareness of the differing discursive frameworks and strategic agendas that were present at their birth, it is hard not to be drawn into many of the narratives reproduced here. These vintage vignettes from the lives of the poor need to be read in a number of ways, of course, but their quiet power as stories should not be overlooked. Some are straightforward, if moving, illustrations of the vulnerability of the poor. Henry Pape at twelve years old had already been in several of London's prisons and had twice been incarcerated in Newgate. He had worked with his father as a tailor, but when his father died he quickly became destitute and after trying to make a living for a while 'sweeping crossings in the streets' he turned, like his brother, to picking pockets. Other narratives illustrate a different kind of journey – one of downward social mobility. Sophia Fortrum, the wife of a merchant imprisoned by the French during the Napoleonic wars, really had 'resorted to every mode of subsistence' as she put it. Her family rejected her after she became a colonel's mistress, and although she enjoyed a period as an 'admired writer' for a fashionable West-End newspaper, she ended up a destitute beggar – a diseased

1. *A Short Account* (1821); HAD D/S/4/4, p. 106, and D/S 58/2/12, pp. 47–8.

prostitute who could not bear to remain in the Lock Hospital for treatment because she saw people there who had known her in former days.[1] A few of the narratives have a distinctly exotic quality, which illustrates why the Refuge took pains to check out the stories of their applicants. Sarah Holmes, alias William Brown, was a black orphan from Grenada who 'entered on board of a ship in man's attire on account of a disappointment in love'. After following her husband to America and finding that he was dead, she travelled the world for some years as a man, rising to be a ship's steward. Returning from the East Indies in 1813 and 'suspecting her sex to have been discovered' she jumped ship and found herself destitute and alone on London's Eastern edge. Occasionally even a very brief narrative comes alive when we investigate the story behind it. Catherine Stillwell, for example, who applied unsuccessfully to the Refuge in 1813, had two years earlier become destitute after her grandparents had been brutally murdered and chopped to pieces while she slept upstairs. This was one of the murders on Radcliffe Highway, which were widely publicized in the newspapers causing widespread alarm in the metropolis.[2]

For all their attractiveness as individual stories, however, the narratives are probably more useful if used in groups to approach a number of issues which it is often difficult for historians to obtain evidence about from other sources. Most obviously we have access here to the kinds of stories the poor told about how they had descended into poverty, prostitution and prosecutable forms of appropriation. The experiences of becoming destitute, desperate and/or deviant that the applicants had been through are described in these stories in myriad ways. Even though we might expect them to talk about those experiences (and to have them further reinterpreted and edited by the secretary) in language that was designed to appeal to the perceived demands of the Refuge authorities, it seems clear that their actual experiences still formed the bedrock of much that came to be recorded. We know from other sources, for example, that there was a symbiotic relationship between servant-hood and prostitution in eighteenth-century London. The insecurity of employment experienced by domestic servants and their tendency to edge into prostitution in times of difficulty was a well-attested aspect of metropolitan life. It is no surprise therefore that it is well illustrated by a substantial group of the narratives reproduced here.[3] Equally a number

1. Narratives 3/131 and 1/60.
2. Narratives 1/71 and 1/50.
3. Narratives 1/82 and 85; 2/109 and 116; Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis, 1730–1830* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 15–16; Peter King, 'Female Offenders, Work and Lifecycle Change in Late Eighteenth Century London', *Continuity and Change*, 11 (1996), pp. 61–90.

of the marginal occupations and survival strategies that Tim Hitchcock's recent book has shown were adopted by those who found themselves 'down and out' in eighteenth-century London can also be illustrated from these sources. Individuals attempting to follow what Hitchcock calls 'pauper professions' – tasks that combined begging and service in ways that helped to legitimate the former – occur quite frequently. A sixteen-year-old boy deserted by his alcoholic father, for example, 'obtained his living by lighting Whitcombe Street with Torches', while a fouteen-year-old girl helped her aunt 'sell oranges etc at the door of the two shilling gallery of Drury Lane'. Others tried to survive by cleaning shoes, by travelling with a blind musician or by selling various items in the streets – cotton laces, matches, combs, old clothes etc.[1]

