URBAN ADMINISTRATION AND HEALTH:
A CASE STUDY OF HANLEY IN THE MID 19th CENTURY

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degree of M.A.

by

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MAPS

ABSTRACT

The central theme of this study is the struggle, under the pressure of a deteriorating sanitary situation to reform the local government structure of Hanley, the largest of the six towns of the North Staffordshire Potteries.

The first chapter describes the location of the town and considers its economic basis and social structure in the mid-nineteenth century, with particular emphasis on the public role of the different social classes. Then follows an examination of the sanitary state of the town together with an analysis of the defects in the form of local government provided by the various unintegrated local authorities. Chapters Three and Four consider in detail first the abortive attempt to set up a local board of health in the town and then the attempt to incorporate the town which was successfully concluded in 1857. The motives and manoeuvres of the town's social leaders, who sought reform, and the brilliantly organized obstinacy of the working-classes who resisted change form the main themes of the first of these two chapters whereas Chapter Four shows how, between 1854 and 1857, the opponents of reform were in turn outmanoeuvred and a consensus in favour of reform eventually established.

The social structure and the work, particularly in the sphere of public health of the new Borough Council, in the first years of its existence, form the subject matter of Chapter Five. The final chapter involves a brief attempt to draw together the various strands of the study by surveying the changed situation in the town after 1870 and also to relate the changes which took place in Hanley to the greater problems involved in an assessment of the causes and nature of the wider movements for reform which provided one of the characteristic features of Victorian England.

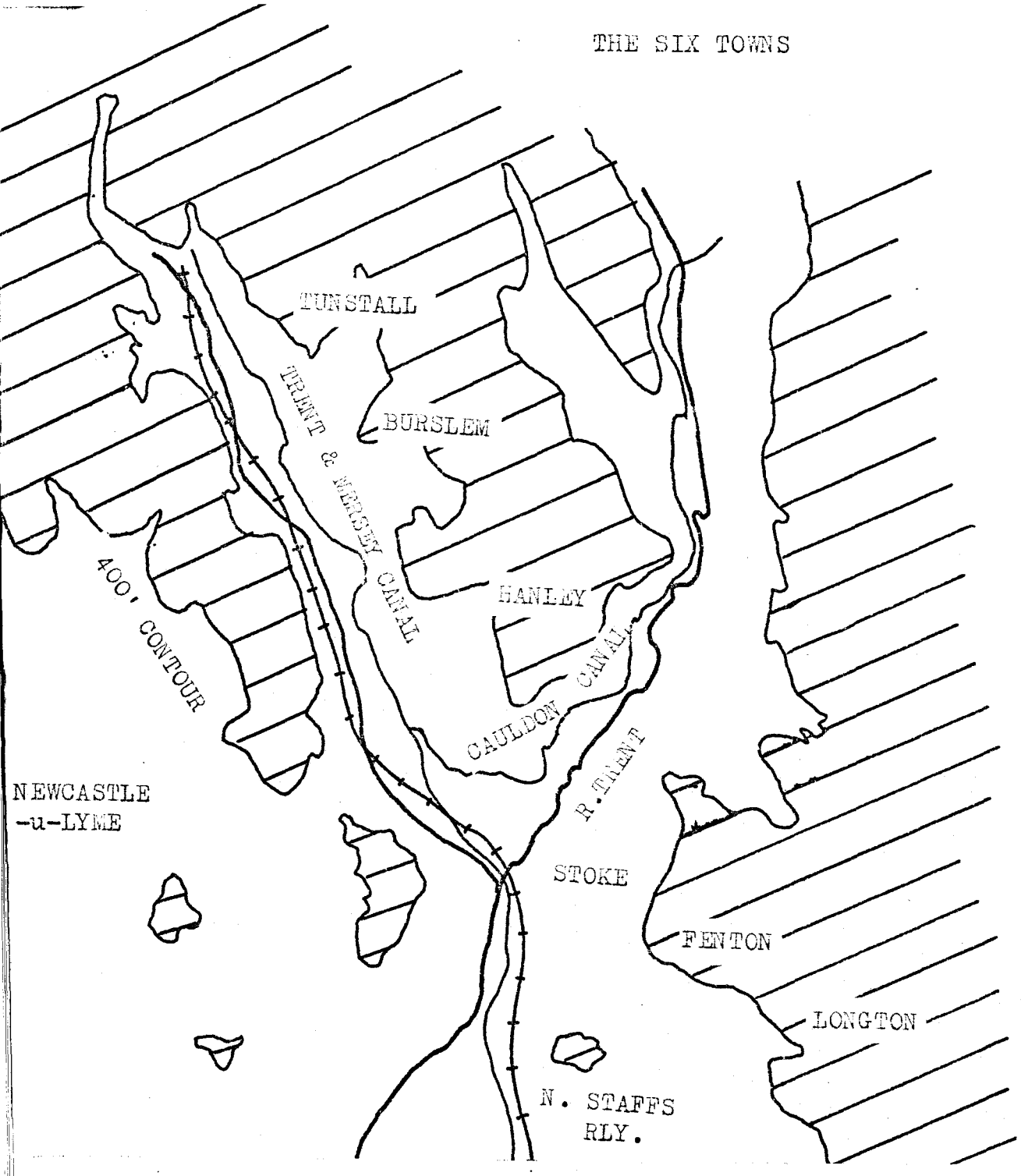
A major point in the study is the imminence around 1850 of a breakdown in local government under the pressure of urban growth. Incorporation prevented this breakdown but local vision was incapable of resolving the most fundamental of the sanitary problems and in these years the drab urban environment was firmly established, leaving immense problems of urban renewal to future generations.

The reform struggle released antagonisms and highlighted class divisions in the town which help to indicate the problems, prejudices and vested interests which Edwin Chadwick and other sanitary reformers had to meet in the critical years 1848 to 1854, as well as illuminating some of the tensions in urban society at this period. Working-class hostility to reform was soundly based

for incorporation robbed them of their slender share in the exercise of local power and the new Town Council was dominated by local manufacturers with the tradesmen in subservient alliance.

The Christian benevolence and committment to public affairs of some of the leading manufacturers and the lively state of working class politics in the town form subsidiary themes but in the last analysis the decisive influence for improvement was the pressure exerted by the central government and its inspectorate. Without this pressure there is little evidence that local initiative or Christian charity would have had the vision or the competence to meet the challenge to public health posed by continued urban growth or indeed to prevent the total collapse of local government in the face of that challenge.

THE SIX TOWNS



CHAPTER 1.

THE TOWN OF HANLEY

The six towns which make up the North Staffordshire Potteries emerged in the early nineteenth century as a straggling line of urban development, some ten miles long and nowhere more than three miles across, in a previously backward moorland area deeply cut by the headwaters of the River Trent. The towns are situated on the small but rich North Staffordshire coalfield, the thirty much faulted seams of which provided early accessible fuel for the pottery industry, while nearby were clays which provided the eighteenth century industry with its basic raw material, each of these early pot banks requiring twelve tons of coal for each ton of clay. Because of this, the towns were located not in the valleys but on the uplands where the coal seams became apparent: a distribution which did not significantly change when imported clay came to dominate the industry as early as the late eighteenth century.

The linear urban growth was a result of this development along the coal bearing ridges where, with a few significant exceptions, the pot banks remained in the nineteenth century. There the pottery towns developed around the banks and among their shallow mines in an environment further complicated by abandoned clay-holes

and the presence of brick and tile works.[1]

Geographic separation and differences of interest and outlook caused the towns to turn away from the earlier provincial capital, Newcastle-under-Lyme, emerging rather as six separate communities, mutually suspicious and occasionally openly hostile to each other. Their failure to develop a regional centre of their own was in part dictated by the line of the coal measures and in part by the long narrow valleys around which they lay.[2]

Burslem was the first of the villages to develop an urban character but by 1800 the twin townships of Hanley and Shelton had emerged as the largest Potteries' community which by 1851 had 25,000 inhabitants.

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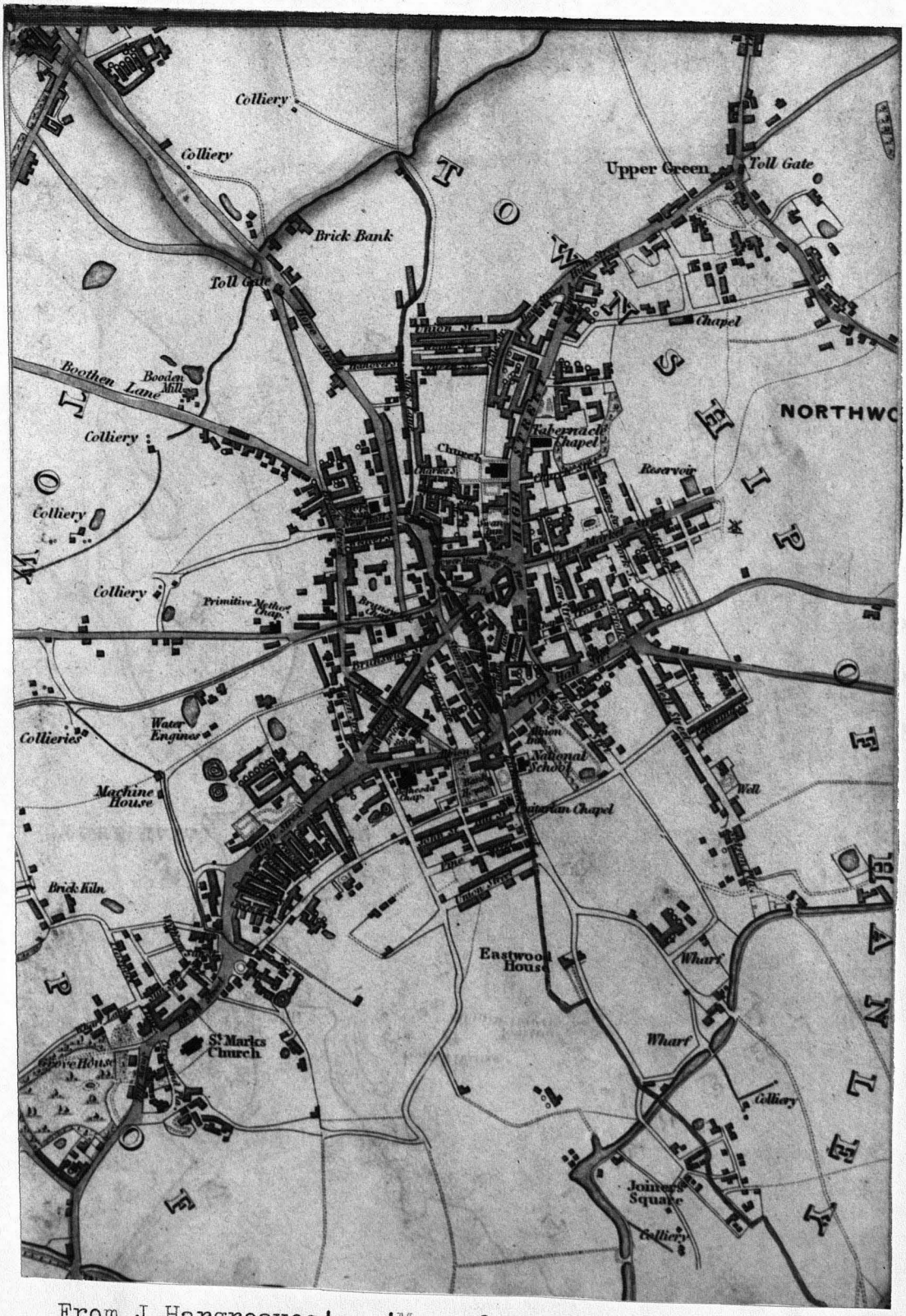
1. The long-term consequences of this development are discussed by S.H. Beaver in 'The Potteries: A Study of the Evolution of a Cultural Landscape' in Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, June 1964, and by H.A. Moisley, 'The Industrial and Urban Development of the N. Staffordshire Conurbation', ibid. 1951.

2. The failure to develop a Potteries' provincial centre is considered by A.M. Morgan in 'Regional Consciousness in the North Staffordshire Potteries' in Geography, Sept. 1942. Other reasons advanced in this article seem less cogent than those indicated above.

Hanley and Shelton in 1832



From J.Hargreaves's 'Map of the Staffordshire Potteries'

TABLE OF POPULATION

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
Hanley & Shelton	7940	9568	12956	16408	20781	25364
Burslem	6486	8478	9815	12572	15490	19109
Fenton	1800	2506	3000	3710	4923	5880
Longton	4000	4930	7100	9608	12407	15166
Stoke	2680	3851	4915	5997	8091	9100
Tunstall	800	1677	2622	3673	6945	9562
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4604	6175	7031	8192	9838	10290

Hanley and Shelton had been separate villages but they were welded into one town by the growth of the late eighteenth century until in 1842 they were described as:- "not marked by any perceptible limits, and the dense seat of their united population is upon and about the ancient and now invisible line of demarcation by which they were divided from each other ..... so they are alike identified in matters of police, and in all that concerns a social and commercial community."[3] In 1851 the inhabitants at a public meeting resolved that the two townships should in future be known simply as Hanley.[4]

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3. J. Ward, 'The Borough of Stoke-on-Trent', 1842, p.365.

4. Advertiser, 15 Feb. 1851.

At this time Hanley stood distinct from Burslem to the north and Stoke to the south, occupying the rough triangle formed by the Trent on the east, its tributary the Fowlea Brook on the west and the irregular Burslem boundary in the north. Within this triangle the land rises from under four hundred feet in the valleys to over six hundred feet to the east of the town centre so that most of the town lay on the relatively gentle slopes down to the Fowlea Brook to the west. The steeper Trent valley remained less developed although by 1850 much of the land between the rivers was showing at least the first signs of urban and industrial development.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Hanley comprised four distinct localities:-

(a) The central commercial area,

(b) The surrounding area of dense housing and associated pot-banks together with spurs of similar development south towards Stoke and north towards Burslem,

(c) The Fowlea Valley,

(d) The Trent Valley.

The central commercial area of Hanley was noted in the Potteries for its broad, well-tended streets, its numerous shops and its extensive market buildings. In 1834 it was described as a densely populated and well-built market town containing

The Market Square circa 1830

spacious and elegant public edifices.[5] There remained within the town centre, two extensive open spaces, Crown Bank and the Market Square, both capable of holding large crowds on public occasions.[6] The distinctive street pattern created by isolated blocks of building with streets flowing into open squares was already formed by this time.[7]

Hanley largely owed its importance as a shopping centre to the work of the trustees who had administered its markets since their regulation by Act of Parliament in 1813. There had over the years been a policy of improving and extending market accommodation which in the 1840's was extended to include the widening and paving of streets leading to the markets. The trustees had in 1831 provided, as a meat market for 130 butchers, a mainly one storey stone building in the Classical tradition with colonnades, pedimented side-wings and a central arched entrance capped by a stone turret and cupola. In 1848, a fish and potato

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5. White, 'Staffordshire Directory', 1834, p. 539.

6. Map by C.J.H. Homer, 1857, (copy in the Staffordshire County Record Office). It was claimed that a crowd of 15 to 20 thousand had gathered in the Market Place in 1856 to support the cause of free trade with France. Sentinel 1. Nov. 1856.

7. This arose from the granting, by the Lords of the Manor of Newcastle, of small portions of the common lands for development on long leases. The results are discussed by D.T. Herbert in 'Some Aspects of Central Area Re-development. A Case Study of Hanley, Staffordshire', in the Journal of the Town Planning Institute, Vol. 49, No. 4. April, 1963.

Piccadilly circa 1858

The Market Square circa 1870

The Vegetable Market and shops opened in 1849 are on the left

market was opened and in the following year a new vegetable market which, with its three storey stone facade and balustrades set over the tall shop windows, represented a new standard among shop frontages in the town and indeed far above the standard of anything else in the Potteries district.[8]

Fanning out downhill from the market premises was a small but rapidly developing central shopping area along Lamb Street, Stafford Street and Piccadilly, which were described as having some good shops.[9] In 1842 there was comment on the very superior order of drapers' shops recently opened in the town which "attract fashionable customers from all parts of the neighbourhood."[10] Around these premises were less pretentious one or two storey brick buildings which gave the skyline of even the central streets an irregular, haphazard appearance.

Other public buildings with some claim to architectural distinction were all in the Classical tradition. The Town Hall, built in 1845, dominated Fountain Square by virtue of its severe

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8. This is the claim of William Tyler in 'The Land We Live In' Part XXX. 'The Staffordshire Potteries' published 1850 (copy in the William Salt Library, Stafford), p. 30.

9. ibid.

10. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 381.

seven bay two storey frontage with a heavy central portico. The British School and School of Art building in Pall Mall was a two-storey brick building with a stone front in the same tradition and the adjoining Mechanics Institute, built between 1859 and 1861 copied the style. It was indeed the more exotic taste of the designers of the District Bank, built high and conspicuously in pale brick "in the gabled or Tudor style of architecture" which contemporaries criticized, considering it out of place in the centre of a modern town.[11]

The relatively large number of public buildings erected in the 1840's reflected the increased resources available to the local authorities as a result of the town's growth during preceding decades. These buildings represented a self-conscious recognition that Hanley had ceased to be a village but was indeed developing pretensions to be regarded as the provincial centre of the Potteries region.

Immediately north of the central market area were three eighteenth century churches: in Town Road, St. John's stood opposite the Tabernacle Congregational Chapel and in New Hall Street there was the plain facade of Hope Congregational Chapel. The most impressive church building was, however, to the south of the commercial area where Albion Street was dominated by Bethesda

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11. ibid. p. 382.

Chapel, again in the Classical tradition, seating 2,500 worshippers, and with its Sunday Schools in a long plain two storey building of pleasing proportions across the graveyard to the rear.

The whole of this central area of the town retained the irregular lay-out of an eighteenth century village. In it, almost all the building of distinction was in the Classical tradition, mingled with one and two storey brick built shops and tightly-hemmed in by the surrounding pot banks and houses so that despite its recent origins, the final impression was of haphazard growth and variety of style.

The commercial centre was surrounded by an area of high density early nineteenth century housing. Small terraced houses with minute back yards formed a circle some three-quarters of a mile in diameter but with spurs reaching out northwards along the road to Burslem and southwards towards Stoke. It was in this area, which was expanding rapidly after 1830, that the most serious public health problems were to be found, particularly to the south ofthe town centre at Tinkersclough on the slope down to the Fowlea Brook and in the 'Royal' group of streets whose grandiose names belied their appearance.

Most of the working-class houses in this area were in terraces, having two rooms on each floor with separate privies at the back and some with small front gardens. They were brick built with Staffordshire blue brick used as a decorative device,

sometimes making a feature of a rounded doorway with a projecting keystone. There were also examples of development around communal courts, including at least one, Raby's Court off Piccadilly, near the heart of the commercial area.

Pot-banks abounded among the houses for there was no separation of housing and industrial development: a situation made more complex by the great number of small firms in the pottery industry. The muddle of small houses, unmade streets and belching kilns was in distinct contrast to the broad paved streets with some elegant buildings in the central market area at its heart.

Northwards from the town centre a fine open road ran to Burslem and the fields on both sides of it marked the separation of the two towns, although a ribbon of houses and pot-banks alongside the road reached to the boundary between them. Since 1820 a separated community had grown up within the boundary at Northwood to the north-east of the town centre. The early development of this area had comprised houses of a good standard including some notable private residences but the rapid expansion of the 1840's turned it into one of the poorest parts of the town.

Southwards the road to Stoke ran its miserable way through some of the worst housing in the town for a full mile until,

half a mile north of Stoke, it ran into comparatively open country and an area within the boundary still largely devoted to agriculture.

While the commercial centre of the town, the central housing area and the majority of pot-banks lay on the upper slopes between the Fowlea and Trent valleys the chief lines of communication and some of the most significant industrial development were situated in the valleys and especially in that of the Fowlea Brook.

The brook marked the boundary of the town to the west, from Burslem in the north, to its confluence with the Trent at Stoke. Through the valley runs the Trent and Mersey canal and the line of the North Staffordshire Railway from Stoke to Macclesfield. Stoke station, the centre of the North Staffordshire Railway, lay just inside the Shelton boundary, but on glebe land of the Stoke rectory, and as a result of this was eventually excluded from the borough of Hanley. Up the Fowlea Valley, lies Etruria station just outside the Hanley boundary and well removed from the centre of the town, which, in the 1850's paid this price for it's elevated situation.

From near Etruria station, numerous branch lines ran towards Hanley, but served, not the town, but the vast new ironworks of

Earl Granville which, with their associated coal-pits, dominated the western approaches to the town, and which were already, in 1850, beginning to dwarf the pottery and workers' settlement planted on the canal at Etruria by Josiah Wedgwood. Etruria existed as a separate little community, with mainly good quality houses, but with serious public health problems created by its low situation.

On these lower slopes from the Fowlea Brook, stood the North Staffordshire Infirmary, in what had once been one of the most favoured areas of the town, but which was described in 1855 in the following terms:-

> 'From being one of the best it has become one of the worst situations in the district. On one side are extensive collieries with powerful engines always working and likely to last for generations with their smoke, steam and perpetual noise. On the other side are large ironworks with their blast furnaces, whistling fans, tormenting hammers... Then here and there are to be seen heaps of ironstone in process of calcination, the sulphrous vapours of which are blown in every direction, contaminating the atmosphere and making fresh patients for the infirmary. Added to these are sundry bone, gas, vitriol, boiler and other ironworks in the background, with the proximity of the canal and railway to induce the planting of any numbers of these and other (to an infirmary) equally undesirable establishments'.
> (12)

The writer could have included the gas-works and the wharfs and basins of the Trent and Mersey canal as not too distant and

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12. Letter in the Sentinel, 28 Apr. 1855.

equally unwelcome neighbours of the infirmary.

In the steeper Trent valley there was less development despite the presence of the Cauldon Canal, a branch of the Trent and Mersey, lying within the boundary and following an irregular course between half and a quarter of a mile to the west of the river. The river marked the eastern boundary of Hanley but between the canal and the river there was, in 1857, the only large area within Hanley which was still devoted mainly to agriculture.[13] The substantial Ridgway pottery works, the Ivy House colliery and the separated high density housing development of Joiners Square were there but in general to the east of the town there was still considerable open space within the boundary. It was described in 1850 in the following terms:-

> 'When we mount to the highest part of the ascent (from the town centre) on which the town is situated we come to a more decided boundary of the Pottery district than perhaps in any other spot. There is a sudden and entire cessation of the bustle of the Potteries which are succeeded to the east by a wide extent of very pretty green fields, through which flows the infant Trent."
> (14)

The Economy of the Town.

Despite the rapid growth after 1840 of iron and coal mining the pottery industry continued to be the most important element in the economic life of the town, overshadowing also Hanley's

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13. From C.J.Homer's map.

14. Tyler, op. cit. p. 30.

importance as a shopping and marketing centre. The 1851 census revealed that 37% of the heads of families gainfully employed were engaged directly in the pottery industry or one of its ancillaries, whereas the colliers and ironworkers represented only 10% of this group and the tradesmen a further 16%. There was in addition a significant undifferentiated class of labourers and also important groups employed on the railway, the canal, in brick and tile making and in the construction industry as bricklayers, carpenters, joiners.[15]

The most important feature of the pottery industry in the mid-nineteenth century was that none of its processes had been successfully adapted to machine production - it remained still a craft industry which, despite the existence of a handful of large firms, was dominated by small manufacturing units.

In 1842 the Child Employment Commissioners divided the potteries into three categories differentiated by the suitability of their working conditions, although often this also directly reflected their relative sizes. In Hanley five works were placed in the first grade, seven in the second and twelve in the third.[16]

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15. These figures are based on a count of a 20% sample of households - 985 in all, the heads of 908 of which were gainfully employed.

16. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners, 1842, p. C2.

The three major potteries organized as independent single manufacturing establishments and producing on a large scale all come into the first category. There was the Old Hall Manufactory of Charles Meigh which had on the same site as the pot-banks a steam mill for grinding flints and a plant for colour manufacture and the production of plaster of Paris. The Cauldon Place Works of John Ridgway built on open land near the Cauldon Canal was described by John Ward as occupying "a large space of ground and, for its handsome exterior, judicious arrangement and capabilities is among the very first rate establishments."[17] Also in this group was the Wedgwood works at Etruria, occupying seven acres of land along the banks of the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Among the smaller potteries there had been some concentration of ownership as works were bought up by expanding firms on the death or retirement of the owner. The most important of the developing firms was that of William Ridgway and Partners which

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17. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 375. The Child Employment Commissioners stated "These premises are delightfully situated, some little distance from the high road to Stoke, by the side of the Cauldon canal, and apart from every other building. The rooms are lofty, spacious, and in all respects clean and healthy: the children and people generally are orderly, regular in their work, and respectful". Appendix p. c. 24. Evidence was given that 500 people were employed there, 220 men, 220 women, 60 children.

owned six separate premises in 1842 and which was followed by Thomas Dimmock and Company with three premises. Eleven independent firms, each with only one factory, continued to resist the trend towards concentration at this time and there were also various small works "principally employed in making china toys" or purely enamelling and gilding works at which china was finished and decorated.[18]

Directly dependent on the pottery manufacturers were the flint and bone grinding mills, several works engaged in preparing colours or boracic acid for the glaze and "The business of engraving (which) is extensively practised in Hanley and Shelton and gives employment to a considerable number of artists."[19]

Most of the potteries were on cramped sites in developed parts of the town, showing a frontage of warehouse and offices to the street and with an archway leading to the working premises

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18. Ward 'Stoke' pp. 374-376. The tendency towards a greater concentration of industry in large firms is difficult to establish statistically even on a national scale. (See, for example, R. Harrison 'Before the Socialists' p. 36). Although numerous small firms survived into the twentieth century the trend was evident in the mid-nineteenth century pottery industry which had been particularly noted for its fragmented nature.

19. ibid.p. 381.

behind. There were frequent complaints about working conditions in the industry, working in wet clay was regarded as an important cause of rheumatism but the high temperature near the ovens in contrast to the winter cold outside and the extremely dusty atmosphere created by the finishing processes were more serious hazards to health.[20]

The potters were paid piece rate wages on the ware which came out from the ovens in good condition and they normally employed their own female and child helpers, whose payment was their responsibility.[21] Each Martinmas they were hired by the manufacturers at piece rates agreed for the next twelve months. Disputes between the potters and the manufacturers centred around the piece rates to be paid, on abuses of the practice of paying only for pieces that came out 'good from oven' and on the potter's legal obligation to remain with the manufacturer throughout the twelve months term of his contract.

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20. Working conditions are described in detail in the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners in 1842 and in the First Report of the Children's Employment Commission (1862), and in a report of 1860 by Dr. E.H. Greenhow into the excessive mortality of the district. (Appendix to the 3rd Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1860, pp. 102-113).

21. It remained common practice, after 1850, for wages to be paid out late on a Saturday night in the beerhouses.

Prices paid to the potters were usually lowest in the smaller firms and working conditions worst in their premises. No worker would willingly move from John Ridgway's or Wedgwood's to one of these smaller works and the larger manufacturers formed the Potteries Chamber of Commerce partly to help bring about uniform prices for the potters' work and so restrict undercutting in the market. Its other purpose was the obvious one of presenting a united front to the potters to resist demands for overall increases in the rates paid.

The National Union of Operative Potters had in the 1830's been one of the strongest unions in the country, with 6,000 members in Staffordshire, but it had been destroyed by a prolonged strike in 1836. Its successor, the United Branches of the Operative Potters' Society was a federation which never had more than 2,000 members. It obtained substantial price increases when trade was good in 1844 and 1845 but was destroyed by internal quarrels and the slump in the industry which began in 1847: by 1850 the union had vanished. After 1850 the only unions in the industry were minute craft unions representing, for example, the turners, the painters and gilders or the flat-pressers.[22]

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22. These unions should not be confused with the 'New Model Unionism' evident in some crafts after 1850. They were purely local, extracted low subscriptions, offering few benefits in return and showing no sign of an ability to develop into something more viable.

In the 1840's the United Branches' strength was undermined by the sporadic support given by sections of the potters to the Chartists and by the rival attractions of the National Land Campaign, which in 1847 claimed to have 1,000 members in the district. Then the union became involved in widely publicized schemes to reduce the supply of labour in the industry by sponsoring emigration to Pottersville, Wisconsin. This policy, inspired by ill-founded fear that some processes in the industry were being successfully mechanized, proved a sad waste of the Union's resources and merely diverted attention from matters of more immediate and direct concern.

After 1850 the small unions could not fight the manufacturers and their fortunes and those of their members depended upon the fluctuating cycle of prosperity and depression in the industry. The only union prepared even to speak the language of conflict, and that only intermittently, was the Flat Pressers' Society. The inactivity of the other unions and the petulant bickering over the failure of the Utopia in the New World make a sad epilogue to the brave days from 1833 to 1836 when the 'Potters' Union' was a power in the land. Active members of the working class in Hanley after 1850 devoted their energies to fighting local government battles rather than to supporting these tiny impotent unions.

Iron -working was in 1850 only a recently established industry. The few small foundries of the 1830's had had mixed fortunes and relying on imported pig iron had played only a small part in the economy of the town.[23]

It was the leasing of the Duchy of Lancaster mineral rights by Earl Granville that marked the beginning of a new era as vast new smelting furnaces were built in the Fowlea valley. These furnaces began production in 1841 and others, built in 1850, were followed by a forge and mills to work the pig-iron they produced. By 1857 the Fowlea valley was dominated by these works, their associated coal and iron mines and the vast complex of railway sidings which served them.[24]

To this new industry was attributed the rapid growth of population after 1850[25] as Granville had houses built on both sides of the Hanley-Burslem boundary at Cobridge and attracted iron-miners and colliers into the town.[26] The iron-working

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23. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 379.

24. C.J.H.Homer map. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. pp. 169-170.

25. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 170.

26. Notably prior to 1851 from Flintshire and Denbighshire (ex census returns).

industry now took on a new lease of life and the works owned by Granville and by W.S.Roden became large employers of labour.

Industrial relations in these industries were for many years very strained. In 1851 a prolonged strike among the colliers spread to the iron-miners and was broken after two months by the use of black-leg labour from outside the district. In later years there were sporadic and unsuccessful attempts to organize a union among the men.[27]

The other industries of the town were on a much smaller scale. The most interesting was the Ivy House paper mill on the Cauldon canal, owned by Messrs. Fourdinier and supplying tissue paper for the engraving processes in the pottery industry. The small engineering works owned by the same firm made paper manufacturing machinery for a wider market.

In the Fowlea valley lay the main works of the British Gas Company and nearby was the noisome Copperas Works at which sulphur crystals were obtained by exposing iron pyrites to the action of sun and rain.[28] It was also commented that "A Naptha Manufactory has been lately established in Hanley, which is most offensive."[29]

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27. Advertiser, 12 July, 1851; 2. Aug.1851; 20. Sept. 1851. The Lever (a short-lived Chartist paper published in Hanley in 1851, copy Hanley Reference Library, and below p.68). p. 28.

28. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 380.

29. Hanley, Watching and Lighting Commissioners' Minutes. 11.July.1850.

Communications within the Potteries' district still centred on the turnpike roads whose establishment in the eighteenth century had played such a significant part in the subsequent expansion of the pottery industry. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, road tolls had become a major irritant to the inhabitants and were alleged to be restricting the growth of Hanley as a market centre as well as forcing up the costs of the pottery industry. There were still nine toll gates in Hanley in 1870 and it is claimed that "One could not move more than half a mile from Hanley Town Hall without having to pay toll."[30]

Payment of tolls occasionally provoked attacks on gate-keepers which earned heavy court penalities despite a general feeling that, except in the matter of toll collection, the Turnpike Trusts were not carrying out their duties satisfactorily. In 1850, J.A.Wise, the M.P. for Stafford, left a formal Cattle Market dinner early, commenting:-

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30. Warrillow, 'Stoke-on-Trent', p. 30.

"that as a family man, anxious about his personal safety, he never liked to ride over the Pottery roads after dark, for they were really in so bad a state - heaps of rubbish lying in some places, ruts and deep holes yawning in others, and loose stones lying about everywhere, and he almost momentarily expected his horse to come down. Seriously, the roads were in such a state as to be quite unsafe. The inhabitants as well as travellers must find this a great grievance, and if the roads were not speedily repaired, he hoped they would be indicted. The trustees ought either to do their duty to the public, or resign office to others." [31]

Until the opening of the lines of the North Staffordshire Railway in the late 1840's the Trent and Mersey canal had a monopoly of the commercial traffic between the Potteries and the outside world. In 1835-36, 143,000 tons of goods were carried into the area and 184,000 tons out from it [32] and for twenty years after the coming of the railway the volume of traffic continued to increase. [33] The main wharfs of the district were inside the Hanley boundary and there the seven principal carrying companies of 1842 had "spacious warehouses, sheds and accommodations"; the town was described as "the principal and central port of the district." [34] At this time a 'horse-railway' extended from the

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31. Advertiser, 26. Oct. 1850.

32. Ward, 'Stoke', pp. 388-389, These figures do not include local traffic which Ward described as 'by no means inconsiderable'. The data quoted was that presented to the Commons in connection with the Manchester and Birmingham Railway Bill.

33. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 2. p. 298.

34. Ward 'Stoke', pp. 387-388. On census night 1851, 103 people were living on boats then tied up at the wharfs.

wharfs to near the middle of Hanley, some two-thirds of a mile but soon after this it fell into dis-use.[35]

After 1850 the Cauldon canal, which joined the Trent and Mersey near the Hanley wharfs, attracted an increased number of works into the Trent valley, following the earlier example set by John Ridgway.

The North Staffordshire Railway Company's lines were laid in the late 1840's after it had taken over the Canal Company under a crippling agreement, guaranteeing its dividends, in order to forestall opposition. The railway, however, stayed resolutely in the Fowlea valley on the border of the town and Hanley, which had grown on the ridge along the line of the turnpike roads and the coal measures, was now to see Stoke,by virtue of its valley site, become the communications centre of the district. Contemporaries saw this as a direct blow to Hanley's pre-eminence in the area and opinion in the town was affected by a fierce determination to have its own railway facilities.[36]

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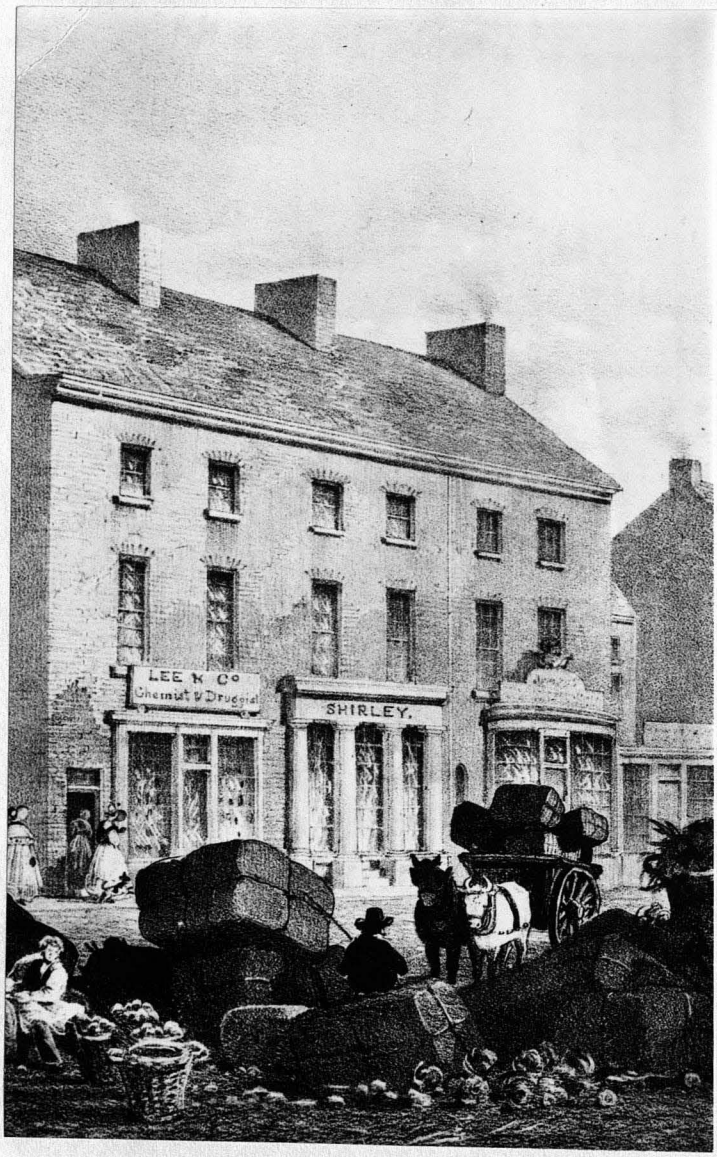
35. Commissioners' Minutes. 11. 3. 58. Final report of the Chief Bailiff, 1858.

36. Etruria station was only just outside the Hanley boundary but it was easier to go to Stoke station from the centre of the town.

A Corner of the Market Square in 1840



Although the town's prosperity depended eventually on the fortunes of the pottery industry and, increasingly, of the iron industry, a sophisticated trading structure overlay this industrial base and Hanley served as a commercial centre for the region. Of Stoke market it was remarked in 1851 that it "has not risen to much importance owing to the Hanley market being in the most populous and central part of the Potteries."[37] The same source gave the following numbers of trading concerns in the town, making a living by providing services or goods for their fellows.

Shopkeepers (flour: groceries: cheese etc)	118
Beerhouses	92
Butchers	87
Boot and shoe makers	60
Inns and taverns	44
Grocers and tea dealers	36
Milliners and dress makers	34
Tailors	27

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37. White's, Staffordshire Directory, 1851. p. 534.

Fruit and vegetable dealers	22
Confectioners	14
Cabinet Makers	14
Plumbers and glaziers	12
Potato dealers	12
Linen and woollen drapers	12
Hairdressers	11
Bakers and flour dealers	11
Other tradesmen	135
Total	741

A large number of shopkeepers were one man or one woman businesses and several of the other numerically most significant groups were little or no larger than this. The beerhouses were usually as small as they were disreputable and dirty: the butchers, the potato dealers and the fruit and vegetable dealers were almost entirely the tenants of market stalls: the boot and shoe makers usually pursued a solitary craft. At the other end of the scale were the recently established drapers' shops, employing several assistants and attracting customers from the surrounding towns.

The owners of these superior establishments would rightly consider themselves far removed socially from men who lived by running disreputable beerhouses. Economically, however, they had in common the fact that none of them were directly dependent on the basic industries of the town for their livelihoods, although how well they lived at any time depended on the fortunes of these industries.

The commercial heart of the town was centred around the market buildings and along the streets widened by the Market Trustees. Around the Market Square there were 67 shops of various kinds and another 26 in Hope Street nearby. The commercial area had already expanded along Piccadilly (31 premises) into Marsh Street (18) and there were in the 23 streets recently identified[38] as forming the trading centre of Hanley in 1865 some 228 shopping premises in 1851.

The growing complexity of the town's economy is illustrated by the increase in the number of professional men in the town. In 1842, Ward commented, "Of professional persons in Hanley and Shelton the number is subject to constant increase or fluctuation; but at the period of our writing, there are, of attorneys and solicitors 5 or 6; and of surgeons and apothecaries 8 or 9".[39]

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38. By D.T.Herbert, op. cit. The 1851 statistics are all taken from White's Staffordshire Directory.

39. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 386.

The problem is in part to define the term 'professional class' but White's 1851 Directory gave the following figures of men or institutions who may arguably be held to be associated with this group.

Accountants	3	Music Professors	5
Architects	3	Surgeons	9
Attorneys	10	Academies & Schools	17
Banks	2		
Fire and Life Insurance Offices	12		

Equally significant is the list in the Directory of almost two hundred persons in this primarily industrial town who are described as a "miscellany of gentry, clergy, partners in firms and others, not classified by trade or profession." They add yet another element to an economic structure the complexity of which is as striking as the town's final dependence on the health of the pottery trade.

The Social Structure of the Town.

The population of Hanley increased by 25% between 1831 and 1841 (16,408 to 20,781) and by a further 25% from 1841 to 1851 (to 25,364), at which date just over 17% (4,333) of the inhabitants had been born outside Staffordshire. The most important single source of immigrants was the neighbouring rural county of

Shropshire which provided 18.5% of the total; Cheshire followed with 14.2%, then came Lancashire (10.4%), Ireland (10.2%), Derbyshire (8.5%) and North Wales (6.7%). The total figures of immigrants from outside Staffordshire, extracted from the 1851 census returns, are indicated in the appendix to this chapter and the pattern of movement they reveal agrees with the general conclusions on the nature of early nineteenth century emigration established by Professor Redford over forty years ago.[40] It was essentially short distance emigration from rural areas to nearby towns. Hanley as the largest of the Potteries' towns, with its increasingly diversified economy, may well have attracted a larger percentage of immigrants than did its neighbours but this has still to be established.

The vast majority of immigrants would soon be difficult to distinguish from the indigenous population (except when they had to fill in a census form). Three groups of immigrants, however, deserve further comment.

The surprisingly large number born in London and in Middlesex included a significant percentage with skilled, managerial, or

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40. A.Redford, 'Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850.'

professional occupations. They formed an immigrant elite moving into the town to provide skills and services which local talent could not provide in sufficient quantity.

Many of the Welsh immigrants were colliers and ironstone miners and this group retained a separate identity united around their chapels by the common bond of language which separated them from their fellows. A few streets in the poorer parts of the town attracted a large number of Welsh immigrants but there were a few people of Welsh birth in all the enumeration districts.[41]

The Irish on the other hand showed an even greater tendency to collect in tight clusters in the poorer streets[42], while other parts of the town had very few people in them of Irish birth.

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41. 300 Welsh people were present at the opening of a Welsh Chapel in 1854. Some it was said had been in Hanley for 30 or 40 years but the vast majority for less than 10. In the last decade a large number had sought a living in the vast coal and iron works of the area and the majority of these were poor and illiterate; they were incapable of deriving advantage from religious services in English. Sentinel. 28. Oct. 1854.

42. Around Swan Street just off the Market Place, in the 'Royal' group of streets towards Stoke, in the new streets towards Burslem near Bryan's Wood.

They stood out as an alien group in the town and newspaper reports of court proceedings made a point of declaring their nationality. These suggest that they were as unruly an element in Hanley as they were in larger towns for they figured prominently in assault and drunkeness cases, swamped the lodging-houses and were prominent in the illicit whisky trade. Many of the people born in Lancashire, most of whom came from the Liverpool and Manchester areas, were also of Irish nationality. So far as the respectable inhabitants were concerned this simply made the 'Irish problem' that much more serious.

Of the inhabitants of Hanley who had been born in Staffordshire almost 80% had been born in one of the Pottery towns. A sample count of three enumeration districts indicated comparatively little movement between the towns for almost 90% of those born in the Potteries were born in Hanley itself and the only discernible emigration was from Stoke.

The remainder of those born in Staffordshire were drawn in ones and twos from a large number of the rural parishes of the north and centre of the county and from Newcastle and Wolstanton, which provided 10% of this group. A few came from Stone and Stafford but practically none from the urban areas in the south of the county.

The fiercely local nature of the pottery industry itself is borne out by an examination of the birthplaces of a 20% sample of heads of households. Of the sample group of 985 there were 333 employed in the pottery and its ancillary industries and 256 or 77% of these had been born in the Potteries district whereas only 37% of the remainder of the sample had been born there. Immigrants into Hanley were attracted by its growing commercial possibilities and by its new industries, not by the staple industry of the region.

The leaders of Hanley society were the wealthiest of the industrialists, for the town had no aristocratic connections of any importance. The Duke of Sutherland owned no property in the town and Earl Granville was important only as the absentee owner of a large industrial undertaking. Neither played any significant part in the life of the town.

There were a number of these wealthy industrialists, rather more 'of a middling sort', together with a host of traders and a sprinkling of professional persons. These groups did not, however, make up a unified middle class which was clearly separate from the respectable sections of the working class beneath them, there was rather an almost imperceptible gradation from one class to the other. Within this 'middle class' there were differences of

social interest and ambition, and of economic status, as significant as those to be found within the working-classes, where indeed it has been argued, lay the most significant gulf in mid-Victorian society - that between the respectable and the disreputable.[43]

After many years spent in Lancashire to provide a suitable point of reference it was this feature of life which, some sixty years later, remained C. Shaw's most vivid memory of a childhood spent in the Potteries at this time.[44] He wrote:

> "There was a deep and wide division between one class of workmen on a potbank and another. The plate-makers, slip-makers, and some odd branches were regarded as a lower caste than hollow-ware pressers, throwers, turners and printers.
>
> The former were the hardest worked and the worst paid. The latter class had an easier employment, were better dressed and better paid.....In this class were found many local preachers, class leaders and church and chapel-goers.
>
> Even those who did not regularly attend a place of worship would be seen on the Sabbath 'in their Sunday best'. Now in any attempt at union, trade or otherwise, (it was) impossible to unite classes which differed so widely in sentiment and habit. Two men might work in the same shop and be friendly enough in their intercourse, but if you could have seen these two men on a Sunday, or at a holiday time, you might have taken the one to be the employer of the other. I have never met with such contrasts and separation among working men anywhere else as those seen sixty years ago among the workers on a pot bank".

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43. G.M.Young, 'Victorian Essays'. p. 122.

44. C.Shaw, 'When I was a Child', (Methuen 1903). pp. 193-194.

It has recently been necessary for Mr. R. Harrison to re-assert the validity of the concept of an aristocracy among the working class in this period.[45] Unless a distinction can be made between the man who drank or gambled or slept away the Sabbath and he who donned 'his Sunday best' the social and political life of the working classes in Hanley must remain an untangled thread.

Despite the 'imperceptible gradations' between them, three social classes may be distinguished - a middle class and two working-class groups, one respectable, the other disreputable.

The size of the middle-class group depends on how their composition is defined. John Ward noted only 13 prominent landowners, some of whom were not resident in the town, and 12 noteworthy private residences, 4 of which were in the hands of these large landowners. He also noted some 40 businesses in or associated with the pottery industry and some 14 professional persons in the town. Add a managerial class in the larger pottery firms, the collieries and ironworks, the gas company and railway, 3 Anglican and 6 Nonconformist clergy and the total size of the group in 1842 remains small, an impression confirmed fourteen

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45. R.Harrison 'Before the Socialists', p. 27. This view was earlier advanced by E.J. Hobsbawm in 'Democracy and the Labour Movement', ed. J.Saville (1954), pp. 201-239.

years later by Mr. Phillips, editor of the Sentinel:-

> "Unlike many of the old Saxon and other towns they had no large intermediate class between the gentry and principal manufacturers and tradesmen on the one hand and the operatives on the other..... As respecting this middle class to whom he had referred Hanley and Shelton compared unfavourably with Burslem".
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The editor was, however, using his impressions to support a cause in which he strenuously believed whereas two other sources suggest that there was in 1851, a numerically more significant middle class than that noted by Ward. White's Directory lists a substantial trading class in the town and adds a supplementary list of almost 200 gentry, partners in firms and clergy, (see above p. 24), indicating a middle class some hundreds strong. There are, however, difficulties in assessing the size of any social group by a count of occupations for many of the tradesmen, perhaps especially the beersellers, were fully absorbed into the life of the working-classes and in Hanley there is the further difficulty of establishing the social standing of the heteorgenous and numerous group of potters. An attempt to use a 20% sample of household heads in the 1851 census in assessing class structure by occupation broke down in the face of these twin problems.

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46. Sentinel. 8. Nov. 1856.

The supposition of a middle class some hundreds strong can, however, be confirmed from this sample for it revealed that 90 of the 985 households had 112 servants living-in. Some of these 112 were probably employees rather than servants and 16 servants of innkeepers, 7 of potters and 2 of colliers among 21 of the households may be subtracted on this ground. Of the 69 households employing servants who remain, 3 had 3 servants each, 12 had 2 and 54 one servant. A tentative pattern then emerges, of one household in 14 in the town employing one or more servants, some 350 households in all. Others no doubt employed daily help though this was a less reliable indication of middle-class status.