Although by their nature these narratives offer a wide variety of information about the deprivation and destitution experienced by the poor they are by no means confined to these topics. They also provide insights into a wide variety of other issues that are of great interest to historians of the family, of economic life, of sexuality, of violence, of race and of a number of other aspects of social history. There is not room here to analyse this extensive range of topics in detail, although the editor has begun to explore one or two of them in other publications.[2] However, even a brief survey of the narratives opens up a considerable range of topics within each of these areas. Family relations, for example, can be explored from a number of angles. For many of the applicants their descent into destitution was rooted in their early experiences either of orphan-hood or of desertion/rejection by their family. Problems with a step-parent, for example, resulted in many children being thrown out on the street vulnerable and alone.[3] By contrast, the important role that kinship networks sometimes played in supporting such children comes out clearly in narratives detailing the assistance offered by uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, cousins and grandparents. The more ambivalent roles played by the Poor Law authorities, and in particular the ways that parish-financed workhouses might offer at least minimal assist-

1. Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, pp. 49–74; narratives 1/72 and 95; 2/41, 55, and 61; 3/54 and 67; 4/28, 70, 261 and 281.

2. Peter King, 'Destitution, Desperation and Delinquency. Female Petitions to the London Refuge for the Destitute, 1805–1830', in A. Gestrich, S. King and L. Raphael (eds), *Being Poor in Modern Europe: Institutions, Surveillance and Experiences* (Geneva: Peter Lang, 2005); Peter King, 'Finding Refuge in Early Nineteenth-Century London: The Admissions Policies of the Refuge for the Destitute, 1805–25 '(forthcoming); King, 'The Development'.

3. In nearly a quarter of the 1815–19 narratives the applicant was an orphan or had been abandoned/rejected. For step-parent problems, see narratives 1/43, 52, 97 and 160; 2/38 and 122; kinship links 1/1, 10, 38 and 70; 3/45, 109 and 150.

ance to those whose family and friendship networks had proved inadequate, is also well evidenced. Some applicants had found shelter in a workhouse, or had at least placed their infants in one. Others had been refused admittance. For many, however, their application to the Refuge was itself clear evidence that the Poor Law had failed to make adequate provision for them.[1]

Many aspects of the economic lives of the London population are touched on by these narratives. Some are very familiar. The gendered nature of the occupations followed by the applicants and the tendency for women's occupations to be extremely limited and limiting is hardly a surprise. However, these accounts from the female poor themselves do bring home in a fresh way how their insecurity of employment and lower wages trapped women all too easily into a downward spiral of poverty. The fragility of the economy of makeshifts that many metropolitan families tried to construct is also well illustrated. The importance of various migration strategies in the lives of the poor also comes across clearly, as does the extreme vulnerability of those who migrated from the provinces without adequate contacts in the metropolis and who often found themselves immediately in deep trouble and distress. Finally the secretary's tendency to create slightly longer narratives when the applicant had a more respectable background has resulted in several poignant stories of business failure, lost or dissipated inheritances, pregnancies and broken promises of marriage etc. which had brought men and women from middling backgrounds to the Refuge's door.[2]

The narratives also contain much of interest to historians of sexuality. There are thought-provoking insights into attitudes to lesbian relationships, for example. There are also many stories of women who were 'seduced' and of their subsequent abandonment. Accounts of young women whose journey into destitution and/or prostitution began when they left home or service in order to follow, and live with, a man occur regularly within these records. Equally the stories of prostitutes who portrayed themselves either as

1. For boys receiving shelter and then being placed in employment, see narratives 3/27, 43, 76, 106 and 110; for an infant taken in, see 1/94; for a girl who had a child in the workhouse but at nineteen was told to leave – 2/66. This was often general policy, see 2/108. The closure of a workhouse could also be a disaster for a teenage girl, see 2/113. Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, pp. 125–49; Tim Hitchcock, '"Unlawfully begotten on her body": Illegitimacy and the Parish Poor in St Luke's Chelsea', in Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and the Strategies of the English Poor, 1640–1840* (London: MacMillan, 1997), pp. 70–86; M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1925), pp. 216–17.

2. L. D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions, 1700–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 14–15. On female employment structures and the difficulties they created, see narratives 1/93 and 166; on migrants' immediate vulnerability, see 1/91 and 2/83; middling vulnerability 3/15 and 94.

forced 'on the town' by poverty or, less frequently, as choosing that option because it was more lucrative than the alternatives available, form a major sub-theme within the narratives. The large number available also offers an opportunity to look in new ways at the careers of prostitutes, their ages and their capacity to slip in and out of the trade.[1]

The narratives contain a surprising amount of material about various types of violence, most of which would never have been formally prosecuted or recorded. Sexual violence is mentioned in various contexts. There are about ten stories involving accusations of rape or attempted rape, and the subsequent impact of these experiences on the young girls who were usually the victims is sometimes all too clear. Some of the men responsible were punished. The majority were not. The sexual and physical abuse of children by family members or masters might also lead to prosecution, but very often the culprits avoided formal punishment. Domestic violence could be a major element in the descent of an individual into poverty. Wives forced to leave their spouses not infrequently found themselves in desperate circumstances almost immediately, and some women experienced this with more than one partner. Barbara Gill for instance, having moved in with 'Veale the Boxer' after her husband left her, then found herself abandoned again when he beat her and turned her out of doors.[2] The backgrounds to at least eight suicide attempts – almost all of them made by women – and the methods they tried unsuccessfully to use, can also be explored. However, women and children were not always cast as victims in these narratives. One young woman who had been imprisoned for infanticide was admitted to the Refuge and two girls who had attempted to poison other members of their households were also among the applicants. Another girl had actually murdered a child left in her care. The authorities chose not to prosecute however, and this incident raises interesting questions about the extent to which children who killed other children were dealt with informally in this

1. On lesbian relationships in the Refuge see 1/98 and 102; on the possibility of fully sexual lesbian relationships growing up in homosocial institutions – Tim Hitchcock, *English Sexualities 1700–1800* (London: MacMillan, 1997), p. 86; and see King, 'Destitution, Desperation and Delinquency'. On the potential for even the most successful courtesan to experience extreme poverty, see Donna Andrew and Randall McGowen, *The Perreaus and Mrs Rudd: Forgery and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 76; Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, p. 21; Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), vol. i, p. 118.

2. For rape accusations, see narratives 1/9, 55 and 101; 2/52, 88, 99 and 114; 4/17 and 295. Sometimes an older man or family member was accused of sexual abuse or rape, see 1/198; 2/106; 4/1 and 98. On physical abuse of children, see 1/32 and 176; 2/3; 3/28, 32, 75 and 102; 4/76 and 251. For domestic violence – 1/147 and 184; 2/120 and 132.

period.[1] It also illustrates another broader theme within the narratives – the wide range of informal methods used by the community in dealing with offenders, and the role of the courts in encouraging informal resolutions to cases that could easily have been tried as felonies.[2]

There is no space here to do more than mention some of the other social history themes that can be approached through these narratives. There is much in these sources that indicates the deep impact that the Napoleonic Wars, and the demobilization that followed them, had on soldiers and sailors, wives and mistresses, orphans and deserted children. The leisure and consumption habits of the poor, including the role that fairs and theatres played in their sexual and recreational lives, is frequently illustrated. Education and, less frequently, religion also form important subtexts in some cases.[3] Since the Refuge seems to have been relatively open to different racial groups, the black presence in early nineteenth-century London also shows up in interesting ways in a small sub-group of the narratives. Around one per cent of the applicants to the Refuge were black and Norma Myers's work suggests that the range of occupations and backgrounds found here is not untypical. At least four were seamen (or women in Sarah Holmes's case), including a twenty-one-year-old from Grenada who was also a musician and who came to London to join the Band of the Guards. One was employed in the white-lead works in Chelsea. Another was a prostitute. Three were servants, two of whom were men bought in Jamaica at an early age and brought back to England. The other, Emily Moyka, was an eighteen-year-old African who 'was stolen, she thinks, when she was 8 years and given 8 years since' to her mistress, who had 'turned her out of doors' because she had become pregnant and tried to conceal the birth.[4] Short autobiographical fragments such as this story of a journey around three continents through slavery and servant-hood to survival on the streets are precious commodities. Refracted as they are through many lenses they still gives us a momentary sense of how women like Emily saw their own history, as well as how they had lived it. We must, of course, be aware of the potential bias of these sources towards failure. The economic, social and sexual strategies

1. On suicide attempts, see narratives 1/7, 31, 40, 65 and 144; 2/30 and 144; 4/88, 194, 208, 266 and 276. On infanticide, see 2/75. On poisoning, see 2/67 and 4/118, and on murder 4/117.

2. See Peter King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion: Law and Social Relations in England, 1740–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and *Crime and the Law*, ch. 1.

3. On demobilization, see narratives 1/121; 3/92. On London's fairs as liminal spaces, see 1/61, 111 and 186; 4/20, 32, 130 and 185. Education is patchily reported but a significant percentage of boys had received some schooling, see 3/62.