It had indeed not been John Ward's purpose to define a middle-class but to pay tribute to the men of real stature in the town, to note their business activities and to describe their houses. The real importance of this narrow group was that they set the tone of life for a much larger number of lesser men of their own class, smaller manufacturers, professional men, the principal tradesmen and finally fading away to the respectable elements among the working class. Their own interests and way of life were very different from those of their ancestors. They had been as much affected as had their contemporaries elsewhere by changes in the moral tone of the country and by a consequent narrowing and

intensification of their way of life.[47] Ward, writing of Hanley, gave what could be considered a classic summary in microcosm of the change in the national mood since the late eighteenth century, not least by the moralizing tone in which he wrote:-

> "The by-gone worthies of Hanley and Shelton (like the rest of their brethren in the district) were most of them homely, hearty, and convivial men.....(who) near sixty years ago, commenced a goodly practice, which has been kept up until the present day, though not without some intermission, of holding a mock Mayor's feast also called a venison feast. .....The test of admission to the freedom of this convivial corporation was the drinking off ~~(sic)~~ a yard-length glass of ale at a single draught, no trifling infliction on a temperate candidate. But the prevalent practices and opinions of the period when such things took place were utterly at variance with those which now prevail among the upper and middle ranks of society..... The progress of improvement among the higher orders of society in the Potteries is, indeed, in no respect more conspicuous than in the decline of the debasing and brutalizing practice of hard drinking which, within the last 50 years or less, was so prevalent.....
>
> Our predecessors were extremely partial to the amusement of bowling, and the weekly parties on the Green, adjoining the Swan Inn, Hanley, in the summer season were highly respectable and agreeable. Nor were the ladies or young people overlooked, there being frequent public assemblies, or domestic parties, for dancing and cards in winter, of which distant recollection now only remains. Most of the leading people have now withdrawn from the pleasures of the venison feast, the bowling-green, and the whist-table, and whilst a few

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47. Muriel Jaeger 'Before Victoria', pp. IX-XI

> have substituted for them the more boisterous, but not more rational, amusement of horse-racing, with all its vicious associations, others have found more placid and solid satisfaction in improving and beautifying their houses and grounds, in patronizing the fine arts, and in promoting a higher degree of moral and intellectual attainment among the operative classes, by establishing and encouraging religious societies on various models, schools for educating the young, and mechanics' institutes for employing the leisure hours of those of riper years." [48]

As nearly all the important employers of labour continued to live in the town, with the exception of Earl Granville and Francis Wedgwood, who retained a lively interest in its affairs, Hanley benefited in many directions from this new-found social conscience of its leaders, whose influence was felt in religion, education, charitable undertakings and local government as well as in matters of public health or those relating to industrial conditions. The Child Employment Commission inspector, Samuel Scriven, paid tribute to them:-

> "The manufacturers are a highly influential, wealthy and intelligent class of men: they evince a warm-hearted sympathy for those about them in difficulty or distress, contribute as much as possible to their happiness, and are never known to inflict punishments on the children, or to allow others to do so." [49]

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48. Ward, 'Stoke' pp. 366-368. The racecourse was soon to be swallowed up by the new iron-furnaces and a puritan tradition was firmly established in the town in the mid-nineteenth century whose influence can still be seen in the books of working-class authors writing about the district at the end of the century.(G. Shaw and H. Owen - see bibliography).

49. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners, 1842, p. C2. and C8.

In no other part of the country he had visited had the wealthy made so many efforts to enable the young to obtain a moral and religious education.

The town's leaders might now have indulged in chiefly private recreations, behind the closed curtains of family life, but this did not cut them off from their fellow inhabitants. They were prominent in the Anglican churches and in the New Connexion Bethesda Chapel, where they patronized the Sunday-schools, gave money to the day-schools and supported the recently established Y.M.C.A. Summer excursions and Christmas gatherings were regularly provided by the larger employers. The North Staffordshire Infirmary relied heavily on their patronage.

In times of distress they and their wives supported the establishment of soup kitchens or provided clothes, blankets and coal for the poor. A mining disaster at John Ridgway's Ubberley Colliery saw them heading a subscription list for the dependants of the seven victims while several of them also attended a public meeting organized to raise further money for this end.[50]

Their part in local government and public health matters is considered later in this study but in national politics most of the important men of the town were Liberals. In 1852 several of

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50. Advertiser, 20. Sep. 1851. over 1000 people attended this meeting at the Bethesda Chapel.

them successfully led a campaign to capture both of the Stoke Parliamentary seats for the Liberals, accompanying the candidates around the Potteries, appearing on public platforms with them and finally organizing victory celebrations in Hanley for both Liberal electors and non-electors. It was at this election that John Ridgway was accused of disturbing the political peace of the town by acting as the Liberal 'king-maker' in persuading the Honourable F. Leveson-Gower, Earl Granville's son, to put himself forward as a candidate.[51]

John Ridgway, who in 1857 became the first Mayor of the town was pre-eminent among its social leaders. His father had been one of the founders of the Methodist New Connexion and he in turn was a life-long worshipper at their Bethesda Chapel in Hanley where his presence played no small part in making that institution one of the most powerful in the social and religious life of the town. In 1834 his money had built the Bedford Chapel and later the Salem Chapel in Etruria. He was a regular teacher at New Connexion Sunday schools and became the first chairman of Hanley Y.M.C.A. It was again Ridgway money which built and supported the British School at Hanley, the finest educational establishment in the district.

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51. Advertiser, 3. Apr. 1852. et passim.

Until 1854 Ridgway owned the Cauldon Place pottery works in Hanley which he had earlier designed and built as one of the most modern pot-banks in the area, providing light and well-ventilated conditions for the 500 workpeople employed there, as well as the additional facility of a chapel. All the children at the works were required to attend Sunday-school regularly and for the adult employees there was a compulsary sickness insurance scheme together with strong pressure to subscribe each week to the funds of the North Staffordshire Infirmary.

In addition to his pottery works, Ridgway owned coalmines locally and a vast amount of copyhold land in the town. He was one of the founders and a director of the North Staffordshire Railway Company in which capacity he received an annual salary of £2,000. He had also helped to found and became chairman of the Staffordshire Potteries Waterworks Company.

He was an active member of the Anti-Corn Law League and in 1842 was absurdly charged by 'The Times' with having fomented the Chartist riots which disrupted the life of the district in the summer of that year.

His social standing in the town, and indeed in the Potteries' district generally, was immense and there is an account of the inhabitants of Tunstall coming to their doors to see 'the great

man' pass. Without doubt he was a paternalist in his approach to social questions but as early as 1852 he was speaking in favour of universal manhood suffrage.

Prior to his election as Mayor he had had a long and distinguished record in the service of the town of Hanley. In 1825 he had become a founder member of the Watching and Lighting Commissioners and five years later was elected to the Market Trustees. One of the first inhabitants to recognize the gravity of the town's growing sanitary problems,he became from 1849 the leading campaigner for reform of the local government structure as a first step towards their eventual solution, abandoning at this point his earlier vision of a unified local government body for all the Potteries district in order that his own town's problems might have the prompt attention they deserved.

His membership of these local government bodies was, despite his many commitments, never a purely nominal one. He was one of the most assiduous attenders at their meetings, on many of their committees, and the moving spirit behind some of their most imaginative work, playing a decisive part in the great expansion of Hanley markets, in the building of the first Town Hall and in the establishment of a town cemetery at a cost of £13,000.

If the high-mindedness of the mid-Victorian middle-classes was often suspiciously close to priggishness the inhabitants of Hanley had still every reason to be thankful that a man of Ridgway's calibre and position was prepared to devote virtually every free moment of his life to public affairs. During his lifetime the town of Hanley grew from a large village until it had a population of 30,000. Ridgway devoted the last 15 years of his life to bringing the town to face the consequences of that growth and this despite the deep hostility his efforts aroused among large sections of the inhabitants.

There was an element of sycophancy about some of the contemporary references to Ridgway and other leading public figures. The eulogy by the inspector into conditions of child employment is difficult to reconcile with some of the evidence he collected on the state of even some of the largest pottery firms. Working class references also tended to be deferential, their criticisms pitched in general terms only.[52] Half a century later, C. Shaw wrote disparagingly of the awe and fear with which the potters of this time regarded their masters who were "meekly and deferentially

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52. Except in the heat of the controversy over local government the only direct attacks on the integrity of the town's leading figures came in the Chartist 'Lever'. There was a sneering reference to Ridgway's £1 contribution to the fund for Hungarian refugees that "even the heart of John Ridgway, the magnate of Cauldon Place, has been moved to compassionate utterance and expression.". p. 185.

passed in the street"; he commented, "The spirit of feudalism must have saturated the Pottery district as in no other industrial district". For Shaw it was fear of the masters which made the potters tolerate all the abuses of the industry,[53] a judgement which renders the considerable working class activity in matters of local government all the more remarkable.

The respectable element among the working class included many small traders who provided the social link with the middle-class above but the identity of the majority of this group is more difficult to establish for there was no doubt an element of parochialism in the view that the native born potters were basically respectable and that the unquiet elements in society were strangers from afar.[54] There is clear evidence that both sheep and goats were to be found among the potters themselves who indeed were generally less well paid than the miners and iron-workers.[55]

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53. C.Shaw, 'When I was a child', pp. 194-195.

54. This widespread assumption was given official credence in a discussion on the 1836 strike in the pottery industry, contained in the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners, 1842, p. C3.

55. In the evidence to the Commissions on the industry, 1842 and 1862 and in C.Shaw, 'When I was a Child', pp. 184-5 193 et passim.

Respectability could of course depend as much on social attitudes as on economic status and it is clear that the skilled potter, particularly with other members of his family working, could in times of good trade, live comfortably and also save for an uncertain future. A careful man in any industry could hope, after 1850 at least, that with good fortune he would be able to rise above the level of mere survival. Contemporary opinion repeatedly suggests that many of the potters were progressing in this way but offers no evidence that the miners and ironworkers as a class were emulating this example. The potters, it was later claimed, were markedly different from the miners and completely appalled by their violence.[56]

Those potters who achieved this moderate comfort and the respectability that went with it were usually those who worked for the larger firms, helped by the more secure employment prospects and better wages these provided as well as by the stricter habits of discipline and sickness insurance schemes, imposed by the benevolent despotism of the large employers.

It was claimed that more of the potters owned their own houses than was common among the working-classes in other parts

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56. ibid. p. 183. In the context this was not intended as a complimentary reference to the potters.

of the country[57] and when this was so, it was probably helped by their families' long-standing in the town. The claim is not, however, easily established from the evidence available, for in 1842 it was asserted to the contrary that the 1836 strike caused most of the potters to sell their houses; they had been reduced to a state of dependence, humiliation and poverty from which they had never recovered.[58] If this were the case, then the state of trade prior to 1850 can have provided little opportunity for the potters to retrieve the situation.

Detailed property plans of 1858 and 1864 prepared in connection with planned railway extensions reveal a property owning pattern, in the older area west of the town centre, in which the typical house-owner possessed a few adjoining properties and sometimes

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57. Sentinel, 5. Mar. 1859. copy of Town Clerk's letter to The Times defending Potteries' morality, "Hundreds of workingmen here occupy their own houses: indeed the cottage property principally belongs to that class, one family in most cases, occupying a four-roomed house with private yard - an amount of home comfort enjoyed by comparatively few workpeople in most populous towns." Tyler op. cit. p. 33, noted in 1850 that the potters had the reputation of having more freeholds in their possession than any other class of operatives in the country. Also White's, Staffordshire Directory, 1834. p. 539.

58. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners, p. C3.

himself lived in one of them.[59] These plans suggest a pattern of small-scale property ownership but do not support the argument that most potters were owners of their homes.

The improvement in respectable working-class standards and prospects probably dates from the end of the 1847-1849 depression in the pottery trade. In 1842 it was noted that:-

> "The earnings of men through this district (the Potteries) in ordinary times are good, and on the whole there is a great deal of comfort amongst them. But their habits, unhappily, are not provident and we have a great deal to do by instructional schools, temperance societies, and savings banks, and the like, before the population will be placed in those advantageous circumstances which providence has put in their power". (60)

After 1850 sharp improvements came in all these directions.

With improved trade, the building societies, friendly societies, insurance companies and savings banks were re-invigorated and achieved a position which recurrences of bad trade were never

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59. Staffordshire County Record Office references Q.RuM/288 and /356. One block, for example, in 1858 had 31 houses divided among 9 owners, 3 of whom lived in one of their houses. In another part of the same area in 1864, 96 houses had 24 separate owners, 5 of whom owned 56 of the houses while 10 of the owners lived in one of their properties.

60. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners, p. C36. The report accepted uncritically this comment of an employer on wages and also some very high estimates of wage rates in the industry, again provided by the employers.

able totally to undermine. A newspaper review of the economy of the district in 1852 concluded:-

> "Lastly we have pleasure in noticing the number of provident institutions and building societies , etc., which have sprung up in the Potteries during the last few years. These represent the savings of the working classes: and the hundreds of neat cottages which are rising in all directions all tell their tale of honest industry, forethought, temperance and economy." (61)

There were newspaper references to six building societies situated in the town, though serving a wider area, between 1850 and 1855, one of these closed down in 1857 but the others survived.[62] The largest was the North Staffordshire Permanent Building Society which was formed in 1850, had 150 subscribers within a month, had £8,000 deposited with it in its first six months, reported a great increase in business in 1852, and had weekly receipts of £1,662 in the first week of 1853.[63] The Potteries Central Savings Bank, also situated in the town, had in 1852, 1549 accounts and total deposits of £46,449.[64] The most local of the insurance companies serving the district was the North Staffordshire Provident Association, founded in 1847, specifically to provide working class

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61. Advertiser, 20. Nov. 1852.

62. ibid. 1. Feb. 1851; 1. Mar. 1851; 28. June.1851 Sentinel, 14 Jan.1854; 28. Oct. 1854; 13 June, 1857.

63. Advertiser, 29 June, 1850; 27 July, 1850; 14 Dec. 1850; 3 Apr. 1852; 8 Jan. 1853.

64. ibid. 25 Dec. 1852. The Bank had been founded in 1824.

insurance and with an income of £458 in 1853.[65] It was, however, only one of twelve insurance offices in the town and the British Industry Life Assurance Company alone claimed to have 5,000 insurance accounts in the district.[66]

There were other institutions in the town which relied heavily on respectable working class support. They provided many of the 400 members of the Mechanics Institute with its library of 3,000 books and its subscription (1d a week) newsroom for papers and periodicals. Seventeen thousand people attended an art exhibition in Hanley Town Hall.[67] Scores gathered to hear the free readings, by prominent inhabitants, on the progress of the Crimean War and later many more supported a programme of free readings and music especially arranged for their benefit.[68] Their children went to Sunday school, some went to day-schools and even to be trained for the pottery industry at the Potteries School of Design.[69] The parents on the other hand might don their Sunday best

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65. Sentinel, 11. Feb. 1854.

66. White's Staffordshire Directory, 1851. Sentinel, 15.Apr. 1854.

67. Sentinel, 4. Oct. 1856.

68. ibid. 29. Nov. 1856; 3 Jan, 1857 et passim.

69. C.Shaw, 'When I was a Child' p. 193. See the sections at the end of this chapter on religion and education.

but clearly many of them did not then proceed to church or chapel.

There was keen working-class interest in the town in any proposals to extend the franchise and in 1851 this led to 'the largest meeting ever held in the Town Hall'.[70] Politically most working-men in Hanley were Liberals and it has been claimed that "Working-class economic pressure won a Stoke election in 1852"[71] and the centre of that pressure was in Hanley. At this election, 2,000 Hanley non-electors attended a Liberal meeting specially called for their benefit, 500 attended the victory dinner.[72] Later the Conservatives re-captured the seat but the majority of Hanley voters still voted Liberal and in national politics the working-class continued to take their lead from the great employers of labour in the town.

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70. Advertiser, 19. Apr. 1851.

71. J.Vincent, 'The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868', p. 103. He quotes the candidate (F.Leveson-Gower, 'By-gone Years', 1905), "In many streets the publicans were the only electors, but the working men were enthusiastic for free trade, and won the election for us by threatening the publicans and shopkeepers to withdraw their custom unless they promised to vote for us."

72. Advertiser, 29. May. 1852; 24 July, 1852.

A Chartist movement survived in Hanley after 1850; for nine months in 1851 a Chartist newspaper, the Lever, appeared each week and a Primitive Methodist chapel was bought and converted into a People's Hall. Here extreme political sentiment was mixed with support of the temperance movement, attempts at self-education and staid entertainment. The Chartists continued to attract considerable suspicion from other sections of the community, withmemories of the Chartist riots of 1842 still very much in mind. In that year a protest meeting on Crown Bank, Hanley, arising from a miners' stike, erupted into violence in the course of which the property of magistrates and churchmen was pillaged and destroyed and local court records removed as for 48 hours the police lost control of the district until anarchy was ended by the military: a traumatic experience which was to remain a potent and often quoted memory for over two decades.[73] By 1850, however, in their social values and their commitment to constitutional political improvement the Chartists were entitled to rank as a responsible element in society especially when contrasted with many in the lower ranks of the working-class who turned their backs on society to indulge in a life of private anarchy.

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73. Ward, 'Stoke', pp. 584-89. Advertiser during Aug. 1842.

After the mid-century the Chartists were in any case a dwindling minority movement whose demagogues only attracted mass support when they found an easily exploitable local grievance. A mere 200 troubled to attend an open-air meeting in 1853 to register support of the Charter, the People's Hall had soon to be sold, the Lever could not sell enough copies at one penny to survive longer than nine months[74] and the ambitious schemes intended to advance a local 'workers' Utopia' never saw the light of day.[75]

Public relaxation was as hard for the working-man to find as it was for his social superiors. The annual Wakes week provided the opportunity for a family outing to the Sutherland estate at Trentham and there were fairground sideshows in the central streets. At weekends in summer there were day railway excursions, which were usually well-supported; Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester and Ashbourne were favoured objectives. The Pottery Towns, however,

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74. Advertiser, 30 July, 1853. The Lever (pp. 49-50) lamented that it had only 60 shareholders in a population of seven or eight thousand toilers.

75. There was a scheme to launch a co-operative society and open a store "at which they could get their groceries and flour at the cheapest rate" (Sentinel, 12 Sept. 1857), and another for a teetotal club which evolved into a project for public gardens costing £3,200 on the lines of Belle Vue, Manchester. (The Lever, p. 78).

lacked laid-out walks and public parks for the benefit of the working classes,[76] although their linear development meant that open country was never too far away. The most common winter entertainment for this class was probably attendance at the numerous, usually well-attended, meetings of inordinate length, on all sorts of subjects which were held in the town.

Between the respectable savings-bank orientated working-man and his drunken, fighting, disreputable contemporaries, lay the most significant gulf in society. In Hanley the latter were the habitues of the 92 beerhouses, where in spartan conditions their chief recreation of gambling was so prevalent as to provoke the wrathful Stipendiary to threats of strong action.[77]

The seedy beerhouses and their adulterated brew could not always lull the desperate and the despairing into forgetfulness and then they turned to the more potent magic of the illicit whisky

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76. Appendix to the Second Report of the Commissioners for inquiry into the State of Large Towns, (1845), pp. 9-10. "None of the pottery towns have any open or public walks, or any places where the working classes are permitted to bathe."

77. Advertiser, 26. Feb. 1853. Sentinel, 23 Dec. 1854.

distillers whose activities in the district centred on Hanley.[78] Prosecutions for illegal distillation "unhappily now so common in the Potteries" reached a peak with the conviction of "The Prince of the Whisky Distillers."[79] Cases continued to come to court so regularly that few attracted more than a passing reference, one of the more sensational was based on the discovery of an extensive distillery in a disused coal pit, while another still on Wetley Moor had a capacity of 150 gallons a week, allegedly intended mainly for the Hanley market.[80]

The indignation of the respectable boiled over at the story of an illicit whisky drinking party on a Sunday, at the conclusion of which some of the 25 Irish revellers had been charged with disorderly conduct.[81] Every feature of this case would re-inforce the prejudices of the respectable citizen but squalor and lack of

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78. The Advertiser commented that "The town of Hanley and Shelton seems to possess an unenviable notoriety in the illicit whisky trade for almost every week it furnishes the officers of excise with something to do in the seizure of concealed stills and the prosecution of offenders". 12. July, 1851.

79. ibid. 23. Feb. 1850; 11 Jan. 1851.

80. ibid. 17. Jan. 1852; 12 Nov. 1853.

81. ibid. 10 May, 1851.

hope among the lowest classes in the town ensured that illicit distillation continued as a major local industry with widespread markets.

It was the violence and disorder of the patrons of the illicit stills which aroused the greatest concern,for even in this small Victorian town the property owner and the timorous citizen rarely felt completely secure from the hopeless violence of the lower orders. A quarrel between the Irish and the Welsh in the town "over which country had precedence", at one o'clock one Sunday morning, attracted a crowd several hundreds strong and tested the courage of the police in ending it.[82] Yet this was only a dramatic example of the hidden menace felt, for example, by unescorted women who were so frequently annoyed by lewd fellows in the town,[83] or by the police faced with a constant stream of assault cases. The Sentinel 'Local Intelligence' column for Hanley on April 1st, 1854 was entirely occupied by a manslaughter case, three assault cases , a juvenile pickpocket, two drunks, a dangerous driver and a failure to remove a nuisance - and this was by no means untypical.

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82. ibid. 18 Sept. 1852.

83. ibid. 31 May., 1851.

The beerhouses and the common lodging houses which the unruly element frequented were regarded by others with hostility. Even attempts to open a theatre were resisted on the grounds that it would be a threat to law and order, though the opposition was also based on disapproval of theatres themselves, on religious grounds.[84] The Hanley Commissioners opposed a later renewal of the licence because of 'the low company and objectionable scenes night after night' and the magistrates only renewed the licence after the management and policy had been changed.[85] From this time the theatre was gradually accepted as a respectable facility in the town.

The undercurrent of violence was still liable to erupt into public affairs. Efforts by ratepayers to open a road closed by Earl Granville's agent were countered by employees hurling slag and filth whilst a locomotive discharged steam at the protesters. Granville's colliers and furnace-men were in force at a subsequent

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84. A theatre opened in 1850 had attracted droves of boys from Fenton, Longton and Burslem and had led to a great increase in the number of petty crimes and acts of destruction. ibid. 28. June, 1851. A theatrical licence was finally granted to the former People's Hall but only after further opposition. ibid. 24 Jan, 1852. 14. Feb, 1852.

85. Commissioners' Minutes. 11 Mar. 1858. but referring to 1856.

public meeting and the ensuing nervous anxiety is attested by the concluding vote of thanks for their good behaviour. Sadly their forebearance was rewarded by a particularly dangerous piece of sabotage on one of the works' railway lines which almost killed two men.[86]

This overflow of violence into public life helps to explain why the respectable were so fearful of the forces latent, in the back streets, among the lower orders. In an age where words led so quickly to deeds, anyone who merely spoke the language of extremism was inevitably an object of deep distrust.

Yet violence and drunkeness were reactions to the environment in which the poor had to live for after long hours of work in bad conditions they returned to sordid, overcrowded surroundings in which the only social facility was the beerhouse[87] and for the unfortunate, really desperate poverty was never far away. Although such poverty was sometimes regarded as one of the fruits of a

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86. Advertiser, 25 Jan. 1851.

87. The densely populated Tinkersclough area in the south of the town had no church, chapel, school or Sunday-School, other than the tiny Wesleyan Ragged School, "in an unsuitable building". Only in 1855 were the Wesleyans able to provide the first building in the area to act as a schoolroom and preaching-house. Sentinel. 7. July, 1855.

dissolute life,[88] its more dramatic manifestations quickly stirred the public conscience as they may not have done in a larger town. One such case was that of a woman of 34, with a husband and three children, who had died "from want of the common necessaries of life" after her landlord's son had taken the sheet and blanket from her bed to put on his own during one cold January night.[89] The local newspaper squarely faced the question of a wider public responsibility for a situation which allowed such a tragedy to occur and laid the burden on private Christian charity to visit the homes of the growing number of child beggars in order to prevent any repetition of it.

In the bad winter of 1854-55, Hanley set up a public relief fund and provided a soup-kitchen to help relieve distress; during the next winter there was no collective effort but various churches organized clothing collections for the poor. The Hanley and Shelton Sick Man's Friend Society was set up to help the large number of sick poor in the town who had sunk into poverty and

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88. ibid. 29 Dec. 1855.

89. ibid. 12.Jan. 1856.

destitution.[90]

Frequent gestures of private charity were too spasmodic to relieve the problem and in the last resort the poor could rely only on the Poor Law Guardians for the Stoke-on-Trent parish. This body attempted to continue the humane traditions of outdoor relief until it came into conflict with the Poor Law Commissioners.[91]

Religion in Hanley.

The religious census of 1851[92] revealed that nationally, towns with a population of between 20 and 50 thousand could, on average, accommodate 60% of their population at any one church sitting. Hanley, with a total of 12,052 church places,[93] fell below this average and could in fact have accommodated less than

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90. It was as concerned with spiritual as with bodily needs. It spent £36 on 52 cases in the first year and could give a statistical breakdown of how many had died happily in the faith (9 out of 18), how many were led towards salvation (8) and how many still "unhappily seem without God" (28). Sentinel, 29 Dec. 1855. The Society survived for some years but attracted little further public attention.

91. Sentinel, 10. Feb. 1855; 17. Feb. 1855; 24. Feb. 1855. Their work is further considered in the chapter on local government.

92. 1851 Census of Religious Worship. Report by Horace Mann. H.M.S.O. 1854. P. CXXVIII.

93. From the returns of individual churches. Providence Chapel in Town Road, (Methodist New Connexion) apparently failed to make a census return.

half of its population as opposed to the postulated 58% which the census report considered a desirable minimum.

In England, the dissenters generally provided 93 sittings to every 100 of the Church of England but in Staffordshire the numbers almost balanced.[94] In Hanley, however, the dissenting bodies provided 118 sittings for every 100 provided by the Anglicans and this despite the great efforts made by the Church of England in the recent past, 3 churches being consecrated for the first time in 1849.[95]

In terms of attendance the dominance of the nonconformists was even more remarkable for 3,327 people attended the services at the 13 nonconformist churches and only 1,167 at four of 5[96] Anglican churches. Sunday school attendance was 1,305 at nonconformist schools and 906 at five Anglican schools.

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94. ibid. p. Cxl

95. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. pp. 155-156. There was also a temporary church in the Wellington District prior to the building of St. Luke's.

96. St. Matthew's, Etruria failed to return any figures, with 728 seats its rector reported a 'full service' both morning and evening. Average Sunday-school attendance was given as 160.

The Methodist New Connexion had five chapels in Hanley of which the largest was Bethesda Chapel with seating for 2,500. Its congregation and that of St. John's, included most of the social and economic elite of the town, while in contrast to the national scene, two of the three Wesleyan chapels were in poor parts of the town.[97]

The census report assumed that half of those present at afternoon services had not been present in the morning and that one third of those attending evening service had not been present earlier. Application of this ratio to Hanley gives a total of 3,132 separate persons who attended a church service on census Sunday or not quite 1 in 8 of the population which is certainly too low a figure.[98] The proportion of people attending a church

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97. One Baptist chapel, two Congregationalist chapels, a Presbyterian and a Welsh Presbyterian chapel made up the total of thirteen. There was no Primitive Methodist chapel in Hanley in 1851 (it had just become the People's Hall) but one opened by 1857. (Homer map). The first Catholic Church opened in 1860. (V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p.274).

98. There were the unrecorded attenders referred to in notes 93 and 96. Nonconformist chapels were often heavily attended in the evening when two thirds of their congregation is, by the census assumption, discounted. Taking all of the first congregation, and half the second of the day, only partly compensates for this, but raises the total to 3,550.

at any time on census Sunday was well below the national average for all towns in the country. In Hanley 8% of the population (2,087) attended a morning service, 2% (487) in the afternoon and 10% (2,429) in the evening. The corresponding percentages for all towns were 23.9%; 10.5%; 15.3%

Allowing for the absence of figures from two churches (notes 93 and 96), and although the clergy were unanimous that census Sunday was a very stormy day,[99] it is clear that church attendance in Hanley was as bad as for any industrial town, and indeed, as low as for many large cities, in the country. The figures fully confirm the gloomy view of the census report that " a sadly formidable portion of the English people are habitual neglecters of the public ordinances of religion".[100]

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99. Remarks on census forms. Almost all the clergy gave estimates of average attendances over the preceding months, some 25% higher than the census figures. The Rector of St. John's considered the method of counting most fallacious and implied that some of his rivals were certain to misrepresent their attendances. The clergy were perhaps by nature optimistic estimators for it seems at least possible that an attempt would be made to produce a good attendance on census day. Unless the rain fell only on Hanley, comparison with figures for other places would still be valid.

100. Religious Census Report, 1851. p. CIVIII.

This neglect was especially serious among the working classes in the towns for in Hanley only 4,500 of the 12,000 church places were free and, even more significant, the churches established in working class parts of the town had much smaller congregations than the fashionable town churches. St. Mark's in a poor part of Shelton had 325 attenders at two services while St. John's in Town Road had 801 at three.Bethesda had 1,008 attenders at two services whilst the other three New Connexion chapels for which figures are available had 329 attenders at a total of six services.

If attendance at church were accepted as the real test of working class respectability there was an alarmingly large disreputable class in the town. C. Shaw, however, looking back on his childhood, had a wider view of what constituted respectability and the other evidence available on working class habits and actions suggests that it is more reliable to use his criteria rather than mis-use the census statistics for a purpose for which they were never intended. (See footnote 44).

The State of Educational Provision.

It was only after 1850 that a determined effort was made to provide an adequate number of elementary schools in the town. In 1841 in the district generally, only 2.4% of the population were attending day-schools. There was a "fearful deficiency of knowledge

existing throughout the district" and more than three-quarters of the population could not read or write.[101]

At this time there were only three elementary schools in Hanley, two National Schools founded in 1816 and 1838 and a British School founded in 1818. In 1841 each school employed two teachers and the total roll of scholars was 697[102] or 3.35% of the population so that facilities were marginally better in Hanley than they were elsewhere in the Potteries. The only school in the area to attract favourable comment on its work was the British School in Pall Mall.

Elementary education relied heavily on private benefactors, for the Ridgway family had founded the British School and continued to support it generously[103] while Francis Wedgwood provided a building for an infants' school in Etruria[104] and Charles Meigh

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101. First Report of the Children's Employment Commission, 1862. p. X1.

102. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commission (1842), pp. C10-11.

103. The debt of £3,732 had been reduced by 1852 to £1,568 and £479 arrears of interest. "Until recently John Ridgway Esq. was the mortgagee, and wherever a sum was raised by subscription towards the liquidation of the debt, it was met by that gentleman by a donation of equal amount" - Ridgway was now offering to sacrifice the arrears of interest if the principal debt was reduced to £1,000. Advertiser, 21. Feb. 1852.

104. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 317.

provided a school for the children employed at his pottery.[105]

The great improvement after 1850 was, however, associated with the foundation of four more National Schools in the town,[106] following on the expansion of church accommodation by the Church of England. Two Ragged Schools were opened in the town in 1852, one a free day school and the other a low priced evening school,[107] and a third, associated with the first two in 1856.[108] The Wesleyans were also running a Ragged School at Tinkersclough at this time.[109] Yet a town where so many women went out to work desperately needed an infants school in the town centre, but the first was opened only in 1857, by the National School, in a room at the school associated with Charles Meigh's pottery.[110]

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105. Sentinel, 10. Jan. 1857.

106. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 309.

107. Sentinel, 17 Jan. 1852; 23. Feb. 1852 - money was raised by public subscription.

108. V.C.H. Staffs, Vol. 8. p. 309.

109. Sentinel, 7. July, 1855.

110. ibid. 10 Jan, 1857 - within a year there were 60 infants there (3. Oct. 1857).

By 1862 the number of day scholars in the district generally had risen until they represented 6.6% of the total population; a figure which still compared unfavourably with the 9% average for England and Wales.[111] It was then felt that the chief obstacle to further local improvement was the continued employment of large numbers of children in local industries where their employers were still not required by Parliament to make any arrangements to ensure their education.

Above the elementary level, Hanley was badly served. There were no endowed schools in the town, although a few private academies did exist, the best known being the Ivy House School.[112] The only public institutions of higher education were the Potteries School of Design, situated in the British School, and also benefitting from John Ridgway's generosity, and the Mechanics Institute.

Although the Institute was languishing in 1853 and its facilities were sharply criticized in 1855[113] it nevertheless

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111. First Report of the Children's Employment Commission, 1862. p. Xl.

112. This was run by Dr. Haslam who was for one year Chief Bailiff of the town. It was once referred to as Hanley Grammar School. (Advertiser, 28. June, 1851), but probably closed by 1854. (Sentinel, 14. Jan. 1854).

113. Advertiser, 30. July, 1853. Sentinel, 8. Dec. 1855.

survived and eventually prospered. In 1841 it had 336 members and a library of 1,500 books[114] but these had risen to over 400 and to 3,000 respectively by 1855.[115] It moved into new and enlarged premises alongside the British School in Pall Mall in 1861.[116]

Serious doubts were expressed by the Child Employment Commissioner as to how much of educational value was being done by the Sunday Schools in the town of which there were eight in 1841, with a recorded roll of 3,583 attenders and 498 teachers.[117] These figures were almost certainly optimistic in terms of attendance for on census Sunday, 1851, 13 Sunday schools were attended by only 2,141 children. Whatever the quality of education they provided it seems clear, however, that they were, at least prior to the expansion of the 1850's, reaching many hundreds of children who never attended a day school.

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114. Appendix to the Second Child Employment Commission Report, 1842, p. C11.

115. Sentinel, 1. Dec. 1855.

116. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 149.

117. Appendix to the Second Child Employment Commission Report, p.C.11.

The growth in the number of local newspapers was in the mid-Victorian period an important, and neglected, factor in creating an informed climate of opinion. The newspaper of longest standing in the Potteries district was the weekly Staffordshire Advertiser which had appeared since the late eighteenth century. It was, however, a county paper published in Stafford which, except in times of high drama, as in the riots of 1842, devoted only a few inches of its space to news of Hanley and usually less than half a page to the entire Potteries district. The Advertiser was careful to avoid involvement in local controversy so that its reports on events in Hanley were brief, factual and colourless.

Local opinion became significantly better informed when publication of the Staffordshire Sentinel began at Hanley in January 1854: costing threepence it soon achieved a weekly circulation of 3,000 copies. In its first few years the local news was heavily slanted towards Hanley as it indulged with vigour and great partiality in most local controversies. The Sentinel was strenuously Liberal in politics, in favour of extending the franchise, against vested interests in local government; favouring the temperance movement and preaching the duty of Christian charity,

it preferred nonconformists to Anglicans and both to Catholics. Like the Advertiser it gave prominence to both national and foreign news, devoting a page to each sector in every edition.

The most interesting of the short-lived newspapers of the period was the Chartist 'Lever' which, surviving for nine months in 1851, was less a paper of news than of fairly predictable and outspokenly presented opinions. In 'The Lever' drink was "the arch-fiend - the World's curse" but not far behind came all employers of labour and wealthy vested interests in local government. With a small format and priced at one penny for each weekly copy, it proved incapable of reaching the circulation of 600 copies which the editor considered necessary for solvency.[118]

The Potteries district in the nineteenth century has often

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118. Other local newspapers which failed to survive the period were the North Staffordshire Mercury (1834-45) which continued until 1848 as the Staffordshire Mercury and 'The Staffordshire Potteries Telegraph' which survived only from October to December 1852. Copies of these newspapers survive only in the possession of the British Museum but 'The Potteries Examiner' (1843-45) can be consulted at Hanley Reference Library.

been accused of being parochial and inward looking[119] and for the vast majority of the population of Hanley, as for every other town in the country the bounds of life were usually set by the place of work and the parish pump or beerhouse.

There was, however, in the town, an interest in wider issues, or the Sentinel's editor had badly mis-understood his readers when he produced long editorials on the weaknesses of the French government or the progress of the American Civil War among numerous other items of foreign news. Not surprisingly, detailed coverage was given to the more dramatic episodes of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny and interest in the former episode was sufficiently high for public readings of extracts about it from the national press to attract large crowds. Any one of the Sentinel's 3,000 subscribers who read the paper's foreign page and nothing else would have been well-informed on events in many areas of the world.[120]

Men from all classes were deeply interested and involved in the struggle to extend the franchise and public subscriptions were

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119. A charge made in its most extreme form by A.H. Morgan in 'Regional Consciousness in the North Staffordshire Potteries' (Geography, Sept. 1942).

120. Attention has recently been drawn to the significance of the educative influence of the provincial press by G. Kitson Clark ('An Expanding Society,Britain 1830-1900', p. 93.).

opened for Polish patriots and Hungarian refugees as well as for the strikers at Preston or the bereaved after the Holmfirth reservoir disaster and the Patriotic Fund of 1855. Large crowds came to welcome Kossuth to Hanley and an even larger crowd (15 to 20 thousand) to support the cause of free trade with France, in which the district, it must be conceded, had a direct interest. The pottery firms sold their ware largely to foreign markets and the more important firms had contacts with agents throughout the world. Wedgwood's made special arrangements to take their employees to the Great Exhibition for which many firms in the area entered samples of their work.

Such a list of outside interests and contacts could be prolonged much further but finally all that is left is an impression. In this case that a minority in Hanley was actively interested in national and international events and was able, quite cheaply, to obtain intelligent information about them.

Conclusion.

The most significant aspect of Hanley's development in the middle of the nineteenth century was its rapid and continuing growth. It was still, however, a small town, the problems of which could be considered as a whole, and one in which an ambitious

or an able man could still gain a public reputation and hope to influence the course of events.

By 1850, this drab unpretentious town was facing serious problems of public health and local government re-organization which, for almost a decade in the mid-century, were to impose severe strains on its social fabric, exposing the many divisions in society which in more normal times lay hidden.

APPENDIX

Birthplaces of immigrants into Hanley who were born outside Staffordshire.

(based on the 1851 census returns)

Shropshire	801	Durham	16
Cheshire	616	Hampshire	16
Lancashire	454	Lincolnshire	16
Ireland	444	Suffolk	16
Derbyshire	367	Cornwall	14
Yorkshire	211	Buckinghamshire	13
Warwickshire	123	Northamptonshire	13
London	89	Essex	12
Middlesex	87	Hertfordshire	10
Leicestershire	57	Berkshire	9
Worcestershire	53	Herefordshire	8
Nottinghamshire	40	Westmorland	7
Gloucestershire	37	Cambridgeshire	6
Devon	36	Oxfordshire	6
Northumberland	31	Sussex	6
Kent	30	Wiltshire	5
Somerset	27	Dorset	3
Cumberland	25	Huntingdonshire	3
Surrey	24	Bedfordshire	2
Norfolk	18	Monmouth	2

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Birthplaces of immigrants into Hanley who were born outside Staffordshire.

(based on the 1851 census returns)

Rutland	2	Scotland	94
North Wales	289	Foreign	66
South Wales	58	Not Known	4
		TOTAL	4,333

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC HEALTH AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT circa 1850

Part I. The Sanitary State of the Town

The public health problems confronting Hanley in the mid-nineteenth century had developed insidiously with the growth of population during the preceding fifty years. There is no evidence that their gravity would have been recognized merely as a consequence of some spontaneous awakening of local consciences. It was on the contrary the probing questions of the Royal Commission on the health of large towns and the persistence of the inspectors of the General Board of Health which eventually made the inhabitants face the squalor amongst which they lived. The importance of pressure from government agencies in arousing local opinion does much to vindicate Miss J. Hart's efforts to re-establish the importance of Benthamite ideas as a source of social progress in the nineteenth century and to demolish the 'Tory' view that reform resulted from the chance workings of some vague humanitarian impulse which eventually led public

opinion to accept that conditions so intolerable must be reformed.[1]

Prior to the appearance in 1842 of Chadwick's report on the sanitary state of the labouring classes, local eyes remained remarkably blind to the sanitary defects which surrounded them. John Ward's history of the district, published in the same year, had not a single reference to local sanitary problems and at the same time Samuel Scriven, inspecting local conditions of child employment, offered only the comment that:-

> "the sites of the several (Potteries) townships appear to have been selected with a due regard for the health of their inhabitants, as each is considerably elevated, and surrounded by a salubrious atmosphere, intersected by the fertile and beautiful vale of Trent, as well as by canals and rivers of wholesome and constantly flowing water". (2)

Such a description, apparently based on myopia and the total absence of a sense of smell, was unlikely to have been repeated three or four years later, after the great awakening of educated opinion on matters of public health.

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1. J. Hart, "Nineteenth Century Social Reform - a Tory interpretation of history". Past and Present, July, 1965.

2. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners, 1842. p. C1.

It was true that Hanley's location outside the Fowlea and Trent valleys gave it considerable advantages over settlements in the valleys and in particular over Stoke at the confluence of the two rivers. Its elevated situation ensured that there was no danger of more than localized flooding, however frequently the valleys might be inundated[3] and in this respect its position compensated for the heavy clay surface, making drainage of surface water one of the least of the problems facing the town.[4] Local complacency had, however, failed to exploit this great natural advantage, for nothing had been done to provide a system of underground drains capable of carrying surplus rainwater or household sewage to the rivers. In the poorer parts of the town there were short, open sewers which carried the household refuse, rainwater and fluid matter from the privies to the nearest open land where it became manure for the fields.[5] The 1849 public

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3. Reply no. 3. of the committee of inhabitants who answered the questionnaire of the Large Town Commissioners in Appendix to the First Report of the Commissioners (1844), pp. 45-47. In future footnotes this is simply referred to as 'Questionnaire'.

4. ibid. no. 2. and R. Rawlinson's Report to the General Board of Health on the parish of Stoke-on-Trent, 1850. p. 44.

5. Questionnaire, nos. 6 and 12.

health enquiry revealed startling deficiencies in the drainage pattern for of 40 streets investigated only 7 had culverts, described as sewers, at depths varying from 3 to 6 feet and between 14 and 30 inches wide, 5 other streets had small suffsewers but the remaining 28 enjoyed no form of underground drainage whatsoever.[6]

The handful of drains which did exist carried their contents only part of the way to the Trent or Fowlea Brook before emptying into open ditches, a situation which caused John Ridgway to comment that:-

> "The only sewer deserving the name, that he was aware of, was one commencing in the vicinity of the Town Hall and pursuing a south-westerly course to the Foulhay (sic) Brook. No town was more favourably circumstanced by nature for drainage and he believed there was none other in her Majesty's dominions more badly sewered." (7)

This situation had arisen during many years of unplanned growth[8] yet only in 1849, long after the campaigns waged by Chadwick and others had captured the public imagination, did Ridgway, a man of

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6. Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 44.

7. Advertiser, 3. Mar. 1849.

8. A process vividly described in the Questionnaire (no. 10). "The public sewers are only such as have been laid down from time to time, as necessity urged; there is no order in the construction of them; they are not in any instance trapped; and would be continually choked were it not for their inclination or dip, ..."

great public standing with an active social conscience, publicly attack the neglect which had been allowed to occur during his own lifetime:-

> "The want of sewerage no doubt prevented the adoption of water-closets. There were sewers of small calibre, two feet in diameter or the like, in some of the principal streets, but they were not at sufficient depth and were quite inadequate to the drainage of the town. Most of the streets had no sewers at all..... Want of sewerage affected the back yards and courts of cottages, endangering health, and preventing the working population from having the clean and comfortable dwellings they deserved, for they were personally the cleanest workpeople in the kingdom". (9)

In Hanley as elsewhere, a handful of local medical men took the lead in drawing people's attention to the health hazards which surrounded them. It was a local doctor who had helped instigate the public health inquiry of 1849 who also spelled out the consequences of the gross neglect of the system of underground drainage:-

> "Although no town could be more favourably situated for the effectual removal of the sewerage, none could possibly be in a worse condition than Hanley and Shelton, which might be represented as surrounded by a moat filled with decomposing liquid filth which was constantly sending forth noisome exhalations. The liquid from the house drainage was frequently mixed in its course along the ditches with that of the privies to form a liquid manure, with which to irrigate the adjoining fields. He need scarcely observe that the public health was seriously injured by these means: that fevers were almost constantly prevalent in the vicinage of these open ditches, and that the simplest disorders were rendered more intractable and consequent debility increased, and the constitution left in an enfeebled and dangerous condition." (10).

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9. Advertiser, 3. Mar. 1849.

10. Rawlinson Report, 1850. p. 56.

With no insuperable engineering obstacles in the way the failure to provide a rudimentary drainage system was on one occasion attributed to Parliament's failure to grant to the local authorities adequate powers to prosecute this end.[11] Although it was true that their inability to borrow money restricted the activity of both the Watching and Lighting Commissioners and the Highways Boards, an even more potent cause of their failure was the dangerous complacency of men in key local positions who lacked the breadth of imagination necessary to comprehend the needs of a rapidly growing urban community. Thus the assistant surveyor to the Hanley Highways Board relied on an out-of-date small-scale map and possessed no drainage plan of the town,[12] and his counter-part in Shelton, a man who consistently sought to minimize the need for change, boasted that the culverting of an 85 yard long open drain was part of a comprehensive drainage plan but, when pressed, had to confess that it was at present only "a plan in contemplation and not a plan on paper."[13] Such local complacency and parochial inertia had contributed largely to Hanley's plight and were to prove the chief obstacles to any improvement.

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11. Second Report of the Large Town Commissioners, 1845, Appendix Part One, p. 9.

12. Rawlinson Report, 1850, pp. 44-45.

13. Advertiser, 3. Mar. 1849.

As central to the public health problem as the question of efficient drainage was that of how to obtain an adequate supply of pure water for drinking and for cleaning bodies, clothes, houses and drains. Hanley had until 1820 relied exclusively upon well-water but twenty years later the extensive mining operations had affected the underground drainage pattern and caused almost all the wells to dry up.[14] Across the Trent valley but nearly three miles from the town centre, limited supplies of pure water were still being obtained from a spring at Washerwell and this was sold from water carts at a halfpenny a pailful.[15]

The only piped water in the town, even after 1820, was pumped from an old coal-mine in the Trent Valley into a reservoir above the town where it was filtered and then distributed through the town and into Burslem. This supply had been provided privately at considerable cost by a local landowner and was considered more a work of charity than one likely to produce economic returns.[16] The water, which was of poor quality, was

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14. Warrillow ('Stoke-on-Trent', pp. 161-162), identified the sites of some wells in use in the mid-nineteenth century but the 1845 Questionnaire (no. 2), stated that very few were still available.

15. Questionnaire, no. 28.

16. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 378.

available on only three days each week and the pipes reached only 1,200 out of the 4,663 houses in the town. Many of these houses had to share a standpipe with neighbouring properties and in the poorer parts of the town, piped water was only provided when the landlord was prepared to pay for it because of the difficulty of collecting the annual rent of 12 shillings from the tenants.[17]

Drinking water was still bought from the water-carts and the piped supply supplemented for cleaning purposes by rainwater caught in water barrels in back-yards and by water from the canal or the stagnant pools which were found near most of the pot banks.[18] These pools and tanks of rainwater were also the chief sources of water for industry for at this stage (1844) the piped supply was exclusively for domestic use.[19]

When such expedients were needed in order to obtain water for private use there was no possibility of watering the streets or flushing the town's few drains nor indeed for introducing the water-closets which were the king-pin of Chadwick's national

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17. Questionnaire nos. 30. 31, 32 and 27 where it was stated that the water was of indifferent quality "containing about 30 grains of carbonate and sulphate of lime in a quart".