4. Narratives 1/2, 71, 153, 159, 206 and 209; 3/4, 47 and 77; 4/59 and 99. Norma Myers, *Reconstructing the Black Past: Blacks in Britain, 1780–1830* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 56–81.

adopted by the applicants who appear in these records must by definition have been unsuccessful in some way. Nor can the language of the accounts necessarily be taken at face value. The secretary's use of words like 'seduction' needs careful analysis, for example, while it was clearly in the interests of petitioners to present their stories in specific and selected ways and to use those terms that would evoke the most sympathetic responses in their audience. For all their brevity and biases, however, these stories of destitution and desertion, of servant-hood and seduction, of prostitution, appropriation, prosecution and incarceration invite both our sympathy and our attention as historical sources of value in a multitude of contexts and sub-fields.

GLOSSARY OF INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS FREQUENTLY MENTIONED IN THE NARRATIVES

Institutions

Bow Street

The Bow Street Police Office had its origins in the 1740s and was developed by the Fielding brothers – Henry and then Sir John – into a major centre of thief-taking activity (hence the famous Bow Street Runners) as well as the best known and most widely reported summary court in the capital. By the early nineteenth century it was also responsible for a widening range of patrols covering many of the main roads into the Metropolis. After the 1792 Middlesex Police Act it became the most prestigious of the new police offices, being the only one that was not limited to a small territory.

Bridewell

Originally a palace on the banks of the river Fleet, the Bridewell became a place of reception for vagrants, disorderly women and petty offenders from the City of London in the later sixteenth century. It had its own court, which might decide the precise punishment to be undergone. Its separate position in the administration of justice in the metropolis was gradually eroded, however, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and by the period after 1815 it was essentially a house of correction specializing mainly in handling vagrants and errant apprentices. It was closed in 1855.

Brixton House of Correction

The Brixton House of Correction was opened in 1820 as a Surrey prison for relatively minor offenders. The cellblocks were arranged in a crescent around the Governor's house. An early treadmill was set up in this institution in 1821. After various changes of function the establishment remained a prison throughout the twentieth century.

Clerkenwell New Prison

The New Prison, Clerkenwell, was the common jail of the Middlesex magistrates used mainly for prisoners awaiting trial. Nearly 4,000 passed through the jail in 1816. Built partly to relieve Newgate, it was extended in 1774 and then rebuilt at the end of the 1810s. It was closed in 1877.

Guardian Society

The Guardian Society was formed in 1812 to provide a temporary asylum and suitable employment for prostitutes who had either been removed from the public streets by officers of the law or had decided without such formal intervention that they wanted to reform. In the 1810s, for example, the society offered to interview all those held in Bridewell for prostitution-related offences and actually admitted about fifteen per cent of them. In the 1820s the Guardian Society's asylum in Bethnal Green was effectively run by the ladies' committee, who had strict standards on behaviour and motivation.

Hulks

These were prison ships, which were initially used as a temporary expedient when transportation became impossible in the 1770s because the war with the American colonies meant that it was no longer practical to transport offenders there. Conditions on them were notoriously bad. Concern about the fate of juvenile offenders on the Hulks resulted in the development of separate ships for this purpose after 1823 but here too there were severe problems. The system was finally dismantled in the 1850s.

Lock Hospital

The Lock Hospital for the treatment and cure of venereal disease was founded in 1746, and reflected the heightened philanthropic concern over

problems of illegitimacy and prostitution at mid-century. It went through a number of financial crises, especially in the 1780s when returning armed forces personnel increased demand and internal division threatened its fragile financial base. However it survived into the nineteenth century and by 1820 four other British cities had also opened similar facilities.

London Female Penitentiary

The London Female Penitentiary was opened in New Road, Pentonville, just after the Refuge for the Destitute in 1807. It was set up on similar lines to the earlier Magdalen Hospital as an asylum for prostitutes who voluntarily wished to reform and regain 'a reputable place in society'. Despite some well publicized opposition from those who thought it encouraged depravity because it was necessary to have actually been a prostitute before being admitted into its care, by the late 1810s it contained 100 women and had an annual income of over £3,000.

Magdalen Hospital

Founded in 1758, the Magdalen Hospital was the first asylum for the reform of prostitutes set up in eighteenth-century London. Another product of the mid-century heightening of concern over prostitution and sexual immorality, it was instigated by Robert Dingley, a successful London merchant, and Jonas Hanway, with the backing of two highly active magistrates – Saunders Welch and Sir John Fielding. It aimed to use a work regime and careful moral training to reform those young women who had been openly involved in prostitution, and those who had been seduced and alienated from their families. Like all the asylums which later grew up for this purpose, it was supported by voluntary contributions. It housed around eighty inmates and had an annual income in the 1810s of about £5,000.