18. ibid. nos. 6 and 32. William Scarratt 'Old Times in the Potteries', 1906, p. 189.

19. Questionnaire, nos. 6 and 26.

schemes for urban sanitary improvement.[20] The pressure in the pipes and the intermittent supply meant that the piped water was of no use whatsoever when serious fires occurred. It had not been thought worthwhile to install fire-plugs and the fire-brigade relied on water carried in buckets to deal with any conflagration.[21]

In 1847 the Staffordshire Potteries Water Works Company was founded as the result of a scheme prepared in 1845 by the chief bailiffs of the Pottery towns to provide a more adequate supply of water.[22] By 1849 the Company was supplying water to the Potteries from the Churnet Valley via a new reservoir at Wall Grange, near Leek. At this point the private works was closed down and the pipes purchased by the new company.

Local private enterprise had taken the first steps necessary to provide sufficient water and as a result the continuing problem attracted little attention at the public health inquiries of 1849 and 1851. The supply was rapidly expanded during the next few

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20. Advertiser, 3. Mar. 1849. note 9. above.

21. Questionnaire 41-46. The town it was felt, was fortunate that fires occurred so rarely.

22. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 216. The Company's capital was raised locally, its chairman was J.L.Ricardo the local M.P. John Ridgway was vice-chairman and the Company's offices were in Hanley.

years and even the complaints about its inadequacy indicate some improvement on the earlier situation as the inhabitants came to rely increasingly on piped water. It was now worthwhile to install fire-plugs in the town and in 1856 to make arrangements to water the main streets.[23]

Unwholesome food was as serious a threat to the inhabitants of a Victorian town as impure water and yet there was very little contemporary comment on this aspect of public health. The danger of disease being transmitted by bad or dirty food was as great in Hanley as elsewhere but on only one occasion was public attention drawn to this. The Market Trustees were aware of the danger and their vigilance may have helped to limit the threat but it could not eliminate it completely.[24]

There was a similar absence of public comment concerning the polluted atmosphere of the district from which the health of all

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23. For examples of complaints see the Sentinel for 14. Jan. 1854 or 11 Feb. 1854. The annual meetings of the Water Works Company were reported each May or June in the Advertiser and the Sentinel. There are particularly interesting accounts of the Company's progress in the Advertiser of 27. Nov. 1852 and the Sentinel of 20 May, 1854.

24. Rawlinson Report, 1850, pp. 60-61. A local surgeon, Mr. Dale, listed diseased meat as among the major causes of mortality. In 1851 the Markets inspector initiated at least four prosecutions against butchers selling unwholesome meat in the previous December;Hanley butchers' meat had been described as unsurpassed in the county. Advertiser, 28 Dec. 1850.

the inhabitants suffered. Pottery ovens, smelting furnaces and steam engines belched forth vast quantities of smoke and yet a generation who regarded bad smells as a major source of disease and spoke with horror of the vitiated atmosphere of many working-class houses had virtually nothing to say on the subject of ridding the atmosphere of its pall of smoke.[25] Familiarity and apparent inevitability had bred resignation and the general feeling was that Hanley was fortunate that its elevated situation allowed the prevailing winds to carry the smoke away.[26]

More localized than the dangers of bad food or a smoky atmosphere were the problems caused by the dramatically overcrowded state of some of the town's graveyards, which unlike other public health hazards attracted considerable public attention.

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25. The unpleasant and dangerous practice of firing chimneys to clear them of soot was commented on by Rawlinson (Report, 1850, p. 33.).

26. At a time of bad trade, when many pot banks were closed, the atmosphere of the district was even described as "salubrious" - note 2 above. Questionnaire no. 20. "The attitude of the town exposes it to the purifying influence of every wind".

The worst conditions were found in the graveyard around St. John's Church in High Street which it was alleged was such a danger to health that "there was scarcely an aged person to be found in that part of the town." The yard was "quite full and elevated above the street. In wet weather the water oozed through the walls of the burial ground into Chapel Street."[27] The cramped site, enclosed by poor quality fever-ridden houses was only one acre in extent and had been in use for the last 60 to 80 years with about 1,000 burials there in the period 1840 to 1850. Rawlinson inspected it and was struck by its trampled and neglected state, by the footpaths which intersected it and the long, dark, narrow and filthy passage at one end. Burials at a depth of four feet were achieved by first raising a mound one or two feet above ground level and by then measuring from this level.[28]

The smaller graveyards attached to some of the nonconformist chapels provided similar, if less serious problems.[29] Only the

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27. Evidence of the assistant-surveyor to Hanley Highways Board, Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 44. Chapel Street is named Church Street on C.J.H. Homer's map of 1857.

28. ibid. p. 70.

29. ibid. p. 71, on the Hope Chapel burial ground or V.C.H. Staffs, Vol. 8. p. 159, on that around the Tabernacle.

recently ppened three and a half acre burial ground at St. Mark's, Shelton was in a satisfactory state.

The most serious public health problems arose in the areas where the worst housing conditions prevailed and in Hanley there were notorious localities where houses with inadequate facilities were crowded too close together on cramped sites. By contemporary urban standards, however, the general provision of working class housing in the town was good,for in contrast to the great cities and/indeed many towns there were no inhabited cellars in Hanley and very few houses contained more than one family. At the time of the 1851 census there were in the Shelton township, which contained much of the poorer property, 2,803 inhabited houses with only 2,876 separate occupiers and with an average of 5.24 inhabitants per house.[30] It was further claimed in 1844, that there was very little building around courts or alleys in the town but an

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30. There are several contemporary references to this feature of local working class life (on house ownership see Chapter I foot notes 58-60 et passim). Questionnaire nos. 21 and 51. Contemporary conditions at their worst were shown in figures for Liverpool where 6,294 cellars were inhabited by 20,168 people and where in working class streets "Each house is usually occupied by two or more families, exclusive of the cellar". Appendix to the First Report of the Large Town Commissioners, 1844. p. 14 - article by W.H.Duncan - then physician at Liverpool Infirmary and later the medical officer of health for Liverpool.

inspection of 1849 revealed several developments of this kind and discovered that in Hanley as elsewhere the worst living conditions were to be found there.[31]

Although few families had to share accommodation, working-class houses in the town were small, in 1851, 44% of them had a rateable value of £5 or less and of these it was said:-

> "The greater number of the small houses consist of a ground-floor paved with 'quarries' or bricks, and an upper storey with two sleeping rooms. The houses generally have four rooms in all; but some of the older houses have only two rooms: all are built of brick and covered with tiles." (32)

They were considered to be adequately ventilated but the inhabitants, who were accustomed to the warmth of the pot-banks and in time of bad trade were short of coal, were reluctant to open the windows and so aggravated the problems caused by badly constructed grates and chimneys.

In the absence of any regulations to control building so as to prevent overcrowding or irregular, haphazard development, it was not surprising that there were criticisms that developments were being carried out in the town often "without the slightest

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31. Questionnaire no. 20. Rawlinson Report, 1850, pp.70-71.

32. 2206 of 5006 houses had a rateable value of £5 or less, while a further 2168 were rated at £10 or less. Rawlinson Report, 1853, p. 17. evidence of the Board of Guardians, Questionnaire no. 50.

reference to the nature of the ground or to the drainage."[33] It was also alleged that no one from a civilized district would imagine that many of the buildings were intended for human habitation with "brick ends, mud, rotten timber placed together in every possible form, without regard to health, cleanliness or safety. The builders and owners of this type of property were the men responsible for Hanley's public health problems."[34]

The drainage of working-class houses like that of the streets was generally defective; small square drains were usually installed and these "are often choked, and sometimes remain so for a long time."[35] Practically none of the houses had water-closets installed and although in 1844 it was claimed that all the houses were provided with privies and most also with small

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33. Rawlinson Report, 1853, p. 22, evidence of the surveyor of the turnpike roads.

34. Advertiser 3. Dec. 1853, letter from the assistant-surveyor of the Shelton Highways Board who was trying to meet attacks on the state of the roads in his care and claiming that if the Public Health Act of 1848 could not reach these avaricious landlords there was little point in cleaning streets and laying drains. It was scarcely unprejudiced testimony.

35. Questionnaire no. 9.

cesspools this was by no means universally true at a later date.[36]

Whatever the deficiencies of working-class housing, the worst living conditions were to be found in the common lodging houses, for here at least, there was gross overcrowding. These houses were usually in the alleys or courts where the worst conditions were in any case to be found and a local doctor gave evidence to Robert Rawlinson, the inspector sent to the Potteries by the General Board of Health, that:-

> "There were several public lodging houses in the town in bad, low condition, and they were not under public control. Their general condition was very bad indeed. He had occasion to visit one of them when the inmates were in bed, and saw 6 or 7 in one bed, lying head to feet, and 9 or 10 beds in a room, with only a few inches between, there being no ventilation whatever." (37)

There were in 1849, thirteen lodging houses in the town which had a total of 25 rooms containing 75 beds; five of the

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36. Questionnaire no. 8. In the Advertiser (3. Mar. 1849) there is a comment by John Ridgway, "In some cases there was but one privy to several houses, and in others the contents of the privies oozed through the walls and drained through into the streets". Rawlinson (Report, 1850, p. 70) noted that in Bow Street, 15 houses shared one privy and the Watching and Lighting Commissioners (Minutes 7.12.54) noted the great annoyance caused by several houses near Providence Chapel which had no privies.

37. Advertiser. 3. Mar. 1849.

thirteen were considered to be brothels, while eight were described as clean and four as dirty. Rawlinson inspected two of them and considered them neither better nor worse than lodging houses anywhere in the country, "they are all alike, disgracefully bad; they are a libel on the charity and civilization of the time."[38]

The worst houses were found in and helped to create the localities which were at the heart of Hanley's public health problems. Inadequate housing led to public nuisances which cruelly exposed the frailties of local government. There was, for example, no public provision for cleaning out the town's cesspools and the only relevant regulation was one compelling the removal of the contents at night. Once the pools were full the fluid matter was mixed with other refuse and the whole carted away by local farmers. In the absence of a public collecting point for the manure the householder relied on regular collections by the local farmers.[39]

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38. Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 33 and p. 69. The Watching and Lighting Commissioners saw them as sources of ill-health and immorality and as haunts of persistent lawbreakers, their inspector referred to the lodging houses of Hanley as "dens of the most wretched description, destitute of bedding or furniture, reeking with filth, and alive with vermin, the nightly resort of the lowest class of Irish vagrants and thieves". Commissioners' Minutes, 14. Aug. 1851.

39. Questionnaire no. 8. There were no public lavatories in the town. Rawlinson Report, 1850. p. 44.

Only after the passing of the Nuisance Act of 1849 were the Watching and Lighting Commissioners able to take steps to mitigate even the most unpleasant private nuisances by compelling those who created them to end them, for even after this legislation there were no public scavengers in the town. Blocked drains continued to emit their powerful odours, refuse accumulating in open drains added to the stench and every waste corner was soon filled with ashes and filth,for none of these nuisances could be terminated except by the occupiers of the houses concerned, fitfully supervised by the Commissioners' nuisance inspector.

The slime and mud surface of the unpaved back streets, deeply marked by stagnant pools, added to the filth and squalor of the environment for they remained outside the scope of the powers of the Highways Boards, which in any case often failed to carry out their responsibilities for even the main roads. Except for the streets around the markets there was no attempt at street cleaning and there was severe criticism of the state of the main streets of the town, by the surveyor of the turnpike roads:-

> "I must, however say that there is a material difference between the state of roads in Hanley and Shelton; those in the latter township are most discreditable..... It would be useless to speak particularly of any one part, all are alike bad; but taking at this moment, Hope Street, Stafford Street and Piccadilly (the principal thoroughfares in this township) there are heaps of road scrapings, containing from

> 7 to 14 cubic feet each, lying on either side of the street, which have been accumulating for some time. The surface of the streets are in a most wretched state, and there is not good material on any part of these streets exceeding the depth of two inches."

He admitted that the streets of the Hanley township were in a better condition than this "although the highways and footways are not kept in the same state of repair and cleanliness as some other towns of much less importance."[40]

The major dangers to public health, contemporaries felt, arose from inadequate drainage, bad housing, insufficient pure water, the prevalence of nuisances in houses, yards and streets and from the grossly overcrowded state of the graveyards. All of these factors were at their most potent in the streets and houses occupied by the poor and although public health hazards abounded everywhere, in Hanley as in all Victorian towns, it was in the areas inhabited by the poor where the worst conditions prevailed.

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40. Rawlinson Report, 1853, p. 22.

In Hanley two such areas were Joiners Square, across the Cauldon Canal and Tinkersclough near the wharfs on the Trent and Mersey Canal. They had in common their separation from the main built-up area of the town, the poverty of their inhabitants, the squalor and overcrowding of houses, a total lack of social facilities other than beerhouses, a high infant mortality rate and the proneness of their inhabitants to fevers.

Two other similar communities, closer to the town centre, were in the notorious Chapel Fields district, which added proximity to St. John's graveyard to all its other health hazards and the 'Royal group' of streets off Broad Street already referred to in chapter one. In 1842 life in these two districts was described in these terms:-

> "There is a small closely built district near the centre of Hanley, called Chapel Field, and a series of blind streets branching off from the main street in Shelton, both which (sic) places are crowded with inhabitants living in squalid poverty. Many of the inhabitants of these spots, but especially the children, have a peculiarly sickly aspect, most probably from the poor and improper food they take, conjoined with the impure air they breathe. Numbers of children die during infancy in these quarters of the town, and fevers and other epidemic diseases prevail there most extensively and in their most virulent forms." 41

In the closely crowded area off Broad Street, in 1851, 209 houses stood on approximately 4 acres of land and in them lived 1,170 people among the worst public health conditions in the

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41. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commissioners 1842, p. C12.

The Centre of Hanley in 1857.

Surveyed by C.J.H.Homer.

Photocopy of central portion of a map of Hanley surveyed by C.J.H.Homer. 1857.

In addition to the broad central streets this map shows the location of two notoriously insanitary areas, namely the Swan Street area, north of the Market Square and the 'Royal Group' of streets at the bottom of the map (centre). The healthier working class district at the rear of Bethesda Chapel is also shown.

Key to Homer's enumeration of public buildings.

1. St. John's Church, Hanley.
7. Tabernacle Chapel.
12. Bethesda Chapel.
18. Vegetable and Covered Market.
19. Shambles (butchers' market).
21. District Bank.

Scale: 1" = 125 yards.

NORTH

town.[42] The area had become more crowded in the last decade for in 1841 there were only 921 inhabitants there, but even at this earlier period the environment had produced an annual death rate of just over 30 per 1,000 inhabitants with 171 deaths in the six years 1837 to 1843.[43] An almost adjacent area, behind Bethesda Chapel, but "well drained, ventilated and kept clean, and pretty well supplied with water" had 839 inhabitants in 1841 and here in the same years deaths totalled 85, at an annual rate almost half that of the poorer area.[44] Although this was also an area of working class housing, it should be added that its smaller number of inhabitants occupied twice as much land as did their deprived neighbours.

This almost one hundred per cent discrepancy in mortality figures in two adjacent working class areas undermines an argument, popular with those who later opposed the introduction of the Public Health Act into Hanley, that the town's high mortality rate

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42. The area was described as "badly drained; ventilated; houses much crowded, always dirty, badly supplied with water". Appendix to the Second Report of the Large Town Commissioners, 1845, Part I. p. 9. As evidence of the relatively few cases of families sharing houses it is worth noting that even here in 1851, 209 houses had only 217 separate occupiers. Census, 1851.

43. ibid.

44. ibid.

chiefly reflected the bad working conditions in the pottery industry.[45]

Industrial conditions on the other hand did contribute their quota to the high death rate. Conditions in the finishing processes and particularly in the china-scouring departments made respiratory diseases a major cause of mortality in the district and responsible for 22% of all deaths compared to a national average of 18%.[46] Bronchitis and scrofula were general throughout the area and were "a fruitful source of death."[47]

Goitre or "Derbyshire thick neck", an iodine deficiency disease, was strictly considered to be the only endemic disease and was attributed to the damp, cold soil of the area; it was in any case rarely fatal. With all diseases, poverty, bad-housing

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45. Mortality statistics could not of course separate the consequences of poverty, a dissolute life or bad working conditions from the results of living in an insanitary environment. The Shelton parish medical officer not unreasonably felt that, in supplying these figures from two adjacent but very different working class areas, he had established a direct correlation between the appalling public health hazards of the Broad Street area and its high rate of mortality.

46. Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 18. The average figure for all of Staffordshire was 17%, in the south of the county, Walsall and West Bromwich's figure was 15% and that in Wolverhampton 13%. Faulty diagnosis could affect statistics but this was less likely with this class of diseases than with most others.

47. ibid. pp. 51 and 60 - evidence of a local surgeon.

and dirt had a weakening effect on the constitution of the victim and also contributed to the spread of epidemics. In poor areas epidemic diseases among children were "usually fatal"[48] and infant deaths in the Potteries were considerably above the national average.[49] Medical opinion believed that the elevation of the town reduced the incidence of fever below the level experienced in Burslem and Newcastle-under-Lyme but when epidemics did occur, as in the case of a typhoid fever outbreak in 1847, they were centred on these poor areas as were the prevalent diseases associated with dysentery.[50]

Cholera had the greatest impact on public opinion for it could apparently strike at random and once it was in the town, no man could feel safe wherever he lived. Like other diseases however, its origins and most serious incidence were found in the poor overcrowded parts of the town. The epidemic of 1848 started in the notorious Joiner's Square district and most deaths occurred there before it spread into other poor areas and resulted in 77

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48. ibid. p. 57. A measles epidemic in 1849 proved particularly dangerous.

49. Of every thousand children born in England and Wales, 395 died before the age of 5, in the Potteries the comparable figure was 487;in the mining areas of South Staffordshire 521 died and in Wolverhampton 593. ibid. p. 17. The figures relate to the years 1841 to 1844 inclusive.

50. ibid. pp. 52 and 60.

deaths in the course of a month.[51] The fear it caused was out of all proportion to the numbers involved and it was the immediate reason for initiating the movement for public health reform.

In times of sickness, the medical help available for the working classes was strictly limited and when epidemics occurred the medical services were easily overwhelmed. The administration of parochial medical relief was frequently criticized on grounds of humanity; it was, for example, the standard practice to require women to enter the workhouse before they were given attention at childbirth. In the case of poor women with young families this amounted to a denial of assistance and added to the high death rate on these occasions for there were no lying-in charities available in the district.[52]

The poor relied in the first instance, on the remedies provided by the chemists and then begged for free help from the local doctors[53] or turned to the North Staffordshire Infirmary which was the only medical charity in the district. It had been

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51. Advertiser, 25 Aug. 1849 and each week until 13. Oct. 1849.

52. Questionnaire no. 57. A hospital attached to the Stoke Parish workhouse was founded, with 80 beds, in 1842.

53. White's Staffordshire Directory listed 7 chemists and 9 doctors in the town in 1851.

built in Hanley, on the slopes above the Fowlea Brook, specifically for the poor of the area, from the proceeds of some substantial voluntary donations. Charitable donations and weekly payments, which the workers at the larger, more enlightened, pottery firms were encouraged to make,[54] constituted its working income. In return, subscribers could recommend patients in proportion to their donation, while the worker's weekly payment entitled him and his family to the services provided.

The buildings had been adequate when opened in 1817, but they and the financial resources for running the infirmary had been overtaken by the growth of population. In the late 1830's annual costs were in the region of £2,000 so that in 1842 efforts were having to be made to increase the number of voluntary subscribers. One hundred beds, including separate fever wards, were available for in-patients and these had been averaging 600 to 700 each year but by 1843 the number had increased to 800. These was a similar increase in the number of out-patients receiving attention from an

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54. Questionnaire no. 59. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commission, 1842, p. c24.

average 2,000 to 2,500 in the late 1830's to over 3,000 in 1843.[55]

Accommodation and facilities were not increased during the next decade and at the time of the 1851 Census the 84 in-patients, all of whom were drawn from the working-classes, were attended by a resident staff consisting of one doctor, one 18 year old medical student, four nurses and seven servants. In 1842, five local doctors had also visited the infirmary free of charge and this practice continued; without it the medical services provided would have been overwhelmed.

The Infirmary served the entire Potteries district, the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme and surrounding villages. The continuing growth of population seriously strained its resources and in 1851 its facilities represented at most, one hospital bed for every 1,000 people in the area. Schemes to raise funds for extensions were considered in 1855 but the growth of industry in the Fowlea Valley had made the site of the infirmary most unsatisfactory. This delayed any significant expansion of hospital facilities in the area until 1869 when a new infirmary

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55. Ward, 'Stoke' pp 390-391. Questionnaire no. 59. The 1843 figures came from the Burslem Questionnaire no. 59. By 1856 the number of in-patients had risen to 950 and of out-patients to almost 5,000 and as a result the annual running costs were then in the region of £3,000. Evidence of W. Livesley to the Incorporation Inquiry. Sentinel, 1. Nov. 1856.

was opened at Hartshill, outside the Hanley township, and the buildings in the Fowlea Valley were closed. Long before this date the medical services available to the working classes had become scandalously inadequate and were playing a major part in contributing to the area's high mortality rate.

Conclusion.

Hanley's public health problems were similar to those afflicting all expanding industrial towns and all the recommendations of the Commissioners into the State of Large Towns could have been applied in the town with some prospect of achieving worthwhile improvements.[56] Local men tended to see their situation as unique but their claims, that it was for example, the worst drained town in the kingdom, lack the precision necessary for valuable comparison with other urban areas. The government inspectors were in a stronger position to make valid comparisons of this sort but in practice they did so very rarely.

Robert Rawlinson made the most thorough inquiry into local conditions, but, despite his vast experience of conditions elsewhere, his only direct comparison with these other towns was made when he chose to temper the scandalized local comments on the state of

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56. Second Report of the Commissioners into the State of Large Town, 1845, pp. 1-76.

Hanley's common lodging-houses.[57] Samuel Scriven's chief interest, in 1841, was the question of child labour and he paid little attention to public health matters.[58] It is not clear whether, in 1844, R.A.Slaney visited the town on behalf of the Commissioners into the State of Large Towns,[59] but his general comment on the district attempted to give a balanced view of the public health situation.

> "The three pottery towns (Burslem, Hanley and Longton) are of comparatively recent date, having risen and increased with the trade which chiefly supports them. They are built in an irregular and rather dispersed manner, on moderate declivities affording good fall to water, and have the advantage of the houses not being packed close together; and sometimes gardens, or intervals of unoccupied land separate groups of dwellings. The principal streets are tolerably wide and open. On the other hand, these towns bear all the marks of their recent origins; they have no sufficient powers by Act of Parliament for adequate drainage, cleaning, or the removal of nuisances; and the condition of the courts, alleys and narrow streets, where the poorer classes reside, is in almost all these particulars greatly neglected, to the injury of their health and the destruction of their comfort, and all habits of decency."

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57. Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 34.

58. Appendix to the Second Report of the Child Employment Commission, 1842, pp. C1 - C15.

59. Their Second Report, p. 103, lists Burslem, Longton and Newcastle but not Hanley among the local towns he visited. On the other hand he appears to talk from first hand knowledge of the town in the Appendix to the Second Report p. 9.

He stressed the lack of public walks and of working class bathing facilities as a particularly serious local problem and could see very few points at which facilities in the area were in any way better than those prevailing in the mining towns of South Staffordshire.[60]

This measured assessment of the local situation is a valuable corrective to the shrill cries of some local reformers but it is the mortality statistics which provide the most satisfactory context for Hanley's predicament.

TABLE: Mortality in the Potteries 1838-42 (inclusive)[61]

	Population 1831	Population 1841	Annual Increase 1831-41	Deaths in 5 years 1838-42	MORTALITY Annual Percentage	MORTALITY As a proportio of inhabitan
Shelton	9,267	11,955	2.6%	1,660	2.844%	1 in 35
Longton	9,673	12,425	2.5%	1,667	2.747%	1 in 36
Burslem	12,714	16,091	2.4%	1,937	2.461%	1 in 41
Hanley	8,001	9,621	1.9%	1,149	2.430%	1 in 41

60. Appendix to the Second Report of the Large Town Commissioners pp. 9-10. He did, however, comment that, in the Potteries at least, the vaults of the privies were generally covered over.

61. Appendix to the Second Report of the Large Town Commissioners, p. 20.

Among the larger pottery towns Shelton's growth had been the most rapid and its death rate at 2.844% per annum was higher than that of Birmingham (2.7%) with 189,000 inhabitants in the same period and higher indeed than that in Wolverhampton (2.8%) whose population had increased by 47% in this decade.[62] The average death rate for all the district was, in 1841, one death among each 40 inhabitants, a figure exceeded by only 28 of the 324 registration districts in England and Wales.[63] At this time the average annual mortality nationally was one death per 46 inhabitants but this figure had a great variation between rural counties (one in 54.91) and the 22 largest towns and cities (one in 38.16).[64]

The Potteries district generally, despite the comparative small size of its individual communities, had a mortality rate not significantly different from that afflicting the largest towns in the country. Shelton township suffered a much higher death rate than the average in the neighbouring towns and indeed worse

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62. ibid. The figures for Manchester and Liverpool, the two unhealthiest cities, were one death for 29.64 and 28.75 inhabitants respectively. Appendix to the First Report of the Large Town Commissioners, p. 13.

63. Rawlinson Report, 1850, pp. 16-18.

64. Appendix to the First Report of the Large Town Commissioners, 1844, p. 12.

than the average urban figure throughout the country, worse indeed than London, Birmingham and Leeds and exceeded only by Bristol, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool among the great cities.[65] The situation in Shelton deteriorated further in the course of the decade 1841-1851, as the town's population increased by a further 25 per cent with a consequent deterioration in matters of public health. Figures presented to the 1849 public health inquiry indicated a death rate of 3.644% (1 in 27,5 inhabitants) in the years 1846 - 1848 inclusive.[66]

The fact that the situation was continuing to deteriorate was ignored by a large body of working class opinion in the town. There was great opposition to any scheme to re-organize local government so that it had the powers and the will to tackle the problems of public health. Complacency, an over-riding concern with expense and a desire to maintain existing forms of government were all widespread in the town.

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65. ibid. p. 13.

66. The comparable figures for the Hanley township was considerably better at 2.49%. Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 19. These figures may have been slightly exaggerated because they were based on an underestimate of the growth of population since the 1841 census. The variation was, however, marginal. The remarkable rise in mortality may in part have been caused by the depression in the pottery industry in 1847 and 1848.

An influential minority on the other hand finally came to realise the seriousness of the situation in which Hanley was placed. Completing the questionnaire for the Large Town Commissioners had first aroused the concern of this group, but only after Parliament passed the Public Health Act in 1848, and after cholera had reached the town in the same year, did a reform party emerge in Hanley. The problems facing this group were first to obtain general acceptance of the need for sanitary improvements and second to persuade their fellow townsmen that such improvements could not be carried out adequately or swiftly enough under the town's existing local government structure.

Part II. The Structure of Local Government.

The competence of urban government in the 1840's was strictly circumscribed and its future pattern far from clear. The national system of borough government, established by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, was based on the concept of ratepayer control through open elections but the Act had given only narrowly defined powers to the new Councils it had created, and this not

least in the increasingly important field of sanitary control and improvement. It allowed the 'statutory bodies for special purposes' (improvement commissioners and the like) to survive and by so doing perpetuated the anarchy of local autonomy of the eighteenth century, for the voluntary surrender of the powers of these bodies to the municipalities proved a time-consuming process.[67]

Those towns which did not have borough status remained unaffected by the 1835 legislation and in order to obtain representative local government their inhabitants would have to petition Parliament for a charter of incorporation. This possibility opened up an avenue along which the municipal system could expand to meet the challenge posed by the continuing growth of industrial towns which had quite recently been villages. Municipal councils, however, remained ineffective instruments of local government until their powers were strengthened and their obligations increased by further legislation.

The remarkable freedom from central control which was given to the municipalities in 1835 was threatened by the growing concern with sanitary problems in the 1840's for in 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act, creating special bodies of Guardians for the specific

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67. Ten years later it was noted that only in Manchester and Newcastle-under-Lyme had the improvement commissioners chosen to surrender their powers. Second Report of the Large Town Commissioners, 1845, p. 12.

purpose of administering poor relief and placing them under close central supervision, had provided the example of a totally different structure of local government. The agitation for sanitary improvements originated within the framework of poor law administration and in 1846 the removal of nuisances was placed under the supervision of the Guardians.

Edwin Chadwick's ambitious efficiency might well have led to an extension of the Guardians' sanitary interests or to the creation of new local bodies for sanitary purposes which would be outside the framework of municipal government on the pattern laid down in 1835. In practice the 1848 Public Health Act gave the badly needed sanitary powers to the town councils but borrowed from the poor relief legislation what was to many people, the objectionable principle of close central supervision.

The towns which were not boroughs were still governed by authorities created by local acts of Parliament, though their main roads were now administered by boards set up by the Highways Act of 1835. They suffered still from the inadequate powers granted by the older local acts as well as from a continuing chaos of conflicting authorities and confused boundaries. The exclusive nature, secrecy of proceedings and lack of accountability of their

statutory bodies were increasingly anachronistic after the Whig reforms in 1832, 1834, and 1835. There was little hope of these bodies retaining public acceptance much less of obtaining any worthwhile extension of their powers to enable them to cope with the problems posed by the development of the towns in their charge. Urban areas in this situation could by 1848 seek to become municipalities with all the offices, pomp and expense involved or they could more directly obtain the sanitary powers which were their real need by obtaining a Local Board of Health as laid down in the Public Health Act. In either case they would have to submit to much closer central supervision in their sanitary functions than they had previously been accustomed to in other spheres.

The competence of any form of local government was limited by the financial resources commanded, the extent to which it enjoyed public confidence, the vision, vigour and ability of the people directly involved in it, the powers delegated and the supervision exercised by the agencies of central government and ultimately by the extent of the technical knowledge available to help resolve the problems it faced.

It was loss of public confidence in the exclusive, often self-perpetuating, statutory bodies for special purposes rather than corruption or incompetence which rendered such bodies as

improvement commissioners unfit to resolve the problems of the towns, even if their narrowly defined powers could have been extended. The municipal councils and local boards of health, although based on the concept of ratepayer control, could not automatically command public support for their actions and the restrictive rating qualifications for membership of these bodies, placing local government on a class basis, often exacerbated this problem.

The formation of ratepayers' associations dedicated to resisting rate increases was a common sign of this loss of public confidence in the ruling authority. Unless the local authority commanded funds other than those derived from rates it often had to be prepared to abandon or to defer schemes which, in principle, it accepted were necessary.[68]

In such a situation, men of integrity, vision and vigour were required in local government if it was not to be stultified by negative opposition. Too often, local government bodies failed to widen the limits to action imposed by financial restraints and by the danger of losing public confidence so that effective

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68. E.P. Hennock "Finance and Politics in Urban Local Government, 1835-1900", Historical Journal VI, 1963. Such opposition often had a class basis and centred around small tradesmen or small property owners who raised a cry against higher rates and aroused the more vocal sections of the working classes in their support.

government was judged to be a matter simply of economic administration. In many towns, men of proven business ability were for various reasons, reluctant to become involved and when this happened, efficiency was lost and the local authorities became dominated by the narrow vision of lower middle class tradesmen. Such weaknesses were unlikely to be remedied by the chief executive officers of the authorities who, few in number, badly paid and often holding posts in plurality, were rarely supported by adequate clerical and technical help.

These local restraints on effective local government were in the long term far more serious than any failure by Parliament to bestow adequate powers on the authorities. Even in the mid-nineteenth century a few mainly large towns did find that Parliament failed to move swiftly enough and these sought extra powers through local legislation but in many towns the process worked in reverse and it was as a result of pressure from the central government that local problems were for the first time faced up to. After 1848 it was rare for small town authorities to feel unduly restricted in their functions by the failure of Parliament to provide them with the necessary powers. They were far more likely to be overwhelmed by the complexity of the tasks already imposed upon them by the legislature.

The final restraint on the local authorities was imposed by the limits of contemporary medical or engineering knowledge. When faced with epidemics, river pollution, the disposal of sewerage or the task of laying drains in an area prone to mining subsidence the urban authorities were often bewildered as to what to do for the best. All too often this could serve as a convenient rationalisation for doing nothing but equally they were often genuinely faced with problems at the limits of available knowledge - the energetic Chadwick only succeeded in flushing the cholera virus from the London sewers into the open Thames with disastrous consequences.

Despite all these restraints, local government did become more efficient and did take on a bewilderingly large series of tasks in the middle third of the nineteenth century.

The increased efficiency owed much to the national obsession with keeping public expenditure to a minimum which resulted in Victorian towns being administered remarkably inexpensively. The provision of essential sanitary and other services at a minimum cost was a great boon to the working classes to many of whom the sacrifice of a larger proportion of their incomes for these services would have resulted in hardship. Concern with expenditure, however,

often led to a preference for cheap makeshift expedients rather than expensive permanent schemes for improvement and resulted in a disastrous failure to invest capital in public works on the scale required to eradicate the unfortunate legacy of the early nineteenth century. In towns where this mood prevailed for long periods of time the mid-Victorians simply handed down their problems to succeeding generations.

It has earlier been argued that in Hanley, concern over sanitary problems arose largely from the intervention of central government agencies[69] and, contrary to the view that local initiative remained the dominant influence in English local government throughout the nineteenth century,[70] it is clear that the great mid-century expansion in the tasks undertaken by local government can largely be attributed to pressure from the same sources. The visits of the inspector of the General Board of Health, Robert Rawlinson, and the passage of the 1866 Sanitary Act did more to promote effective government in Hanley than did any local ihitiative or humanitarian concern that may have existed in the town. Such local initiative played a subsidiary role on

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69. See feotnote 1 of this chapter.

70. E.P. Hennock, op. cit.

most occasions and when it was important it usually stemmed from the active social conscience of influential individuals or less frequently from the enlightened self-interest of sections of the business community. The mass of ratepayers, obsessed with questions of expense, usually acted as a retarding influence on the expansion and improvement of local government services in the town.

Throughout the nineteenth century each of the six Potteries' towns administered its own affairs, co-operating with its neighbours only when national legislation required it to do so. Hanley, along with Longton, Fenton and Stoke was part of the Stoke Poor Law Union and these towns, together with Burslem and Tunstall, were represented in the House of Commons by two members elected for the Parliamentary Borough of Stoke-on-Trent. A stipendiary magistrate had regional responsibilities and the Potteries district was policed by units of the County police, though these were organized on the basis of the separate towns.[71]

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71. The Newcastle Manorial Court still exercised its jurisdiction in disputes over the tenure of copyhold land or occasionally in relation to markets disputes. In the absence of a district magistracy anyone requiring the aid of a magistrate had to attend on the stipendiary, the Newcastle-under-Lyme magistrates, or the County magistrates, whose nearest local sessions were held at Trentham or Keele. In 1855, John Ridgway became the first magistrate resident in the town, 2 others were appointed by 1858. (Final Report of the Chief Bailiff. Commissioners' Minutes).

There had in 1834 been a move to obtain a common government for the Potteries towns but it had aroused opposition in all the towns. By 1850 even the occasional wealthy inhabitant who referred to the need for such a measure no longer considered that there was much hope of its being implemented. At this time, except for the instances outlined above, Hanley governed itself without reference to its neighbours with the functions of town government shared among separate specialized authorities. Of these authorities the Watching and Lighting Commissioners were the most important, the Market Trustees the most wealthy and the two Highways Boards the most interesting.

The Watching and Lighting Commissioners were founded by a local Act of 1825, the chief purpose of which was to establish a more efficient police force in the town following a period of growing disorder.[72] They were empowered to create and maintain a force of watchmen for this purpose and in addition to arrange for the lighting of the streets. They could levy a rate on all buildings within the area under their jurisdiction but this power was seriously restricted by an amending Act in 1828.[73] Another

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72. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 169.

73. Act of 9. George IV, cap. 28. This established a maximum rate of 6d in the pound on assessments of six pounds and under, 9d on assessments of six to eight pounds and 1 shilling on assessments above eight pounds.

serious defect in their constitution was that their powers did not extend throughout the townships of Hanley and Shelton as they had no jurisdiction over the village of Cobridge, the Wedgwood properties in Etruria or the glebeland of Stoke Rectory lying inside the Shelton boundary. This limited their effectiveness and was to prove a serious obstacle to the smooth re-organization of local government in the town.

The qualification clauses of the 1828 legislation strictly limited the membership of the Commissioners and made them a very exclusive body in the town. Those eligible were the officiating ministers at the town's churches and chapels, the owners of property worth one hundred pounds per year and the occupiers of property rated at fifty pounds but with a special provision excluding all publicans and beersellers.[74] With such qualifications only the wealthiest of the laity could hope to become commissioners but for those who met them there was no further obstacle in the

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74. Sidney and Beatrice Webb considered that the local legislation of the same year relating to Manchester had, by imposing a qualification of £28 annual value restricted membership of the commissioners there to the class of substantial traders and the occupiers of mansions. (The Development of English Local Government 1689-1815, Oxford University Press edition 1963, p. 173). The much higher qualification applied to a relatively small industrial town amounted to exclusion of all but the class of pottery and other manufacturers and a tiny number of large tradesmen.

nature of elections. The aspiring commissioner attended one of the meetings and simply swore that he was duly qualified for membership according to the terms of the Act.[75] The only additional honour to which he could then aspire was to be elected Chief Bailiff by his fellow commissioners. He would then convene and chair their meetings and indeed all public meetings of the inhabitants of the town as well as acting as the Commissioners' chief executive officer in respect of all their functions.

The exclusiveness of the Commissioners who in 1849 numbered 40[76] in a town of almost 25,000 people earned them the suspicious dislike of the working classes and, as emerged in the struggle to reform local government after 1850, alienated influential sections of middle class opinion. In practice they were even more exclusive than their total number suggests for the usual attendance at their meetings varied from 7 to 12, rising to a maximum of 21 when a new rate collector was to be appointed. At a crucial

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75. Commissioners' Minutes, 1847-1858 where at various points the oaths taken were recorded and signed.

76. Rawlinson Report, 1850, p. 9. Evidence given by their clerk.

meeting to consider the advisability of adopting the 1848 Public Health Act, 19 commissioners were present; four years later only 10 attended to consider the possible incorporation of the town.[77] The work of their committees must often, in these circumstances, have represented the despotic decisions of a single individual.

Additional offence was caused by this exclusive body declining to admit the press or public to any of their meetings and by their failure to publish any accounts or until a late date in their existence, to issue any public statement on the business discussed at their meetings.[78]

Faced by the loss of public confidence they suffered a drop in morale, frankly recognizing that they lacked the powers needed to provide the town with an adequate government (see below). The declining status of their chairman, the Chief Bailiff, was indicative of a more general decline in the fortunes of the Commissioners by the middle of the century. At public meetings and in dealings with outside bodies this official had ranked as the leading citizen

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77. Commissioners' Minutes 1847-58, particularly entries for 30. Nov. 1852 and 24 Oct. 1856. On only two occasions, however, between 1847 and 1858 did they fail to reach their quorum of 5.

78. Ironically, at their demise, they decided to publish a glowing account of their history and recent achievements prepared by the last Chief Bailiff. Apparently no published copies have survived but it was transcribed in extenso into the pages of their last minute book which is deposited at Hanley Reference Library.

of the town and in the past the post had been held, usually for no more than one year at a time by many of the leading inhabitants.

A substantial pottery manufacturer, Joseph Clementson held the office for three years, 1849 to 1852, and was succeeded by Dr. Haslam, the proprietor of a private school, who declined to serve for more than one year after an earlier threat to resign because of unruly conduct at a public meeting. Edward Moore who was apparently not a commissioner was then invited to take the office but declined[79] and another pottery manufacturer, John Dimmock, was elected despite his repeated refusals to accept. He served from 1853 to 1855 and Edwin Allbutt a local printer was then the last Chief Bailiff until the office disappeared in 1858. The difficulties experienced in 1852 suggest that this honourable office was now less avidly sought after than in the past and that

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79. One excuse Moore gave was that he was "a stranger still" (Advertiser 12. Mar. 1853) but the Commissioners' Minutes (10. Feb. 1853) recorded that he asked to be excused because he was disqualified by his occupation as a wine merchant. He was, therefore, presumably not a member of the Commissioners, for nowhere is there a record of his attendance at their meetings. A.Redford (A History of Local Government in Manchester, Vol. II. pp 11-16) has noted a similar difficulty in filling public offices in Manchester prior to the reform of its government in 1838 and regards this as the immediate cause of the reform agitation in that town.

in fact men of no great distinction in the town were having to be pressed into it.

The evidence on which to judge the efficiency of the Commissioners in their everyday activities is slender, being drawn from occasional newspaper references and their one surviving minute book covering the period 1847 to 1858, which includes the self-congratulatory review referred to in footnote 78.

In view of the numbers who habitually attended their meetings the business was clearly conducted on a very personal basis and yet despite this they developed a series of committees to carry out their work. None of the minute books of these committees have survived and in some cases perhaps none were kept for the impression of informality is strengthened by the absence from the general minute book of any lists of members of committees or any reference to the election or annual re-election of committee members. Unfortunately also on only one occasion was any record made of a committee reporting back to the main body of Commissioners.

The most active of the committees was the Rate Committee which held 140 meetings in the period 1855 to 1858 compared with 40 full meetings of the Commissioners.[80] There are also single references in each case to a Lighting Committee and to a Town Hall Committee

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80. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff, 1858. Commissioners' Minutes.

although the functions of both committees imply a more permanent existence than this sparse evidence suggests.[81]

In the mid-nineteenth century further committees were set up to carry out the new tasks undertaken by the Commissioners. A Nuisance Committee existed in 1849 and in 1854 and this was revived in 1855 to carry out the provisions of the Nuisance Removal Act passed in that year. In 1851 another committee was set up to enforce the Common Lodging Houses Act. Finally there were committees appointed in 1852 and 1857 to look into schemes for reforming the structure of local government.[82]

It might appear that a relatively sophisticated system for delegating power had been evolved by the Commissioners but such an impression would fail to take account of the small number of commissioners who were at all active. Informality of proceedings and considerable duplication of committee personnel must have been inevitable and in the event much business may well have been transacted by individual commissioners acting alone or in consultation with the Chief Bailiff. The increased activity around 1850 must in any case have made the work undertaken by individuals more onerous and so have reduced the attractiveness of the position.

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81. Commissioners' Minutes. 4. Mar. 1857. and in the Final Report of the Chief Bailiff.

82. The first of these presented a valuable partisan account of their efforts to secure the adoption of the 1848 Public Health Act. Commissioners' Minutes 29. July. 1854.

By this time it had become necessary to expand the administrative machinery commanded by the Commissioners, in particular by the appointment on a part-time basis, in 1849, of an accountant to supervise expenditure and the work of the rate collector. This had become necessary because of the large arrears of rates and Town Hall rents which had accumulated and significantly because of "the rapid advance of population and consequent increase of financial duties."[83]

In other respects administration remained rather crude and as new tasks were undertaken they were simply handed out to the existing employees. Superintendent Cole was in charge of the local force of the County Police but he also supervised the fire-brigade maintained by the Commissioners who went on to appoint him first inspector of lodging houses and later inspector of nuisances at a combined annual salary of forty pounds. In the latter post he was given the assistance, in 1855, of a medical officer who was paid five shillings for each inspection he made. He, together with the accountant, the rate collector and a local solicitor who acted as their clerk made up the entire executive staff employed by the Commissioners to carry out their functions in a town with 25,000 inhabitants.

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83. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff. Commissioners' Minutes.

The rudimentary nature of their administration probably exercised a more effective restraint on the activity of the Commissioners than did any question of the adequacy of their financial resources and this despite the restrictions imposed on their rate levying powers. Income from rates amounted in 1852 to £1,439 and, although there had apparently been some financial difficulties prior to this time, the Commissioners debts which amounted to £4,200 in 1849 had arisen from an extraordinary combination of circumstances.[84] With improved administrative efficiency[85] following the appointment of the accountant, this debt was soon reduced and in 1858 the Commissioners presented the new Borough Council with their surplus balance of £2,000.

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84. This debt, which exceeded the Commissioners' maximum legal borrowing powers, had been incurred by the extra-legal decision in 1844 to build a Town Hall. To re-pay the loan they continued, despite the ending of their watching functions in 1843, to levy the watching and lighting rate at its maximum level, as a result some of the inhabitants with-held their rates and obtained Counsel's support for their stand.

85. In 1855 there was a re-organization of the rate collecting and auditing system and a determined effort was made to reduce the accumulated arrears of rates. As a result they were in the next year able to reduce their debts from £2,940 to £1,170. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff, Commissioners' Minutes, which contains the best summary of the progress of the Commissioners' finances.

It is, however, necessary to recognize that the restrictions on rates and on borrowing over £3,000 did place an effective restraint on any ambitions they may have had to interfere systematically in the field of public health improvements. In this sense, finances placed a limit on their potential development rather than on their day to day administrative efficiency.

The achievements of the Commissioners are not easily assessed, for their minute books have survived for only the last eleven years of their existence. In their early years they had been primarily concerned with establishing a force of watchmen to patrol the town but this body inevitably proved quite incapable of maintaining order during the Chartist riots of 1842. Although the force was superseded in March 1843 by the recently established County Police, the Commissioners continued to take an active interest in police matters. In 1851 they argued that the withdrawal of military garrisons from North Staffordshire would involve the risk of a breakdown of law and order and in 1857, having earlier opposed an attempt to reduce police salaries, they were urging the County Police Committee to provide more police for the town. The last Chief Bailiff's proudest boast was that he had been able to give valuable help to the police and magistrates when rioting broke

out in December 1857.[86]

Good order in a wider sense concerned them directly and in the mid-century they were active in the prosecution of the owners of brothels,[87] in inspecting beerhouses, and in supervising the common lodging houses.[88] Their opposition to a theatre because of the local company who gathered there and the objectionable scenes which took place was one aspect of this concern with good order, of which another manifestation was the interest they took in erecting street names and in seeing that all houses in the town were numbered.[89][90]

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86. Commissioners' Minutes. 26. Dec. 1850. 14 Aug. 1851. 12. Feb. 1857. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff. In 1856 they for several months fought the County Police Committee who had dismissed Superintendent Cole, who was in charge of the Hanley police, and when the local magistrates declined to investigate the matter they obtained a favourable decision from the Home Office, which led to the resignation of the Chief Constable and County Police Committee and later the re-instatement of the superintendent. ibid. - various references in 1856, 13. Aug. 1857. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff, Commissioners' Minutes.

87. Commissioners' Minutes. 19. July. 1849. 24. Oct. 1850. This action was in response to a request from the Stipendiary Magistrate.

88. ibid. 2. May. 1850. 14 Aug. 1851.

89. see Chapter One.

90. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff, Commissioners' Minutes. He also expressed regret that the builders of new property had failed to continue this practice.

The Commissioners' interest in the state of the streets was derived also from their function of arranging for their lighting. In the early years of their existence, the Commissioners concerned themselves principally with the streets in the town centre but between 1849 and 1852 they awarded contracts to the British Gas Company to lay mains and provide lamps in the poorer areas, for example, in the Chapel Fields district behind St. John's Church, and in such outlying parts of the town as Northwood and around Ivy House in the Trent Valley. There were further "considerable extensions to the public lights" between 1853 and 1855[91] and in 1856 gas mains were being laid in Joiners Square.[92]

The maintenance of the town's part-time fire brigade and its equipment was also the responsibility of the Commissioners and after disastrous fires had destroyed Shelton Old Hall and a local farm they made belated improvements in the equipment, on the first occasion spending £200 on this.[93] After 1850 they were active in installing and maintaining fireplugs throughout the town, but often found their efforts nullified by the persistent unreliability of the water supply.

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91. ibid.

92. Commissioners' Minutes. 17. Jan. 1856.

93. ibid. 25. May. 1853. Final Report of Chief Bailiff, Commissioners' Minutes.

The local Acts of 1825 and 1828 had given the Commissioners only limited responsibilities in matters of public health and had virtually done no more in this respect than empower them to impose penalties on those who created nuisances or obstructions on the highways. The legislation of the mid-nineteenth century enabled them to increase their activity in public health matters.[94] In particular they inspected the common lodging houses and enforced the recent regulations on these low-standard, overcrowded premises, which were sources of disease and immorality as well as the habitual dwellings of criminals.[95] The Commissioners also carried out two vigorous campaigns using the powers given them under the Nuisance Removals Acts. They first in the period 1849 to 1852, started with the appointment of a committee "who with the Chief Bailiff, inspected the whole of the townships, with a view to reporting existing nuisances, and in a great number of cases, such nuisances were promptly removed." The campaign in 1855 was also

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94. Particularly important in this respect were the Common Lodging Houses Act of 1851 and the Nuisance Removal Acts of 1849 and 1855.

95. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff, Commissioners' Minutes. A Committee was set up to assist Mr. Clementson (the Chief Bailiff, 1849 to 1852), in the inspection of the Lodging Houses, which proved to be in a deplorable and filthy state. Visits were made to them weekly for several months together, thus effecting a thorough reformation in what had been hitherto intolerable nuisances, both as regards their condition and the low class of people who congregated in them.

the responsibility of a special committee, now assisted by an inspector of nuisances and a part-time medical officer, which met 30 times in the next three years and in that time recorded the removal of 1,336 nuisances in addition to those removed voluntarily by the inhabitants.[96]

In another public health sphere the Commissioners succeeded in making the first public provision for watering the streets[97] but their belated consideration of the possibility of providing a public park and a public cemetery came to nothing before their demise.[98]

The Chief Bailiff's role of leading inhabitant of the town on public occasions, has been noted earlier but there were also times when the Commissioners took it upon themselves collectively to represent the interests of the town. On these occasions their individual wealth and influence helped to discount any lack of legal sanction for their actions. They were in any event able to secure

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96. ibid.

97. ibid.

98. ibid.

amendments to a proposed Bill of the Newcastle-Leek Turnpike Trust so that carts passing through the toll gates a second or more times each day did not have to pay the proposed extra tolls - an outcome which coincided with their own interests as manufacturers.[99] On another occasion they made representations to Earl Granville's agents concerning the danger being caused by a fire in a coal seam under a main shopping street.[100]

It was the work of the Commissioners under the nuisance acts and in lighting the streets which constituted their most important contribution to the good government of the town but even in these spheres they were capable of mounting little more than a holding operation. Their powers, as they frankly acknowledged,[101] were insufficient to provide the town with efficient government and their exclusive constitution would ensure widespread resistance to any move they might make to have them extended. Caught in this

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99. Commissioners' Minutes - various dates in 1857.

100. ibid. 25. June. 1857.

101. Advertiser, 4. Sept, 1852, which reported this extract from a resolution passed at a Commissioners' meeting:- "That, in the opinion of this meeting, the powers of the Commissioners under the existing local acts, known as Watching and Lighting Acts, are inadequate for the purposes of the government and sanitary improvement of the townships.". John Ridgway who was a commissioner described their powers as a nullity except for lighting purposes. Advertiser. 11. Sept. 1852.

The Town Hall erected by the Commissioners in the 1840's.

dilemma they could at least look with pride at the Town Hall which they had built illegally and which they considered to be their greatest achievement.[102] The mass of the townspeople, however, thought more affectionately of their equally illegal contribution of £25 to the splendid celebrations by which Hanley marked the end of the Crimean War.[103]

The Market Trustees had controlled Hanley markets since their inception in the late eighteenth century. A Market House had been built just prior to 1791 when eleven trustees entered into a formal undertaking with the Lord of the Manor of Newcastle to lease land in the centre of the town for market purposes. In 1812 the eleven trustees were increased to 21 and the annual rent for the land leased was fixed in perpetuity at £10, renewable upon payment of a £50 fine every eighteen years.[104]

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102. The last Chief Bailiff opened his final report on the work of the Commissioners by noting the erection of the Town Hall which "has proved of such incalculable advantage to the Townships."

103. Final Report of the Chief Bailiff. Commissioners' Minutes, William Scarratt, 'Old Times in the Potteries' pp. 174-175. The Hanley celebrations exceeded anything undertaken elsewhere in the Potteries.

104. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 361.

In the following year the Trustees obtained an Act of Parliament giving them a formal status and their power legal recognition.[105] Under this Act the 21 lessees were appointed managers of the market and given power to purchase land and erect or buy buildings to enlarge the facilities, for which purposes they were also given the power to borrow money. Any tolls charged, or profits made, by the Trust were to be used in the first instance to meet management expenses, to pay for market improvements and pay off any debts and after this any surplus could be used, at the discretion of the Trustees, on public works for the benefit of the town.

Any vacancies among the 21 trustees were to be filled by the choice of the survivors, although all these new trustees had to be inhabitants of the town or conduct some business or profession within three miles of it. This provision ensured that the trustees had interests in the locality while both the self-perpetuating nature of the Trust and the heavy debts for which the individual trustees became personally liable made it likely that only men of substance would become trustees.

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105. 53. George III. cap. 115. - copy in the Hanley Market Trustees' Minute Book 1845-1862 in Hanley Reference Library.

The only surviving minute book of the Trust is for the period 1845 to 1862 and this gives the names of 22 men who were trustees in that period. Five of these were elected before 1840 and all were primarily pottery manufacturers; of the eight elected in the next decade the occupations of only three have been identified, two pottery manufacturers and a cleric. The occupations of the nine elected in the period 1849 to 1860 were more varied. Three were pottery manufacturers; one a timber merchant and property owner; a wine merchant, a surgeon, a stationer, the Rector of Shelton and one whose occupation remains unidentified.

In the later elections, the preponderance of pottery manufacturers clearly declined but this could simply reflect the fact that as the town grew there were increased opportunities for men to achieve both substance and station in a greater variety of fields. There is nowhere any suggestion of a conscious process of work or of any division among the trustees on lines of personal economic interest.

The self-perpetuating Market Trustees were an even more exclusive body than were the Commissioners, who could at least be joined by men of sufficient wealth without any electoral proceedings. Their financial status and their business discussions were shrouded

in a secrecy made even more objectionable by the obvious extent of their assets and their economic importance. By the early 1850's there was, in the discussions on local government reform,[106] clear evidence of considerable public hostility to them and very little appreciation of the significance of their achievements. To an even more marked degree than the Commissioners, with whom there was some overlapping of membership, they had forfeited public confidence.

In practice control of the markets between 1850 and 1860 became even more exclusively centred for in these years no elections of trustees took place and in the latter year it was only by a vote of five to three that it was decided to fill the four vacancies which then existed. At this time the Trust was under considerable pressure to surrender its powers to the new Borough Council and the possible attitude of new members to this proposal was creating complications for the established trustees who were divided on its merits.

Despite their unpopularity in the town the record of the Trustees in managing and extending the markets was an excellent one, reaching a climax with the opening of new buildings in 1848

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106. Chapter III of this study.

and 1849 and the establishment of a fortnightly cattle market by 1851.[107] Much of this substantial extension of the market facilities had been financed by loans raised on the personal security of the individual trustees. As a result, the gross debts of the Trust at the end of 1849 stood at £16,300 of which £12,000 had been incurred in the immediate past. The annual interest payments amounted to £722 from an income of £1,400 from the lease of the market tolls and £390 from shop rents.[108]

The extension of facilities and the improvement, after 1850, in the economy of the district combined to improve the income of the Trust for in 1851 the tolls were farmed out at £1,700 per annum for three years and, in 1854, this again increased to £1,750 to be followed by two years at £1,800. This last figure was repeated for the period 1857 to 1860. In 1860, however, the highest bid for the right to collect the tolls was only £1,620 and the Trustees made arrangements to collect them direct from the stallholders. In the following year a figure of £1,691 per

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107. See Chapter One, p. 5 and V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 162. White 'Staffordshire Directory', 1834, p. 540.

108. Market Trustees' Minutes 7. Sept. 1849. No Trustee accounts have survived and the only record of income is that of the sale of the market tolls: there is no further minuted reference to shop rents. Ward, 'Stoke', p. 363 gave £1,512 as the sum for which the tolls were farmed out in 1840-41. The 1848-49 depression in the pottery industry may have caused the fall to £1,400 in 1849.

annum was accepted for the period 1861 to 1864. The Trustees had apparently had to accept a significant reduction in their income following its rapid expansion in the early 1850's.[109]

This reduction in income must have been made more acceptable by the knowledge that between 1849 and 1857 their debts had been reduced to £13,000.[110] In 1860, however, they chose to spend £1,590 on repairing the Market Square which reduced the current balance of their funds to £277 and they then made no further attempt to reduce the overall debt before the Trust's powers passed to the Borough Council in 1862.

In the mid-century the Trustees demonstrated their willingness to mortgage future income heavily in order to carry out extensive alterations to the market buildings and improvements in the surrounding streets. Their original intention, in 1849, of paying off £500 of the debt each year was followed in principle at least until 1857

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109. ibid. 5. Sept. 1851. 1 Sept. 1854. 4. Sept. 1857. 7. Sept. 1860. and 6. Sept. 1861.

110. The plan, in 1849, was to pay off £500 each year and by 1854 £2000 had been paid back but this left a deficit of £563 owing to the treasurer. In the next two years this was turned into a balance of £516 and by 1857 they were re-paying a further £1,300. In 1859 they spent £460 on street improvements but still had a balance of £1,223 which in the following year was added to and then spent on further improvement. ibid. 7. Sept. 1849. 1. Sept. 1854. 5 Sept. 1856. 4. Sept. 1857. 2. Sept. 1859. 7. Sept. 1860.

but was then abandoned in favour of a policy of continued improvement. Some of the trustees hoped to use their indebtedness as a means of maintaining their exclusive powers in the town, asserting that these could not be surrendered to the Council until the debts had been liquidated.[111]

The Trustees were men of substance who on their own responsibility were prepared to spend heavily on projects of commercial worth bringing prestige and business to the town.[112] It was their single-mindedness in developing the market facilities which served to create Hanley's distinctive role as the shopkeeper of the conurbation for around the market buildings there developed a shopping area much larger and more diverse than any to be found in the other five Potteries' towns.[113]

This development in turn gave rise to the numerous commercial class who were to play such an important part in the social and political life of the town. In this way the almost reckless expenditure of the Trustees succeeded in exploiting Hanley's central position in the district to the great benefit of its economy and social structure. The working-classes and the small traders and

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111. ibid. 3. Sept. 1858.

112. It is worth adding that none of the trustees whose business interests have been identified stood to benefit directly from the market extensions whose finance they guaranteed.

113. See Chapter I. p. 6.

shopkeepers who had no influence over the Trust were unlikely in other circumstances to have had either the vision or the dedicated commitment to market improvement demonstrated by the exclusive trustees, so undemocratically appointed, who triumphantly succeeded in making the market facilities the pride of Hanley and the town the commercial centre of the Potteries.

This the Trustees achieved by committing almost all their income for many years ahead[114] and by so doing they implicitly rejected the possibility of using surplus market profits for the more general good of the inhabitants as they were entitled to under the terms of the 1813 Act. They persisted in this course to the end, for one of their conditions for considering the surrender of their powers to the Council was, that this could only be in return for an assurance that market profits would be used for market purposes.[115] As late as 1870 some of the then ex-trustees took legal action to enforce this narrow interpretation of the 1813 Markets Act. This policy gave Hanley its fine markets but the independent status of the Trustees in the local government structure also had the consequence

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114. Their only other major investment was in another public building, the Town Hall, which was built on a site near the markets donated by the Trustees who also provided £750 of its cost.

115. Market Trustees minutes, 3. Sept.1858. 17. Sept. 1861.

of preventing any consideration of the possibility that other local developments should have been given priority over the markets in the allocation of the only local public income that did not have to be squeezed from the pockets of reluctant ratepayers.

The effect of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 had been to set the Poor Law Guardians apart from the other bodies involved in local government and, by creating its own administrative areas, to add further confusion to the already complicated boundaries of local government. In the southern part of the Potteries, the Act was administered by the Board of Guardians of the Stoke-upon-Trent Union, which included Stoke, Longton and Fenton as well as Hanley and Shelton. The election of the 24 Guardians was organized on a township basis, the ratepayers of Hanley elected six of them and the ratepayers of Shelton five.

There was no question of local government reform in the district affecting in any way the status and powers of the Guardians. The Guardians elected for Hanley and Shelton were not, however, prepared to remain outside the debates on the future government of their town and in this and other ways, their composition and achievements around 1850 formed a significant strand in the history of the Potteries district.

In 1849 the working-classes gained control of the Stoke Board of Guardians, helped by their capture of all eleven Hanley and Shelton seats. The following year's elections produced great excitement with 56 candidates contesting the eleven seats but again an "operatives' class committee" was able, by organizing public meetings and by canvassing, to secure the election of all of its select list of candidates.[116]

In 1851 the Chartist paper, The Lever, foreseeing an equally keen struggle in that year's elections as the "capitalists" planned their counter attack, urged the ratepayers again to stand firm, and vote for the list of candidates issued by the working-men's committee.[117] This campaign was again successful for the numbers of votes obtained by 'approved' candidates ranged in Hanley from 1026 to 925 while the highest unsuccessful vote, among the 33 candidates, was a mere 280. This success was repeated in Shelton where they captured all five seats with votes ranging from 1,114 to 979 with the highest unsuccessful vote reaching only 302.[118]

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116. Advertiser 6. Apr. 1850. The intention of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act had been to prevent such working-class control of local boards of Guardians (see B. Keith-Lucas, 'The English Local Government Franchise, p. 35).

117. The Lever, pp. 69-70.

118. Advertiser. 6. Apr. 1850. These figures are particularly remarkable in view of the system of plural-voting, employed in the election of Guardians, which was intended to give the large owners of property a predominant say in administration of poor relief.

The 1851 election result caused the Staffordshire Advertiser to congratulate the working-men of Hanley and Shelton on the skill and energy of their campaign. In Longton, which had more ratepayers than either Hanley or Shelton, the number of votes polled had been less than half what it was in each of the latter townships. In the following year the working-classes played an important part in the Parliamentary election[119] and the history of the Guardians elections confirms the impression given in that more important context thattheir activity centred on Hanley rather than any of the other Pottery towns.

The working-class Guardians believed that they had originally won control because of the refusal of their predecessors to introduce a scheme for some of the inmates of the workhouse to cultivate land owned by the Guardians to the benefit of workhouse finances. In 1851 they fought the election on the record of their two year's work, including the success of the land scheme[120] but also emphasizing the check they had put on the insolence of officials and their extension of the system of outdoor relief beyond that allowed by "their cruel predecessors".[121]

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119. Chapter I. p. 49.

120. This scheme, replacing repetitive stone-breaking with productive labour, had been operated on an experimental basis by 24 boys at the workhouse and had in its first year yielded a profit of £35. The Lever p. 69. Advertiser 5. Apr. 1851.

121. The Lever, p. 69.

Despite these liberal measures they had virtually succeeded in liquidating the debt of almost £7,000 which they had inherited and it was this achievement which encouraged the ratepayers to continue to give them control of the Board of Guardians. They no doubt owed much to the marked improvement in trade which occurred in 1850 but in addition their efforts to compel the North Staffordshire Railway Company to pay more towards the cost of poor relief were richly rewarded.[122]

The Guardians' success with the railway company led them to impose a poor rate on the Hanley market properties and so brought them into direct conflict with the Market Trustees. The latter represented the social and economic elite of Hanley while the Guardians were a product of local working-class politics and this was at times very self-consciously a class struggle. It helped to promote a serious division within the community at a particularly unfortunate time when schemes for local government reform required co-operation and common opinions on crucial issues or at least a willingness to compromise. The dispute could of course have arisen even within a reformed structure of local government but its consequences need not have been so serious.

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122. By taking legal action against the Company they forced up its assessment for poor rate purposes from £700 to £3,920. Advertiser 27. Dec. 1851.

In October 1851 the magistrates held that the lessee of the market tolls was not an occupier of the buildings and declined to issue a warrant against him for payment of the rate. John Ridgway had addressed the magistrates on behalf of his fellow trustees, explaining that the question of liability had been raised some years before but that the parish authorities had then abandoned their claim. The Guardians, he felt, were now doing a most ungracious thing, for the Trustees served no personal ends but spent their money on public improvements. This was an attempt to rob Peter to pay Paul and it was not good enough to annoy the Trustees with a claim that could not be sustained.[123]

The dispute over rates swiftly flared into a wider conflict, indicative of both the lack of mutual respect between the two authorities and the strength of working-class hostility to the wealthy trustees, when one of the Guardians launched a general attack on the work of the Trust:-

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123. Advertiser 25. Oct. 1851. The Trustees Minutes (27. June.1851) recorded that, relying on Counsel's opinion of 20 years previously, the Trustees had borrowed large sums on their personal liability and that removal of their exemption from paying the poor rate would mean that they would have great difficulty in re-paying these debts.

> "Behold the Market Terrace, a heap of rich rubbish, a row of closed shops ..... Never since 1836 was trade half so good in the Potteries as it is now - not a shop of any sort, nor scarcely a house to let, save the property of the market trustees - the 'improvements' ". [124]

This hostility within the town was re-inforced by the resentment of the representatives of the other towns on the Board of Guardians that the largest market in the district did not contribute to the poor rate, whereas the markets at Longton and Stoke were rated for poor relief purposes.[125]

The Guardians and the Trustees failed to agree on the terms of an amicable suit to the Court of Queen's Bench to decide the liability of the Trustees, as opposed to that of the lessee of the tolls. A later suggestion that the opinion of the respective Counsel should be binding on both sides also fell through. When, in 1852, the Trustees failed to appeal against five successive poor rates the Guardians summoned them before the Stipendiary for £130.[126] The latter tried to persuade the Guardians to abandon their summons but they threatened to obtain a mandamus writ if a warrant was not issued

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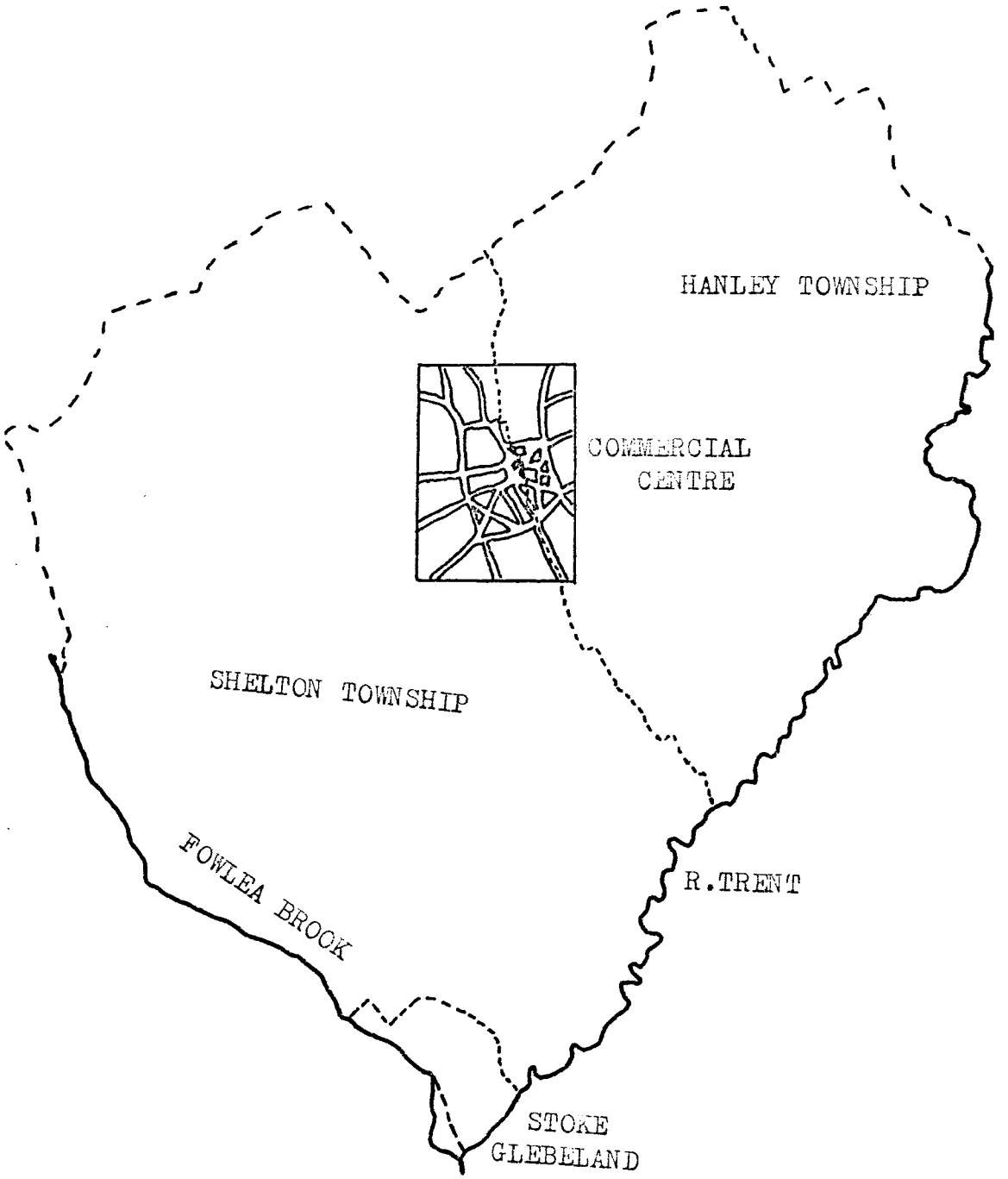
124. ibid. 27. Dec. 1851. and an indignant denial of the charges by the Trustees, ibid. 10. Jan. 1852.

125. ibid. 24. Jan. 1852 when a Guardian from Longton stressed this point.

126. The £130 was the product of five 6d rates, giving a valuation of £1,040 to the Market Trust properties.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOUNDARIES.



and later they repeated these tactics when the Trustees tried to avoid paying the expenses involved in obtaining a warrant.[127]

After this defeat, although the issue had never been settled in a higher court, the Trustees accepted their liability to payment of the poor rate and, at the cost of much ill-feeling, the Guardians had obtained another rich scalp.

The two townships of Hanley and Shelton, though one unit in all other matters of local government, maintained their roads quite independently through separate Highways Boards elected annually, in accordance with the Highways Act of 1835, by their respective vestries. This division of authority prevented the introduction of any co-ordinated plan for highways maintenance which was particularly annoying as the line dividing the two townships ran through the central streets of the long unified town. It produced such awkward anomalies as the refusal of the Shelton Highways Board to contribute to a scheme, for watering the central streets, in which the Hanley Board was prepared to participate and provided a classic example of the difficulties which could occur with irrational local government boundaries.

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127. ibid. 16. Apr. 1853, 23 Apr. 1853; 7. May 1853, 14 May, 1853.

Highways board elections were conducted under the most democratic of all contemporary franchises[128] which made them easily open to domination by working-class activists. This happened in Hanley in the late 1840's and as a result the higher classes ceased for a time to attend the vestry election meetings.[129] The working classes led by the local Chartists established a monopoly of representation on the Shelton Highways Board but their hold on the Hanley board was never so complete nor did it survive for so long.[130]

The boards could levy rates for highways maintenance which might include some provision for underground drainage as well as the

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128. Everyone who paid highways rates was entitled to one vote and no more; nor was there any additional qualification for membership of a board. In Hanley and Shelton each board had 20 members.

129. This led to the jibe that the higher classes were not prepared to co-operate with working-men and were not interested in street improvements in the poorer parts of the town which they had so grossly neglected when they had in the past controlled the boards. Advertiser. 6. Apr. 1850. In partial support of this thesis the wealthy John Ridgway was quoted as saying to the 1849 public health inquiry. "The back streets he was bound to say were in a much better state than formerly". ibid. 3. Mar. 1849.

130. This was indicated by a sneering reference of the Shelton Surveyor to the Hanley board which "can boast a higher order" than the working-classes of the Shelton board. ibid. 3. Dec. 1853. The effect of the exclusion of the higher-classes from the Shelton board on its efficiency are considered below.

repair of the road surface and street cleaning.[131] The major defect of the Act which set up the highways boards was that it gave them no authority to compel the owner of property to put the adjoining street surface in good repair in the first instance and it was this that discouraged the boards from attempting to improve the back streets in which the worst conditions were found.[132] In Hanley there was the further generally acknowledged complication[133] that the boundaries of the area under the control of each board bore no sensible relation to the area of urban development nor to the inclination of the land. The ensuing confusion of authority was made more complex by the statutory powers of turnpike trusts over some of the main central streets and by the vague, if rarely exercised, power of the Commissioners to deal with highways obstructions and nuisances.

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131. The Shelton Highways Board had apparently used this power to culvert an 85 yard long open ditch. ibid. 3. May. 1849. Examples of such work were not, however, to be found frequently in the town.

132. Second Report of the Large Town Commissioners, 1845, pp 34-36. On drainage the Commissioners commented that many towns "if drained at all, are subject only to the inadequate provisions of the Highways Act", p. 11.

133. ibid. pp. 16-19.

If the legal powers of the boards were restricted and confused it was also the case that their finances were only precariously balanced for in any year expenditure tended to be within a few pounds of income received. The need to retain public confidence showed itself in their failure to exercise their full financial powers and in their avoidance of expensive schemes for improvement. The limited resources of many of the ratepayers allied to the limited ability of the boards to secure payment of the rates constituted a real restraint on their work. In the year from March 1849 to March 1850 when the pottery trade was still depressed, a sixpenny highways rate produced £419 in Hanley and £467 in Shelton but with a better economic climate in 1851-1852 this had been raised to £460 and £670 respectively and in 1853-1854 the income of the Hanley board had risen to £580. When a trade depression could result in such a large proportion of the rate remaining uncollected the power of the highways boards to increase their rates was clearly near its limit and in practice neither board chose in any year to increase its rate requisition above 7d in the pound.[134]

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134. The Hanley Highways Board obtained a larger income when it successfully enforced a highways rate on the property of the Market Trustees, thus repeating the success of the Guardians in this respect. Market Trustees Minutes. 5. Sept. 1856.

The situation of the highways boards revealed how confined could be the limits to effective action for any local government body entirely dependent on rate income. In their case the final and most crippling restriction was that they had no power to borrow capital by mortgaging future income. Faced by the problems of surfacing new streets and laying drains throughout the townships this rendered their powers for improvement a nullity.

The main concern of the working-class ratepayers whose votes were decisive in highways board elections was with expense rather than with improvements. In this circumstance the boards had little alternative but to indulge in cheap but inefficient cheese-paring of administrative costs which produced incompetent officials with insufficient or no departmental assistance.[135]

The history of the working-class Shelton Highways Board in particular[136] demonstrated the importance of having men of proven administrative ability among the elected members of a local authority when the competence of the professional personnel in their employ was so uncertain. Such men could have improved the efficiency of

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135. In 1851 the Hanley board employed only two permanent officials, the rate-collector and the assistant-surveyor, and paid each of them £25 per annum.

136. A distinct contrast was drawn between the state of the streets in Hanley and those in Shelton by the surveyor of the local turnpike roads. Rawlinson Report (1853), p. 22. and above p. 91.

its rate-collection and contracting procedures and may even in the final analysis have done something to establish the honesty of its accounts and prevent the corruption which finally swallowed-up the working-class board. The state of the roads in Shelton and the leading part played by members of the Shelton Highways Board in opposing the reform of local government eventually determined the higher classes in the town to re-capture control of the board. Their success was to reveal serious incompetence and corruption among the working-class board and its employees.

As the deteriorating state of the roads in Shelton produced increasing disenchantment among the 'respectable' ratepayers the crucial highways board election of March 1855 drew nearer and, as the preliminary skirmishing of both supporters and opponents of the board grew fiercer, so the indications of a serious conflict at the vestry meeting became more certain. The first evidence of a concerted effort to wrest control from the old board came in a 'Sentinel' editorial urging a good attendance at the meeting so that in future the powers, however slender, would be competently used and the management of the highways not left in the hands of one class.[137] The posters and pamphlets circulated by supporters

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137. Sentinel, 31. Mar. 1855.

of the board prior to the meeting succeeded in producing a large attendance of working-men prepared to resist this attack on their slight share of local power.

The atmosphere at the overcrowded meeting became more excited as more and more people arrived at the vestry of St. Mark's until it became necessary to transfer the proceedings to the nearby schoolroom. Any prospect of the business being conducted on an amicable basis was destroyed by the conviction of the opponents of the old board that there had been a deliberate attempt to trick them by the display of posters which gave the time of the meeting incorrectly.[138] When James Dixon, a known associate of the old board and a notorious firebrand in local government matters was elected chairman, the Rector of Shelton, the Reverend F.B. Grant, who was a commissioner and a market trustee, refused to allow him to take the chair, threatening to call the police to prevent him from doing so as it was his own intention, as Rector, to chair the vestry meeting.[139]

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138. ibid. 14. Apr. 1855. Ralph Hopkinson, surveyor to the board who had publicized the meeting produced an elaborate denial of this charge - after the posters had been printed the time of the meeting had been changed and correction slips had been attached to them, although some of these slips may have come off he personally had seen no examples of this.

139. ibid. 26. May. 1855. The legality of the rector's action is not entirely clear. (B. Keith-Lucas, 'The English Local Government Franchise', p. 13.).

In the tension of the crowded schoolroom this stand required no little personal courage and it proved, as the Rector must have appreciated, of crucial importance in deciding the outcome of the election. A list of working-class candidates proposed by a local Chartist, Charles Heath, was elected by acclamation over the rival list proposed by William Coates. The latter challenged the vote and demanded a poll which the Rector, as Chairman was now able to agree to. His decision provoked an explosion of passionate invective within the meeting and an outbreak of violence at its close as the angry supporters of Heath's candidates took their revenge on the Rector by hurling bricks at his schoolroom windows.[140]

The two day poll in early April reversed the decision of the vestry meeting and the Rector declared Coates' board duly elected.[141] Charles Heath, however, declined to accept defeat and, asserting that the poll was illegal and therefore null and void, he announced that the board elected by acclamation at the annual meeting would serve as the highways board for the coming year.[142] 'His' board

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140. Some of the events of the meeting emerged in the course of later legal proceedings. The first account appeared in the Sentinel. 7. Apr. 1855.

141. Coates's candidates obtained 597 votes of whom 12 were objected to on the grounds of non-payment of rates. Heath's list obtained 488 votes of whom no less than 347 were objected to because of the non-payment of rates. The number of objections gives an interesting indication of the likely economic and social status of Heath's supporters. ibid. 14. Apr. 1855.

142. ibid.

proceeded to appoint as surveyor, Ralph Hopkinson who had served the old board in this capacity and Hopkinson then refused to hand over his books to Coates' board. When summoned before the stipendiary who held that Coates' board had been the one legally elected, he appealed to the Quarter Sessions aginst the £5 fine imposed upon him because of his refusal.

Shelton now had a surfeit of highways boards as both Heath's board and Coates' board proceeded to act as the legally constituted body to the confusion of the County magistrates who, at their Keele meeting, refused to confirm the legality of either of their rate demands because they could not satisfy themselves that either had been legally elected.[143]

The legal confusion led to an astute switch of tactics by the working-class activists and the old board of 1854 proceeded to resume its legal existence and summoned defaulters for the preceding year's rate. In this they were relying on their interpretation of a clause in the Highways Act which gave an out-going surveyor power to act until his successor should be appointed.[144] The Newcastle

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143. ibid. 26. May. 1855.

144. They also took the argument into the streets where the ranting eloquence of James Dixon, a local chemist with aspirations to the dignity of Doctor Dixon, secured the unanimous support of 500 present at an open-air meeting for a petition to the magistrates that they should allow the old board to continue to function. ibid.

magistrates, before whom the defaulters were summoned, accepted their interpretation of the Act[145] and this triumph for the working-class board caused great excitement among the many people from Shelton who had attended the court. Although Coates' board claimed that this decision was a mistaken one and urged the ratepayers to continue to refuse to pay the backlog of their rates, the supporters of Charles Heath thought that victory was near as the old board continued to exercise its powers.

The one threat to the old board's continued power was the possibility that the magistrates might rule that there was no legally appointed highways surveyor and then exercise their right to appoint one. It was in an attempt to prevent this, that the working-class leaders, Heath, Dixon and Hopkinson presented a petition, allegedly signed by 2,000 of Shelton's 3,800 ratepayers, asking the County magistrates meeting at Newcastle to confirm the continuation of the 1854 board. This step brought the heady confusion and uproar of popular politics into the courtroom as the magistrates attempted to

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145. They allowed the summonses on the rate for 1854 but not those relating to earlier years because of the rate collector's failure to produce the relevant rate-books. ibid. 9. June. 1855.

cut through the complexity of the legal alternatives before them.[146] Disorder frequently broke out in the courtroom as lengthy contradictory statements and counter-claims on matters of fact and of law came from the opposing factions to the total bewilderment of the magistrates.[147]

In these harrowing circumstances the magistrates' final verdict was a triumph of legal subtlety. They ruled that Ralph Hopkinson, the surveyor of the 1854 board, had failed at the time when the accounts were passed, to deliver to them the name of his sucessor. Even if he were his own successor this still remained the case, and so, as he had failed to carry out his legal duties, the magistrates were dismissing him from office. It was their intention at the next sessions to appoint his successor and, perhaps rather wearily, they hoped that by then the opposing parties would have agreed upon some neutral person whom they could appoint as surveyor for the coming year.

Continued legal skirmishing elsewhere failed to affect the final outcome. Ralph Hopkinson won his appeal against the £5 fine

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146. Although it took the magistrates a long time to reach this point, the argument came down to the questions of whether they had any legal power to extend the life of the old board and whether they were compelled to appoint a surveyor if no legally appointed surveyor existed. This second question required a decision on the legality of Hopkinson's position as surveyor of the old board continuing his functions until a successor was appointed.

147. Sentinel. 23. June. 1855.

imposed on him for failing to hand over the highways books but the Quarter Sessions magistrates stressed that their decision was in no way a judgement on the legality of either of the boards elected in 1855.[148] Each of these boards also made one more attempt to set the stamp of legality on their rate demands but on each occasion the magistrates declined to co-operate.

By this time an influential section of public opinion was disenchanted not only with the antics of the working-class boards but with all of the long-drawn-out wrangling of the last three months. These inhabitants, who had hitherto held aloof from the proceedings now co-operated with some members from Coates' board in presenting three names to the magistrates, one of whom they asked should be appointed surveyor. In this way at the end of July, Robert Scrivenor emerged as the undisputed legal surveyor of the Shelton highways - the choice of the magistracy, not of the ratepayers.[149] Not surprisingly the magistrates expressed the hope that this appointment would end the litigation and that both parties would shake hands and be content to await the verdict of next year's elections. In practice the

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148. ibid. 7. Jul. 1855. They declined to enumerate the grounds for their granting the appeal.

149. ibid. 28. Jul. 1855. The magistrates also appointed Scrivenor the collector of the highways rate. They rejected a Mr. Forbes on the grounds that he was involved in the current disputes, being the intended surveyor of Coates' board.

opponents of the working-class boards had already obtained all that they had set out to achieve.

There were important issues at stake in this bitter struggle for the highways boards represented the reality of political power in the town and were indeed the only place where the working-classes could take any part in its government. The determined assault on their position can, however, be too simply seen as a class struggle. For several years the 'higher classes' had not chosen to make such an attack and only when the state of the roads became intolerable did they do so. Men drawn from all classes who had been sympathetic to the working-class board's resolute opposition to the introduction of the 1848 Public Health Act into the town (~~see Chapter III~~) were by 1855, totally disillusioned about its competence as a highways authority.[150]

The dramatic challenge to working-class control of the Shelton Highways Board, provided a vivid illustration of the need for local authorities to retain the confidence of the electors in their everyday competence; for in the mid-nineteenth century there was only local income available to resolve local problems and incompetence could not be hidden behind a smokescreen of Treasury grants. Once the incompetence of the working classes on the board became evident, its

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ibid.

150. 2. Jun. 1855. The character and the extent of local opposition to the introduction of the 1848 Public Health Act is considered in Chapter III of this study.

democratic constitution left them mercilessly exposed to the disenchantment of a growing number of ratepayers led, ironically enough, by men whose own share of local power was more carefully shielded from public wrath.

The end of the working-class board revealed devastating evidence of the extent of their incompetence and of the high price the township had had to pay for the exclusion of men with business experience from its affairs. There had been earlier allegations concerning its unbusinesslike methods - in particular its failure to open its contracts for the supply of materials for competitive tenders and its inefficiency in collecting the rates. More sinister were the implications that public materials were being used without payment for private works and that favoured individuals were being allowed systematically to evade their rate demands.[151] Such charges it could be argued, were part of a campaign to discredit the board but after its fall they proved only too accurate.

After Scrivenor's appointment as surveyor by the magistrates he was approached by the old board and asked to meet its debts of £328. He had to point out that when the last highways accounts were

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151. ibid. 2. Jun.1855. The 1854 rate should have realised in full £900 but of this only £560 had been collected; this contrasted unfavourably with the arrears of the Hanley board which came to £52 on a total rate of £704.

passed they had showed a surplus of £8 and that it was a very different picture which they were now presenting. He agreed, however, to pay all just debts if the previous officers would produce the relevant books and vouchers. Hopkinson, the previous surveyor and James Capewell, the collector and another Chartist, had so far failed to do this and were now ordered to do so by the magistrates.[152] Several months later they had still not done so and as queries were raised in the press, Scrivenor to clear his own reputation, issued an account of his correspondence with the old board whose members had failed to reply to a letter of his sent three months previously.[153]

By the end of the year, some of the old board's creditors were considering legal action to recover their debts while others had been urged to wait for repayment until the following March, apparently in the hope that the supporters of the old board would recapture control at the next elections.[154] At the vestry elections of 1856, Charles Heath did attempt to nominate a list of working-class

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152. ibid. 25. Aug. 1855.

153. ibid. 8. Dec. 1855.

154. ibid. 29. Dec. 1855. The editor of the Sentinel sounded a warning note to the ratepayers to resist any such notion with a savage attack on the extremists among the working-class board:- "They live in an atmosphere of suspicion.... The blacking brush is their weapon and their deity.... Such men have been the curse of Shelton. They are not now on the Board of Highways. Let every man resolve, whether manufacturer, tradesman or operative, that they never shall be." ibid. 23. Feb. 1856.

candidates, in opposition to a list put forward by his opponents of the previous year, but several of the men he named refused to stand and he was defeated in this. The final defeat for the working class board of 1854 came with the election of their opponents' shrewdly selected list of candidates.[155] This came at the end of a stormy meeting which had been chiefly concerned to establish the whereabouts of the old accounts, a quest made more difficult by the ex-surveyor's failure to attend and by the ex-collector's efforts to distract attention from this issue by savage personal attacks on his accusers. The most disquieting discovery was that the accounts for the old board's last year of existence had not been audited but that the auditors' names had been forged to give an appearance of legality.

It was exactly one year after being forced out of office when in July 1856 Hopkinson was at last persuaded to surrender the highways books.[156] The accounts for the period 1852-1855 were found to be so muddled that a professional accountant was called in to bring

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155. To reduce the chances of extremists exploiting class differences in the heat of the vestry meeting this list contained the names of 10 operatives, 6 tradesmen and 4 manufacturers.

156. After the 1856 election he still refused to hand them over as they were his only security for money owing to him and then, having agreed to accept the arbitration of the accounts by a local magistrate, he twice more failed to keep appointments to surrender them.

them into some form of order.[157] His report constituted a humiliating epitaph on the working-class board and its officers. Many receipts for money spent could not be found: the uncollected rate in its last two years amounted to £721: the incidental expenses were five times as high as those of the Hanley board and included the cost of a visit to London for the collector.[158]

A severe critic of the working-class board like the editor of the Sentinel considered the majority of its members to be no worse than incompetent.[159] Two members of the board were prepared to do no more than assert that 16 out of the 20 members were honest men.[160] Their failure was because of their lack of business experience leading to mistakes in the appointment and supervision of paid officials. These latter proved incompetent in the keeping of accounts and injudicious in their squandering of public money and materials.[161]

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157. ibid. 5. Jul. 1856. 12. Jul. 1856.

158. ibid. 18. Oct. 1856. The new highways board accepted responsibility for its predecessors' debts and made plans to pay them off over two years.

159. ibid. 15. Mar. 1856. 29. Mar. 1856. Charles Heath's honesty as clerk was never successfully challenged and years later he again played a part in public affairs as a member of the Borough Council.

160. ibid. 12. Apr. 1856.

161. Until the full muddle of the accounts was revealed the Sentinel was prepared to defend Hopkinson's honesty and saw him as a scapegoat. ibid. 12. Apr. 1856.

Almost certainly there was petty pilfering of materials and the use of board resources on private projects without payment. Corruption of a more serious nature than this was difficult to prove though either Hopkinson or Capewell, or both of them, may have been systematically plundering the funds of the board. Too much should not, however, be made of their 'adjusting' the accounts which could have started as a means of hiding their incompetence which escalated into forgery of the audit as the confusion became more confounded and panic set in. Their pathetic wrigglings in every direction, as they saw their public reputations collapse, certainly lacked dignity but were not conclusive proof of dishonesty. They were fortunate to avoid prosecution but as they vanished into obscurity seemed pathetic rather than evil men.

Their greatest crime was the damage they did to the reputation of the only democratically elected local authority in the township and to that of the working-class activists who controlled it.[162]

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162. The work of the Shelton Highways Board prior to their becoming its officers, but when already dominated by the working-class, had on the contrary attracted favourable notice - see note 129.

Conclusion

Virtually all the restraints on effective local government were to some degree present in Hanley in the mid-nineteenth century, All were made more restrictive by the division of local power among several local government bodies. This made overall planning and the rational arrangement of financial priorities well-nigh impossible at a time when the continuing growth of the town was presenting increasingly urgent problems, especially in matters of public health. Even efforts to keep the ineffective local government machine creaking along,required more co-operation among these bodies than was usually evident. The disputes and lack of confidence among the authorities were intensified by the class differences between them and indeed also by the suspicions aroused by the very efforts being made to secure some re-organization of the structure of local government in the town.

This situation, exacerbated by the legal and financial impotence of much of local government, was in the early 1850's producing a total collapse of public confidence in the existing machinery. The chartist attack on the work of the Chief Bailiff as "The pranks of this high functionary and Grand Buffoon"[163] could be dismissed as mere partisan invective. It was, however, more difficult to put the

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163. The Lever, p. 73.

same interpretation on the middle-class Sentinel's attacks on the Commissioners generally - they were a "secret conclave" whose affairs should be more openly conducted for "We do not know if any of them have gas shares". In the next issue they were "a self-elected body, representing nobody", and, a month later, "self-elected and irresponsible."[164] The Market Trust and the highways boards, especially that for Shelton, were in an even more vulnerable position and suffered accordingly from public attacks.[165]

As public impatience mounted,the search for alternatives began. Hanley was suffering the pangs of urban growth quite late in the day and Parliament had already provided the means for rationalizing the town's government and for providing the powers needed to tackle its public health problems. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 and the Public Health Act of 1848 both provided a way out of the dilemma. All that was required was a clear demonstration that the inhabitants would welcome one of these solutions to their unhappy divisions.

In practice the search for a replacement to the existing

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164. Sentinel. 28. Jan. 1854. 4. Feb. 1854. 18. Mar. 1854.

165. The attacks on the Shelton Highways Board have already been considered at length in this section. Even those who were prepared publicly to defend the achievements of the Market Trust could not approve of the secrecy surrounding its accounts and were prepared to concede that the time had come for a consolidation of all the local government bodies. This was the view, for example of a correspondent in the Sentinel. (16. Sept. 1854).

ramshackle structure was to occupy eight valuable years from 1849 to 1857. This search, the factors influencing its course and the tensions it exposed within the town, form the subject matter of the next two chapters of this study.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUGGLE FOR A LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH

1849 - 1854

The pressure for reform of local government emanated from the outbreak of cholera in the Potteries in 1848 and was, until 1851, concerned to find a solution which would apply to all the parish of Stoke-on-Trent. The highlights of these years were the public health inquiry of 1849 and the subsequent report by Robert Rawlinson, published in 1850. When agreement on a district scheme of reform proved impossible a campaign developed to establish a local board of health for Hanley alone and there was in consequence in 1853 a second public health report on the town.

The 'reform party' in Hanley was divided on important issues and their cause was made more precarious by the rising ground-swell of working-class opposition to reform. Until April, 1854, however, all the existing local authorities continued to support the cause of reform, although all wanted it on their own terms, but in that month the consensus broke down over the related issues of the future of the Market Trust and the qualification which would be necessary for membership of the local board of health.

The various local manoeuvres occupied virtually all of the period during which Edwin Chadwick dominated the General Board of Health in London. They illustrate the local prejudices and vested interests which he faced in his efforts to reconstruct and strengthen local government. The time they were allowed to take, suggests that, contrary to his reputation as an impatient man, he was not anxious merely to override local opposition and cut short the tedious course of local debate. Eventually the local opponents of reform found valuable allies amongst the national opposition to Chadwick and to the centralized form of local government which the General Board of Health was alleged to represent. In 1854 the provisional order to establish a local board of health in Hanley came before the House of Commons at the same time as the great crisis of Chadwick's own stormy career moved to its dramatic climax.

The cholera scare in the autumn of 1848 caused committees of inspection to be set up in Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton to organize the removal of nuisances and with a wide brief to take action to prevent the spread of the disease.[1] It was these inspection

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1. Rawlinson Report (1850), pp. 7-8. The Hanley committee, which was closely associated with the Commissioners and had John Ridgway as its chairman, continued to function during most of 1849.

committees who, early in 1849, took the first step to secure a more long-term solution to the public health problem. In Fenton the inspectors in the employ of the committee and in Hanley and Stoke the committees themselves forwarded resolutions to the General Board of Health that an inspector of the Board should be sent to the parish to consider the case for applying the Public Health Act of 1848 to the area and thus create a local board of health which would have greater and more permanent powers than they enjoyed as ad hoc committees of inspection.

The General Board agreed to send an inspector but there was, from the outset, opposition to the action taken by the committees of the three towns. The committee at Longton informed the General Board that such an inquiry was unnecessary in view of the falling mortality rate in the town and the existence of an adequate Local Act.[2] The Stoke Improvement Commissioners also opposed the inquiry as did Alderman Copeland, the Conservative Member for the Stoke Parliamentary Borough. In Hanley, despite the committee's clear declaration that local application of the Public Health Act was

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2. ibid.p. 8. A Local Act of 1839 had established Improvement Commissioners in each of the three towns of Longton, Fenton and Stoke. They had lower financial qualifications for membership and wider powers for action than had the Watching and Lighting Commissioners established for both Burslem and Hanley in 1825. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 194.

desirable, the inhabitants generally were divided on the issue and a public meeting was called to discuss its implications.[3]

The General Board, ignoring these portents of opposition, appointed Robert Rawlinson to conduct the inquiry[4] which opened within six weeks of the committees forwarding their memorials to the Board. At public sessions in each of the towns in the parish, evidence was taken on matters of public health and local government and in addition, Rawlinson made a tour of each town during his six days in the district. A description of his personal inspections and of the evidence presented to him, together with his recommendations on the future pattern of government for the parish, formed the corpus of his report, dated the 17th June, 1849. The report was not published until a year later but there had been a previous disclosure of its main proposal, namely, that in accordance with the terms of the 1848 Public Health Act, a local board of health be set up in the Stoke Parish.