Middlesex House of Correction at Cold Bath Fields

The Middlesex House of Correction at Cold Bath Fields was built in 1794 between Clerkenwell and Pentonville but soon became notorious for its severity and corrupt administration. More than 2,800 prisoner went through its doors in 1816 (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1817, vii, p. 552). The prison was closed in 1877.

Newgate Prison

This was London's most important prison, where those awaiting trial at the Old Bailey were usually held and where those awaiting execution lived out their final days. From 1783 to 1868 public hangings were conducted immediately adjacent to the prison. First built in the twelfth century, it was burnt down in the Great Fire and rebuilt in grandiose style in 1672. However, conditions inside were often extremely unhealthy and the seventeenth-century prison was eventually pulled down and rebuilt between 1770 and 1778. The Gordon rioters destroyed the new building only a couple of years later and it had to be rebuilt again 1780–3. At the beginning of the twentieth century it was demolished to make way for the Central Criminal Court.

Philanthropic Society

The Philanthropic Society was formed in 1788 and was initially to reform both the children of convicted felons and those of a very young age who had actually broken the law. Its founders believed that by taking the children of the idle or criminal classes away from their parents and giving them a proper education and vocational training, progress could be made in the elimination of crime and the inculcation of habits of labour. It was first established at Cambridge Heath near Hackney but in 1792 it moved to larger premises in St George's Fields, Southwark, rented to it by the City of London. In 1849 it was moved to Redhill in Surrey and became a farm school patterned after the French agricultural colony at Mettray.

Prison Discipline Society

The PDS emerged out of the Committee for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis, in 1817. It became for a while an important pressure group for prison reform. Its meetings in the late 1810s and early 1820s were well reported in the leading newspapers and its printed reports had a wide readership. Those reports included detailed discussions of the Society's links with the Refuge for the Destitute. Many of those involved in the PDS such as William Allen, Edward Forster and Stephen Lushington, were also key players in the Refuge. The first treasurer of the PDS was Thomas Furly Forster. The first chairman was Samuel Hoare Junior. The first secretaries were Peter Bedford and William Crawford. All these four were also involved in the management of the Refuge.

St Bartholomew's Hospital

St Bartholomew's Hospital was the oldest hospital in London, having been founded in the twelfth century. It was rebuilt between 1730 and 1759. It was situated just south of Smithfield Market and took a considerable number of poorer patients in this period.

Temporary Refuge

The Temporary Refuge was a new initiative started by the Refuge for the Destitute in 1818. It was partly funded by the Prison Discipline Society, which had evolved out of the Committee for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase in Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis. Unlike the main Refuge, where no charges were made on those who supported an applicant; the cost of the applicant's residence in the Temporary Refuge was to be paid for, initially at least, by those who had recommended them.

Individuals

Henry Grey Bennet (1777–1836) was a very active Whig MP in the 1810s and early 1820s. He was especially involved in attempts to reform the criminal law. The 1816 parliamentary enquiry into the police of the metropolis was his initiative and he chaired it. In 1818 he was also responsible for 'Bennet's Act', which effectively put an end to the use of rewards, or blood money as it was known. He was an active prison reformer and a member of the committee of the Refuge for the Destitute in the late 1810s and early 1820s.

Hon. Edward Harbord sat as an MP 1806–12 and 1820–1. He inherited the title Baron Suffield in 1821 and in the House of Lords was an earnest supporter of Liberal measures and was instrumental in helping the passing of prison reform legislation. He was a regular subscriber to the Refuge, the subscription lists giving his address as 'at Lady Vernon's' Park Place, which came to him on his marriage in 1809. He was a committee member in 1821.

Samuel Hoare Junior of 62 Lombard street was a Quaker banker and one of the prime movers behind the Committee for Investigating the Alarming Increase of Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis, formed in 1815. He was Elizabeth Fry's brother-in-law and a regular visitor to London's prisons. He was also a very active member of the Society for Diffusing Information on the Subject of Capital Punishment. He became a member of the committee

of the Refuge in the later 1810s and remained on it until the 1840s. By 1821 he had been appointed as one of eight visitors for the male establishment and often attended committee meetings. In 1819 he gave detailed evidence about the Refuge to a parliamentary committee.