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3. Advertiser. 27. Jan. 1849.

4. For further information on this most interesting and zealous of government inspectors see the appendix to this chapter. As the annual mortality rate in the parish was over 23 per 1,000 inhabitants, the General Board could act without waiting for a petition, from one tenth of the ratepayers, requesting it to do so.

The local board was to have 27 members (Hanley, Shelton, Stoke and Longton each electing six and Fenton electing three of these) each of whom would have to be qualified for membership through residence in the parish and by owning personal estate with a value of at least £800 or by being rated for poor relief to a value of at least £25 per annum.

This proposal of Rawlinson's was never put into effect apparently because of the amount of opposition it encountered within the parish, although the evidence available on this point is slender. The influential opposition in Longton and Stoke and the division of opinion in Hanley have been noted while even the Fenton health inspectors who had asked for an inquiry had, in their invitation, urged that nothing should result from it that would increase the rate burden. Which of these elements of opposition or hesitancy proved decisive there is no means of telling: Rawlinson later simply noted that his proposals had not been carried out.[5]

The Minute Book of the Hanley Commissioners[6] suggests that they were the only local body in complete support of Rawlinson's

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5. Rawlinson Report (1853) p. 1. The deference of the General Board of Health to this local opposition certainly contradicts the popular image of the methods of the Board under Chadwick's influence.

6. Commissioners' Minutes. 15. Jan. 1851. 17. Jan. 1851.

proposed scheme. They were prepared to see their powers absorbed by a local board of health though anxious to preserve the office of Chief Bailiff in each of the towns, even if these officials were in future to be elected by the local board. Even among the Commissioners separatist feelings lingered on to this extent and these became more acute when they realised that members from the other towns could levy rates and take decisions affecting Hanley.[7] They nevertheless at this point, believed that the authorities in Stoke, Longton and Fenton, who had once opposed the proposal, had undergone a considerable change of attitude. In this, however, they were unreasonably optimistic. The mutual suspicions of the Potteries' towns were to make a regional solution impossible and within a fortnight of accepting the parish scheme the Commissioners themselves had disowned it and were expressing the wish that the Public Health Act should be applied to Hanley and Shelton "unconnected with the other parts of the parish."[8]

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7. As Hanley and Shelton were to elect 12 of the 27 members of the board this argument presumably carried even more weight in the other three towns. Commissioners Minutes. 15. Jan. 1851 17. Jan. 1851.

8. ibid. 4. Feb. 1851. Their natural optimism then immediately led them to instruct the rate collector not to proceed with the next rate collection in view of the imminent introduction of the Public Health Act into the town.

They then postponed consideration of this plan and proposed instead a scheme for incorporating the town or preferably an incorporation of the parliamentary borough of Stoke. Investigation of these proposals revealed little enthusiasm for them and it became clear that the Commissioners had, with all their swift changes of plan, seriously underestimated the obstacles to local government reform.

At the end of May 1851 they had to acknowledge that they had failed not only to take the neighbouring towns along with them in their desire for reform but that they had also failed to secure the support of the inhabitants of Hanley itself. Deeply regretting the differences of opinion in the district over the introduction of the Public Health Act they went on to denounce the lukewarm support of many of the inhabitants and property owners who "influenced by groundless fears, sought to delay the cause of local reform."[9]

In view of this situation, the Commissioners, despite their own continued conviction that reform was essential, decided to postpone further consideration of the problem. When they resumed their deliberations these were limited to the question of a solution for Hanley's own difficulties. Whatever reforms were to take place

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9. ibid. 29. May. 1851.

within the town the search for a regional solution to local government and public health problems was at this point finally abandoned.

It is noteworthy that in 1851 the only committed advocates of reform were the Hanley Commissioners who were at once the most powerful and the most criticized of the authorities in the town. Despite the setback of that year, they at least remained convinced of the need for reform and in the following spring appointed a committee to resume the quest for an acceptable scheme.[10]

The public debate on the government of Hanley was, however, re-opened in the summer of 1852 at a meeting called by the Pottery Central Reform Association, a body of Liberal electors and non-electors who had just fought a vigorous campaign to capture both Stoke

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10. The resolution which set up the committee read "The opinion of the ratepayers or inhabitants as expressed at several public meetings, convened to consider the propriety of introducing the Health of Towns Bill, being adverse to the application of that measure to the townships it is necessary that some other means should be adopted to promote the sanitary condition of the inhabitants. Whereupon it is resolved that the object will be best accomplished either by an extension of the powers of the Commissioners under the existing local acts or an incorporation of the townships." ibid. 8. Apr. 1852. A fortnight later the committee was instructed also to give further consideration to applying the Public Health Act to the town.

parliamentary seats for their party. With victory dinners out of the way they turned to the question of local government reform and at this meeting they carried a motion in favour of incorporation of the town.[11] This initiative sparked off a debate that was to last for almost two years and in this way local government reform in Hanley can be seen as in part a product of the political enthusiasm aroused locally by the General Election of 1852 even though the search for solutions outlived the impact of the election and the Reform Association was only influential in the early stages of the debate.

From the disappointments of the previous years the Commissioners had come to realise that a successful conclusion to the reform question depended on their gaining the support of influential opinion in the town. They therefore used this independent initiative to encourage a general debate on the problems associated with local government reform and, having frankly admitted their own inability to govern the town effectively, they invited all interested parties to meet them in order that, however belatedly, the state of public opinion on the matter could be established.[12]

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11. Advertiser. 21. Aug. 1853.

12. ibid. 4. Sept. 1852.

They themselves claimed at this stage to be prepared to consider any of three alternative means of obtaining reform, namely, incorporation, the setting up of a local board of health or an extension of their own powers by means of another local Act. The Reform Association had already declared their support for incorporation and after the Commissioners' open invitation the 'Saracen's Head Committee', of "numerous influential gentlemen of all shades of political opinion", emerged to support a local board of health.[13] At the first joint-meeting sponsored by the Commissioners the proposal to extend their own power encountered strenuous opposition reflecting fear of the likely cost of a local Act as well as resentment of their privileged position in the town. In later discussions this last alternative was not seriously considered.

The 'Saracen's Head Committee' and the Reform Association Committee were joined, at their first meeting with some twenty of the Commissioners, by a delegation from the Shelton Highways Board and at later meetings by representatives of the Hanley Highways Board but never in an official capacity by members of the Market Trust. Three joint-meetings of these bodies took place in September 1852 with a private meeting of the Commissioners falling between the first and the second. At them the merits and disadvantages of each of the

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13. ibid. 11. Sept. 1852.

two practicable alternative forms of local government were discussed by men, the majority of whom had in common the opinion that some change was necessary to achieve effective government for the town.

The common concern with the local government and public health problem[14] contributed much to the good tempered tone of the first joint-meeting of the various delegations[15] at which the Reform Association's case for incorporation was taken up by Dr. Haslam, the Chief Bailiff. This rested on the argument that introduction of the Public Health Act would not give to the town all the power that was needed and in particular would not give the town its own magistracy or the control of its own police force.[16] At this first meeting, despite persistent differences over the qualification to be adopted for membership of the council, Haslam's persuasive advocacy

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14. The spectre of the return of cholera, in the absence of improvements in drainage and wider sanitary powers, was held before the meeting by John Clementson, a pottery manufacturer and Chief Bailiff during the preceding four years.

15. This led the Staffordshire Advertiser to make the singularly unfortunate prediction that earlier differences of opinion might now be eased.

16. A municipal council could almost automatically acquire the extra powers of a local board of health. The annoyance caused by the absence of a local magistracy is considered in the next chapter as is the police question although it should be added that since the formation of the County Police in 1842 the crime rate in the district was in fact falling significantly. (Evidence of the Chief Superintendant of Police for N. Staffordshire to the 1856 incorporation inquiry - Sentinel. 8. Nov. 1856).

secured "a most generous approval" for the idea of incorporation.[17]

The support won at this meeting, however, rapidly disintegrated at the separate meeting of the Commissioners held in the following week. It then became clear that amongst the most influential inhabitants of the town the concept of a wider reform of local government, than one just embracing Hanley alone, was far from dead. In the words of John Clementson, the last Chief Bailiff, they preferred that a Charter of Incorporation "should comprehend the whole Pottery district" but that as the problems of public health brooked no delay they should as an interim measure apply immediately for the introduction of the Public Health Act into Hanley alone. The three Anglican clergymen among the Commissioners suggested as a compromise which would avoid divisions and consequent delays, that both measures should be applied for simultaneously. John Ridgway shared Clementson's views on district incorporation "but if the greater measure were found impracticable he should not be averse to the less" and on his advice the compromise proposed was agreed to and forwarded to the second meeting of interested parties.[18]

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17. Advertiser. 11. Sept. 1852.

18. ibid. 18. Sept. 1852.

This manoeuvre coincided with the apparent removal of another obstacle to reform when Ridgway denied earlier reports that the Market Trustees were not prepared to allow the Trust to come under the control of either a municipal corporation or a local board of health. As one of the Trustees, he asserted that if as individuals they could be released from their personal responsibilities under the Trust "they would not be averse to merging their powers in those of one governing body." At the second joint-meeting this view, in the absence of formal representation of the Trust, was confirmed by the individual trustees who were present. They qualified their approval with the opinion that in addition, surrender of their powers would have to be preceded by assurances that the interests of the Trust would not suffer. The deep suspicion of the Trustees was not allayed and their supplementary prerequisites to surrender were to provide a useful smokescreen behind which they were to continue to exercise their powers for another decade.

The cause of reform suffered at the hands of its supporters as, in a search for the ideal solution to the town's problems, they exchanged one scheme for another. Such abrupt changes had already occurred among the Commissioners in the previous years and now the pattern was repeated more publicly at the three meetings with the 'outside' committees. The initial unanimity on incorporation was

transformed into a simultaneous application for both incorporation and a local board of health until at the final meeting of the delegations a decision to apply only for a local board of health received the support of the majority of those present.

At this final meeting it was once more the public health issue, emphasized by Dr. Head, one of the instigators of the 1849 public health inquiry, which assumed paramount importance and pursuit of a charter of incorporation was depicted as an unprofitable and expensive irrelevance. The progress made by Burslem under a Board of Health and the danger of Hanley being left behind in the march to improvement were both used to underline the moral. John Ridgway expressed the latest prevailing mood:-

> "In all respects, sewerage, abatement and removal of nuisances, sweeping and watering the streets, regulating lodging houses, and supressing houses of infamy the Health of Towns Act seemed to give them all they could desire for local government; and the application of the Act could be effected at a very light expense. A charter of incorporation in addition would give a few civil distinctions which those who liked to be mayors and aldermen might prize but he did not see any great advantage in them; and they might be purchased at sadly too dear a rate". 19

It was significant that this re-emphasis on a local board of health came from within the ranks of the Commissioners and was promoted by the wealthiest of the town's inhabitants who saw a charter

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19. ibid. 2. Oct. 1852. The Burslem local board of health had been set up in 1850. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. pp. 125-126.

of incorporation as an irrelevance except in the context of district incorporation. They now felt that they had sufficient influential support to apply for introduction of the Public Health Act even if this meant losing the approval of the tradesmen and respectable working-men who formed the Reform Association.

In the course of the three joint-meetings another division of opinion emerged as it became clear that the attitudes of most of those present to the alternative schemes of reform were being decisively influenced by the critical issue of the financial qualification necessary for membership of a local board of health or of a town council. This had been discussed at the first meeting in the context of incorporation and had led to a serious division of opinion between the two alternatives of a £15 or a £30 rating qualification. At their own ensuing meeting the Commissioners felt that under the Public Health Act the question of qualification was a matter for the Privy Council to decide but gave a clear indication of their own preferences by discussing at length the implications of a £30 rating valuation or ownership of real estate worth £1,000 becoming the minimum qualifications.[20]

The Reform Association and the two Highways Boards felt strongly

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20. It would they argued provide almost 100 potential members of a local board of health, ibid. 18. Sept. 1852. At the earlier joint-meeting the £30 rate qualification, it had been argued, reduced the potential membership of a council to 69 while a £15 qualification provided 345 possible candidates.

that a much lower qualification than this was required, indeed the boards seemed at first disposed to accept whichever form of local government appeared to be the more truly representative. The qualification for membership of a local board of health could be set at any point between £30 and £3 annual rateable value and the attraction of the latter figure disposed the Hanley Highways Board to prefer a local board to incorporation where the only alternative qualifications were £30 or £15. This feature of incorporation was also disliked by the Shelton Highways Board as were the three year residence qualification for voting and the deprivation of the right to vote for failure to pay the poor rate.[21]

The Chief Bailiff, Dr. Haslam, appreciating that the question of qualification was the main issue dividing the various bodies, made

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21. ibid. 2. Oct. 1852. Brian Keith-Lucas, (The English Local Government Franchise' p. 155) describing the 1848 Public Health Act as intended to protect the interests of those who would bear the greatest financial burden and taking minimal account of the interests of the working-classes, failed to indicate that any qualification lower than £30 was available for membership of a local board. This omission blunts his criticism of the 18 48 legislation for in Hanley it was precisely the existence of lower qualifications that made the Public Health Act an attractive alternative to incorporation in the eyes of working class extremists.

a vain effort to reduce its significance:-

> "With respect to the non-representative character of the measure (reform by means of incorporation) some gentlemen seemed to labour under a mistake in confounding the right to elect with the qualification to be elected."

Differences of opinion over details of the qualification, however, now hardened and became fundamental issues of principle which destroyed any hope of unanimity on the reform question and led, at the last of the three meetings, to the emergence of a group totally opposed to any reform of the town's government.

These opponents of reform were drawn from members of the two highways boards to whom John Ridgway found it necessary to address an appeal that they should imitate the example of the other local authorities and show a disposition to merge their powers in one efficient form of local government.[22] When this appeal went unheard it became clear that these three joint-meetings, intended by the Commissioners to create a united front for reform, had only succeeded in totally dividing the participants. The division was no longer primarily between those who wanted incorporation and those who wanted a

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22. A member of the Shelton board had condemned incorporation on the grounds that the minimum qualification for council membership was too high and went on, using the mortality statistics, to question the justification for applying the Public Health Act to the town. Another had sought the impossible by requiring that any sanitary measure for the town must include the factories as bad working conditions were the basic cause of the high rate of mortality. ibid. 2. Oct. 1852.

local board of health.[23] They at least were united in a desire for change in the status quo. Of increasing importance was the division between on the one hand the reformers and on the other, those who now began to see any reform as likely to restrict the power of the smaller ratepayers and to end their own petty influence in the affairs of the town.

The position of the opponents to reform was dramatically strengthened a month later when a public meeting of ratepayers voted overwhelmingly against promoting any change in the management of the town's affairs and it then became clear that most of the delegations at the joint-meetings represented only a minority of the ratepayers.[24]

The first reaction of the Commissioners to this public rejection of their initiatives was to abandon their immediate plans to apply for a local board but to reserve their right to re-open the subject

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23. The Reform Association remained convinced that incorporation was the preferable solution and carried resolutions to this effect at their October meeting (ibid. 16. Oct. 1852). This continued division of emphasis among the reformers weakened the position of the Commissioners but later provided a way out of the deadlock between the protagonists over a local board of health.

24. There was no press report of this crucial meeting and its dating to October 29th, 1852 is established from the Commissioners' Minutes (11. Nov. 1852). As a result of this the names of the participants and the arguments they employed are unfortunately lost, it is known however that the Chief Bailiff later threatened to resign office because of incidents at the meeting. (Commissioners' Minutes, 25. Nov. 1852).

at any suitable opportunity.[25] The effect of the ratepayers' decision on the wider movement for reform was to reconcile those who wanted change but who had previously disagreed as to the form which it should take.[26] The first fruit of this reconciliation was a visit by a deputation from "certain united committees" to the November meeting of the Commissioners in order to urge that body to proceed with their application for the introduction of the Public Health Act into Hanley "for want of which the town was awfully suffering." It was the deputation's opinion that there could be neither comfort nor safety until the sanitary advantages of the measure were realised.[27]

These representations were eagerly seized upon by the Commissioners "as it appears that a change has taken place in Public Opinion, as manifested by the Union of the Committees and their agreement for the adoption of the Health of Towns Act, this meeting not only feels at liberty but under a solemn obligation to presecute this matter without further delay".[28] The possibility exists that

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25. ibid; 11. Nov. 1852.

26. Advertiser 4. Dec. 1852.

27. ibid. 27. Nov. 1852.

28. Commissioners' Minutes 30. Nov. 1852. With 20 commissioners present this was one of the best attended of their meetings.

some of the more active commissioners, disagreeing with the defeatist reaction of their fellows to the outcome of the public meeting, had carefully stage-managed this deputation in order to give themselves a pretext for ignoring the ratepayers' decision.[29] In the absence of other evidence there is no valid reason for assuming that in fact public opinion on the issue had altered in any way since the fateful meeting at the end of October.

The Commissioners, however, having failed to achieve a united front in favour of reform, were now prepared to press their case in defiance of a substantial body of hostile opinion in the town. The most committed advocates of reform must often have been bewildered by the frequent changes of policy in which the Commissioners had previously indulged but all this was now at an end, as, committed at last to a fixed course of action, they immediately proceeded to implement their resolution by electing a delegation to call on the General Board of Health.

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29. Clearly no change had taken place in public opinion and the mystery remains as to who constituted these "united committees." If a public authority like one of the highways boards had been represented on the deputation this would surely have been publicized in some way. The only other known 'committees' were the 'Saracen's Head Committee' and the Reform Association: it is possible that the latter had decided to abandon incorporation and support a local board of health(but see note 23). In any case the deputation can only have represented an influential minority of the mass of the ratepayers.

The Opposition to reform of Local Government.

The expressions of hostility to any change in the government of the town which had been voiced at the public meeting of October 29th, 1852, had antecedents going back to 1848 and the first call for a public health inquiry. At the time of the inquiry the inhabitants of Hanley had been divided on the prospect of a district board of health. In 1851 and again in 1852 the Commissioners had been reluctantly compelled to recognize the disquiet in the town at the prospect of reform.[30]

Throughout these years the opposition to reform arose almost entirely among members of the working-classes, who were aided by literally one or two medical men and a few tradesmen.[31] They were led by a few political activists from among their own ranks, several of whom were associated with the Shelton Highways Board or among the town's representatives on the Board of Guardians and some of whom retained strong Chartist sympathies. Their campaign was deeply marked by the knowledge that any scheme of local government reform would involve a clash of interests between the different social classes in the town.

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30. See footnotes 3, 9 and 10 to this chapter.

31. Despite a reference by the Commissioners to opposition from owners of property there is no other evidence of any active resistance from any group or individuals who could be so described.

A petition to Rawlinson from Charles Hackney and other operative potters of Hanley and Shelton had, in 1849 given this feeling of class consciousness its most coherent expression. They had opposed the imposition of a local board of health because it would result in misplaced power and deny the smaller ratepayers their right to a voice in making the law which bound them.[32] Castigating the measure as centralization they considered it gave irresponsible power to the executive employees and often gave office to those who already had lucrative positions and did not need it, while others were left behind, deserving but destitute.

In these circumstances the tactics adopted by the opponents of reform were the obvious ones of arousing working-class discontent at the proposed measure and then demonstrating to the General Board of Health the extent of this feeling. Public meetings were a useful means of achieving both objectives and these were supplemented by petitions and memorials from the highways boards and the guardians to the Board's inspector, a tactic which was later extended to

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32. Rawlinson Report (1850), p. 9. Such a denial they considered would produce inefficient government and public discontent. They cited the years when the higher classes had dominated the highways boards in the town and the failure of the higher classes on the Board of Guardians to respond to the wishes of the ratepayers in support of their thesis.

petitioning the Board directly.[33] Large numbers of men from the working-classes also attended both of the public health inquiries conducted by Rawlinson and on the second occasion they forced through a resolution against adopting the Public Health Act.[34]

In order to rally support among the smaller ratepayers the leading opponents of reform raised the spectre of the considerable increase in the rate burden which would follow the establishment of a local board of health. This was the main theme at a public meeting, "chiefly of operatives", which followed the publication of Rawlinson's first report. James Capewell, the prominent Hanley Chartist attacked Rawlinson's 'deliberate deception' in claiming that the Public Health Act would save money - "had the Poor Law and the County Constabulary Act saved money?" He urged that the measure should be resisted until its precise cost had been established. Another Chartist, Charles Heath, speculated gloomily on the likely costs of the measure and foresaw a salary of £500 a year for some London man to act as the engineer, a sum equal to half the combined rate of the two highways boards. No doubt there would also be a

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33. There were references in 1851 to "numerously signed petitions against the Act". Advertiser. 8. Mar. 1851.

34. Rawlinson Report (1853), pp. 6 and 9.

staff for the local board at least as large as that for the Poor Law, for which there had already been five rate requisitions in the current year.[35] Such arguments resulted in unanimous approval for a motion condemning the plan, for a local board of health for the parish, as an expensive measure whose real cost was being concealed until after its introduction.

This decision was not at all surprising for the working-classes in the town were acutely sensitive to the danger of any increase in their rate burden. The 'spectre of expense' had indeed been raised in the operative potters' petition to Rawlinson. This had opposed the introduction of a local board on the grounds of the cost involved and had supported its case by references to the bad state of the pottery trade during the last six or seven years (1842 to 1849) which was in turn re-inforced by giving specific examples of typical rates of wages paid in the industry. It pointed

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35. Advertiser. 20. July. 1850. The Hanley Highways Board later elaborated on the theme, suggesting an intial expense of £1,000 for an ordnance survey and an annual bill for salaries of at least £680, in contrast to the £25 received by their own collector and surveyor. They alleged that application of the Public Health Act to Burslem had doubled the rate burden from one shilling to two. ibid. 29. Mar. 1851. The last charge provoked an indignant denial from the Chief Bailiff of Burslem who pointed out that the rate there had increased from 1/9d to 2/-. ibid. 5. Apr. 1851.

to the difficulties involved in collecting rates at their existing levels and wondered how they would be able to pay if more were laid on - "Good sewerage may increase our personal comforts and conveniences but if it tends to deprive us still more of our now scanty living, we fear the introduction of it".[36]

In this way the financial implications of reform became an issue at the outset of the public health inquiry at a time when the depressed state of the pottery industry added to their impact. Rawlinson anxious, in Hanley as elsewhere, to counter such fears urged that the intention of the Public Health Act was to give relief from and not to add to, official and pecuniary burdens but his assurances failed to allay the concern felt by the working-classes.[37] The improvement in the pottery trade coming after 1850 however, robbed these financial arguments of some of their force and in later years they were less frequently used.[38]

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36. Rawlinson Report (1850), p. 9.

37. ibid. p. 9. It was in 1849 that "Rawlinson's long and eloquent plea in the packed town hall" won over the citizens of Macclesfield to support for the Public Health Act. D. Roberts, 'Victorian Origins of the Welfare State'. pp. 314-315.

38. A committee set up by the Commissioners to promote the local board of health later commented that"The alarm of enormous expense and increased rates gradually subsided". Commissioners' Minutes. 20. July. 1854. There were several references to the improvement in the pottery trade, for example, the Advertiser 27. Dec. 1851, 20 Dec. 1852. The Lever (1851), p. 193.

Two other common arguments used to oppose the establishment of a local board of health were, first, that it would not have the power to deal with the basic causes of the health problem, and second that the town was not unhealthy nor inefficiently governed. It was not unknown for both these arguments to be used on the same occasion and even by the same individual even though there is an element of contradiction in them.

Among the opponents of reform, views differed as to what constituted the fundamental causes of the health problem. They were, however, in general agreement on one point, namely, that working conditions in the pottery industry were a far more important cause of mortality than were deficiences in sanitary arrangements.[39] The inquiry of 1842 into conditions in the industry had been concerned only with the employment of children and had in any case been quite unproductive. A point taken up by a local surgeon, Mr. Chawner,

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39. In support of this thesis a working potter gave Rawlinson a graphic description of conditions in the industry (Rawlinson Report (1850), p. 54), and his opinions were in turn supported by Dr. Dale, the Hanley parish medical officer who also considered bad meat to be a serious cause of disease. (ibid. pp. 60-61). James Capewell at a public meeting, made the point that "the greatest amount of disease amongst them arose from the long hours during which they were obliged to exist in inconvenient and overheated workshops". (Advertiser. 20. July. 1850). For a fuller consideration of working conditions see Chapter I.

when he presented a public lecture on local health problems, arguing the need for a "Health of Manufactories Bill" rather than a "Health of Towns Bill".

Chawner saw so many other causes of the high death rate which were equally outside the scope of the powers of a local board as to render such a body irrelevant to the local situation. The chief causes of fever lay in the intemperance and the poverty or even destitution of the people, rather than in lack of sewerage. Rather than introduce a local board, the town's problems could best be resolved by the highways boards continuing their present vigorous action and by the working classes attending to cleanliness, temperance and their other social duties. On advocating the substitution of home-brewed beer for illicit whisky he clashed with a temperance supporter who had the even simpler solution that with universal total abstinence there would be no need for bills to improve health.[40]

To the Chartists on the other hand:-

> "The principal cause of nuisances in the township was a dereliction of duty on the part of owners of property, in not constructing proper conveniences for the occupiers of their dwelling houses. And was the public at large to be taxed because these individuals failed to perform their duty?" [41]

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40. Advertiser. 18. Jan. 1851.

41. ibid. 20. July. 1850.

Complementing these attempts to cast doubt on the competence of a local board of health to resolve the important issues, the opponents of reform also sought to show that where, in the sphere of public health, it would have the necessary powers, the condition of the town was not such as to require their application.

In order to do this they had first to challenge the mortality statistics, submitted to the inquiry by Rawlinson himself, which indicated an annual death rate in Hanley of 28 or 29 per 1,000 inhabitants.[42] On behalf of the Guardians it was argued that his calculations ignored the growth of population since the census of 1841 and that "The mortality in Hanley and Shelton, candidly stated, so far from averaging 28 or 29 in the thousand was not even 23....."[43] This it was claimed would certainly be the case if allowance were made for the presence in the town of an infirmary

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42. Rawlinson Report (1850), pp. 16-18. For a fuller discussion of the rates of mortality see Chapter II. (Part I.).

43. ibid. p. 45. The significance of a death rate of 23 per 1,000 was that below this rate a local health inquiry could not be imposed on a community unless ten per cent of the ratepayers had asked for it. As this had not been the case in the Stoke parish this reference constituted an indirect attack on the legality of the inquiry being conducted by Rawlinson. To be as candid as Rawlinson's critics it should be added that their allegations were quite unfounded; his figures did attempt to take the rise in population into account - see footnote 66 to Chapter II.

which served all of North Staffordshire as Rawlinson had conveniently forgotten to do in order to exaggerate the apparent mortality among the inhabitants.

Faced with the formidable medical evidence in favour of reform the opposition, aided by the presence of a medical man in their own ranks, attempted to challenge the integrity of the medical witnesses to the inquiry and to ridicule the picture they had presented of the sanitary state of the town. Mr. Chawner, the surgeon, publicly emphasized the gross ignorance revealed by the other medical men in their testimony and singled out for especial abuse, Dr. Head, who had been one of the promoters of the inquiry - this man was looking out for a snug berth under a local board and having recently been convicted of allowing a nuisance on his premises was quite certainly hypocritical in his concern over public health.[44] Another surgeon's efforts to relate the incidence of fever to the prevalence of bad drainage was attacked in similar terms.

Chawner marvelled that all this formidable array of medical witnesses had managed to name only one endemic disease, namely goitre, which he was convinced was caused by children employed in the pottery industry, carrying heavy weights on their heads. Only Dr. Dale, parish medical officer for the Hanley township, merited

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44. Advertiser. 20. July, 1850.

a word of praise from his fellow doctor and this for his evidence, that in six years he had attended only 81 cases of fever, with a mere seven fatalities, which, to Chawner, was conclusive proof that the district was not unhealthy.[45]

Despite frequent repetition by his admirers, Chawner's opinions did little to meet the case presented by the majority of the town's doctors that there was a clear relation established between the incidence of disease and death in a locality and its sanitary state. Nevertheless they served their purpose in arousing working-class suspicion of the motives and the capabilities of the medical witnesses who favoured reform.

An important feature of the opposition's campaign against reform was the stress laid on the large number of recent improvements carried out in the town.[46] This was intended to justify their central contention that the existing structure of local government was adequate for the town's needs and in practice involved paying lavish tribute to the achievement of the highways boards in improving the condition of the previously neglected courts and alleys, especially in the Joiners' Square district since the cholera outbreak there in 1848.[47] This last point was intended to paper over one of the

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45. ibid. 18. Jan. 1851.

46. The extent of these improvements was often exaggerated to create a totally false impression - see for example footnote 13 to Chapter II.

47. Advertiser. 20. July. 1850. 5. Apr. 1851.

flaws in their picture of a town with no serious public health problems and to counter the potent fear of cholera that was felt by even the most reluctant ratepayer.

The Shelton Highways Board surveyor told Rawlinson that the drainage powers granted under the Highways Act and the powers under the Nuisance Removal Act were together, sufficient to provide for improvement in the town's sanitary condition.[48] The Chartists loudly proclaimed the same message at public meetings - the introduction of a local board was unnecessary in view of all that had already been done in the town, for within a short space of time an effective drainage system could be provided, relying only on the powers already available to them.[49]

The argument that the establishment of a local board of health should be opposed because it would mark an undue surrender of local power to the central government, was taken up by the opposition at an early date and proved useful in arousing local feelings on the subject of reform. The Lever supplemented vitriolic attacks on all who differed from its own point of view in local affairs, with condemnation of the Public Health Act as the same brand of centralization as Peel's police and the Poor Law, envisaging fat

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48. Rawlinson Report (1850), p. 45.

49. The credibility of such claims, and of the men who made them, should be assessed in the light of the description of the local government situation set out in the second part of Chapter II of this study.

London officials looking after the stench taps and sewerage of Hanley.[50] The cry of centralisation was also heard at public meetings and was to be repeated with increased vehemence in the later stages of the campaign against reform. In this, the local tactics against a board of health reflected those of the national campaign waged against Chadwick and the General Board of Health.

By means of this and all their other arguments, the leading opponents of reform were struggling fundamentally to retain their own slender share of local power as exercised on the highways boards. This motive, implicit in all the praise lavished on the achievements of the highways boards, was occasionally given specific expression as, for example, at the public meeting when the Chartist, Charles Heath, demanded the continuation of his right to assist in the management of the town's affairs[51] or when the Lever denounced the Public Health Act because it precluded a working-man from holding office.[52]

The opposition campaign reached an apparently triumphant climax when a large majority of the inhabitants present at the critical public meeting of October, 29th, 1852, rejected the renewed initiative

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50. The Lever. pp. 69-71 (29. Mar. 1851).

51. Advertiser 20, July, 1850. Heath was, about this time, clerk to the Shelton Highways Board.

52. The Lever, p. 74.

of the Commissioners and voted to oppose any measure of local government reform.

The Campaign for Reform, 1853-1854.

The success enjoyed by the opponents of reform in converting the majority of the working-class to their point of view was in fact largely irrelevant to the outcome of the issue unless the General Board of Health and its inspector chose to be so awed by the strength of the local opposition that they decided not to proceed with the measure.[53] Rawlinson's report of 1850 showed that he was in favour of introducing the Public Health Act into the district and it seemed inevitable that the General Board would follow whatever lead he gave, so far as the situation in Hanley was concerned, especially in view of the support for the measure amongst the most influential inhabitants.

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53. Once a public inquiry had been held the initiative for reform, under the terms of the Public Health Act of 1848, lay entirely with the General Board who were not compelled to take into account the state of local opinion. In Hanley a local board of health's powers would cut across existing local government boundaries and so any Provisional Order issued by the General Board would require Parliamentary confirmation.

These factors had exercised a moderating influence among sufficient members of the highways boards to the extent that they had been prepared to discuss the possibility of reform at the meetings called by the Commissioners in September 1852. Only after they had failed to obtain any satisfaction over the issue of the qualifications needed for membership of a local board of health had they called the public meeting at which the frustration of the ratepayers had exploded into total opposition to reform. It seemed probable at that point that there would be an immediate open clash on the reform issue with the two sides forming-up largely on a class basis. In the event, the clash was averted until April 1854 because the highways boards, despite the mandate given them by the inhabitants and to the surprise of local commentators, again adopted a more flexible line.

Prior to Christmas 1852 a deputation from the highways boards to the General Board of Health argued the case for a £15 rating qualification for membership of any local board.[54] It was the Staffordshire Advertiser which expressed astonishment at this move in view of the widely held impression in the town that the highways boards were utterly opposed to the introduction of a local board. Local

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54. In this they were supporting an earlier letter to the same effect from the working-class dominated Guardians.

feeling was "running high" and there was "some smart skirmishing with handbills" but for the moment the extremists on the boards had apparently been out-manoeuvred.[55] Chadwick himself was later to describe their deputation as not unfriendly to the measure but insistent on a £15 qualification because a £30 qualification would leave only 70 people in the town eligible for election.[56]

The decision of the Commissioners to apply for the introduction of the Public Health Act[57] had been followed by the organization of a petition in support of their request for which, within a fortnight of its inception, they had obtained some 1,200 signatures (from a total of 5,300 ratepayers in the town) including those of most of the manufacturers, tradesmen and principal ratepayers. Armed with this petition a deputation from the Commissioners called on Chadwick at the General Board.

The change of heart among the members of the highways boards had created the possibility of a compromise on the qualification issue, and Chadwick, who had every reason to avoid a local conflict

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55. Advertiser, 11. Dec. 1852. 5. Mar. 1853.

56. ibid. 5. Mar. 1853. The Commissioners disputed this - a £30 rating qualification plus a £1,000 property qualification would make 260 people eligible, or one in every 20 of the ratepayers. This was an upward revision of their earlier estimate (see footnote 20 to this chapter).

57. See page 182.

which could only delay application of the Public Health Act, suggested to the Commissioners that it might be appropriate to impose a qualification of £20. The view of the Commissioners was that the qualification was strictly a matter for the Privy Council to decide but they felt that the case for a £30 qualification was a compelling one.[58]

Their opinion in this reflected their own elevated social and economic status in Hanley and their concern that the management of the town's affairs should be in responsible hands. It was an opinion which found official expression in their minutes ".... the Act has also laid down a property qualification for Members of the Board according to population and circumstances because of the important duties committed to them and the heavy responsibilities devolving upon them".[59] It was in any case well known that the Market Trustees would only voluntarily surrender their powers to a

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58. Advertiser. 5. Mar. 1853. The Commissioners told Chadwick that the £30 qualification worked well in Burslem and they felt that it would be more neighbourly if Hanley had the same qualification.

59. Commissioners' Minutes. 20. July. 1854.

responsible local body[60] and the Commissioners, publicly committed to the view that the Trust would be surrendered to a local board,[61] were no longer free agents in the matter of the qualification.

Chadwick, having failed to obtain the Commissioners' agreement for his suggested compromise, informed them of the General Board of Health's unanimous agreement that conditions in Hanley were such as to require urgent application of the Public Health Act, but reserved his position on the question of the qualification to be adopted.

This was the situation in February 1853 and there the matter rested until November of the same year, when Rawlinson's second report was published. This document recommended the creation of a local board of health for Hanley with 18 members who would have to be qualified through ownership of real or personal estate to the value of at least £800 or through assessment for poor rates to the value of £25.

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60. The Trustees later made a £30 rating or a £1,000 property qualification for membership of the local board a prior condition to any consideration of surrendering the Trust. (Market Trustees' Minutes, 30. Dec. 1853).

61. In a speech of John Ridgway to the second of the joint-meetings held in September, 1852. Advertiser. 18. Sept. 1852.

The proposed qualification satisfied the aspirations of neither party to the dispute but the Commissioners and those who thought like them were disposed to accept Rawlinson's compromise. They commented later on the change from the £30 qualification, which they had sought, that:-

> "Desirous to show good feeling and secure unity of action your Committee recommended that this alteration should be accepted, and you (the Commissioners) promptly expressed your assent, as did the Trustees of Hanley Market, the Manufacturers and large Ratepayers generally, and many others, representing by far the largest amount of property in the Townships." 62.

The low qualification party on the other hand remained dissatisfied and determined to secure further concessions. The Chief Bailiff, however, declined to agree to theirrequest that he call a public meeting on the subject and, having made the Town Hall available to them, had the building placarded with a statement of his own determination not to attend and urging others to follow his example.

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62. From the report of the committee set up by the Commissioners to prosecute the matter of a local board. Commissioners' Minutes. 20. July. 1854. There is no evidence that prior to January 1854, the Market Trust formally agreed to the £25 qualification; to the contrary in December 1853, the £30 qualification was one of their minimum requirements. Market Trustees' Minutes, 30. Dec. 1853. But see also footnote 67 to this chapter.

The meeting was, however, well attended by the working-classes and had a pottery manufacturer, Robert Brown of Etruria, in the chair. He assumed that all present were agreed that the Public Health Act should be introduced in some form or other and that something should be done to promote the general health of the locality. If, however, the Act was to be beneficial it was necessary that it be brought into operation in a proper manner.

> "It was necessary that its working should be entrusted to hands which would conduct it efficiently and with economy and to that end it was essential that the qualification should be placed upon such a basis as would admit of a large number of persons, well qualified by sense and ability, as well as by property,being eligible for election to the local board. It was also advisable when the Act was introduced that it should embrace all the existing public bodies such as the Watching and Lighting Commissioners and Highway Boards and the Market Trust."

The applause which followed this last point was caused by a renewed suspicion that, despite earlier promises, the Market Trust would not be incorporated into a local board. This self-electing, comparatively affluent body was regarded with open envy and dislike by the leaders of the working-classes and the Guardians had again taken up the question of its future status with Rawlinson, who had indicated that in his opinion the Trust should surrender its property and powers to a local board. A resolution that this should be the

case was carried unanimously at this public meeting.[63]

It was, however, the qualification issue which continued to demand most attention as Rawlinson's compromise of £25 was dismissed as "contrary to the sacred principles of freedom, for affluent persons, in a superior station of life, once placed in a governing position, with the power to spend the money of a numerous class below, were too apt to dispose of it without due caution and consideration".[64] Such Chartist sentiments did not appeal to all those present at the meeting. Towards its close, several speakers urged that the dispute should be conducted in more moderate terms and personalities avoided. A working-man among these moderates particularly objected to the tone of one of the numerous pamphlets which had been circulated prior to the meeting - this, entitled "Impeachment" was likely to do no more than further alienate the higher classes.

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63. Advertiser. 26. Nov. 1853. Also raised were objections to general features of the Actwhich allowed landlords to compound for the rates of property under £10, giving them more votes and depriving their tenants of the vote, and also the clause which allowed plurality of voting. Hanley was, however, unlikely to get a special dispensation from these clauses and they were, in any case, additional irritants to the working classes rather than the chief issues at stake.

64. ibid. 26. Nov. 1853. Speech at the meeting of James Capewell.

Significantly these moderates did not oppose the main decision of the meeting, namely that the Guardians and the Highways Boards should together organize a canvass of the town in order to establish the opinions of the ratepayers on the issues raised regarding the qualification and the future position of the Market Trust. While this canvass was in progress, a report swept through the town that Rawlinson's proposal had been rejected by the General Board of Health who intended to impose a £20 qualification. The organizers of the canvass denounced such malicious rumours as being deliberately intended to sabotage the campaign for a £15 qualification. The report was in fact a genuine one, for C. Macauley, a secretary of the General Board had written to the Guardians that "... the Board have decided that the qualification for such members (of a local board of health) shall include all persons rated to the relief of the poor within the district, on an annual value of not less than £20."[65] Probably suspecting the motives behind this letter the Guardians gave it no immediate publicity but hurried on the canvass, which by the end of the year had resulted in a petition bearing 4,000 signatures[66] favouring a £15 qualification being sent to the General Board.

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65. ibid. 10. Dec. 1853.

66. Sentinel. 21. Jan. 1854. The Advertiser (31. Dec. 1853) reported 3,000 signatories.

As the brisk political activity, produced by the publication of Rawlinson's report, was continued into the new year, the campaigns of the high and the low qualification parties came to follow quite distinct patterns. Three petitions[67] were sent to the General Board on behalf of the high-qualification party who thereafter discreetly devoted their energies to bringing influence to bear on the General Board in favour of Rawlinson's proposal. Some of the members of a delegation in London on quite different business went along to the General Board accompanied by the Members for Stoke and Staffordshire. This visit was only disclosed locally at a later date, as the result of a brief report of it in The Times and then led to the assumption that their purpose had been to challenge the validity of over half of the 4,000 signatures on the ratepayers petition, a tactic which was dismissed as "secret diplomacy on a small scale".[68]

The low qualification party on the other hand concentrated on keeping public feeling in favour of a £15 qualification at boiling point in the hope of persuading the General Board to carry

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67. Sentinel. 21. Jan. 1854. The Market Trustees sent one; the Chief Bailiff, clergy, manufacturers and tradesmen the second which had 280 signatures in all; the artisans and workers the third with 550 signatures. Despite the earlier resolution of the Market Trustees favouring a £30 qualification (see footnote 61) all three petitions favoured Rawlinson's proposal of a £25 qualificatio

68. ibid. 18. Feb. 1854. The claim was that only 1,700 of the signatures were those of men who had paid any poor rates.

out a further modification of Rawlinson's proposals. In this they were greatly helped by the appearance, in January 1854, of a new local paper, the Staffordshire Sentinel whose editor, a Mr. Phillips, was a staunch supporter of the case for local reform based on a low qualification. Phillips was prepared to use the paper to advance his views and produced a series of editorials concerned with local government matters.[69]

The correspondence columns of the Sentinel were used to frustrate an attempt by John Ridgway to discredit the leaders of the low qualification party. In a letter to Rawlinson he had claimed that the gentry, manufacturers, traders and leading workmen all approved of the £25 qualification and denied the right of the Highways Boards as the Guardians to speak for the town. When this letter became public it produced a flurry of letters and advertisements from his opponents. His attacks on the other local government bodies and his advocacy of an "exclusive franchise" were described as the actions of an arrant Tory. The 'Czar Nicholas' praised his conduct in protecting the interests of his friends but

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69. An editorial in the second issue included the following:- "The town ought to be clearly represented - the people - the masses ought to be honestly personified". ibid. 14. Jan. 1854. Later editorials concentrated on warning the ratepayers of the influence and tactics of the high qualification party which were likely to succeed unless vigorously opposed. (for example an editorial of 4. Feb. 1854).

feared "you may have cause to regret the haughty course you are following". The Guardians and the Highways Boards defended their right to speak on town matters and dismissed Ridgway's claim to represent the intelligence and the property of the town as "a piece of untruthful and unwarrantable impertinence".[70]

The editor supported his correspondents and felt that the letter had been a tragic mistake coming as it did from a man with a high reputation for benevolence, energy and perseverance. The episode illustrates how the establishment of a genuinely local newspaper , with a strong commitment to open government and public accountability in local affairs, had made the conduct of secret intrigues and the plotting of cliques a much more hazardous undertaking than hitherto. Throughout the rest of their existence the Commissioners were to be under repeated attack as "a self-elected body, representing nobody"[71] as the Sentinel played a large part in creating the climate of local opinion in which reform

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70. ibid. 28. Jan. 1854. 11. Feb. 1854. Ridgway was not advocating an 'exclusive franchise' but a high property qualification for membership of a local board. The distinction is obvious but it was one that the high qualification party found difficult to establish in the public mind. The charge continued to be made, by the supporters of the low qualification, to the embarrassment of those Liberals, like Ridgway, who had already advocated a wider franchise in Parliamentary elections.

71. ibid. 11. Feb. 1854.

eventually became inevitable.

Meanwhile at a tactical level the Hanley Highways Board decided to publish accounts of all its proceedings and, in an attempt to embarrass the Market Trust and the Commissioners, urged all the other local bodies to follow their example.[72] More important was the co-ordinated effort made by the working-class Guardians for Hanley and Shelton to secure their re-election and so deny control of the Board of Guardians to the supporters of the high qualification. The organization of the low qualification campaign was at the same time strengthened by the creation of a joint-committee from the Guardians and the Highways Boards which, with the title of Sanitary Reform Committee, was to co-ordinate their tactics.[73]

Events moved into their final phase in April, 1854, with the announcement by the General Board of Health that it was not legally possible to include the position of the Market Trust in a Provisional Order under the Public Health Act. Once more the future status of the Trust became a central issue in the struggle for reform

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72. ibid. 1. Apr. 1854.

73. ibid. 1. Apr. 1854. 15. Apr. 1854.

for the Market Trustees refused to discuss their own intentions with a deputation from the Sanitary Reform Committee on the grounds that one of its constituent bodies, namely the Guardians, had no right to speak on town affairs.[74]

Faced with this uncompromising stand by the Trustees, the Sanitary Reform Committee called a public meeting for May 9th, in order to establish the views of the ratepayers on the question of the Trust's future. At this meeting, the only improvement on Rawlinson's proposals to which the Committee could point, was the offer from the General Board to reduce the qualification to £20 and against this had now to be set the new doubt cast on the future status of the Market Trust.

In this situation the supporters of reform lost the initiative and the dominant voice was that of 'Doctor' James Dixon, a local chemist, who launched a savage attack on the evils of the Public Health Act so that at the close of a meeting, marked by violent language and disorderly behaviour it was resolved that the entire project to introduce a local board of health was highly objectionable. A committee was then appointed, drawn again from the Guardians

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74. The intention of the deputation had been to seek an assurance that the Trustees would stand by the promise made on their behalf in September 1852, that they would voluntarily hand over their property and powers on the introduction of a local board into the town. ibid. 1. Apr. 1854. 15. Apr. 1854.

and the Highways Boards to fight the introduction of a local board.[75] The Market Trust by its refusal to meet the Guardians had enabled the extremists who opposed any local government reform to convert the low qualification party into a party of total opposition to reform.

This opposition party now sought to exploit the bitter feeling in the town regarding the Trustees to further their new found determination to oppose the introduction of a local board to the last. Their strategy centred on a series of mass open-air meetings, one of which was attended by some two to three thousand people, who, with flags and banners, were led by bands in columns through the town. The ensuing excitement was then further stimulated by a succession of inflammatory speeches, on the evils to be expected from a local board, spiced with vicious personal attacks on the promoters of such a body. Valuable allies were found in J.A.Wise, the M.P. for Stafford, and in W.T.Copeland the defeated Conservative candidate in the Stoke Parliamentary election of 1852, who were to organize the campaign in London. These new allies were made necessary by the refusal of the two Liberal members for Stoke, J.L.Ricardo and F.Leveson-Gower, to become involved on either side in an issue which had divided those

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75. ibid. 13. May. 1854.

who had supported them so effectively in 1852.

The opposition party was not content to accept the posture of neutrality taken up by the Members and in consequence the local government struggle became a serious embarrassment to the two Liberal M.P.s.[76] There remained in any case a suspicion that they were both too much indebted to John Ridgway, the most prominent of the local Liberals, to be really neutral so that allegations that they were secretly promoting the high qualification cause were widely circulated in the town. Neither repeated denials by Ricardo, including publication of his correspondence with James Dixon his chief critic, nor a public denial by John Ridgway could still the flood of rumours among their erstwhile supporters.[77]

The split between the leading Liberals in Hanley and their working-class supporters created a situation from which W.T. Copeland could not fail to benefit. Probably in the hope of re-establishing his position, after the 1852 defeat, he had

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76. A local Liberal wrote to Ricardo that:- "the position of antagonism taken by some of your friends on this vexed question has done the liberal cause in these townships an immense amount of harm". ibid. 20. May, 1854: in which issue its publication was authorized by Ricardo.

77. ibid. 20. May, 1854. Ridgway asserted that he had never received help of any sort from Ricardo in the matter of local government reform and indeed had often had to express himself angrily to the latter on account of his dogged neutrality.

earlier declared himself to be in favour of a low qualification.[78] He was now prepared to follow the extremists from the low qualification party into total opposition to the measure and in this he may again have been motivated by political opportunism. He was, however, an ex Lord Mayor and still an Alderman of the City of London where opposition to Chadwick's 'centralizing' tendencies was rife and his new stand may well have represented his real prejudices concerning all local boards of health.

The policy of total opposition, the new extremism in language and behaviour and the persistent attacks on the Liberal members split the low qualification party, not all of whom were prepared to follow the new course. The more moderate elements were still convinced that one useful concession, namely the £20 qualification, had been obtained. One of them, Thomas Pidduck, a Guardian who considered the Public Health Act an excellent measure, was not prepared to serve on a committee resolved to oppose its local application.[79] Others, with similar opinions made up 'a highly' respectable meeting of ratepayers' whose deputation vainly attempted

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78. ibid. 28. Jan. 1854. where there is a letter of his, opposing the imposition of a local board from London but welcoming it "if the inhabitants" compose the Board of Management, - "A high qualification often leads to malpractice and jobbery.. I am rarely in the Potteries but I should certainly advocate the £15 franchise". (sic).

79. ibid. 13. May. 1854.

to persuade the Market Trustees to assist in quelling the opposition by a voluntary offer to merge its powers into those of a local board.[80]

Even the Hanley Highways Board broke away from the opposition because of the 'baseless' attacks on Ricardo with which Dixon regaled a meeting of the opposition party's committee. "The latitude which some of the parties present gave to their statements, without any ground of truth to support them, would ruin any good cause",was their terse justification for walking out of a meeting which was ended by the police who had been called in to restore order.[81]

In particular the new extremism alienated the Staffordshire Sentinel which, until the divisive meeting of May 9th, had been a good friend to the low qualification party. After that meeting the paper swiftly disassociated itself from the opposition party and in an editorial headed 'The Rival Factions' the great body of ratepayers were described as mere spectators "of the discreditable strife which has given to these townships for a long time, such

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80. ibid. 27. May. 1854. 3. June. 1854. The Trustees replies were so evasive that they may even have been leaving themselves free to revoke an earlier commitment to surrender in return for a £30 qualification.

81. ibid. 27. May. 1854.

an unenviable notoriety."[82] From this moment the opposition party was more scathingly attacked than the Market Trust or the Commissioners had ever been - they were now the "professed ultra-reformers who when in office, are opposed to all reform".[83]

The Sentinel, like all the other moderate elements, was for the moment powerless to alter the course of events. The high qualification party had sufficient confidence in their influence in London to decline to offer any compromise over the qualification and apparently lacked either the will or the power to obtain any concession from the Market Trust. The opposition on the other hand were equally obdurate in their determination to fight to the last. Until this conflict came to an end there was no one to listen to a new initiative from the moderates who wanted local government reform but not on the high qualification party's terms.

The opposition party, however, suffered from no such inhibitions and throughout May and June they continued to pursue their vigorous tactics, in the course of which they repeated almost all of the arguments against the Public Health Act which had had

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82. ibid. 13. May. 1854. There followed a scathing attack on the disgraceful scenes at the meeting and a rejection of all the charges made there against the local Members.

83. ibid. 27. May. 1854.

local currency since 1849. In many instances they were led by the same men who had been leaders of the earlier opposition, for once again this now centred around the Shelton Highways Board and the Chartists so that Capewell and Heath took on a new lease of life as mob orators, although in this role they were overshadowed by the new recruit, James Dixon. In these two months at three great public meetings, a petition totally opposed to a local board of health, attracted 4,000 signatures.[84]

At these meetings the Public Health Act was repeatedly castigated as centralization and its inadequacies in other towns held up to general ridicule. It was at this point that the opposition party formed themselves into a branch of the Anti-Centralization Union from whom they obtained much of their widely drawn propaganda.[85] Locally a moral was drawn from the case of Burslem where it was alleged the new drainage plans had only just arrived but already the surveyor had denounced the inadequate width of the pipes, while at Newcastle the pipes were so inadequate

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84. ibid. 24. June. 1854.

85. Dixon denounced the measure as a failure in Durham, Bilston and Birmingham and pointed to its expense in Epsom, Croydon, Leicester and Cardiff. Worcester illustrated the oppressive working of the General Board which had refused to allow the local surveyor to be dismissed.

that the place would soon be known as Newcastle-under-Water.

In all of the propaganda of this type the most frequently recurring theme was that of the danger of sewage disposal through the pipe sewers for which the engineering profession had taken Chadwick to task. There was the occasion locally were "a man had lately lost his life by opening a sewer of that description at Tunstall" and inevitably the harrowing story of the General Board's responsibility for "the massacre at Croydon, where a disease was created worse than the cholera in its worst stages."

Many of the allegations were quite unfounded and the remainder gross exaggerations[86] but their local currency illustrates how a local campaign was able to profit from the growing tide of opposition to Chadwick's regime at the General Board of Health. True or false, they provided the mob orators with 'heady' propaganda, and their efficacy in this is in turn indicated by the 4,000 signatories who opposed any local board of health being introduced into Hanley.

In addition, strictly local propaganda could be manufactured from the references to the profits made by John Ridgway in making the water-closets which were recommended by the General Board.

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86. The campaign against the General Board of Health is discussed by S.E.Finer, 'The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick'.

Such stories were improved by further references to Rawlinson's embarrassment in other towns that these water-closets were not in use in the Potteries until he had threatened to withdraw the recommendation unless Ridgway saw to it that they were introduced locally. John Ridgway was equally open to the charge that his warm advocacy of a local board could be attributed to the extra profits which would accrue to himself as a director of the Waterworks Company with the increased demand for water that would follow the introduction of water-closets.[87]

The level of the opposition's argument rarely rose above the level of exaggeration, smear and innuendo. It made no acknowledgement of the state of public health in the town and further elaboration of the case that was made out would have little value. What is quite certain, however, is that the opposition's tactics succeeded admirably in creating the maximum amount of local uproar against a local board of health.

The opposition party,and to an even greater extent the now silent moderates suffered a heavy blow with the publication of the Provisional Order, setting up a local board of health in Hanley, for the qualification for membership of the board was not the £20 promised in 1853, but the £25 proposed earlier by Rawlinson.

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87. Sentinel. 3. June. 1854.

Savaged by the party of total opposition, spurned by the supporters of a high qualification and now betrayed by the General Board, the true impotence of the moderates was starkly revealed.

Once the Provisional Order had been issued, interest switched from the local agitation to London and the campaign to secure its confirmation by Parliament. Most of the evidence for the sequence of events from this point on came from the opposition party and the manager of their Parliamentary campaign, J.A.Wise. James Dixon provided the first public account at a mass meeting held in Hanley in mid-July, 1854.[88]

The opposition party had sent a deputation to the General Board and, Dixon claimed, had been courteously received, especially by Lord Shaftesbury who was apparently unaware of the existence of the letter from the General Board offering a £20 qualification to the town.[89] In this account of the meeting, Dixon's animosity to the General Board was directed solely at Chadwick and Rawlinson.

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88. ibid. 22. July, 1854.

89. He was also unaware that the Provisional Order sought to exclude publicans and beer sellers from the Hanley local board and, Dixon claimed, he was quite sure that this clause would be struck out of the Order. This clause was intended to continue to exclude such men from local government on the pattern of their exclusion from the Commissioners.

The most interesting feature of this visit, again according to Dixon, had, however, been provided by the simultaneous visit of a deputation from the high qualification party. This had included John Ridgway who had unsuccessfully attempted to persuade J.A.Wise not to obstruct the Provisional Order. At this point Sir William Molesworth, who was to introduce into the Commons the Bill confirming provisional orders for Hanley and seven other towns, had suggested that they all agreed to a compromise based on inclusion of the Market Trust and on a £20 qualification. When Ridgway had indignantly rejected this suggestion, Molesworth had threatened to remove Hanley entirely from the Bill but Ridgway had then used Earl Granville to persuade him to let the Bill stand as previously drafted.[90]

J.A.Wise's later account of this episode confirmed much of Dixon's version but alleged that the high qualification deputation

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90. Molesworth had since 1852 been publicly stating that he would not apply the Public Health Act to any town where the majority of ratepayers opposed it. (S.E.Finer. op. cit. p. 455). His views represented the best hope of the Hanley opposition party. If applied they would have severely restricted the work of the General Board of Health but as this episode illustrates Molesworth was not immune to influential political pressure on behalf of those who wanted active application of the Act.

had in fact agreed to the £20 qualification. If that agreement had been honoured he would have opposed the Provisional Order no further but their opponents had broken faith and so he had taken the issue into the Commons.[91]

The Commissioners received a third version of these events from members of the high qualification deputation:-

> "It was at an accidental meeting which one of your Deputation had with Mr. Wise in the presence of Sir. W. Molesworth that in answer to a challenge from him the Gentleman offered to include the Market Trust property in the Bill provided he would accede to the £25 qualification but this offer he thought proper to decline."

There are obvious discrepancies between these accounts and one final mystery remains, namely, how could either Molesworth (according to Dixon) or 'the Gentleman', presumably Ridgway, (Commissioners' account) offer to include the Market Trust in the Provisional Order when the General Board had earlier declared that this was not legally possible? In any event the Provisional Order went into the Commons unaltered.

In an effort to undermine Wise's reputed position as representative of the mass of Hanley's ratepayers, the high qualification party challenged the validity of many of the 4,000 signatures on the petition opposing the local board. Their own

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91. Sentinel, 2. Sept. 1854.

opinion on the petition was that:-

> "..... it ought not to pass unnoticed that the number of duplicated names, of persons not entitled to vote, and of signatures written in the same hand, was so great that it was doubtful whether they were a real majority of the ratepayers and proved that scarcely more than one fourth of the property of the Township was represented by them." 92

It was John Ridgway who was thought to be the organizer of his party's tactics at this stage in their campaign. He was alleged to have distributed a circular to many boroughs asking for their help, presumably by bringing pressure on their Members, and to have written a similar plea to various religious sects and the remnants of the Anti-Corn Law League. He was also accused of writing articles, under various pseudonyms in the Sentinel and of dragging religion through the mire, bespattering it with spite, malevolence and party feeling in order to secure his objectives. 93

If Ridgway was cast as the villain of this account the role of hero without doubt went to J.A.Wise. Despite the alleged

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92. Report of the committee of the Commissioners (Commissioners' Minutes 20. July. 1854). This later claim was based on a scrutiny of the petition carried out by the overseers of the poor on the instructions of the General Board. In the time vailable 2,440 of 4089 names were checked and of these 612 were not ratepayers while the 1,828 valid signatures represented property rated at £9, 448 out of a total rateable value of £52,256. (Sentinel. 8. July, 1854).

93. Sentinel. 22. July. 1854.

campaign to wear him down by putting the Bill on the Commons Order paper for the morning and evening sittings, day after day he was in his place ready to object when it was finally introduced. It was then that Sir William Molesworth "seeing the state of the house" withdrew Hanley from the Bill.[94]

This abrupt end to a struggle of so many years standing, with its tangled threads and its twists of fortune, left those most deeply involved so stunned that they were unable to comprehend the implications of its unexpected outcome. For the moment the opposition was content to celebrate its victory with pamphlets, public meetings and presentations. Almost immediately the news reached Hanley a pamphlet appeared, headed 'Victory, Victory, Victory', containing a scurrilous attack on the Sentinel and the proud boast that "the largest battle ever fought by the working-classes of the town has just ended in a triumphant victory of liberty and right over gold and despotism".[95]

A week later an exuberant meeting of working-men filled the Town Hall to hear accounts of the heroic struggle from their leaders, whose speeches lacked both generosity and moderation. It was finally resolved to organize a public demonstration at

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94. ibid. Account of James Dixon.

95. ibid. 15. July, 1854.

which the principals in the fight against a local board should be presented with a public testimonial.

This final act in the drama began with a parade through the town and ended with a presentation to J. A.Wise on a platform which had been erected in the Market Trust's vegetable hall by the Commissioners to pay tribute to Kossuth on his visit to the town. The local struggle had never lacked these little ironies and at the end there was one more. Alderman Copeland, that redoubtable opponent of a local board of health, was unable to attend "being far from well" and fearing that "unless I lay bye the prevailing epidemic may fasten upon me".[96]

Conclusion

The only success of the reforming groups in Hanley in these years was that they established beyond any reasonable doubt that local government and public health reforms were desperately needed in the town. The weight of the evidence presented to Rawlinson was conclusive and the criticisms of their opponents almost entirely irrelevant.

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96. ibid. 2. Sept. 1854. Through the Sentinel, Copeland wrote to congratulate the people of Hanley on their escape from the jaws of the centralization monster and to add such political points as might have value in the future. He contrasted the present conduct of one of the Bill's supporters (presumably Ridgway) with his conduct at the last election. "Then Universal (certainly household) Suffrage was the cry! Now a £25, if not a £30 qualification is necessary for local government."

The opposition argument hinged too much on the fallacy that unless something effective could be done about working conditions or poverty then there was no point in doing anything about public health. Their evidence was made all the less convincing by their willingness to discuss the sanitary state of the town in purely static terms, failing apparently to realise how rapidly the situation could deteriorate as population continued to increase. Equally incredible was their argument that the existing authorities could deal with the situation for none of these bodies had the powers or the resources needed to govern the town effectively. The great gulf yawning between theory and practice was made only too evident by the contrast between the strident voice against reform raised by the Shelton Highways Board and the standards which applied in the maintenance of its highways and its accounts.

If by any objective standard the reformers succeeded in establishing their case then why did the town fail to support their programme of reform? It is clear that they spent too little time on widening the basis of their support and that at critical moments they failed to make crucial concessions but fundamentally they failed because the issues were judged emotionally and the lines of conflict were illogically drawn. The proposal

to establish a local board of health for the Stoke Parish almost certainly foundered on the rock of inter-community envy and mistrust. The opposition to a Hanley local board emerged because the proposal had come from the wealthiest inhabitants and would have snatched a tiny crumb of power from the hands of the least wealthy. It was, throughout, a class conflict.

Ultimately the struggle was resolved, not in Hanley but in London, and the town failed to get its local board because the Commons made it clear that they would not confirm the Provisional Order. This happened because at last the opponents of Chadwick and the General Board of Health had sufficient Parliamentary support to attempt to strike down both the man and the machine. In 1854 the General Board's period of power was coming to an end and required Parliamentary extension. The time had come for its enemies to act.

The proposals relating to Hanley were caught up in this whirlpool of political conflict and the General Board found it good tactics to withdraw the Provisional Order. In the last few weeks of the struggle it had been clear that the local opposition were heavily indebted to the national criticism of the General Board and, at the end they owed everything to it.

This might suggest that the local opposition was irrelevant to the outcome but this was not the case. The strength of the opposition in the town attracted allies to its cause - notably Wise and Copeland - and their noise and numbers gave these allies the evidence they might have needed to convince the Commons that here was a classic instance of the over-zealous, bureaucratic General Board forcing the measure on a reluctant populace. The possible repercussions of such a situation were so dangerous to its existence that the Board thought it wiser to withdraw the local measure. Of equal importance was the fact that the vigour and size of the opposition paralyzed the two Stoke Members who by reasons of interest and obligation should have been the managers of the Parliamentary campaign to secure the measure.

The extent of the total opposition to reform is surprising until it is remembered that the working classes were especially active in Hanley politics and had their well-established centres of power. On the Highways Boards and the Board of Guardians they were dominant and they had played an active part in the 1852 General Election while the remnants of the Chartist movement provided them with an active, outspoken and determined leadership. With the issues at stake an opposition group would almost certainly have emerged in any circumstances but with timely concessions it need never have reached the dimensions it did.

It was the prominent reformers' insistence on a high qualification for membership of a local board of health that constituted the main obstacle to agreement between the parties. In this they represented the interests and the prejudices of the wealthiest inhabitants who were the most consistent promoters of reform. Above all, the high qualification represented a concession to the exclusive Market Trustees who were very reluctant to hand over their considerable assets except to a body whose constitution and sense of responsibility were as impeccable as was possible under a ratepayer franchise. This group sought for efficient rather than democratic local government and probably considered the two to be incompatible.

In these years the movement for a further extension of the parliamentary franchise was becoming significant and in Hanley, men in very varied situations in life were sympathetic to it. This bitter local struggle, dividing men who were in agreement on the franchise question, suggests that, to the politically aware among the urban working-classes, the financial qualifications imposed for membership of a local authority resulted in an equally serious deprivation. It remains an open question why this issue did not attract more national notice from politically active elements among the working-classes in later years.

Throughout the course of the conflict the record of the Commissioners and their allies was apparently admirable. It was they who saw most clearly, the defects in the local government structure and it was their initiative which led to the movement for the introduction of a local board of health, for which they worked persistently. The character of the opposition, its methods and the arguments it deployed are on the other hand, all alike, easily open to ridicule. The fact remains, however, that in the last two months of the struggle a timely concession on a £20 qualification or an unequivocal statement on the inclusion of the Market Trust would have left the extreme opponents of local reform stranded without either mass support in the town or powerful allies in London. In the last analysis it was the Commissioners' narrow vision and prejudiced self-interest which in 1854 destroyed the prospect of reform. The Commissioners drove their working-class opponents into the arms of extremists by their own inflexibility. The working-class movement should be judged not by the crude exhibitionism of the last few weeks of the struggle but by their impressive efforts over the preceding two years to obtain a constructive compromise in the local government question.

The effects of the local government struggle on the town were in the main, transitory. In the absence of a local board of health the existing local authorities were given a few more years of life but their power and influence remained as inadequate as ever. While the conflict was raging, some public health improvements had been postponed and none of the public health problems had become easier to resolve. The editor of the Sentinel commented that "the town must mend its ways for if the cholera strikes, people will curse those who would sacrifice all that was pure and beneficient to personal pride and party ends."[97]

In the same issue of the paper an anonymous contributor discussed the lessons to be learned from recent events. He argued that the victory of 'the dirty party' showed that it was useless to introduce a scheme of local reform into the town which excluded the middle and the working classes. The great body of intelligent operatives, he continued, despised the selfishness of the dirty party but even more strongly resented those who questioned their competence to share in the government of the town. Goodwill among all classes was essential to the peace, improvement and prosperity

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97. Sentinel, 15. July, 1854.

of the town, as was "A just, liberal, consistent and comprehensive form of local government."[98]

Such an arrangement, or something approximating to it, was still some years away. A more immediate outcome of the conflict was the decision of the respectable inhabitants to end the extremist control of the Shelton Highways Board - a campaign that replaced the reform struggle as the most exciting free entertainment in the locality.

The end of working-class domination of the Shelton Highways Board marked the eclipse of the Chartists in local politics. The successful fight against the introduction of the Public Health Act was their greatest local victory and almost their last excursion into local politics. Their decline, however, must be ascribed more to national causes than to local circumstances for as the movement withered nationally the local leaders lost their sources of

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98. This article was almost certainly published because it represented precisely the Sentinel's own point of view. The paper had earlier depicted the mass of ratepayers as mere spectators of a factional struggle (ibid. 13. May. 1854). In the last few weeks, however, 4,000 inhabitants had petitioned against a local board (three-quarters of which the Overseers had estimated were valid ratepayer signatures) and earlier there had been 1,000 signatures in favour of a high qualification. It would appear that as the struggle reached its climax the vast majority of the 5,300 ratepayers had committed themselves one way or the other.

inspiration and encouragement. The earlier failures to sustain the Lever as a local Chartist newspaper and the People's Hall as a Chartist gathering place for working-men showed how slender were their local resources.

The effect of the struggle on the fortunes of the local Liberals was more direct, for it divided their supporters into opposing factions. Just as the working-classes had contributed so much tothe Liberal victory in 1852 so their disillusion with the leading local Liberals, and with their members, in 1857 helped the Conservative, W.T.Copeland, to regain his seat.[99]

The class antagonisms, which the struggle in the town had aroused, were not long on public display for the tactics and the exuberance of the extreme opponents of reform taught the other groups, including the high qualification party, that they must co-operate and be prepared to compromise if the future prospects of the town were not to be squandered. After 1854 local affairs never again succeeded in evoking the passion or the total commitment that had consumed the preceding five years.

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99. In 1852 Ricardo and Gower, the Liberals, polled 328 and 326 votes respectively in Hanley and Copeland 172 but in 1857 the latter's vote rose to 322, Gower's rose to 361 and Ricardo's fell to 278. The increase in the Hanley Conservative vote was sufficient to win one of the seats for Copeland. Gower, whose vote in the other pottery towns fell dramatically, was the victim of this swing.

APPENDIX I

An outline chronology of the struggle for a Local Board of Health.

1849. Jan.	Requests for a public health inquiry in The Stoke Parish.
1849. Feb./March.	Inquiry by Robert Rawlinson on behalf of the General Board.
1850. June.	First Rawlinson Report proposed a local board for the Stoke Parish.
1850.	His proposal abandoned.
1852. Sept.	Re-newed initiative based on Hanley alone.
1852. Sept.	Three combined meetings of interested bodies.
1852. Oct. 29th.	Decision of Public Meeting to oppose introduction of a local board.
1852. Nov./Dec.	Commissioners defy decision and petition for a local board.
1852. Dec.	Local bodies thought to oppose reform, instead ask for a local board but with a low qualification for membership.
1853. Nov.	Second Rawlinson Report proposed a local board for Hanley with a £25 rating qualification for membership.
1853. Nov.-1854.April.	Fight to reduce the qualification.
1854. Jan. 7th.	First issue of the Sentinel - for reform with a low qualification.
1854. April.	General Board said the Market Trust could not be included in a local health Bill.

1854. April.	Low qualification party split - extremists into total opposition to a local board, - moderates became onlookers.
1854. May/June.	Opponents' campaign to arouse local opposition.
1854. May/June.	Deputations to the General Board - failure to compromise.
1854. May/June.	The Parliamentary campaign over the Provisional Order imposing a local board.
1854. July.	The measure withdrawn.
1854. July-Sept.	The opponents' celebrations.

APPENDIX II

Sir Robert Rawlinson (1810 - 1898)

Rawlinson was in many respects the most interesting of the growing army of inspectors first employed in various capacities by the government in the period from 1833 to 1854. The family background of 64 out of some 140 of these men has been traced and he was the only one of these 64 to come from the artisan class. His father was a Lancashire builder who gave Robert only a day school education, which, the latter boasted, never cost more than 3½d a week.[100] From this humble background he rose after 1854 to a pre-eminent position among these men whose application and interpretation of the developing social legislation of the period was of crucial importance in tempering the brutalities of Victorian urban and industrial life.

He was born in Bristol in 1810 but spent his youth in Lancashire. From 1831 to 1836 he was employed by Jesse Hartley, Liverpool's able dock engineer and during the next four years served Robert Stephenson as resident engineer at the site of the complicated

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100. D. Roberts, 'Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State' p. 153.

Blisworth tunnel on the London to Birmingham railway. He was assistant-surveyor at Liverpool from 1840 to 1843 and then until 1847 chief engineer under the Bridgewater Trust, in the latter year he was responsible for building the remarkable brick arch ceiling of St. George's Hall, Liverpool. In 1848 he was one of the inspectors appointed by the government under the Public Health Act and, surviving the fall of Chadwick, in 1855 he became head of that body.

Earlier in 1855 he had been one of a three man sanitary commission sent out to improve conditions in the Crimea and while there was "knocked off his horse by a cannon shot". In 1863 he recommended to Palmerston a policy of providing public works in Lancashire to ease the distress caused by the American Civil War, and later administered this programme with conspicuous success. From 1871 to his retirement in 1888 he was Chief Engineering Inspector of the Local Government Board. Knighted in 1883 he was promoted to K.C.B. in 1888.

In public health matters he was imbued with Chadwick's crusading zeal, once writing to the latter that "It is a matter of indifference how I serve the sanitary movement provided I serve it".[101]

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101. Roberts, op. cit. p. 175.

He clearly came to Hanley heavily committed in favour of the advantages of applying the Public Health Act. His reports of the same period on Dover (1849) and Carlisle, (1850) it has been suggested, in their emphasis on the moral consequences of physical evils, were "designed to exploit the moral revulsion of the Victorian to sexual promiscuity",[102] while his report on Macclesfield (1851) stressed the links between bad living conditions and a rising crime rate. His report on the parish of Stoke-on-Trent (1850), on the other hand, made little reference to such matters but emphasized the misery, disease and deaths which resulted from bad sanitary conditions.

His work for the General Board of Health required perception and courage in overcoming the intrigues of local vested interests, in a letter to Chadwick he referred to the opposition he encountered from "publicans, beer-sellers, spirit merchants, and owners of cottage property",[103] while earlier he had acknowledged the help local medical men invariably gave to the cause of sanitary reform, commenting that:- "the country will ever owe them a debt of gratitude."[104]

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102. Roberts, op. cit. p. 214.

103. Chadwick Papers, Nov. 2. 1854(quoted by Roberts, p. 281).

104. Report to the General Board of Health on Whitehaven (1849).

In Hanley of course he found the chief opponents of local reform to be members of the working-classes, although the beerhouses may well have played an important part in fomenting that opposition, but here also he was to find his best allies among the local doctors.

Working class opposition to sanitary reform was by no means unique to Hanley. On the contrary one of the great enemies of Rawlinson's work was the ignorance of those whom it was designed to help and, for example, in both Hexham and Macclesfield his ability as a public speaker was fully tested in winning over noisy, hostile public meetings. In both cases his advocacy was crucial in saving the cause of sanitary reform. In Hanley his courtesy and apparent fairness in conducting the public inquiries earned him the respect of the working-classes but, in the final struggle against the imposition of a local board of health, he was subjected to a savage attack from working-class extremists.[105] At this point he shared the unpopularity of his master, Edwin Chadwick, to whose sanitary dreams he was to devote the next 35 years of his life.

105, Sentinel, 22. July, 1854. speech by James Dixon.

CHAPTER IV

INCORPORATION

The failure to obtain a local board of health left all of Hanley's problems unresolved. As the wealthy inhabitants had lost the initiative in the matter of local government reform, this now passed to the men who had earlier been sympathetic to the cause of reform but who had wished it to be based on a low financial qualification for membership of any future local government body.[1] These men, concerned at the insanitary state of the town, felt a growing contempt for the existing local administration in the exercise of which they had played little or no part.[2] Some of their number had, in 1852, been active in the Pottery Reform Association[3] when their remedy for the ills

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1. See Chapter III. In the moment of victory the opponents of a local board of health had set up a committee to consider the future pattern of local government but there is no record of any activity on the part of this body.

2. Correspondence in the Sentinel. e.g. 9. Sept. 1854, 16. Sept. 1854.

3. One of these was Edward Challinor, a local solicitor, who emerged as the leader of the movement for incorporation; he was a prominent local Liberal and later the first Town Clerk. Samuel Taylor, seconder of a crucial resolution on incorporation in February, 1856 and Phillips, editor of the Sentinel, were other key figures who had earlier been in the Reform Association.

besetting the town had been to seek its incorporation and from 1855 onwards this was the solution they again propounded. Their ideas were to benefit from a reaction to the extremism of recent years, which resulted in a greater willingness among almost all parties to compromise for the greater good, and also from the fact that they were a much less exclusive group than that which had earlier sponsored the local board of health.

Almost as soon as that cause had been lost the Sentinel was campaigning in favour of incorporation which was repeatedly mentioned until in March 1855 all other local government interests were consumed by the passions aroused in the attempt to wrest the Shelton Highways Board from the control of the extremists among the working-classes. Interest again revived in the summer of 1855 and a move was made to requisition a public meeting on the subject at a time when, it was hoped, the absence of any prospect of an election would enable the matter to be settled free from party feeling. The editor of the Sentinel, who throughout the period 1854 to 1857 remained a strong supporter of incorporation, was soon chafing at what he considered to be the dilatory way in which the matter was being pursued so that it was not until February 1856 that the public meeting was convened.

This meeting was virtually unanimous in its decision to petition the Privy Council to grant a charter of incorporation but another meeting held on the same day on Crown Bank had resolved to oppose any such move and there seemed some prospect of a repetition of earlier struggles. This was, however, postpohed until the following October when the Privy Council sent Major Warburton to the town to establish the state of public opinion and to investigate other matters relevant to the petition.

In the resumed debate on the structure of local government, the supporters of incorporation repeated many of the arguments used earlier to support the introduction of a local board of health although with fewer references to sanitary problems, whose gravity was now generally acknowledged. Despite the feeling that incorporation was only the first step towards other essential reforms the issue was on this occasion, debated more directly in terms of the reform of local government than had been the case in the earlier conflict.

The reformers were less interested in sooring debating points than in producing a consensus in favour of reform. Their references to the Commissioners and the Market Trustees tended to acknowledge the past services of these bodies to the town and criticized only the inadequacy of their powers and their anachronistic constitutions.

The Sentinel summed up the campaign in these terms:-

> "It was simply objected on abstract principles that they were self-appointed, and in no way subject to the approval or disapproval of the ratepayers - that in fact they were simply the administrators of a system of government which Hanley had in every way outgrown." [4]

The leaders of the Shelton Highways Board were, in 1855, so discredited that it was possible to attack them more savagely in order to prevent their again emerging as the focus of opposition to any scheme of reform.[5]

With the need for sanitary improvements generally accepted and in a debate in which personal attacks were avoided, the stress could be laid on the advantages to be derived from obtaining borough status. The group which initiated the public debate on incorporation considered the consolidation of authority in one local government body, and that body's accountability to the ratepayers, to be particularly significant. Their statement to the public meeting held in February 1856 is a classic summary of the case for the modernization and standardization of nineteenth century local government.

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4. Sentinel, 23. May. 1857.

5. ibid. 8. Nov. 1856. Henry Pidduck, watchmaker and member of the Potteries Reform Association stated to the public inquiry that:- "The town has suffered very much from the non-collection of the highway rates, these having been hardly enough to pay salaries. The consequence is that the town has got into a very bad state of repair which it will take a considerable time to put right.

"Instead of the present system of government (if it can be so called) in these townships, where so many different and sometimes rival and conflicting public interests exist without any supreme head, for much of the authority of the Chief Bailiff is ceded to him by courtesy rather than possessed of right, a Charter of Incorporation will substitute a single efficient system of local self-government, founded on a constitutional basis, whose members will be periodically elected by the suffrages of the inhabitants. The powers held by the Market Trustees and by the Commissioners under the Lighting Act will become vested at once by their voluntary surrender, or subsequently by the adoption of other means, in the Town Council, by whom the revenues received under these acts will be disbursed and publicly accounted for. The management of the highways will in like manner, at once or subsequently, fall into the hands of the Council, who will also make bye-laws for the good rule and government of the Borough, and for the prevention of nuisances." [6]

By looking forward to the exciting prospects before the town once it was incorporated and by avoiding dwelling on past differences of opinion the reformers won over the vast majority of the inhabitants to their proposals. It was a commissioner and Market Trustee, William Brownfield who at this meeting proposed the preparation of a petition requesting incorporation of the town and his presence as much as his words marked the end of recent antagonisms in the town.[7] His motion was seconded by an earlier opponent of the Commissioners on the qualification issue,

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6. ibid. 9. Feb, 1856.

7. He urged those present to "forget the unkind feelings which had before been manifested. Let us unite and determine to rid ourselves of the present government and get a better one". ibid. 9. Feb. 1856. By July the Sentinel was referring to all classes and parties working together and to the good progress made in building up opinion in favour of incorporation. (ibid. 5. July. 1856.)

Samuel Taylor who favoured reform because "the townships laboured and suffered under a system of taxation without representation", which would be ended by incorporation. He spoke of Council meetings open to the press, of Council control of market revenues for public improvements of many kinds, of the end of corruption and all this at no extra expense as the present four bodies of employees were reduced to one; above all "He was in favour of a Charter of Incorporation because it gave the whole power to the ratepayers."

The meeting overwhelmingly approved of these sentiments and resolved by a majority of four to one, to proceed with the petition to the Privy Council. Within hours, the petition had attracted 250 signatures and 50 of those present had volunteered to carry out a canvass of the town so that eventually 2242 of the 5,492 ratepayers signed it.[8] When the time came to convince the Privy Council's commissioners of the desirability of granting a charter the Counsel for the petitioners was able to claim that, "The inhabitants of the district were substantially unanimous."

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8. ibid. 1. Nov. 1856. They represented £23,000 rateable value out of a total for the town of £56,200. It was claimed that if time had permitted, many more signatures could have been obtained and that in any case £15,000 of rateable value in the town was unrepresented. Earlier petitions in favour of a local board of health had attracted only 1,200 signatures. (Chapter III. p.198.).

The case they presented to the commissioner rested largely on the rapid pace of recent developments in the town and the need for corresponding changes in its government. The town's facilities, its important pottery industry and the growth of its coal and iron industries and its population were themes dwelt on at length at the inquiry to emphasize the point that "there were only four towns in the whole of England which with larger populations had not representative institutions."[9]

The case against incorporation was not allowed to go by default although it could scarcely have had less satisfactory advocates than James Capewell and 'Doctor' James Dixon.[10] Capewell's opposition to any reform of local government had at least the merit of consistency but his arguments were even more diffuse and extravagant than in earlier controversies. At the February public meeting this arch-opponent of earlier proposals to introduce a local board of health now declared that "Although he took exception to the Health of Towns Bill, he believed it contained more clauses likely to promote the health of the townships

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9. ibid. (Counsel for the petitioners) - the four towns were said to be Bury, Chatham, Cheltenham and Greenwich.

10. See Chapter II, Section 2 on the Shelton Highways Board and Chapter III on the opposition to a local board of health for the earlier activities of these two Chartists.

than would be obtained in a charter of Incorporation", an argument which ignored the probability that a Council would speedily obtain the powers of a local board. He followed this with a straightforward lie which led the meeting to believe that in Rochdale a high financial qualification for Council membership had just been imposed on the reluctant inhabitants. His more local illustrations of the defects of borough status, however, did much to damage his credibility, as successive allegations that in Newcastle-under-Lyme there were separate elections for a council and a local board of health, and also two sets of officers for these authorities, were shouted down and had to be withdrawn.

James Dixon was as diffuse as ever,[11] to him, incorporation savoured of centralization from beginning to end: borough magistrates would be like those in Manchester who had recently imprisoned people who would not accept low wages: the Council would express its own opinion without ever consulting the ratepayers.

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11. The Sentinel described his speech as 'discursive and flimsy' and at many points it owed more to Chartist theory than the practicalities of local government, e.g. "Democracy is spreading its rages throughout the land and they are afraid it will sweep away royalty itself". He was frequently interrupted by gales of laughter and outcries of dissent. ibid. 9. Feb. 1856.

These crude efforts to arouse class prejudice against the measure were effectively supplemented by his reading extracts from an anti-incorporation pamphlet published some years earlier by John Ridgway.[12] He finally proposed that the question of local government reform should be postponed in order that due consideration could be given to Sir Benjamin Hall's promised amendments to the Public Health Act.

These two stalwarts succeeded in creating as much confusion as ever at the public meeting but their proposal secured little support and they failed to obtain a hearing for a fellow Chartist from Birmingham.

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12. No copy of this pamphlet has apparently survived but in 1852 Ridgway had spoken disparagingly of incorporation as giving "a few civil distinctions, which those who liked to be mayors and aldermen might prize" but which he thought "might be purchased at sadly too dear a rate". (Advertiser 28. Oct. 1852). Ridgway had earlier desired a Potteries' district scheme of local government reform but he now declared to the public meeting that "He appeared there that night as the advocate of incorporation, and he did not take any disgrace to himself for having changed his opinions. His great desire had once been that the Potteries should be united under one great act, but he had lived to see the impossibility of carrying out such a scheme. From a consideration of the difficulties of the case he had been led to give up the idea, and to confine his efforts to the improvement of Hanley and Shelton."

Although many Commissioners and other members of the middle-classes were at this meeting the great majority of those present were working-men and the most significant aspect of Capewell and Dixon's opposition was the reception it had. Dixon was constantly interrupted by laughter and shouts of disagreement and was later denied a second opportunity to speak while Capewell's speech ended "amid turbulent signs of impatience".

These extremists among the working-class were on this occasion unable to command sufficient support seriously to impede the move for reform. Their effort to arouse public feeling by organizing an open-air meeting, prior to the 'official' public meeting in the Town Hall, had been a miserable failure with only some 150 men and boys present, less than half of whom had troubled to vote on the issue before them. To a large extent they had been discredited by their implication in the notorious affairs of the Shelton Highways Board and at the public inquiry in October 1856 the Counsel for the reformers was able to subject them to merciless ridicule so that the commissioner had to insist on a fair hearing for Capewell.[13]

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13. Sentinel. 1. Nov. 1856. 8. Nov. 1856.

They were out-manoeuvred and totally failed to exploit the issue of the financial qualification necessary for membership of the Council on which the supporters of incorporation were deeply divided. The latter, however, resolutely refused to allow this division to deter them from pursuing their main objective. They resolved to submit their differences to the arbitration of the Privy Council rather than allow them to wreck the cause of reform as had happened with the plan to introduce a local board of health.

The only other opposition to incorporation, within the town, was provided by two local landowners, John Smith of Northwood and J. Baddeley of Shelton, who resented the imposition of borough rates on their agricultural land. Smith's land was well inside the proposed northern boundary, but Baddeley's solicitor sought to encourage the idea that an appropriate eastern boundary for the proposed borough would be provided by the Cauldon Canal rather than by the River Trent beyond it, thus excluding the agricultural land between the two. This was an impracticable suggestion for two densely developed areas, Joiners' Square and Cauldon Place lay beyond the canal and, although John Ridgway conceded that he personally would not wish to charge full rates on the agricultural land, other speakers pointed to

the extra return enjoyed by the owners of this land by reason of its proximity to the town and to its valuable potential as building land.[14] In the event, neither landowner received satisfaction for these personal grievances but the growth of the town must eventually have compensated both of them abundantly.[15]

Divisions over the qualification required to sit on the Town Council were the greatest potential menace to the unity of the reform party for an inhabitant of a borough which for electoral purposes was divided into four or more wards had, by the terms of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 to be rated for poor relief at £30 or more before he was eligible for membership of the Council, whereas with three or fewer wards, the qualification was set at £15.[16] It was one of the duties of the commissioner to advise the Privy Council on what was the appropriate number of wards in each case. There were no intermediate qualifications as were available in the case of a local board of health.

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14. One witness asserted that some agricultural land near the town was let at £5 to £6 an acre whilst equivalent land ten miles away brought in only 35/- an acre. Land near the town was being sold at between 5/- and 7/- a square yard.

15. Agricultural land could have been quite simply excluded from the borough rates by insertion of the relevant clause of the Town Improvements Clauses Act into the charter.

16. Ownership of real estate valued at £1,000 and £500 respectively provided an alternative qualification.

The most ardent supporters of incorporation, led by the Sentinel, wanted the lower qualification but were prepared to risk having the higher imposed upon them in order to obtain a reformed local government structure. Not all the correspondents to the newspaper were so sanguine and, as the critical public meeting in February 1856 drew near, several letters appeared urging that people had the right to know the price that had to be paid before they committed themselves to the measure and pressing the supporters of the £30 qualification to abandon their position as an essential prerequisite of unity on the issue of incorporation.[17]

The committee which presented the case for incorporation to the public meeting was itself divided on the qualification and, perhaps deliberately, the proposer and seconder of the main motion to pursue reform were drawn from opposite sides of the divide. A more skilful debater and a more reputable opponent of reform than James Capewell might well have exploited this issue to destroy any prospect of unanimity over the measure, but his brand of extreme and disreputable opposition probably helped to keep the issue of petitioning for incorporation separate from that of the qualification.

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17. Sentinel, 12. Jan. 1856. 19. Jan. 1856.

Those who wanted the £30 qualification were the same group who had earlier fought for a high qualification for membership of a local board of health (see Chapter III) and once again the leading exponent of their case was John Ridgway. They represented the economic and social elite of Hanley[18] which seriously doubted the capacity of its inferiors to govern the town efficiently. In all, six individuals urged the commissioner to recommend a £30 qualification and among these Ridgway was the most eloquent, arguing that the qualification needed to become a member of the Watching and Lighting Commissioners stood at £100 and that to change this to £15 in one move was too sudden:-

> "I do not mean to say that property gives ability; but among those rated at £30 we shall find more persons accustomed to business, more their own masters, more independent, and better able to make the sacrifices the members of local governing bodies are required to make of their private interests to the public good, than among the class rated at a less amount..... I am sorry to differ from the working class on this but my opinion is that of the manufacturing and professional gentlemen of the town, as is the case with the tradesmen and leading workmen." [19]

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18. John Ridgway's speech to the February meeting indicated their paternalism:- ".... on the question of the qualification, God had created distinctions in society and he liked to observe these distinctions (Hisses and uproar). But there was not a man who more esteemed the poor, or who treated them more kindly than himself (Hear. Hear.). Under Incorporation all had the same power - one vote and only one". ibid. 9. Feb. 1856.

19. ibid. 1. Nov. 1856.

Some of the high qualification party were particularly afraid that the £15 qualification would give the town's 128 beersellers an undue influence on the Council - a point of view which drove the total abstaining editor of the Sentinel to defend beersellers as often being good business men.[20] Their attitude was based on a mixture of nonconformist puritanism in the matter of alcohol and fear of the anarchical elements in society who were among the beersellers' best customers. It also contained an element of hypocrisy for in Parliamentary elections these same men relentlessly pursued the votes of the beersellers on behalf of the Liberal candidates.[21]

It was further argued that three wards would be insufficient to provide adequate representation for the ratepayers and would in any case destroy the old township boundaries of Hanley and Shelton. Four wards would enable these boundaries to be retained and would avoid confusing the mainly copyhold tenures of

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20. ibid. 2. Aug. 1856. Ridgway considered that the £15 qualification "might make the Town Council constituted of the beersellers of this place. When sitting here as a magistrate I see the pernicious influence which beersellers exercise upon society, the organization, the vice and the immorality to which they give rise". ibid. 1. Nov. 1856.

21. A point made forcibly by a correspondent to the Sentinel. (22. Nov. 1856).

Shelton with the mainly freehold land of Hanley.[22]

Such views were, however, irrelevant to the main issue and the most serious threat to the £15 qualification was the danger that, in the event of its imposition, the Watching and Lighting Commissioners or the Market Trustees, might decline to surrender their powers to the new Council.[23] In view of this possibility the Privy Council might well feel it worthwhile to defer to the wishes of the wealthier inhabitants in order to obtain a smooth transfer of power. Ridgway himself promised to accept whatever qualification was imposed on the town but the Market Trustees made it clear to Major Warburton, the commissioner, that they would only consider surrendering their powers and property in the event of a £30 qualification being imposed.[24] In the event, this threat failed to sway the issue

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22. ibid. 8. Nov. 1856. Letter of John Ridgway to the Sentinel.

23. John Dimmock, a Commissioner, wrote to the Sentinel after the February meeting that a £15 qualification might not "enable us to obtain the amalgamation of the different governing bodies in the townships". ibid. 16. Feb. 1856.

24. ibid. 8. Nov. 1856. evidence of F.Bishop to the inquiry. Market Trustees Minutes. 21. Oct. 1856.

and it was considered that "their published resolve not to amalgamate unless under a £30 qualification was a mistake - an attempt at coercion which cannot have helped their case with the Commissioner".[25]

The £15 qualification was supported by the working-classes who, at the February meeting, voted four to one in its favour, a majority which could well have been even more overwhelming but for abstentions resulting from Capewell's attempts to distort the issue. Support for the lower qualification was not, however, dictated merely by social class, for the many tradesmen who spoke in its favour at the public inquiry were supported by the editor of the Sentinel, by at least one of the Commissioners, the Reverend Whidbourne, evangelical rector of St. John's and by Robert Brown, a partner in the Wedgwood pottery firm.[26]

Prior to the public inquiry the main concern of the low qualification party was to convert their opponents to their own point of view by allaying fears as to the likely consequences of the low qualification. The danger from the beersellers was ridiculed and there were repeated assurances that men of property

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25. Sentinel editorial. 7. Feb. 1857.

26. ibid. 9. Feb. 1856. 18. Nov. 1856.

who had served the town for years as Trustees or commissioners would still have a part to play in administering the town.[27] The language employed was that of conciliation rather than of class conflict.

Once the matter went before the Privy Council commissioner it was essential that a reasoned case should be made out for the £15 qualification for he was unlikely to be convinced of its suitability by employment of the techniques of mass demonstration and demogogic eloquence which had achieved the purely negative victory of 1854. At this stage too, the struggle was devoid of the exuberance which had marked that earlier battle.

The low qualification party argued that a £30 qualification would provide too narrow and exclusive a form of local government in a basically industrial town like Hanley. It was claimed that the exclusiveness of the existing authorities, which was the chief source of local feelings of bitterness, would continue under the higher qualification. Attention was again drawn to the previous poor record of attendance and devotion to duty of the

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27. Samuel Taylor of the Pottery Reform Association saw many among both bodies whom the town would want to keep:- "I believe that their business habits, their abundant leisure, and the laudable ambition of many of them to serve the town, would point them out as the fittest persons to sit at the council board". ibid. 9. Feb. 1856.

wealthy classes on the Board of Guardians and contrasted unfavourably with standards set by the current working-class Board.[28] The Sentinel made the point that with the exclusion of the elderly, the uninterested and the obnoxious a £30 qualification would provide too few suitable candidates for "the ratepayers ought to have the greatest number of persons possible from whom to elect Town Councillors ..... Why should the careful, respectable operative, manager, tradesman rated at £15 be excluded?"[29]

The second objective was to convince Major Warburton of the respectability of the town's working-classes and of their suitability to serve on a Town Council. This point was illustrated in one instance by the large numbers and the orderly behaviour of those who had attended two recent art exhibitions in the town and in another case by the peaceful way in which a crowd of 15,000 to 20,000 had come together to support the cause of free trade with France. It was argued that there was much

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28. ibid. 8. Nov. 1856. Evidence of a publican and working-class Guardian, Thomas Simpson, who understandably failed to mention the record of the working-class Shelton Highways Board.

29. ibid. 11. Oct. 1856. The editorial also drew attention to the satisfactory operation of low qualifications in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Tunstall.

more reading than in earlier times and also a notable change in the attitude of the artisans to strikes.[30]

The view was taken that a feeling for public affairs was rather a matter of character than of wealth, - "the wealthy are often too busy to attend to public matters: men of moderate means were more likely to be economical..... and will give a tone of simplicity to the town's government."[31] The important role of the working-classes in organizing the petition in favour of incorporation and the evidence they gave to Warburton were further cited as demonstrating their political maturity.

Influenced either by the large majority in favour of the lower qualification or convinced by what he saw and heard in the town, Major Warburton took the course desired by the low qualification party and recommended the £15 qualification. When this news reached Hanley there was, however, no repetition of the wildly triumphant scenes that had accompanied the working-class victory in 1854.[32] By avoiding a bitter conflict over the qualification and surrendering the issue to the impartial verdict

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30. ibid. 1. Nov. 1856 evidence of Elijah Jones to the public inquiry.

31. ibid. 11. Oct. 1856. editorial comment.

32. ibid. 7. Feb. 1857.

of an outside arbitrator the reform groups obtained incorporation. The campaign lacked the colour and fire of the local board of health struggle but its very staidness enabled unity on the wider issue to be preserved.

The responsible attitude of the low qualification party was matched by that of their opponents who waived their right to petition the Privy Council against Warburton's recommended qualification. They too had learned the lesson of their failure in 1854 and the Major's verdict was generally accepted.

All the other Pottery towns were concerned about some of the implications of Hanley's attempt to obtain borough status and in particular with the effect of this step on the maintenance of law and order in the district for since 1839 all the towns had combined to support the expenses of a stipendiary justice and, since 1842, all had been policed by detachments of the county force. There was concern that if Hanley became a borough, with its own magistrates, the withdrawal of cases from the stipendiary court would lead to a loss of fines and thus place an additional rate burden on all the local communities. To counter the effect such arguments might have on Major Warburton, counsel retained

by the incorporation petitioners made the offer that "no part of the fees received at Hanley should be appropriated by the Borough magistrates until the salaries under the Stipendiary Justice Act had been raised"[33] - this issue, however, involved further negotiations after incorporation.