Mr Hoskins was the superintendent of the female Refuge and his weekly reports were regularly recorded in the minutes. He and his wife seem to have taken up this post in 1815 when the Refuge split into separate male and female establishments. He later played various supervisory roles in the institution.

Sir John William Lubbock, second Baronet, was a banker who worked in partnership with the Forsters in the firm of Lubbock, Forster and Co. By the early 1820s he was a member of the committee of the Refuge for the Destitute.

Dr John Gibbs Ridout Esq. was listed in the 1811 article in *The Philanthropist*, and in the 1812 and 1821 Annual Reports, as one of the two official surgeons of the Refuge. He was also a committee member in the late 1810s and early 1820s. The 1821 subscription list gives his address as New Bridge Street.

PRINTED ACCOUNTS

The four printed accounts of the Refuge presented here represent the public face of the institution and in particular the face it wished to present to current and potential subscribers. The three annual 'Short Accounts of the Refuge for the Destitute' selected for reprinting – the first report (1806) and the 1818 and 1831 annual Accounts – fulfilled five main functions. First, they were publicity sheets designed to indicate the need for such an institution of rescue and reform. As such they were endeavouring to pinpoint the philanthropic niche the Refuge for the Destitute was trying to fill and the reasons why it was important to fill it. Secondly, these Accounts were reports on the activities that the charity had engaged in – the numbers admitted from different sources, the outcomes achieved, the regimes that the inmates had been subjected to in order to reform them. As part of this reporting process they also included a financial balance sheet of income and expenditure. Thirdly, and less important, they contained a brief and almost unchanging description of the constitution of the charity, of how (in theory at least) decisions were made, by whom and in what circumstances. Fourthly, the Accounts usually listed the subscribers and their level and type of contribution. These lists are too lengthy to reproduce here, although, as has already been indicated in the general introduction to this volume, they are useful in tracing the growth, and later the decline, of support for the Refuge and in giving a rough idea of the social backgrounds of its subscribers. Finally some of the Accounts contained appendices briefly describing the stories of successful cases where the 'object' had become a productive and responsible member of society. Although highly selective, and very moralistic, these stories were clearly designed to add a personal touch to the Refuge's repeated appeals for more support.[1] A similar

1. The constitution sections in the 1818 and 1831 Accounts have been omitted to avoid repetition. The relationship between these printed stories and the manuscript narratives reprinted later in this volume is extremely difficult to trace. The dating of the printed narratives is often unclear but most come from pre-1812 admissions, of which we have no manuscript records. Since the names were not included in the printed accounts, linking the two sources is fraught with difficulty. Among the printed stories I have only identified one – Case 15 – which might have a manuscript-narrative link (1/132), and even here the ages do not match.

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appeal lay behind the shorter article on the Refuge reprinted here from a journal run by the Quaker philanthropist William Allen,[1] which was designed by the Refuge's treasurer to attract subscribers through a succinct account of its aims, methods and outcomes.

As the introduction has already indicated, the opening pages of these Accounts, in which the general aims of the Refuge were described, were not especially responsive to changes in the institution. Although the movement from a refuge model to a reformatory one had been largely accomplished a decade earlier, the 1831 report still did not indicate this in its opening pages. Only by a careful reading of the annual report sections that followed the general introductions could the subscribers ascertain that things were changing, although in its private correspondence with the Home Office the Refuge made this abundantly clear. When these Accounts are studied in conjunction with the internal records of the institution, they therefore offer a warning against the use of the former alone as a means of reconstructing the history of a philanthropic institution. However, these printed pamphlets are still of great value in themselves as records of the Refuge's public face and as an overall guide to the size, aims and finances of the institution.

1. William Allen was active in the anti-slavery movement, in educational reform and in many other fields of philanthropy. He was one of the four partners who set up New Lanark Mills. From 1811 to 1817 he ran a quarterly journal, *The Philanthropist*, which included many articles by his friend James Mill.

A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE

INSTITUTION

CALLED

THE REFUGE FOR THE DESTITUTE,

CUPER'S-BRIDGE, LAMBETH;

CONTAINING THE

NATURE AND VIEWS

OF THE

INSTITUTION,

WITH THE

RULES AND REGULATIONS

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SAME;

AND

A LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS,

TO OCTOBER 1, 1806.

LONDON:

Printed by the Philanthropic Society, St. George's-Fields.

1806.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003553045-2

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Lieut. Col. Sweedland.