The neighbouring towns laid more stress on the inconvenience to the area of Hanley becoming a separate police area, especially in view of the town's central position in the Potteries. This view was supported by the Chief Superintendent of Police for North Staffordshire who thought the town too small to provide an efficient, separate force. The Chief Bailiff took the contrary view and, considering the existing arrangements quite inadequate, could see no difficulty in achieving co-operation between a Hanley force and the County force. In the event a separate force was not established until 1870 so that the validity of these various claims was not immediately tested.

A more serious obstacle to a smooth transition to borough status was, however, raised by the question of what the boundaries of the new borough were to be. In particular this involved a

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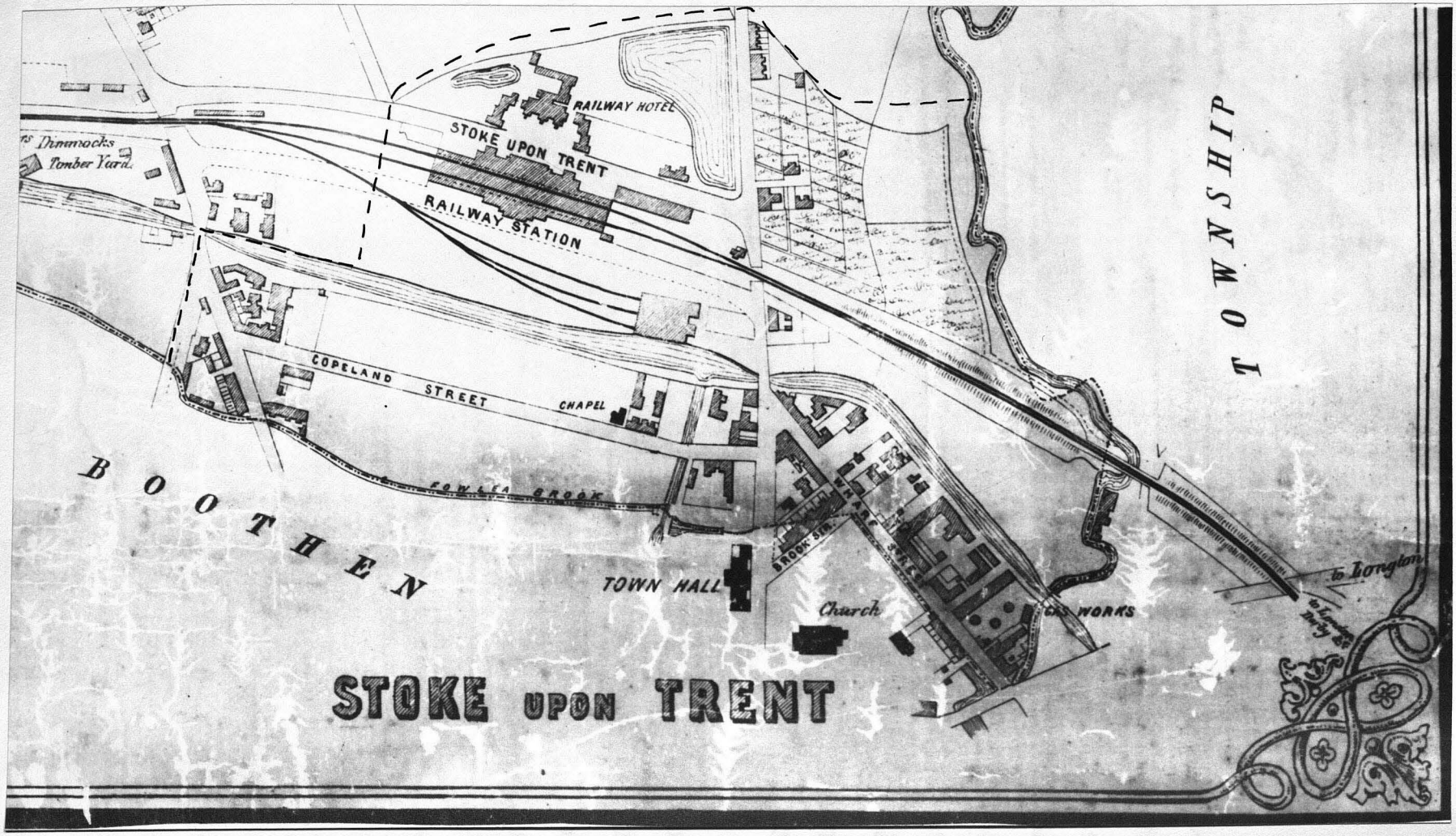
33. ibid. 8. Nov. 1856.

serious dispute with the town of Stoke over the future of the Stoke Rectory glebe-land. This lay inside the ancient boundaries of the township of Shelton and property there paid Shelton highways and poor rates and was treated as part of the township for census purposes. It was, however, specifically excluded from the jurisdiction of the Hanley Commissioners when this body was established in 1825 and, in 1839, had for watching and lighting purposes been included within the scope of the Stoke Improvement Commissioners.

The glebe-land was cut by the Trent and Mersey Canal, on the north bank of which was a large timber yard and, more important, Stoke railway station with its associated hotel property which constituted the central point of the North Staffordshire Railway Company's network. All of this development was separated from the built up area of Hanley by open farming land. The southern boundary of the glebe followed the course of the Fowlea Brook so that to the south of the canal the glebeland stretched to the side of Stoke Town Hall in Glebe Street included parts of Stoke gas-works and extensive areas of private housing in Copeland and Wharf streets, all of which were integral parts of the built up area of Stoke.

The Stoke Glebeland in 1857.



The problem of the glebeland illustrated the complexities of local government in an area which logically required one overall governing authority while the quarrel which now developed over its future status equally demonstrated the petty local animosities which repeatedly wrecked any hope of obtaining this wider solution to the district's problems.

There was great fear in Stoke that Hanley hoped to include all of the glebe-land within its boundaries and the Stoke authorities, together with residents on the glebe, retained Counsel to present the case against inclusion of any of it within the new borough.[34] At the opening of the inquiry Counsel for the Hanley incorporation party urged that the southern boundary of the borough should be along the line of the canal which would have the effect of giving the valuable railway property to Hanley.[35] As the inquiry proceeded the

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34. Their Counsel, attacking Hanley's case at the public inquiry alleged that:- "The whole of the townships, including the glebe land, were sought to be included in the boundary: but so unjust was this that his learned friend had been instructed in the opening of the case, to abandon the portion of the glebe land which lay to the south-west of the Trent and Mersey canal and to retain that portion only which was on the north-west side."

35. At first the legal representative of the railway company stated that he was there to oppose the inclusion of the station within the borough but Ridgway, a director of the Railway Company, claimed that he had been given no such instructions. Next day he limited his brief to that of safeguarding the railway from any danger of double rating.

threat was made that, unless the Stoke opposition to the canal boundary was dropped, the inhabitants of Hanley would press for inclusion of all of the ancient Shelton townships and it was pointed out that 96 of the 100 residents petitioning against inclusion lived south of the canal and so outside the proposed boundary. Later witnesses, including Earl Granville's agent, did in fact press the case for the ancient boundary along the Fowlea Brook as this was necessary for drainage purposes and, as Stoke persisted in its opposition, this became the case which the Hanley Counsel argued in his concluding speech.

With the railway property at stake, Stoke was not prepared to accept the canal as a suitable boundary; only if Hanley would surrender all of the glebe would they withdraw their opposition to Hanley's incorporation. The Chief Bailiff of Stoke, the clerk of the Stoke Commissioners and sundry glebeland residents argued that by reason of its position, the glebe was a natural part of Stoke which had spent public money on its northernportion and borrowed capital against the security of the rateable value situated there. The area was widely separated from Hanley, excluded from that town's lighting powers and habitually neglected by the Shelton Highways Board.

A recent Act of Parliament enabled the Rector to dispose of this land and once the threat of double-rating had been removed it would quickly be disposed of and developed. Those who had already bought and built there would never have done so if they had seen that one day they might have to pay borough rates to Hanley and lighting rates to Stoke. Counsel for the Stoke Commissioners went further than this and ridiculed the idea of incorporation with all its expenses, contrasting it to the wise government and healthy state of Stoke which only wished to be left alone under its present authorities.

This extension of the Stoke case produced a strong reaction among the inhabitants of Hanley and helped to prevent acrimony among them on the qualification issue as the spokesmen from Stoke became "Foreigners trying to prevent them carrying out sanitary improvements."

The issue was a difficult one and its outcome uncertain[36] but Major Warburton's verdict went against Hanley in recommending

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36. The Sentinel, recognizing that Major Warburton saw it as a most important and difficult matter, commented:- "Our ancient, our legitimate boundary is the Foulhay Brook. Practically we have to thank the folly and the want of foresight, forethought and resolution evinced by the Hanley Commissioners for our present dilemma." Sentinel. 22. Nov. 1856.

that all the glebeland should be excluded from the new borough.[37] High drama then changed to farce for when the Charter was issued it included all the townships to the Fowlea Brook and did not in the words of the delighted Sentinel, "say that a large bit of Shelton was no longer in Shelton but had gone off by the railway to Stoke."[38] Protests from Stoke to the Parliamentary solicitors for the Charter revealed that an error had arisen in its wording and that it would now have to be amended.[39]

Hanley, however, stood by its aspirations for the real error might well lie in this latest opinion of the Parliamentary solicitors but, even if this were not so, the Charter could now only be amended by an Act of Parliament. In Stoke, feelings ran high and the Hanley solicitor, Edward Challinor was savagely criticized for having failed to draw the Treasury solicitors' attention to the discrepancy when he had been the

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37. ibid. 7. Feb. 1857.

38. ibid. 30. May. 1857.

39. Correspondence quoted by the Sentinel. 6. June. 1857 - after describing in detail the boundaries of two of the wards the Charter referred to the South Ward simply as including the remainder of the townships of Hanley and Shelton.

only local person to see the Charter in its draft form.[40] In a provocative reply, Challinor found it difficult to believe that Stoke seriously thought it could continue permanently its unjust and grasping occupancy of part of Shelton. He was supported by other inhabitants of Hanley who mocked the fuss their neighbours were making over their lost lands.

The rejoicings were, however, short-lived for an amending Act was swiftly introduced and, after Hanley's first borough elections had been postponed for a month to allow for its passage, the Charter was brought into line with Major Warburton's recommendations. Despite the considerable inter-community bitterness which had been aroused the great prize had slipped through Hanley's hands.

Major Warburton recommended the incorporation of Hanley in February, 1857 and on May 22nd the Charter was granted. The amending Act relating to the glebeland received the royal

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40. Challinor was the solicitor empowered to inaugurate the Charter. His ringing denials of the charges from Stoke brought great popular support for him in Hanley but failed to provide a convincing rebuttal of the allegations. ibid. 13. June. 1867.

assent on July 13th and Hanley's first borough elections took place at the end of August. The last Chief Bailiff, Edwin Allbutt, had agreed to act as returning officer and so found himself administering the confusing municipal election procedure under which there were no nominations or official lists of candidates and no ballot papers. The possibility of total electoral chaos at the first elections was considerably reduced by the admirable publicity given to the procedure by the Sentinel which, over a period of several months, also discussed the issues which deserved consideration in choosing the town's first Council.[41]

The absence of official nominations resulted in 90 candidates receiving votes in the election of 24 councillors although many of these obtained only one or two votes.[42] Despite the number of candidates a large proportion of the ratepayers did not trouble to vote in the elections, perhaps because of boredom engendered by the long-drawn-out course of the struggle

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41. In particular all candidates should be asked whether they supported the surrender of the Commissioners' and Market Trustees' powers to the Council, and, more generally, the elections should be conducted with moderation and goodwill.

42. The Sentinel felt that on future occasions more effort should be made to produce lists of 'serious' candidates.

to reform local government or, more encouragingly because matters had been so openly arranged that few party or class suspicions emerged.[43]

The election of councillors and aldermen marked the beginning of a new phase in Hanley's development but in practice it was some months before the new machinery of local government made its impact on the town. In creating that machinery the Council relied heavily on the advice of its first Town Clerk, the local solicitor, Edward Challinor, who, for example, impressed upon the members the need to form a system of committees to carry out business, a process that was completed in June 1858 when it was agreed that all committees should have deputy-chairmen and secretaries who were to keep minutes of the meetings.[44]

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43. Sentinel. 15. Aug. 1857. The arguments and tactics employed in these elections are considered in the next chapter together with their effect on the composition of the Town Council.

44. At the Council's first meeting, Finance, General Purposes, Bye-laws and Burial Board committees were set up and were followed in the next six months by Nuisance Removal., Lighting and Rating committees. It required a reminder from the Home Secretary before the Council, in November 1857, fulfilled their legal obligations under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 by appointing a Watch Committee, a step they probably overlooked because control of the police remained out of their hands until 1870. (Council Minutes, 1857-1858).

Hanley's new and more formal structure of local government developed further with the adoption of a Borough Seal in December 1857 and the issue of several series of bye-laws in the following March.

That the reality of power still lay with the Watching and Lighting Commissioners was indicated by the Council's decision that it should meet only quarterly until the Commissioners' powers were transferred but that once this was completed it would be necessary, first, to appoint a Nuisances committee and, second, to arrange for full Council meetings on a monthly basis. One of the first Council committees to be appointed was empowered to negotiate the transfer which, under legislation passed in 1857 could be accomplished by a simple deed of transfer whereas it would previously have required a local Act.[45]

The responsibilities of the Commissioners weighed heavily upon them, their powers were inadequate and their prestige in sad decline so that, despite their earlier insistence on a £30 qualification for Council membership, they resolved in November 1857 to surrender their property and powers. A resolution that this should not take place until the Market Trust felt itself able to do the same, received minimal support

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45. Act of 20 and 21. Victoria Cap. 50.

and was rejected even by those who, like John Ridgway, were themselves Trustees or who fully appreciated the difficult position in which the Trust now found itself.[46] By March, 1858, the Commissioners had balanced their accounts and, along with their responsibilities for street lighting and nuisance removal, had presented the Council with the valuable Town Hall property and a sum of £2,000 in the hope that "they may carry out with full power every improvement that has been entered upon and that may still be wanting for the comfort and prosperity of the Borough."[47] The Commissioners' last exit was accompanied by a flurry of self-congratulations and a decision to circulate a history of their work for the town.

At this point the Council's public health powers were enshrined in a series of Highways Acts, Nuisance Removal Acts, the Common Lodging Houses Act and the slender powers inherited from the Commissioners. If it wished to take advantage of the wider powers conferred by the 1848 Public Health Act the Council would also have to have itself constituted a local board

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46. Sentinel. 7. Nov. 1857. The Commissioners had laid the basis for this decision some months earlier by appointing a committee to consider their situation once the Charter had been implemented. They were now following this committee's recommendations. (Commissioners' Minutes. 28. May. 1857. 27. July, 1857).

47. Commissioners' Minutes. 11. Mar. 1858.

of health or obtain a local Act granting similar powers. Despite the expense involved the latter course was seriously considered but the Local Government Act of 1858 so amended the status of a local board of health that this was finally considered the preferable alternative.[48] In January 1859 the Council formally adopted the 1858 Act and was made a local board of health by order of the Home Secretary.

In the first eighteen months of its existence the Council enlarged its powers and responsibilities in various directions. It took over the levying and collection of the general district, borough and highways rates from the Guardians and farmed out their collection on a percentage basis. One of the Council's first actions was to petition the Privy Council to be given the powers of a burial board in order that it could deal with one of the town's most pressing public health problems. When these powers were granted in April 1858 the first step had been taken to arrange for the provision of a town cemetery.

There was some delay before Hanley obtained the much discussed advantage of having its own borough magistracy[49] for

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48. Council Minutes. 6. May. 1858. 12. Aug. 1858.

49. At the public inquiry in 1856 some members of the working class had opposed the suggestion that a borough magistracy would be advantageous to the town: they saw it as a probable source of corruption when men tried cases in which they might have an interest.

the fears of the other Pottery towns concerning the finances of the stipendiary magistrate remained unresolved. Various guarantees were offered by the Council culminating in an offer to submit to the Lord Chancellor's arbitration, if over a three year period the stipendiary finances appeared to have suffered from the creation of a borough magistracy. The Stipendiary Commissioners persisted in their opposition and Hanley Council, breaking off negotiations, formally requested the Lord Chancellor to proceed with the appointment of borough magistrates. The opposition, however, led to continued delay involving repeated requests for immediate action from the Council and it was not until June 1859 that the Borough Court was established.[50]

At this stage the new Borough Council had obtained almost all of the powers available to it for administering the town. The one serious exception to this was provided by the continued independence of the Market Trust which deprived the Council of a useful source of revenue and constituted a persistent irritant to its prestige. The Trustees' prior condition to any consideration of terminating their separate existence, namely

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50. Council minutes from 4. Feb. 1858 to 13. June. 1859.

a £30 qualification for Council membership,[51] had never been met and, despite the considerable hostility and distrust which they faced, the majority of them were in no mood for concessions. At the public inquiry into incorporation their clerk had provocatively stressed the fact that the public had not had to contribute one penny towards providing the best market accommodation in the Midlands and that, as the Trust had originated in private arrangements between the Lord of the Manor and certain individuals and not in any Act of Parliament, the public had no right to any share in its management.[52]

John Ridgway, Hanley's first mayor and one of the minority of Trustees who thought they should surrender to the Council, was in an embarrassing situation for the Council found itself

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51. Their other conditions for transfer had included their own release from personal obligations as Trustees, an assurance that future market income would be applied strictly for market purposes as laid down in the 1813 Act, including an undertaking that none of the expenses of the transfer should fall on the Trust, and a guarantee against the transfer involving disputes with the Lord of the Manor. Their final condition, that no publicans or beersellers should have a share in local government, had also already been rejected.

52. Sentinel, 1. Nov. 1856.

under strong public pressure to take a firm line with the Trust.[53] The Council's Transfer of Powers Committee formally requested the Trust to surrender their powers and indeed this step was recommended by a committee of the Trustees which could see no insuperable legal obstacles to such a step. A majority of the eleven Trustees present at this critical juncture, feeling that it was neither expedient nor practicable for their powers to be transferred, rejected their committee's recommendation but indicated their willingness to co-operate with the Council to secure improvements in the town. This majority felt that the property could not be transferred until the market debts had been paid off and only then if they could ensure that market income would be used only for market purposes and for specific public improvements but not for sewers or other general purposes for which rates were available.[54]

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53. Ridgway had in 1856 tried to explain the Trust's difficulties to the public inquiry:- "The Trustees are not free agents.. .... the Lord of the Manor has made it clear that he is surprised at the money we are making, and his lordship tells us, without ceremony, that he should be glad of an opportunity of taking possession of the property we now hold for the benefit of the public and at the first opportunity he would do it. Our course, therefore, has necessarily been a very anxious one. Gentlemen at various meetings have pressed us to pledge ourselves to give up our trust but we have never felt at liberty to do so. I may say that there is a difference of opinion amongst ourselves as to the giving up of the Trust." ibid. 1. Nov. 1856.

54. Market Trustees' Minutes, 19. May. 1858. 3. Sept. 1858.

This was the authentic voice of exclusiveness and wealth seeking to perpetuate its own influence in a more democratic age in the business ability and integrity of which it had no confidence. The Trustees real intentions can be judged by the fact that it was at this time that they terminated their efforts to pay off the accumulated market debts, on the need for which they had laid such stress, and instead resumed their policy of using surplus income to carry out further market improvements.

Negotiations between the Trust and the Council continued during the next two years and, having taken legal advice, the latter were able to come to an arrangement by which the Lord of the Manor agreed to raise no objections to the transfer. As this involved an increase in the manorial rent from £10 to £20 per annum the Trustees, seeing no compensating advantages for this rent increase, again declined to transfer the property to the Council.[55]

The continuing independence of the Trust with its large income and imposing property in the town centre was a constant

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55. Council Minutes. 24. Sept. 1858. 1. Dec. 1859. 3. May.1860. Market Trustees' Minutes. 15. May. 1860.

affront to the dignity of the Council which in 1860 resolved to adopt any legitimate means to secure the transfer of these assets and gave its transfer of powers committee a free-hand to take whatever steps it thought necessary to secure its ends.[56] It was, however, pressure of public opinion which, after a further twelve months delay, caused the Council to petition the Home Secretary that despite the reluctance of the Trustees their property and powers should be transferred to the Council.[57]

A government commissioner was sent to Hanley to investigate the issues involved and the Council having organized the evidence in support of their case, engaged Counsel to present it to him. The Trustees drew up a reply which they had circulated throughout the town but their representatives at the inquiry found that the commissioner was very unsympathetic to their case. They therefore sought out those who were promoting the transfer "and finding that some of the Promoters of the Inquiry were willing to consent to the Market Funds being strictly reserved for purposes of special improvement as intended by the Act, as well as to

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56. Council Minutes. 14. June. 1860.

57. This step followed a public meeting of ratepayers which urged the Council to act without delay. ibid. 13. June. 1861.

agree to the other conditions required by the Trustees" they called together the 13 Trustees in the area and agreed to consent to the proposed transfer.[58] This informal surrender marked a total and ignominious defeat for the rump of the Trustees who had sought to perpetuate their own existence.

The Trustees powers came to an end in September 1862 but in the last year of their existence they held few meetings and these were only sparsely attended. They accepted the terms of the Provisional Order authorizing the transfer and then had to await its confirmation by Parliament.[59] Unlike that other exclusive and irresponsible local body, the Watching and Lighting Commissioners, the Trustees had had to be prised out of office and in consequence their end was a bitter anti-climax which left no room for graceful final flourishes.

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58. Market Trustees' Minutes, 17. Sept. 1861.

59. Act of 25 and 26 Victoria Cap. 25.

CHAPTER V

HANLEY TOWN COUNCIL 1857 - 1870

Eight years had been taken up in argument, petitions and inquiries, but in 1857 Hanley at last had its reformed system of local government. The town had continued to expand rapidly, public health problems had become more pressing and less susceptible to satisfactory piecemeal reform. The years of argument had done nothing to provide a comprehensive drainage system; they had only made its provision more essential and more expensive; facing the Council with a problem so complex that it was constantly postponed. The long debate on local government denied the new Council the opportunity to exert real influence on the growth of the town by making public health problems appear incapable of a comprehensive solution. Hanley's government was reformed eventually but reform had come a decade too late.

The debate had eventually narrowed into a dispute over the qualification needed for membership of the Council. For many a high property qualification conjured up visions of the

perpetual oligarchy of the Market Trustees. A low qualification recalled to others the wild excesses of rioting in 1842; yet the eventual adoption of this(£15)qualification raised hopes and fears which were to prove equally illusory.

The low qualification did not enable the extremists, who had earlier been so vocal, to dominate the Council. In fact they played almost no part in public life after incorporation. The mob orators Dixon and Capewell were not heard from again and their supporters, failing even now to qualify for membership of the Council, did not emerge among the lengthy lists of candidates in the first elections.

The effort which was made to maintain a working-class party in these elections proved unavailing. There were calls to the electorate not to vote for any of the Market Trustees and a 'smear campaign' against John Ridgway. Yet Thomas Simpson, a prominent opponent of a local board of health but not of incorporation, an ex-chairman of the 'working-class' Board of Guardians and a publican, was the only councillor elected in the first instance who had had any connections with this group. In the bye-elections caused by the appointment of aldermen, the working-class party won two seats in the

South Ward,[1] but failed completely in the first annual elections when their candidates fought the North Ward.

The vigour and exuberance of working-class indignation had been dissipated or diverted[2] and only a small proportion of the electorate troubled to vote in the various elections in 1857. "The regrettable degree of party spirit evinced by some had proved almost entirely in vain."[3] Although this did not mark a complete end to working-class influence in local affairs[4] the intoxicating power they had wielded when on the Shelton Highways Board was never to return and very few candidates openly parading as working-class representatives ever secured election to the Council. When the ex-Chartist,

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1. When one of their candidates, Thomas Worthington, was probably elected on personal merit as "a popular and just employer". Sentinel, 5. Sept. 1857. He was later a benefactor of the Bethesda Chapel.

2. The attention of this group was diverted into fighting the case of the inhabitants of some converted railway coaches whom the Watching and Lighting Commissioners, with belated zeal, had sought to evict. Their campaign, which rivalled the elections in interest, was based on the familiar technique of the mass public meeting at which references were made to future chartist activities in the area and to grandiose plans to establish a co-operative society. ibid. 12. Sept. 1857. 19. Sept. 1857.

3. ibid. 22. Aug. 1857.

4. See below. pp.317 and p. 328.

Charles Heath later entered the Council he had risen to the status of potters' foreman and his radical past was a decade behind him.

On the other hand the supporters of a high qualification did well in the elections with four Market Trustees elected as councillors and quite soon translated into aldermen. Not one of the high-qualification party who put himself forward at these elections failed to enter the Council, while their leader, John Ridgway, obtained the greatest number of votes among the candidates in the East Ward.

The fear that some men of substance might, in view of the low qualification, decline to seek election, was unfounded, to the delight of the Sentinel which had urged support for men of proven ability, integrity and substance who had in the past been benefactors of the town. It was the previous system of government, which the town had outgrown, not the abuse of power by individuals, which had made reform necessary and those who had done so much before were best able to serve the town now.[5]

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5. ibid. 2. May. 1857. 23. May. 1857. 13. June. 1857.

The electors shared the paper's views and proved remarkably conservative in their choice of councillors for an analysis of the Council by occupations hints at respectability and even affluence. It reflects the fact that the municipal voting qualifications were much less liberal than they appeared to be[6] and certainly does little to make meaningful the passion with which ex-Chartists fought for the low qualification.

Composition of Hanley Town Council by Occupations.

	1857/58	1868/69
Pottery manufacturers	7	10
Other manufacturers	4	4
Shopkeepers	8	7
Publicans	5	1 (spirit merchan
Commission Agents	2	-
Gentlemen	2	-
Surgeon	1	1
Glass dealer	1	1
Timber merchant	-	1
Publisher	-	1
Engraver	-	1
Managers and foremen	-	2

6. Lady Shena Simon 'A Century of City Government' Appendix A. 'The History of the Municipal Franchise'. pp. 430 - 432. B. Keith-Lucas 'The English Local Government Franchise. Chapter III.

Only the election in 1857 of five publicans can have caused any alarm to even the most timorous of the 'respectable' inhabitants of the town and, having little to say and even less influence in the Council, by 1865 all but one of them had chosen to withdraw.

The only other new influence on the government of the town was provided by the tradesmen, chemists, grocers, ironmongers, a woollen draper; a class which had little part to play in town affairs prior to incorporation. Their numbers did not, however, increase over the years, despite the importance of Hanley as a district shopping centre. Henry Pidduck, a jeweller, took the initiative in important public health debates and was, in 1864, the first Mayor drawn from this group. W.H. Yates, a chemist, did remarkable work on the Rates Committee, but in general the tradesmen councillors rarely took a prominent part in the big debates. None of the group was in this period elected an alderman although right at the end, George Ridgway, grocer, and Thomas Pidduck, ironmonger, served in turn as Mayor.[7]

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7. Samuel Cole, glass-dealer, took little part in the debates but served the Council as superintendent of the fire-brigade and as inspector of nuisances and of lodging-houses. He was also superintendent of the local police force.

The Council was dominated by men who were the social and economic leaders of the town; of the same class and often the same individuals, who had earlier governed the town as Commissioners and as Market Trustees. The most influential among them, although they did not constitute a formal group, were the pottery manufacturers and in particular John Ridgway, Francis Wedgwood, John Dimmock, Edward John Ridgway and William Brownfield. In 1863 these patriarchs were joined by W.S.Roden, ironmaster, of Etruria Hall, a future M.P. for Stoke and perhaps the greatest local capitalist, who was soon elected Mayor and became the only man to hold this office for a second year. Associated with this group was Basil Boothroyd, a local surgeon and ex-Market Trustee who became a most conscientious and influential member of the Council.

These men controlled the town as clearly as they had when Commissioners or Market Trustees. The majority of them escaped from direct public control by early election as aldermen but there is no evidence of any serious challenge to their position nor of any decline in their decisive influence within the Council.[8]

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8. The practice of open voting may have assisted their original election to the Council and their continued willingness to continue serving the town as aldermen may well indicate the value of that institution in nineteenth century municipal government. At a later date all were in favour of the secret ballot in municipal elections. Sentinel. 10. Sept. 1869.

The label of pottery manufacturer tends, however, to hide the complexity of their economic interests. John Ridgway indeed relinquished his pottery works in 1854 but retained an interest in many other areas of local economic activity.[9] William Brownfield and John Dimmock were both directors of the Staffordshire Potteries Waterworks Company and the North Staffordshire Railway. Edward John Ridgway was the principal beneficiary of his uncle's reputed half-million pound will. The surgeon, Basil Boothroyd, was only one of this group who was also a property and land owner and he had also in common with other council members his directorships of the Burslem-Hanley street railway and of the Hanley Hotel Company. Such men were major local capitalists, representing an economic and social aristocracy in a town of tradesmen, potters, miners and ironworkers.

In national politics the vast majority of all the Council members were Liberals so that from 1866 onwards party labels played some part in Council elections[10] and local Conservatives blamed W.S.Roden, then the Mayor, for the introduction of

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9. See Chapter One. p. 40.

10. Keates and Ford's Potteries Directory, 1867. p. 276. "..... in one ward especially, party strife was as paramount as in a Parliamentary election."

politics into the Council, looking forward to the day when the Council would not be almost entirely of one colour. The Conservative Government of the day obtained revenge by appointing only Conservative magistrates.[11]

The Council was more divided by religious persuasion and this produced an unhappy dispute immediately after the first elections, when John Ridgway, after his inaugural mayoral breakfast, went on to the Bethesda New Connexion Chapel to worship. Thirteen members of the Council forced a special meeting to challenge the legality of this step in the light of his oath to do nothing to harm the Established Church. The Sentinel's editor calculated the religious composition of the Council at this stage as 15 members of the Church of England, 6 members of the Bethesda Chapel and 9 others.[12]

This analysis of religious commitment among Council members indicates clearly the importance, among the upper reaches of Hanley society, of Bethesda Chapel and also gives the Anglicans proportionately more councillors than they had worshippers in the town. By 1870 a majority of the Council were opposed to

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11. Sentinel. 26. Jan. 1867. 9. Feb. 1867.

12. ibid. 5. Sept. 1857.

the pretensions of the Established Church and were petitioning Parliament that no denominational schools be supported by local rates and that religious teaching in board schools should be entirely unsectarian and undenominational.[13] Fortunately, after the inauspicious beginning, religious rivalry appears to have played no part in the working of municipal government in the town.

Successive Councils can have been in no doubt as to the extent and nature of the Public health problems which be-set the town. These had been set out clearly before three public inquiries by government inspectors in the eight years of wrangling rhetoric which had preceded incorporation. The possibility of resolving these problems had been the chief motive of those who had pressed for the reform of local government.

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13. Council Minutes. 5. Apr. 1870. The religious composition of the population in the mid-nineteenth century is discussed on pp.59-60.

The problems had been indicated and the highest hopes raised that with incorporation they could be resolved. Those who, as Commissioners, or as private individuals, had been most ardent in the cause of reform were, in the first Council elections, given the powers they had sought. It is not unfair, in the first instance, to judge the Council on their success in this direction and to consider how far the earlier aspirations of the public health reformers were realised after incorporation. Noxious graveyards, inadequate drains and sewers, unpaved streets, unsatisfactory housing together with the nuisances caused by humans and animals, presented daunting and unglamourous problems for the new administration. Whatever they did in other directions might be of interest but its value would be limited unless the town could be brought into a sanitary state.

The Council accepted that its first concern must be the noxious, overcrowded graveyards in the town[14] and at its second meeting took steps to acquire powers as a burial board. The Duchy of Lancaster declined to donate land, conveniently near the infirmary, as the site for a new town cemetery and subsequently

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14. John Ridgway (then Mayor) for example, "... deeply regretted that they must be under the necessity to think of the burial of the dead before they could provide a park for the living." Sentinel, 26. Sept. 1857.

twenty acres were bought for this purpose[15] on the Shelton Road to Stoke.

This was only the beginning of the Council's expenses and, as the ground was laid-out and drained, with chapels, walls and roads provided, their debt reached £13,500.[16] Borrowing on this scale, which had been beyond the legal power of earlier bodies, provided Hanley, within three years of the incorporation of the town, with a cemetery, adequate for the next 40 to 50 years. Its existence, must, over the years, have done much to relieve a major public health hazard and its prompt establishment ranks as the most imaginative and important achievement of the Council in this period.

The new town cemetery did not, however, lead to any immediate improvement in the deplorable state of the existing graveyards where

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15. Despite objections that it was too near the town and by resisting demands that part of the land should be used as a park. (Sentinel. 17. July. 1858). The land cost £5,400 and the Council declined to pay £300 an acre for a further 3 to 3½ acres jutting into their plot; six years later they were asked £700 an acre and recognized their initial mistake. ibid. 30. July. 1864.

16. Council Minutes. 3. May. 1860. Charges at the cemetery usually provided a bare surplus over running expenses but repayment of the debt, and interest, over 30 years at 4½% remained a charge on the rates.

burials in several cases continued for many years.[17] Those in built up areas remained for years a source of complaint and a hazard to health and as late as 1866 a Sentinel editorial commented on the graveyard at Bethesda that:-

> "All the waste water of every kind from Bagnall Street, Adventure Place and adjacent properties, runs into the burial ground in the rear of Bethesda Chapel, from which there is no outlet. The consequences may be imagined. The land is in a state of foul saturation. Graves, vaults and coffins are in a most improper condition. The water has found its way through the foundations of the spacious schools and permeated the land beneath them until it is fast becoming a quasi quagmire. The trustees, we learn, entered into a contract, some time since to drain the land, but the work had to be relinquished when more than half done, being flooded out, owing to the absence of a public drain in Bethesda Street to convey the water away. The gas and the vapour exhaled from the chapel-yard, especially in hot weather, must be injurious to the public health".[18]

The Bethesda trustees, several of whose congregation were Council members, are made to appear victims of Council incompetence, indeed it was claimed that the town surveyor deliberately deposited

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17. In 12 months from June 1863 there were 134 burials at Shelton Church (which had a new graveyard), 109 at Northwood Church, 64 at Etruria Church, 55 at Bethesda Chapel, 7 at Brunswick Chapel and 7 at Providence Chapel - a total of 376 compared with 305 in the town cemetery in the same period. Sentinel. 25. June. 1864.

18. ibid. 3. Feb. 1866.

refuse, from surrounding streets, in the graveyard.[19] Yet the trustees continued to allow burials in their tiny, overcrowded graveyard long after it had become a menace to the inhabitants of the surrounding streets and many years after the opening of the town cemetery.

In 1865, Hanley Council sought an Order in Council closing this and other graveyards attached to churches and chapels in the town, despite the feeling of some members that the rights of those who had already purchased burial spaces were being unduly infringed. After 1866 only walled and vault burials were allowed in these yards although the incumbent of St. Matthews, Etruria, defied the closure order until prosecuted by the Council and, surreptitiously, for much longer.[20]

A decade after incorporation the church graveyards remained as lurid a public health hazard as they had appeared to be in the evidence at the 1849 public health inquiry. Only after the

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19. ibid. 10. Feb. 1866.

20. He had earlier attempted to extend the graveyard but had been prevented from doing so by the Council. (ibid. 24. Mar. 1866). Warrilow, 'Stoke-on-Trent' p.339 recounts evidence that the same man buried 40 to 50 still-born children there in the period 1880 to 1885.

closure of these yards in 1866 did conditions gradually improve and the imaginative provision of a large town cemetery have its full impact. For this delay the clergy and religious trustees rather than the Council must accept responsibility.

Other, less dramatic, health hazards did not require large-scale capital expenditure so much as the creation of a more complex and more efficient administrative machine than had existed hitherto. The three key figures here were the surveyor, the nuisance inspector and the medical officer supervised by the permanent Nuisance Removal Committee. All were, in the early years of the Borough's existence, part-time officials. Samuel Cole's many duties in addition to nuisance inspection have been mentioned (note 7 above). I.S.Forbes, the surveyor, had a private practice and John Scott, the medical officer, was paid a fee for each piece of work performed. It was not until 1866 that these first two posts became full-time appointments and the medical officer a part-time salaried official, when, in each case, new officials were appointed.

In the absence of dramatic schemes for sewage disposal the key role in raising the quality of everyday life, in the crowded poor areas of the town, belonged to the nuisance inspector who alone could prevent the lazy and the unclean from becoming a menace to their neighbours. The Nuisance Removal Committee and its

inspector show, in their reports, modest pride in what had been achieved but how far a part-time inspector, with only labouring assistance, could do more in a rapidly growing town than prevent a total breakdown of civilized life, may well be doubted.[21]

On Cole's retirement there were demands that a full-time inspector be appointed and in 1866 the first year after this was done, there was a significant increase in the inspector's activity although this might have been inspired by the attention paid nationally to sanitary matters in that year and also to local fears of an outbreak of cholera.[22]

The older houses around the town centre created special problems and in several cases Cole and the part-time medical officer

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21. In his last year in office, to November 1865, Cole visited 580 houses, all with some nuisance in them, and finding the inhabitants generally co-operative he had to issue only two summonses. In addition the Committee ordered the repair of 91 drains, the removal of 192 ash and filth piles, the repair of 124 privies, the building of 72 new cess pools, 42 new ash pits, 29 privies and 73 drains and the lime-washing of 257 houses. Council Minutes. 9. Nov. 1865. In 1858, 381 houses had been visited and 147 complaints laid. Sentinel. 13. Nov. 1858.

22. 834 houses were visited, 84 nuisances ordered to be removed, 646 ash piles cleared. This in a town with some 7,000 houses. Sentinel. 10. Nov. 1866. The figures for later years are not available.

John Scott urged the closure of houses as unfit for human habitation, and in this they were especially active prior to 1863. There were differences of opinion in the Council as to how vigorously this policy should be pursued. Alderman Boothroyd, in other fields of public health a notable reformer, urged caution on economic grounds, for with many more houses in the town no better than those it was intended to close, a whole class of small landlords might well be reduced to beggary and become a charge on the rates.[23] Alderman Wedgwood, a strong supporter of factory legislation, wondered whether eight houses some three to four feet below the adjacent Brunswick Chapel burial ground were, in the opinion of the medical officer "... in their present state injurious to the public. If they did not affect the public, but only those who lived in them, he did not see what the Council had to do with the matter."[24]

Two other houses "within a dozen yards of the Town Hall" were described by the surveyor "as wretched in the extreme. There was scarcely a particle of furniture in either, no back premises and no drainage. In one house the occupants slept on straw; in the other a woman and two children were found to have nothing more than a couple

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23. Sentinel. 6. June. 1863. The Council, however, closed the 7 houses in Bow Street and Brunswick Terrace which were under discussion.

24. ibid. 11. May. 1861.

of sacks for a bed."[25] The closure of these two houses could only drive the wretched inhabitants into equally disreputable accommodation or into the workhouse. This may explain the Council's reluctance to multiply the number of such closures but in addition even some of those members who favoured an advanced social policy, felt that in ordering the closure of houses, they were near the limit of the Council's legitimate powers and interests, unless such houses became a general health hazard.[26] In all only some 30 to 40 closures were noted in the Council minutes or in the newspaper files in this period.

It was easier for the Council to ensure, through its bye-laws, a better standard of housing in the new areas of the rapidly expanding town. The bye-laws particularly stressed the need for minimum heights for rooms, siting in relation to the street pattern and the provision of drainage and ventilation in new houses. All new building had to be approved in advance by the surveyor who was

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25. ibid. 11. May. 1861.

26. Wedgwood later stressed the arbitrary nature of the Council's powers in regard to property and urged that they ought to be exercised with great caution. ibid. 26. May. 1864.

in this respect vigorously supported by the Council. New bye-laws in 1869 again evoked protests, against their "tyranny" from Wedgwood, while others feared that they would increase the cost of building, so discouraging the supply of 'cottage' property.[27] Again the limits on effective Council action are apparent.

The impression remains that successive surveyors worked actively and effectively to enforcethe bye-laws, making an important contribution to the orderly development of the new areas of the town. In this they were helped by the fact that the greatest single block of building, on behalf of Earl Granville, was in any case of a good standard. His agents had to be discouraged from installing water closets and their demands for sewage outlets proved an embarrassment to the Council.[28]

In these areas the worst excesses of haphazard development, as seen in the older parts of the town, were avoided and the resulting monotony was itself the first step towards a civilized urban environment.[29] Even among the older pockets of bad housing

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27. ibid. 9. Oct. 1869 and 23. Oct. 1869. The surveyor, however, claimed that the new proposals differed little from the existing regulations.

28. Alderman Boothroyd complained that money was being provided for such outfalls in the new areas of the town while the old parts were being totally neglected. ibid. 31. July. 1869.

29. See pp.

street improvement schemes, the cost of which could be transferred on to the shoulders of neighbouring property owners, effected remarkable changes. Some schemes were carried out voluntarily but in other instances the Council was active in compelling reluctant owners to take action, occasionally carrying out the work and then charging them with the costs. In 1859 property owners in no less than 22 streets were given notice to sewer, level, pave, flag and channel the streets; a burst of activity which apparently took care of the worst instances for in later years there was only a trickle of such orders.[30]

The maintenance and improvement of existing footpaths on the other hand were the responsibility of the Council, involving major expenditure of between £1,000 and £1,500 each year throughout this period, towards the end of which it was envisaged that, with the improvements thus made, it could in future be considerably reduced. Much of this expenditure would then be available for other improvements but these were to fall outside the public health sphere for in 1867 the Council committed itself to an ambitious

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30. Council Minutes 4. Aug. 1859, 30. Sept. 1859. Property owners in outlying areas, e.g. Northwood, were allowed to delay improvements until further development of the area made this necessary. Piecemeal development then created difficulties in providing a linked street drainage pattern. Sentinel. 6. Feb. 1869.

street widening programme, costing £11,000, in the central commercial area of the town.[31] In this the Council were the inheritors of the traditions of the Market Trustees which they perpetuated at the expense of the surrounding areas of long established overcrowded housing. In the latter improvements were effected only by a handful of closure notices on individual houses and nuisances kept within tolerable limits only by the regulating activity of the nuisance inspector. The capital for improvements which they so desperately needed was invested in prestige projects elsewhere.

Throughout the town but particularly in these older areas the unreliability of the water supply created hazards to health and this despite all the efforts of the Staffordshire Potteries Waterworks Company in the early 1850's[32] to improve the position for after incorporation the growth of all the pottery towns outstripped the resources of the Company and the situation in Hanley deteriorated instead of improved. The correspondence

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31. £4,000 was to be spent in Old Hall Street and most of the remainder in Piccadilly and Stafford Street. Keates and Ford's Potteries Directory, 1867, p. 275.

32. See Chapter One, pp. 82-83.

columns of the Sentinel are peppered with protests at the inadequacy of the supply and each major fire provoked a further series of complaints. It was standard practice to turn off the supply of water at night in order to build up pressure in the mains and even then water was usually available for only a few hours each day.[33] The Mayor, W.S.Roden, was convinced that the situation had deteriorated in the period 1856 to 1868[34] and in 1869 Alderman Wedgwood alleged that parts of Etruria had had no piped water supply for weeks.[35]

The Council was greatly concerned but could do little except protest to the Company which it did frequently until a major crisis developed between the two bodies in 1868, provoked by the Mayor, W.S.Roden, himself a major industrial user of water.[36] Stern

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33. Sentinel, 23. Jan. 1869. with disastrous consequences when the turncock failed to arrive at the scene of a fire.

34. ibid. 8. Feb. 1868.

35. ibid. 31. July. 1869.

36. The occasion of this crisis was a Bill brought forward by the Company to enable it to supply the elevated areas around Kidsgrove in which it also asked to be released from its legal obligations so far as any district over the height of its Birches Head reservoir was concerned, to maintain a constant supply and also to be allowed to increase its charges to such areas. This would affect 1,033 out of 7,000 houses in Hanley. ibid. 23. May. 1868.

resolutions deploring the inadequacy of the water supply in the Potteries were accompanied by savage denunciations of the Company who "have broken faith with the inhabitants" in that "the supply has been most scant and inconstant". The Council unsuccessfully opposed a new Bill of the Company in the Commons and only by 10 votes to 8 decided not to pursue their opposition in the Lords; a decision which led to allegations in the town that the majority had been comprised of shareholders in the company.[37]

On two later occasions, in 1869 and 1870, the Council considered taking legal action against the Company for failing to honour its obligations "thereby causing considerable inconvenience and cost to the Authorities of this Borough and great danger and inconvenience to the inhabitants".[38] Despite the presence in the Council of Company directors, relations continued to be strained while the Sentinel reflected on the handsome profits which could be made by a municipal waterworks.[39]

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37. ibid. 30. May. 1868. Hanley had been joined in its opposition by some of the other pottery towns but the cost to the Borough was £433 which some Council members alleged had been wasted. ibid. 6. Feb. 1869.

38. Council Minutes. 2. Feb. 1869 and 5. Apr. 1870.

39. Sentinel. 30. May. 1868.

This last was, however, a pipe-dream and there was little effective action the Council could take in the matter except to maintain such public pressure on the Company that it would do all it could to resolve the engineering and financial problems with which it was faced. In this the Council did its best and in 1870, with the new Wall Grange reservoir almost completed the Company was able to assure the Council that there would in future be an adequate supply.[40] In this they were distinctly optimistic.

Local aspirations as to what constituted a desirable supply of water had risen since the late 1840's but the volume of protests and the instances of inadequacy cited, suggest that in the 1860's the supply of water failed to keep pace with the growth of the town and of the district generally. This was a serious inconvenience to individuals, a danger to their health and a constant irritation to the Council in its efforts to organize an efficient fire-brigade or to arrange for the watering of streets in dry weather. It had even more serious implications so far as the sewage of the town was concerned. On the other hand the situation in the 1860's did mark

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40. Keates' Potteries Directory 1875 stated that "The increase in the supply from the Mear (sic) Works has been very considerable, but the company's efforts have been taxed to the utmost, and they are still unable to keep pace with the ever increasing demands of their customers." p. 85.

a distinct advance on the primitive state of supply prior to the foundation of the Waterworks Company in 1847.

The passing of the 1866 Sanitary Act, facing the Council with additional responsibilities for public health, was in part responsible for its increased pressure, after this date, on the Waterworks Company. More directly the Sanitary Act compelled the Council to consider action in regard to the two major public nuisances caused by the emission of black smoke from factories and by the inefficient disposal of sewage. Prior to 1866 the Council had taken little note of the first problem and carefully avoided taking action on the second.

Black smoke was an accepted fact of life in the Potteries, attracting little public comment except as a spur to taking a Wakes Week railway excursion to sunnier climes. After the 1866 legislation on this nuisance, however, there was regular newspaper correspondence on the subject but very little action by the Council in carrying out the law, despite editorial encouragement and admonition in the Sentinel:-

> "It is high time for the Town Council of Hanley, where the nuisance is greatest, to take action in this matter, and happily the recent Sanitary Act gives ample power to the Council, to do all that can be done to abate it. In no other part of the United Kingdom is it more necessary to

bring the Act into operation than in these towns, in which the worst evils of the clay and iron manufactures are combined."[41]

Later editorials lamented the failure of either the Council or the Potteries Chamber of Commerce to take action while a stream of letters kept the issue alive when inspiration occasionally escaped the editor. In October 1867 a district conference on the smoke nuisance was held at Stoke but at an early stage its deliberations were diverted into considering problems of sewage.[42] Meanwhile black smoke continued to belch forth unabated.