Rev. John Grindlay, LL.D. Secretary

Mr. Jones, Collector.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE *INSTITUTION.*

THE object which this Society has in view, is to provide places of refuge for persons discharged from prison, or the hulks – unfortunate[1] and deserted females, and others, who from loss of character, or extreme indigence, cannot procure an honest maintenance, *though willing to work.*

For this purpose, premises are already engaged at Cuper's Bridge, Lambeth, competent to the separate accommodation of the sexes, upon a scale, in the first instance, proportioned to the infant state of the Institution, and capable of any further extension which may hereafter be deemed expedient.

The utmost possible attention will be paid to the improvement of their morals; and suitable admonition and religious instruction will be regularly afforded them.

They will be employed in useful trades and manufactures, and some of the females in knitting, spinning, and other appropriate works, for the more immediate use of the establishment. – Lenient, persuasive, and encouraging measures only will be adopted, to lead them to a proper course of life; although the strictest conformity to regulations, for the maintenance of order, will be enforced.

As an incentive to good conduct, a certain portion of the earnings of each individual will be set apart, and allowed them, if discharged with credit to themselves, and premiums will also be distributed to such as behave in a manner peculiarly exemplary.

After they have acquired a due sense of religion, and such habits of industry as may render them useful members of society, reconciliation to their friends or relations (if persons of character) will be attempted; proper situations sought for them, and recommendations given to the Clergy and principal inhabitants of the places to which they may resort for employment. Further rewards will be bestowed on those who are found afterwards to persevere in good conduct.

By these means the objects of this Institution, whilst they contribute by their labours during their stay, to defray the expense of the establishment,

may be weaned from vicious pursuits; encouraged and confirmed in virtuous dispositions, and enabled, after their discharge, to gain a support, by occupations advantageous to themselves and to the community.

For the beneficial effects to be expected from such a system, an appeal may confidently be made to the.experience of the Magdalen Charity, as well as to the Philanthropic Society, both founded on principles in a great measure similar, but necessarily so restricted in their plans, as not to be open to receive all the descriptions of persons, which it is the design of this Institution to protect and reform.[2]

When it is considered that thousands in this metropolis subsist by dissolute and dishonest practices, the important advantages likely to result to the public, and to individuals, from an Institution tending to remove so great an evil, are too obvious to require further explanation. The want, indeed, of such an Institution has long been felt, and particularly by many of those, whose judgment, from their professional experience, or from station in life, is most entitled to consideration and respect.

It is also in contemplation, when the funds of the Institution will admit of it, to afford temporary relief to any distressed objects, till parochial or other assistance can be obtained, and thereby wholly to put an end to the *plea of necessity*, urged (often falsely) by many of the idle, disorderly, and profligate characters which infest our streets[3]

With these views the Society look with confidence, to the most effectual and general support from a liberal, humane, and discerning public; – if hereafter it shall appear requisite, an application may be made to Parliament for further powers.

One Guinea, paid annually, constitutes a Governor, and Ten Guineas, paid at once, or within one year, a Governor for life.

Subscriptions are received by the Treasurer; all the Members of the Committee; the Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Grindlay, No. 24, *Queen's-row, Grove-lane, Camberwell;* the Collector, Mr. Jones, No. 6, *Chapel-street, Pentonville;* and by the following Bankers:

Messrs. Bowles, Brickwood and Co. *Lombard-street*
Devaynes and Co. *Pall-Mall.*
Down, Thornton and Co. *Bartholomew-lane,*
Forster, Lubbock. and Co. *Mansion-house-street.*
Goslings and Co. *Fleet-street.*
Hoares *ditto*
Sikes, Snaith & Co. *Mansion-house-street.*
Vere, Lucadou and Co. *Lombard-street*

This Pamphlet may be had *Gratis* at the Bar of St. Paul's Coffee-house, *St Paul's Church-yard;* at Lloyd's Coffee-house; Mr. Asperne, Bookseller, *Cornhill;* and Mr. Hatchard, Bookseller, *Piccadilly.*

RULES AND REGULATIONS

FOR THE

GOVERNMENT OF THE INSTITUTION.

THE Government is vested in the Governors at large, out of whom are elected a President, twelve Vice-Presidents, two Joint-Treasurers, and a Committee.

GOVERNORS.

A subscription of Ten Guineas, paid at one time, or within any one year, shall constitute a Governor for life; and a subscription of One Guinea, a Governor for a year.

GENERAL COURTS.

A General Court shall be holden twice in each year, namely, in the months of May and November, to consist of at least seven Governors, whose votes upon any question shall be taken by ballot, if a division be required: the Chairman, besides his own, having the casting vote, if the numbers be equal.

At these General Courts the Treasurer's accounts shall be passed; reports received from the Treasurers, the Secretary, and Superintendents of the Institution; and no Rule or Regulation shall be valid, unless confirmed by a second General Court.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL COURTS.

An extraordinary General Court may be called at any time by the Committee, or on requisition of seven Governors, transmitted in writing to either of the Vice-Presidents or Treasurers, and specifying the purpose for which it is called, of which at least five days notice shall be given.

ELECTIONS.

All Elections shall be by ballot, if required. The Vice-Presidents, Treasurers, Auditors, and Committee, shall be elected at the annual General Court, holden in the month of May. All other Officers, and the Servants of this Institution, shall be elected by the Committee.

No Governor shall be entitled to vote at any General Court, unless he shall have been a Subscriber for six months.

No Governor, whose subscription is in arrear, shall be entitled to vote, until such arrear be paid.

THE TREASURERS.

The Treasurers shall keep an account of all monies received and paid by them, on account of the Institution; and the monies in the hands of the different receiving Bankers shall be paid to them, from time to time, on drafts signed by the Chairman, and any two of the Committee, in Committee.

The Treasurers shall produce their accounts, once in every six months, before the Committee and receive their direction, as to any balance in their hands, or any disbursements of which they may doubt the propriety. They shall pass their accounts with the General Court twice in each year.

The Treasurers, besides the customary duties of their office, shall have the general superintendence of the Institution, when the Committee is not assembled; and on any emergency which may require an immediate order, before a Committee can be assembled, they shall be jointly or severally empowered to give it, subject to the approbation of the Committee.

TRUSTEES.

All investments of money in the public funds, for the use of the Institution, shall be in the names of three Trustees appointed by a General Court; such Trustees shall be parties to all bonds, contracts, and other engagements of the Society; and, upon the death or resignation of any of them, his place shall be supplied at the next General Court; but until supplied, the surviving or continuing Trustees or Trustee shall have full power to act.

No part of the funded property shall be disposed of but by consent of a General Court.

COMMITTEE.

The Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, and Treasurers, and of thirty Governors; two of which Vice-Presidents, and six of which thirty Governors shall not have been members of the preceding Committee.

The Committee shall meet once in each week, and three of them shall be competent to act, except for the purpose of confirming or altering the Resolutions of former Committees, when five must be present.

They shall have authority to manage all the affairs and to form all the internal regulations of the Institution; and to appoint all the Officers not elected by the General Court, and all the servants.

They shall have power to draw on the Bankers of the Institution, under the hands of three of the Committee, of whom the Chairman shall be one, and to order the purchase of Stock through the Treasurers.

They shall have authority to elect honorary Governors, and to appoint Sub-Committees, whose Resolutions shall be submitted for confirmation to the General Committee.

The Resolutions of the Committee shall not be considered as finally passed, or valid, until they shall have been confirmed, at a second meeting.

No servant of the Institution shall be dismissed, nor any new one elected, but when all the members of the Committee shall have been summoned by the Secretary to attend on such business.

The same rule shall be observed in laying aside any usual mode of employment, or manufacture, or introducing any new one into the Institution.

AUDITORS OF ACCOUNTS.

Three Auditors of Accounts shall be elected annually, whose duty it shall be to examine all the accounts of the Institution, once in every six months, and within a fortnight of every half yearly General Court; and an abstract of such accounts, audited and signed by one or more of them, shall be laid before such General Court.

FORM OF A BEQUEST OF A LEGACY.

To such as are inclined to become Benefactors by Will, the following Form is recommended.

> *'I give and bequeath to the Treasurers, for the time being, of a charitable Institution, called* THE REFUGE FOR THE DESTITUTE, *the sum of to be applied towards carrying on the benevolent designs of the said Institution.'*

N. B. Gifts by Will of Land, or of Money or Stock, to be *laid out in the purchase of any Lands*, for charitable uses, are void by the Statute of Mortmain; but Money or Stock, may be given by Will, if not directed to be *laid out in Land.*

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A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF

The Refuge for the Destitute,

HACKNEY ROAD, AND HOXTON,

CONTAINING THE

NATURE AND VIEWS OF THE INSTITUTION,

WITH ITS

RULES AND REGULATIONS,

AND

A LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS,

TO JANUARY 1, 1818.

LONDON:

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1818.

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