Then some 200 inhabitants, led by the Tory Anglican parson the Rev. S. Nevill, became the first group in the country which, by the terms of the 1866 Act, petitioned the Home Secretary to remove smoke control from the hands of the local authority and to appoint a Government Smoke Inspector for the town.[43] The manufacturers

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41. Sentinel. 22. Sept. 1866. Keates and Ford's Potteries Directory 1867, p. 274-5 is very critical of Council inactivity over this nuisance.

42. Reported in the Sentinel, 19. Oct. 1867. At this stage, one year after the Act was passed, the Council had sent out a circular to manufacturers (Oct. 1866) drawing their attention to the smoke clauses and now inserted a similar notice in the Sentinel as well as drawing its Nuisance Committee's attention to the matter. There had been no discussions with manufacturers and no prosecutions for contravention of the Act.

43. The Sentinel, (22. Sept. 1866) had drawn attention to this possibility.

on the Council were stung into protest and none with more wounded innocence than Roden, the ironmaster Mayor - "In consequence of the notice issued by the Town Council, nearly every manufacturer, so far as I have found, has taken action in the matter" - he had spent hundreds of pounds, thousands had been spent altogether in the Borough and the petitioners were misrepresenting the Council's activity. "The question was whether those who were so delicate should leave the district or whether the manufacturers should put an end to their manufactures."[44]

The opposition quite unabashed by charges that they were bringing humiliation upon the town submitted a second petition to the same effect as the first pointing out the absence of prosecutions or bye-laws requiring new factories to use the best methods of smoke control.[45] The Sentinel abounded in solutions to the technical problems involved while the editor self-righteously lectured the Council on the need to discipline its own members in

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44. ibid. 9. May. 1868 - an outburst which provoked a sharp exchange of personalities in the correspondence columns during the next few weeks.

45. The highways committee had in March 1866 recommended bye-laws controlling the minimum heights of industrial chimneys. "The proposal was, however, received with disfavour by the Council, and immediately shelved." Keates and Ford's Directory, 1867. p. 274.

their role as manufacturers and deplored its use of rate funds to employ Counsel to defend its position in the government inquiry which followed the petitions.

Here was a clear case of the vested interests of prominent Council members being placed before the public interest until the Council was stung into action by the pressure of public opinion and, before the inquiry could begin, it appointed a smoke inspector and issued summonses against six manufacturers. Neither protestations of innocence nor this belated activity impressed Rawlinson, the Government Inspector in charge of the inquiry, who went out of his way to congratulate the petitioners and warned the Council that unless effective action were speedily undertaken he would recommend the appointment of a government smoke inspector.[46] The brisk activity of the Council after this ultimatum was in clear contrast to the torpor of the two previous years.

Maximum times were now laid down for the emission of black smoke from steam boilers and pottery kilns with the town divided into sixteen districts for inspection purposes. The reluctance of the Stipendiary to convict summoned manufacturers attracted unfavourable public comment but the Council persisted in its efforts.

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46. Sentinel. 29. Aug. 1868. The smoke question attracted much comment in the newspaper in the period from June to August, 1868.

In fact Hanley Council became the initiator of action regarding the smoke problem in the Potteries generally and called another district smoke conference at which representatives of the other towns thanked it for its zeal and regretted that other local authorities were not as active. To this conference it was reported that, in Hanley, the period allowed for producing black smoke when stoking kilns or boilers had been cut down to 15 minutes from a previous average of 30 to 40 minutes. Of 50 factories only 12 were outside this limit and of these only 3 manufacturers had failed to introduce smoke consuming appliances. These 3 and the 9 firemen involved in the other cases had been summoned before the nuisance committee and warned.[47]

Twelve months later the Council felt that great progress had been made especially in the pottery and brick-manufacturing industries. Smoke from steam boilers was now a more serious nuisance but was gradually being controlled by the willing co-operation of the majority of manufacturers. The remaining major nuisance, which was difficult to control, was created by the calcining of iron

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47. ibid. 30. Jan. 1869. The Council was going on to consider the problem in relation to the iron industry. Later there were conferences with the brick manufacturers. (ibid. 13. Mar. 1869.), who were co-operative and a warning to the owners of lime kilns.

and by the ironworks.[48]

The cause of the Council's activity and interest had been underlined at the earlier conference when the Mayor, George Ridgway, had stressed that, unlike the other pottery towns, Hanley had only a limited time in which to comply with the Act or come under the control of a government smoke inspector. The sponsors of the 1866 Act and the local petitioners to the Home Secretary could have expected no higher tribute to the effectiveness of their work than the Council's ensuing bustle of activity.[49]

The smoke problem was of major importance from 1867 to 1869, prior to that period it had attracted little attention; the problems of sewage disposal on the other hand were of long standing and had been exhaustively debated since 1849. When men in Hanley talked of sewers they almost always meant drains, either for surface water

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48. Sentinel. 11. Sept. 1869 and 13. Nov. 1869, where the following figures, presented to the Council, are recorded - 211 of the 263 steam boilers in the town had smoke consuming appliances fitted as had 71 of the 79 slip kilns, 183 of the 374 enamel and other kilns, 84 of the 120 hardening-on kilns, 1108 of the 2331 oven fireplaces and 12 of the 30 saggar houses.

49. Until the adoption of the electric kiln in the pottery industry smoke continued to play its part in bolstering Hanley's mortality rate and a Wakes Week excursion remained an essential lung clearing operation. Contemporaries claimed that from 1868 to 1870 conditions improved vastly but much remained to be done.

or surplus household water. The disposal of human manure was by means of privies and carts or through cess pools which were in turn cleaned out into carts. For the new-fangled idea of water closets, so popular with Chadwick and so fashionable in Burslem, the men of Hanley had a great and quite justified contempt.

There were two distinct problems facing the Council so far as liquid sewage was concerned. It was first necessary to provide a system of mains sewers linking up the street sewers which were being laid down with no reference to an overall sewerage plan. In 1866 the street sewers drained to four outlets where their liquid content was filtered before proceeding along open ditches to the nearest stream or being allowed to enrich neighbouring land.[50] The second problem involved the question of where to deposit the sewage of the town without creating a health hazard either in the town or in neighbouring towns. Both problems produced lively discussions, ingenious theories and very little action from the Council.

Despite pressure from a small number of their members the Council, in 1859, declined to commit itself to the immediate provision of a general scheme of drainange. The state of trade and of the poor,required them to limit the rate burden and all that

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50. As indicated by the surveyor (Sentinel. 24. Nov. 1866).

was authorized at this point was an investigation into the existing system in order to establish what new drains were required.[51]

At the conclusion of this investigation the surveyor reported that a system of drains "extending through the Borough, would be necessary, the Sewerage Committee being of the opinion that the few existing drains were not worth anything." He believed that this could be provided at a probable cost of 14 to 15 thousand pounds but first a detailed survey of the town was required, preferably to be carried out by the Ordnance Department. This sum was only slightly more than the cost of the cemetery yet it was not merely the total cost which the Council declined to contemplate they even objected to the cost of an ordnance survey.[52]

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51. ibid. 3. Dec. 1859 and 5. May.1860. It was John Ridgway who urged this cautious approach in a speech stressing the great importance of the matter. "They never could remove all the impediments that stood in the way of the health of the town until they had established a complete system of underground drainage. There were many improvements required in the town, among them improvements in their buildings and streets; but this question of sewerage was the first that stood in their way and the most important."

52. Despite the surveyor's protests that no sane contractor would work from the Waterworks Company's street plan the Council decided to contact the Ordnance Department to see if it could be adapted for drainage purposes. ibid. 14. July. 1860. Some inhabitants, with an even higher opinion of the surveyor's ability, urged him to rely on the Hargreaves map of the Potteries published in 1832, scale 2 inches to one mile or the Homer map (1857) on a scale of one inch to one hundred and 25 yards neither having any contours marked.

Another year elapsed before the Council again considered the matter when the surveyor outlined the problem and presented his solution to it. He examined the existing, defective system, indicated a programme of work required to provide efficient drainage, explained how it could be financed and concluded by urging the Council to face up to its responsibilities:-

> "In conclusion your surveyor feels it his paramount duty to urge upon the Council the commencement of some attempt to alleviate a prevailing source of misery, poverty, death, destitution and pauperism. The Council stand in the position of guardians of the public health and social welfare; they can by their verdict confer upon the inhabitants a boon none other can supply; to them each and all look for relief, and upon their decision is based the happiness, comfort, health and prosperity of all around." 53

This appeal was received with enthusiastic applause and warm compliments. The Council was, however, deliberating under the shadow of a public meeting, held earlier the same week, at which proposals for either a survey or a general sewerage scheme had been firmly condemned while the pottery trade was so depressed as a result of the American Civil War.[54] Alderman Boothroyd, no

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53. ibid. 11. May. 1861.

54. ibid. 11. May. 1861. One wit had commented "they could not tell when the war in America would end and he would suggest that they send to the two Presidents, Mr. Davies and Mr. Lincoln, and tell them the sewerage of Hanley depended on the war." Another had urged that if the American war should last 50 years then they should wait that long.

enemy of sewerage improvements, confessed that he had found this expression of working-class opinion "prevailing in other classes of the inhabitants of the town" and he felt that the Council could not act against the feelings of the community. The Surveyor had chosen a bad moment for his inspired advocacy and the Council, acknowledging their obligation to act at the first favourable opportunity, decided that in view of the prevailing distress they could not at that time proceed with either sewerage or survey.

In 1863 the same arguments were again heard but by 15 votes to 6 it was agreed to carry out further investigations,[55] and in the following year only three members voted against commissioning an ordnance survey. There was still concern at the likely cost of a sewerage scheme but the majority accepted this as a valuable first step. A decision which had to be defended before another hostile public meeting.[56]

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55. ibid. 17. Oct. 1863.

56. ibid. 14. May. 1864 and 25. June. 1864.

Two more years passed with no discernible progress and the Council seemed generally to be paying only lip-service to its public health obligations. Hanley was one of the last local towns to appoint a salaried medical officer of health or to arrange for detailed recording and investigation of mortality statistics.[57] The continued absence of effective action from the Council provoked protests from the Sentinel.

> "Take for instance the central and largest Pottery town, Hanley, In this place nearly 36,000 human beings constantly breathe an atmosphere largely contaminated by smoke, sulphur and pestiferous vapours and gases of every kind. Although the surface presents the best possible facilities for effective sewerage no such sewerage exists. There is a municipal corporation, with all its stipendaries and titular dignitaries and there are two registrars of deaths, and a beautiful cemetery, but no officer of health collects, classifies and publishes the death returns, or gives an analysis of the diseases which week after week result in death." [58]

The year 1866 was one in which the pottery trade enjoyed remarkable prosperity thus removing the main argument against proceeding with a sewerage scheme. The Council, however, failed to take advantage of the economic revival to commit itself to the desperately needed main drainage scheme. After this opportunity was lost, drainage problems within the town tended to be ignored as attention became focused on the associated problem of river pollution.

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57. ibid. 3. Feb. 1866.

58. ibid. 31. Mar. 1866.

Pollution of the rivers had by this time become a serious problem in the Potteries. In 1866 Hanley's new surveyor had proposed a scheme to handle the town's sewerage by the irrigation system so that only unpolluted water entered the Trent and the Fowlea Brook.[59] The following year a district conference at Stoke, the town most adversely affected, discussed the problem of pollution and the Stoke Commissioners threatened to take legal action unless Hanley took steps to abate the nuisance caused by the deposit of sewage into the two streams, a threat which was repeated in 1870. Hanley Council had the rivers surveyed upstream of the town in order to establish their innocence in this matter, holding the 2,000 wretched water-closets in Burslem responsible for the nuisance.[60]

Further pressure on the Council came from the Duke of Sutherland whose estates at Trentham were being made uninhabitable by the continued nuisance. Great concern was felt when the Duke

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59. ibid. 24. Nov. 1866.

60. ibid. 5. July. 1870. In 1868, Alderman Boothroyd claimed that, "It was well known that the Council had steadfastly set its face against the construction of water closets in the Borough.... They had done nothing which would increase the pollution of the Trent... on the contrary their sewers had been constructed to carry off only the surface water instead of allowing it to stand until it became stagnant" - the water in the Trent was around their outlets, completely clear. The Sentinel, 30. Nov. 1867, admitted that there were at least 80 water closets in Hanley.

introduced a 'Trent Purification Bill' into the Lords, only to abandon it later. This Bill, it was claimed, "would shut up Shelton Colliery at once", and "if it were passed they (the Council) would have to shut up all the avenues to pollution of the river, and should require permission of the Duke to perform the ordinary functions of nature."[61]

The local authorities of the district failed to agree in support of a scheme for a main sewer which would carry the district's sewage downstream past Trentham to Hem Heath where the Duke offered to assist in providing an irrigation plant for its treatment.[62] This scheme, the brainchild of Liddle Elliott, the Waterworks Company engineer, had been considered by Hanley Council which, perhaps frightened by the likely cost, had considered it impracticable.[63]

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61. ibid. 8. Feb. 1868.

62. This failure provoked the Duke into introducing another Trent Purification Bill under which an Upper Trent Conservancy Board, elected by landowners, would have had extensive powers to stop pollution and a joint-committee of local authorities, with power to levy rates, would have prepared a sewerage scheme for the district. Alterations sought by Hanley Town Council were rejected and the bill was opposed by all the local authorities concerned. It failed on May 8th, 1871, to pass its second reading in the Commons. Keates, Potteries Directory, 1875, p.83.

63. Sentinel, 10. Apr. 1869.

A few Council members, and notably Alderman Boothroyd, believed that the problem must be dealt with at a district level and that any scheme for the rapidly growing separate townships would provide only a temporary solution. This view, which attracted only lukewarm support elsewhere in the Potteries, the Council now rejected and in 1871 they fought a scheme to impose co-operation on them by law. (See note 62). As early as 1868, Hanley Council had implicitly rejected the possibility of co-operating with the neighbouring towns when it purchased various plots of land for the separate treatment of its own sewerage by the irrigation method[64] and despite another flirtation with the idea of a district scheme in 1873 each of the Potteries' towns had by 1875 committed themselves to separate schemes of sewage treatment.

In the decade after incorporation, Hanley Council had done remarkably little to improve the methods of sewage disposal. The carts still removed the night-soil from the privies, open ditches continued to serve as open sewers depositing increased amounts of

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64. Warrilow, 'Stoke-on-Trent', p. 189.

65. Sentinel. 10. Oct. 1868. This was after an inspection of irrigation works at Leicester, Warwick and Coventry. The successful application of the method at Coventry convinced the Nuisance Removal Committee that it provided the best solution to the town's problem. Nine further acres were purchased in 1875 and another fourteen in 1877.

filthy liquid into the polluted rivers. An attempt to analyse the causes of this situation must begin by admitting that there was little which could be done to improve the methods of disposing of the nightsoil. The Council was wise to reject the water-closet and to resist its introduction into Hanley. In the absence of an efficient outfall where the dung could be treated, the 2,000 water-closets of Burslem turned the Fowlea Brook into an open sewer bearing the excreta of the town downstream through Etruria and Stoke to Trentham. Inadequate water pressure ensured frequent blockages in the system and made it as obnoxious in operation as the deficiencies of the privies. The 1867 Sewage Conference in Stoke urged a return to the dry closet system and at that conference the Burslem representatives freely confessed that the introduction of water closets had been a mistake.[66]

All the Council could do was to ensure that the privies, the cesspools and the carts produced the minimum nuisance and to this end the Nuisance Removal Committee and the nuisance inspector worked energetically. In 1868 the relevant nuisance regulations

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66. ibid. 19. Oct. 1867.

were overhauled and extra staff were employed to carry out house visitations in the densely populated areas.[67]

On the other hand the Council's record so far as drainage and water-borne sewage was concerned was frankly disappointing. Haphazard improvements and insistence on drains for new houses and streets made the overall problem more complex.[68] A new system of main drains and a means of disposing of sewage, other than into the rivers, had to be provided, as the Council's first surveyor had made quite clear. The Council's failure to take action disappointed the editor of the Sentinel and caused adverse comments from Rawlinson who had been the government public health inspector in 1849 and 1851.[69]

No action was taken chiefly because a majority of Councillors were reluctant to contemplate spending money on the scale required,

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67. Council Minutes 9. Oct. 1868. It was, for example, laid down that all cesspools must be watertight and of stone construction and that not more than three families or two houses were to use the same privy.

68. As Alderman Boothroyd acknowledgedin urging the townspeople to recognize that the provision of temporary outlets for street drains, or signed contracts by the owners of property that they would in future construct drains, was uhsatisfactory and would ultimately lead to greater expense. (Report of public meeting. Sentinel. 11. May. 1861).

69. Sentinel. 13. Mar. 1869.

at first because of the great cost of the cemetery and later because of the disastrous effect of the American Civil War on the pottery industry. Without doubt this attitude reflected that of the majority of the town's inhabitants, especially those drawn from the working class for the first suggestion to commission an ordnance survey had led to the formation of a Ratepayers Protection Society to oppose such expenditure.[70] This body succeeded in getting at least two firm opponents of a sewerage scheme elected on to the Council and reflected working class hostility to the expense involved, a feeling which found expression at the public meetings on the subject held in 1861 and 1864.

Yet the financial obstacles could have been overcome sufficiently easily to enable a drainage plan to be prepared which could then have been implemented over the years. Expenditure on footpath improvements, running at over £1.000 each year, was by 1868 coming to an end and with this money available some supporters of a sewerage scheme considered that no rate increase would be necessary to implement it. Others spoke of a threepenny or at most a sixpenny rate increase.[71] In any case the financial alibi could not be cited in 1866 when the Council still did nothing.

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70. ibid. 11. May. 1861. At least one ex-Chartist was prominent in the affairs of the Society.

71. ibid. 14. July. 1860. 11. May. 1861.

The argument that the Council could not run ahead of public opinion may well have been true in the lean years from 1861 to 1865, but after this date, with the case against a sewerage scheme argued at such a puerile level[72] and the need for a scheme so clearly demonstrated, as an alibi for inaction, it reflects little credit on the Council. The opposition's arguments reflected those of the period 1849 to 1854 when indeed two of their principal spokesmen, Charles Heath, the Chartist, and Elijah Jones, an advocate of total abstinence, had been active.[73]

Such opposition, reflecting widespread public prejudice might well have imposed caution on the Council but the members proved remarkably irresolute in attempting to overcome it or explain it away. The case for a drainage system within the town was clearly established, the Council were committed to it but they did not provide it.

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72. A typical contribution, reported in the Sentinel on 11. May.1861, from a leading opponent was to ask whether the health of the town was not far better "when they possessed more pigs and had fewer parsons".

73. The town, they said, had never been healthier and this scare like that of 1854 was being created by medical vested interests. They exaggerated the cost, forecasting a rate increase of one shilling to three shillings and at public meetings distorted the Council's tentative plans out of all recognition, suggesting a final cost of £50,000.

A better case can be made out to justify the failure to reduce the amount of river pollution or provide for the treatment of the bulk of the town sewage in that the Council simply did not know what to do for the best.[74] They believed that they were not the main culprits in polluting the rivers and found the northern pottery towns in particular, reluctant to share the cost of a massive main sewer to bear the district's sewage to the south of Trentham. There were genuine differences of opinion on whether this was a practicable piece of civil engineering.[75] It would in any case by tremendously expensive and in the event only a few visionaries on the Council preferred it to the more parochial but initially less costly borough irrigation plants.

The Council did, however, recognize the gravity of the problems facing them and towards the end of the period were making determined efforts to obtain further information on the subject of sewage disposal. Deputations visited other Midland towns, an annual sum of £21 was contributed to support the British Association's researches into the problem of sewage disposal, and in addition information was sought

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74. A city with the resources of Manchester failed to tackle the problems of river pollution until the last decade of the nineteenth century. A. Redford. op.cit. vol. I. pp. 161-162.

75. Sentinel. 19. Oct. 1867, 10. Apr. 1869.

from the Home Secretary.[76] Many years were to pass, however, before there was any improvement in the state of local rivers and in these years, from 1857 to 1870, the situation deteriorated dramatically.

The Council had proved quite active in effecting improvements when the capital costs involved could be transferred to other shoulders and this was again demonstrated in its willingness to adopt the Workshops Regulation Act. This contributed greatly to the welfare of the workers in the smaller factories and involved the Council in the expense of employing an inspector of such premises.[77] The financial burdens involved in meeting the regulations fell, however, on the proprietors of the workshops. In 1869 the inspector became responsible for 213 workshops and, under legislation passed in 1863, 132 bakehouses "many of which I found very badly ventilated indeed and many disgracefully filthy." His work in ensuring proper cleaning of these premises and the provision of improved ventilation and sanitary accommodation must have played a significant part in improving the health of the 602 people employed in them.[78]

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76. Council Minutes. 6. July, 1869, 31. May 1870. 2. Aug. 1870.

77. Sentinel,8. May. 1869, 10. July. 1869. Administration of the Act was taken over by the Factories Department of the Home Office in 1871.

78. ibid. 31. July, 1869. He was also able to prevent the employment in bakehouses before 5.a.m. or after 9. p.m. of 57 young persons.

This was all very commendable but, with the shining exception of the cemetery, the Council was much less active in public health matters when it was unable to unload the financial burdens involved upon others. There was in any case a marked preference for capital expenditure to be above ground, where its results were visible to all, rather than employed to lay drains which would be buried from public view. It was Rawlinson who, in 1869, commented wryly on the contrast between an £11,000 street widening scheme in the town centre and the complete absence of any sewerage scheme.[79]

Inactivity in certain important fields of public health cannot be entirely excused on the grounds of inadequate finance for the Council's financial position, unlike that of earlier local authorities, was far healthier than many public comments suggested as the chief source of income was the yield of the Borough and General District Rates,[80] which were based on sharply rising rateable values.[81]

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79. Sentinel, 13. Mar. 1869.

80. The former levied under the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, the latter levied by the Council as a Local Board of Health.

81. Totalling £58,000 in 1858 these rose to £84,000 in 1868, which reflected both revaluation of rateable values and the expansion of the town, (a revaluation in 1863-64 raised the total from £64,000 to £75,000). The valuation of property was carried out by the Overseers of the Poor but in 1859 the Council took over the levying and collecting of the rate. This practice was not general until much later when it was found to be considerably cheaper than collection by the poor law authorities. (Redlich and Hirst, 'Local Government in England', Volume I. p. 398).

When trade was depressed, many of the poor had to be excused their rates, in 1862 when 100 applicants had been excused 240 rates there were still another 157 applicants to be heard. Not all these cases could be carefully investigated and there was a feeling that 'people were being paid for telling lies'. Part of the increased yield from the rates came with the strengthening of the system of collection when a full-time borough accountant and an inspector of the collection were appointed[82] although the Council was also well-served by the assiduous attention to duty on the Rate Committee of a handful of its members.[83] In 1858 some 18% of the Borough Rate was lost whereas in 1868 the loss was only 9%.[84]

The increased yield made it possible to hold the level of the rate steady from 1858 to 1868 with a sixpenny Borough Rate and a one and sixpenny District Rate. In 1869 the latter rate was reduced to one shilling and the Borough Rate increased to eightpence to provide a surplus in the Borough Fund for future sewerage expenditure. An attempt to maintain the sixpenny rate was lost by only 14 votes to 12 although the new combined rate represented a fall of fourpence. The Council was not averse to popular gestures to the ratepayers, even

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82. Sentinel. 3. Feb. 1862.

83. ibid. 17. Oct. 1863.

84. 1858 and 1868 were both years of indifferent trade.

as it shuddered at the likely expense of a sewerage scheme.[85]

The only important source of income additional to the rates was from market rents and from 'farming-out' the market tolls. This income was only available to the Council after it took over control of the markets in 1862 and its use continued to be controlled by the Markets Act of 1813. It had first to be used to administer and improve the markets and then for other town improvements. This restriction produced a serious split among the Council members when a majority wished first to use surplus market funds for street improvements and later to borrow money to provide a cattle market.

A substantial minority of the Council claimed that this was illegal and that repayment of the still considerable market debts and payment for market improvements must have first call on surplus market funds. The majority argued to the contrary that the mortgages involved were of the general district rate with repayments coming out of the surplus market funds so that the market was not in debt and the 1813 Act not contravened.

Public opinion in the town, led by the Sentinel, sympathized with the majority and castigated their opponents as heirs to the traditions of the Market Trustees who would deny the Council full control of its own income and resources. This the minority party denied,

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85. ibid. 5. June. 1869.

claiming that it was prepared to see borrowing for street improvement purposes but not by using market income for this purpose until the legal obligations had been met.[86]

The terms of this dispute were much narrower than the heat of public emotion suggested. The minority view originated among the finance committee members who were concerned as to their personal financial responsibility if market funds were mis-appropriated and their feelings in the matter were so strong that they refused to carry out the Council's instructions and had to be replaced by a committee of the whole council. Formal protests, at the misuse of market funds, were handed in and in a flurry of petitions from both sides the matter was referred to the arbitration of the Home Secretary.[87] A Home Office decision in favour of the majority view aroused further protests but resolved the issue.

The important feature of this dispute is the acceptance by both parties that surplus market funds were not an integral part of the Borough Fund and could not be used for ordinary highway or other rate purposes such as the provision of a sewerage scheme.

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86. Sentinel, 29. May. 1869. and 3. July, 1869 which describes claims and counter-claims made at a public meeting on the subject.

87. The documents outlining the views of the two parties are incorporated in extenso in the Council Minutes. (23. June, 1869. 27. July, 1869).

Their use was limited to 'town improvements' which both parties interpreted narrowly to mean the provision of public buildings or the widening of central streets. The argument would have been more radical and vastly more important if it had involved an attempt to re-define 'town improvements' to include such projects as a sewerage scheme. As it was, there was a built-in financial bias in favour of street-widening, for which surplus market funds could be appropriated, at the expense of sewerage, for which they could not be used.

While details of receipts and expenditure have not survived in any systematic form, occasional information is available as when the ratepayers in the East Ward were given the following summary of Council finances for the year 1863-1864.[88]

Income from the Borough (6d) and General District (1/6d) Rates.			£6,644
Expenses			
Salaries	£846		
Interest on cemetery loan	£780	(including capital repayment)	
Gas	£1,300		
Scavengers	£200		
Rates, taxes, insurance	£83		
TOTAL			£3,209

88. Sentinel, 29. Oct. 1864.

Leaving £3,435 "to be devoted to the making of the footpaths of the town or to any other purpose". (Alderman Boothroyd).

Balance in the rate funds at the end of the year			£2,700
Market income			£2,230
Market expenses			
Salaries	£200		
Gas	£145		
Interest	£780	(including capital repayment)	
Rates and taxes	£370		
TOTAL			£1,495
Balance "applicable to the widening of streets, improvement of market property and providing a cattle market"			£ 735

(Alderman Boothroyd)

A noteworthy feature of the accounts is the high cost of lighting the streets, with the supply of gas costing the equivalent of a fivepenny rate. The salaries of officials was the second largest item of expense and as individual salaries rose appreciably in these years, alongside a significant growth in the number of officials, the sum involved increased over the years. The accounts and Boothroyd's comments on them both indicate the current fashion for footpath improvements.[89]

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89. Sentinel, 25. June. 1864. The salaries of officials had by 1868 risen to a total of £1,243. ibid. 9. May. 1868.

Loan repayments and interest charges were an important item in the accounts and one which became more important later. All the Council's borrowing was over thirty years, usually at 4½% interest, from the Economic Life Insurance Society. The loan for cemetery purposes was £13,500 and in 1862 another £13,000 was borrowed to enable the Council to discharge the debts of the Market Trustees: then in 1867 £5,000 was raised for street improvements, in 1869 £3,000 for a cattle market and a further £5,000 for street improvement schemes. At this point, allowing for repayments, the Council's debt was over £30,000 and interest and repayment charges were costing the equivalent of a 7d rate and this despite the increased rate yield and in the absence of expensive sewerage schemes. It was, however, correctly predicted that the receipts from the cattle market would provide a surplus over the loan charges and that surplus market funds would cover all loan charges other than those on the cemetery. This borrowing, on a scale far greater than anything which could have been contemplated prior to incorporation, was far from straining the Council's resources, as was clearly indicated by the fourpenny reduction in 1869 in the rate demand.

Council policy in matters of public health varied between cautious parsimony and visionary foresight and this pattern was repeated in other fields. On occasion, Council members took the

lead in attempting to provide new facilities in the town but at other times it was the Council which dragged its feet and resisted schemes for improvements; a pattern illustrated by its sharply contrasted attitude to the provision of a library and of a public park.

A number of members of the Council in 1864 took the lead in pressing for adoption by Hanley of the 1855 free libraries legislation. The Council gave unanimous support to this initiative and called a public meeting to get the Act adopted.[90] Here the proposal foundered on working-class opposition led by Charles Heath for only one sixth of those present supported the idea.[91] Alderman Brownfield commented "All I can say is that it is your loss and not mine."

Working-class opinion, which had swept the library aside, was divided over the proposal for a public park which was being considered

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90. They may have been inspired by jealousy of Burslem which had just adopted the Act. Equally the pottery manufacturers must have welcomed the intention to use part of the penny rate available to assist Hanley School of Art. Sentinel. 26. Mar. 1864. Council Minutes, 24. Mar. 1864.

91. Heath argued that over 20 years, without missing a Sunday as a teacher, he had built up his own collection of books, others should copy his example or join the Mechanics Institute for a penny a week, the fact that the projected help for the School of Art would help only the potters and, inevitably the American conflict's effect on trade were also cited. Sentinel. 16. Apr. 1864.

at the same time. The leading opponents of the library, including a councillor member of the Ratepayers' Protection Society, were the chief supporters of a park. They wished to see the Council acquire some 30 to 40 acres for this purpose, preferably near to the town so that it would be easily accessible to working-men who had great need for such a facility.[92]

Such a project had been wished upon the Council by the Watching and Lighting Commissioners but had never been taken up because of the prior commitment to provide a cemetery but now, in response to this pressure a Park Committee was formed and this found a 25 acre site at Far Green costing some £6,000 which would in turn involve a final outlay of £8,000 to £10,000.

It was the Council which drew back from "this monstrous extravagance"[93] and which decided to postpone the matter with only the Ratepayers Protection Society member dissenting. Working class opinion in the town was divided with one section frightened by talk of a twopenny rate increase but with others resentful that those who sought to deprive the people of a park were prepared to spend 25 to

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92. Sentinel. 26. Mar. 1864; 9. Apr. 1864; 16 July, 1864.

93. ibid. 29. Oct. 1864. speech by Alderman Roden.

30 thousand pounds on sewerage works "to drain their own cellars".[94] In a sense this was not an unfair contrast to draw, for most of the Council felt that a park would involve a substantial rate increase or the abandonment of any scheme for sewage. In the event the town obtained neither facility.

The inclination of the Council to press hardest for improvements when it was possible to transfer the financial burden on to others also showed itself in other directions, notably in the struggle to provide the town with a rail link to the main line and, later, with the northern Pottery towns.

The establishment of Stoke station as the headquarters of the North Staffordshire Railway Company, while Hanley had no line at all, was a severe blow to the town's pride and was held likely to have serious economic consequences. To obtain a branch line from Etruria station the Council assented in the Company obtaining a monopoly position in the district[95] but was to regret this later, for there

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94. ibid. 15. Oct. 1864.

95. This in 1858 when John Ridgway, a railway director dominated the Council. The Council petitioned against the London North Western Railway's attempt to build a line from Shrewsbury to the Potteries and later refused to support the protests of the Stoke Commissioners at the joint-traffic arrangements made between the L.N.W.R. and the North Staffordshire Railway. In return proposals for the branch line were included in an N.S.R. Bill and Hanley Council then refused to consider suggestions from Burslem and Tunstall for a loop-line connecting the three towns. Sentinel. 23. Oct. 1858. Council Minutes 4. Feb, 1858; 15 July, 1858; 5. Jan. 1859; 1. Mar. 1859. Manifold 'The North Staffordshire Railway'. p. 51.

was growing antagonism in the town to the N.S.R. caused partly by its high freight charges and partly by restiveness over the slow progress in providing the promised branch line.[96]

As a result in the period from 1862 to 1864, the Council flirted with various schemes, intended to break the Company's monopoly. There was a petition sent supporting a plan of the Great Western Railway to bring a line from Wellington to Silverdale but this was blocked by the N.S.R. and the London North Western Railway jointly presenting an identical scheme. Then support was considered for a line from Shrewsbury through Drayton to Madeley and in a great sweep northwards to Harecastle and along the ridge, linking the northern Pottery towns, to Hanley.[97]

The Council was persuaded not to support this scheme by the N.S.R. offering to extend the Hanley Branch Line through Burslem and Tunstall and in a loop back to its main line. Although this project received Parliamentary approval in 1865 the depressed state of trade after 1866 delayed construction and the Company sought to

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96. At a public meeting on the subject it was claimed that the Company was abusing its monopoly position with disastrous effects on the pottery industry - this at the height of the American Civil War. Sentinel. 19. Apr. 1862. The Branch Line was opened in the autumn of 1863 when it soon became extremely profitable to the Company. Council Minutes. 10. Sept. 1863 and Manifold op. cit. p. 53.

97. Council Minutes, 22. Mar. 1862; 11. Feb. 1864; and Manifold, op. cit. p. 51.

abandon the line. This the Council castigated as a breach of faith with the inhabitants of the town and an abuse of the company's monopoly position in the district.[98]

On this occasion and in 1870, when the Company again attempted to abandon the line, petitions were successfully presented to Parliament to prevent this. The Company was first allowed to delay construction but was finally ordered to complete the line by 1872 and, after further delays, eventually did so in 1875. This successful campaign by the Council, in which it was joined by the local authorities of Burslem and Tunstall, was largely instrumental in bringing valuable rail links to the town. Ironically the line the Company tried so hard to abandon proved a very valuable section of its track, supporting a 15 minute service in its hey-day.[99] Without the pressure from the Hanley Council it might never have been built.

Good rail communications were vital to the manufacturing interests on the Council but that body had a more direct and corporate interest in obtaining cheap supplies of gas.[100] Other towns, notably

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98. Council Minutes. 8. May. 1868.

99. Manifold, op. cit. p. 54.

100. See p. 326.

Manchester, had in the past established profitable municipal gas undertakings and the Council urged the British Gas Company, which was the town's only supplier, to insert a clause in its latest Parliamentary Bill giving the Council the option of buying their works. This the company declined to do and, despite John Ridgway's suggestion that the possibility be borne in mind for the future, the question never arose again.

As was the case with the railway, the Council in its first years deliberately worked to create a monopoly of gas supply to the town by threatening to oppose a Bill of the Stoke Gas Company unless Hanley was specifically excluded from its operations.[101] Once again it soon regretted this course of action and there were complaints that the British Gas Company's charges in Hanley were higher than in towns far from any coalfield. Despite a reduction in the price of gas from 4/6d to 4/- per 1,000 cubic feet the idea grew that a competitive company should be established in the town.

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101. The Stoke Company urged the Council to consider the advantages of competition in the supply of gas - an argument long rejected by Parliament as leading to wasteful duplication of pipes. The Council's opposition may have been perverse parochialism because the competition came from Stoke or because the Town Clerk was also the legal adviser of the British Gas Company which in addition paid £150 of the Council's £174 expenses in the matter. The Stoke Company decided not to persist in the face of the Council's hostility. Council Minutes. 13. Jan. 1858. 4. Feb. 1858. 31. Mar. 1858. and 12. Aug. 1858. Sentinel. 16. Jan. 1858 and 7. Feb. 1858.

This company, which became known as the Hanley Gas Consumers Company did not originate with the Council and the allegation that almost all the Council members were prepared to rush headlong into street-lighting contracts with it, despite the absence of any actual gasworks, is wide of the mark.[102] The question of support for, and contracts with, the new Company completely divided the Council and a petition in favour of its Bill was carried by only one vote against arguments that wasteful duplication of equipment could well force an amalgamation and then a price increase to pay for this.[103]

The new company enjoyed widespread support in the town, at a time when other local gas undertakings were making substantial profits, and large numbers of small shareholders paid a shilling deposit on each share. The lengthy Parliamentary struggle involved heavy legal expenses so that when the British Gas Company agreed to meet these, it was decided to withdraw. It was only after many recriminations and threatened legal actions that the Company was, in

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102. Warrilow, 'Stoke-on-Trent', p. 138. The Company offered gas for street lighting at3/- per 1,000 cubic feet, which would have meant a £300 saving per annum to the Council, whereupon the necessary pipes would have been laid. Parliamentary agreement that private consumers could be supplied would then have been easier to obtain because pipes were already in situ.

103. Council Minutes, 21. Mar. 1865.

1870, wound up, without ever actually producing any gas. Its only success was in forcing down the price of the British Gas Company's supplies by a further sixpence per 1,000 cubic feet. Despite local enthusiasm for the scheme a large minority of the Council remained sceptical of its practicability or its advantages to the town and, in the absence of unequivocal local authority support Hanley never obtained its own gas company.[104]

Council efforts to improve other facilities in the town can be noted more briefly. The most serious concern was caused by the effect of high road tolls on the trade and industry of the town but there was little that the Council could do except support legislation to have control of turnpike roads generally transferred to the local authorities and petitions to this effect were on four

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104. There are numerous Council minute references to the scheme in 1864 and 1865 and in the Sentinel in the same period, with occasional references until 1869 on the difficulties involved in winding-up the company. Eventually all small shareholders received their deposits back when larger shareholders waived their rights and were rewarded, out of the remaining assets, by a large public dinner, marked by great bonhomie; at which the British Gas Company was represented. The most easily available account is in Warrillow, 'Stoke-on-Trent', pp. 138-139.

occasions submitted to Parliament with no result.[105] Then there was the more effective pressure on the Post Office for more and better accommodation and more frequent postal deliveries. In 1862 the Council even contributed towards the cost of improving the Post Office building in Fountain Square.[106] The Council also encouraged the United Kingdom Telegraph Company to bring its lines to the town and urged general support for this venture.[107]

An eye had to be kept on the possible effect on the Council's powers of legislation passing through Parliament and committees were appointed to watch several such measures. On occasion Bills which did not directly affect the Council were seen to have wider implications and so the Council supported the Bill, sponsored by

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105. There were thirteen toll gates in Hanley at which it was calculated some two to three thousand pounds was paid each year in tolls. It was argued that £600 per annum would keep the relevant roads in repair and that this could be collected far more cheaply as a rate than through tolls. The effect of the tolls on Hanley's commercial pre-eminence in the area, and especially on the markets, caused great concern to the Council. Sentinel, 3. Feb,1862; 1. Nov. 1862.

106. Council Minutes, 28. Aug. 1862. This was opposed by six votes for a resolution "That no public money be spent on private property."

107. ibid. 5. Feb. 1863.

Birmingham, to enable boroughs to deposit their sewage outside their boundaries and petitioned against the attempt to merge the City of London police with the Metropolitan Police Force.[108]

Nor did the Council take a narrow view of what constituted its legitimate interests and, urged on particularly by Alderman Wedgwood, expressed its opinion to Parliament on a variety of more general matters. There were petitions in support of Shaftesbury's climbing boys' legislation, the workshops regulation Bill of 1867, the secret ballot in municipal elections and on the 1870 education legislation.

In this the Council was self-consciously aware that it spoke on behalf of the town and in other ways also it showed a high sense of its own importance.[109] There was resentment at the lack of consultation before a Waterworks Company Bill was submitted to Parliament and a feeling of humiliation at the threat that a government inspector might take over the duty of controlling the smoke nuisance. A lengthy debate and a major crisis occurred with the Cattle Show Committee when the Mayor felt that he had not been given due

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108. The Stoke M.P. W.T.Copeland was a City of London Alderman and this step was taken at his prompting in order to resist 'centralization'.

109. In 1868 there was, for example, a long discussion on the possibility, in view of the town's size and importance, of obtaining separate Parliamentary representation.

precedence at one of their functions. Feelings of this type were soon aroused in official dealings with the other Pottery towns, especially when these involved Stoke, whether the issue was the supply of gas, the inclusion of the Stoke glebeland into Hanley, the market pretensions of the Stoke Commissioners, or the flow of Hanley's sewage downstream to Stoke.

In contrast to these demonstrations of self-importance was the devoted, unpublicized service of the long-standing members of the Council. There were on average, ten to twelve, usually lengthy, Council meetings each year and in addition the likelihood of service on three or four committees, the most onerous being service on the rate committee which met almost every week. A few members neglected these obligations but those with long-service were remarkably assiduous in what was often the pursuit of inglorious trivialities. The prestige attached to the office of Mayor was fully earned during the year of office; one chairman of the rate committee, who had attended 44 meetings in the year, resigned from the Council when his colleagues insisted on proposing him as Mayor, because his business commitments would prevent him taking on the varied duties of the office.

Almost all the Council members were active as industrialists or tradesmen and, whatever their failures, Hanley was remarkably fortunate that so many of this class were prepared to give such conscientious service to the town over so many years.

Nor did this devotion to the interests of the town stop at the doors of the Town Hall. Several Councillors were actively involved in running the Hanley to Burslem street railway, because it was regarded as a commercial asset to the town, when its dubious legal position and the effect of high road tolls made its profitability highly questionable. Then a great number of members were directors of the Hanley Hotel Company which was very self-consciously founded because the town's commercial pre-eminence required such an institution, especially when Stoke possessed the North Staffordshire Hotel.

Conclusion.

In its first years the Council created an effective administrative machine which it continued to supervise and improve. The everyday administration of the town was far more efficient than it was prior to incorporation whether in the field of nuisance inspection or of rate collection. In many respects and especially in its right to borrow capital the Council had far wider powers than

its predecessors and these powers continued to increase through legislation. The increased interest and activity in public health matters after the 1866 Sanitary Act was passed is particularly notable. All this led to continued improvement in the appearance, the surfacing and the lighting of the streets.

The finances of the town remained on a sound basis and the Markets were administered as progressively and as efficiently under the Council as ever they had been by the Market Trustees.

In its dealings with commercial undertakings the Council clearly represented the town and so could speak with far greater authority than any earlier bodies could have done. There is only the minimum evidence that in such dealings the council members failed to do their best for the town because of private interests, a tendency clearly revealed only in the reluctance to combat energetically the smoke nuisance which enveloped the town.

The vast majority of council members were involved in the affairs of the town, certain of its importance and committed to its improvement, as can be seen in the rapid provision of a cemetery and a cattle market or in the extensive programme of central street widening. They did not do more in part because of honest differences of opinion as to what were the proper financial priorities

or technically the best steps to take and because always they were committed to the general proposition that rate increases should be resisted. They all remained surprisingly conservative in their views on what constituted proper use of the surplus market funds and their automatic exclusion of sewerage schemes from their definition of town improvements did much to prevent such schemes being realized.

The period 1857 to 1870 was one of honest administration, increased efficiency and continued interest in the well-being of the town. The serious gap in this story of honest parochial endeavour was the failure to provide a drainage scheme for the town or a scheme for the disposal of the town's sewage. Tragically these had been the primary purposes for which the Council had been created. They had a decade earlier provided the terms of reference for the great debate on the reform of local government. A new cemetery, the increased sanitary powers, the devoted work of the nuisance inspector and the general improvement in administrative efficiency may all, after incorporation, have made Hanley a healthier town in which to live.[110] Yet all these improvements could in

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110. The improvement in mortality in this period is considered in the next chapter. The compiler of Keates and Ford's Potteries Directory, 1867, p. 275 paid the town authorities this double-edged compliment:- "A considerable amount of vigilance has been exercised by the Council in regard to the general sanitary condition of the town, which has been kept clear of nuisances, and as healthy as the want of drainage, defective ventilation, and a smoky atmosphere would allow."

the long run scarcely compensate for the growing deficiencies of drainage and the approaching crisis over sewage disposal which in 1870 remained a complex and evil legacy for future generations. Too little had been attempted in these matters to provide a healthy basis for the continued expansion of the town.

The new Council had proved more efficient, more honest administrators and better representatives of the town than their predecessors but their sense of financial priorities had denied fulfilment to the highest claims and pious hopes of those who had earlier battled with vested interests and popular scorn to bring about reform. The majority of members preferred low rates and wide streets to drains and men like Robert Rawlinson, disciples of Edwin Chadwick, were right to condemn them for it.

Fountain Square in 1875.

CHAPTER VI

REFORM IN RETROSPECT

In 1871, with 42,000 inhabitants, Hanley stood pre-eminent among the Potteries' towns, having doubled its population during the preceding thirty years. Growth on this scale owed much to the continued expansion of the pottery industry, particularly along the Cauldon canal, but even more to the spectacular increase in mining and working iron with which was associated the development of deep coal mines in the Fowlea valley.[1] Commercial facilities had been further extended so that the shopping centre stood unchallenged in North Staffordshire[2] and street widening became necessary in the town centre because of the pressure of traffic.[3]

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1. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 2. pp. 80 and 130-131.

2. The three largest towns were Hanley, Longton and Burslem; some indication of their relative commercial status can be obtained by comparing the numbers involved in each town in five widely different branches of retail trading. (from Keates's Potteries Directory, 1875).

	Hanley	Longton	Burslem
Chemists and druggists	15	8	6
Drapers	36	23	20
Greengrocers	95	47	31
Grocers and provision dealers	286	143	110
Milliners and dressmakers	90	16	9

3. Keates and Ford's Potteries Directory, 1866. p. 275. A traffic census in Piccadilly revealed that 3,683 vehicles and 148, 381 pedestrians had used the street in the course of one week.

Hanley's triangular site between the rivers was by 1870 widely scarred by houses, pot-banks and mines. The great ironworks and railway sidings dominated the Fowlea valley and, in swallowing up the racecourse and the open fields had driven both the Wedgwood family and the infirmary out of the town in search of healthier and more peaceful sites. Pot-banks along the Cauldon canal towered over the Trent valley and the tide of housing crept south towards Stoke but was still far from linking the two towns. To the north, continuous housing developments had linked the once isolated Northwood district to the town centre and behind the ribbon development along the road to Burslem rows of houses had replaced the open fields. As the town became more compact, more thoroughly urban in character, the intervening countryside was swallowed up and in these decisive decades the drab twentieth century environment finally emerged.

The appearance of the many areas of new housing was monotonous in the extreme, long grim rows of terrace houses providing a cramped environment with few facilities. Yet there at least the drains, water-mains, pavements and orderly lay-out provided a basic minimum for a civilized life that was scarcely possible amidst the clutter of older housing and industry which still surrounded the town centre for it was not until after 1880 that

even the first efforts were made to clear any of these latter areas.[4]

Expansion of the built-up area, by denying easy access to the 'lung' of the open countryside, had enclosed the working-classes more tightly in their urban environment than their fathers had ever been. Thanks to the linear development of the Potteries' district their plight was not as serious as that of the inhabitants of large cities for from Hanley open land across the Trent was still quite close. Although the town did not obtain its first public park until 1894, the opening in 1875 of a four acre playing field in one of the poorest areas, to the rear of St. John's Church, eased the problem at least in that part of the town.[5] Opportunities for recreation were further improved in the same year when the Council spent £6,000 on providing public baths.

In other ways also, continued growth brought with it the compensation of improved facilities within the town. In 1871 The Theatre and Opera House, with 2,500 seats, was opened only to

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4. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. p. 143.

5. Keates's Potteries' Directory, 1875, p. 170. This playground, ambitiously provided with gymnastic equipment for men and boys, a cricket field and a girls' playground resulted from the joint enterprise of the Council and private benefactors.

be surpassed in size two years later by The People's Music Hall. Despite these widening social opportunities the mainstay of working-class recreation remained the beerhouses, the number of which kept pace with the rising population.[6]

The growth of the town also resulted in increased provision for religious minorities with the opening of three chapels in which services were held in Welsh, a synagogue and a spacious Catholic church and school, none of which had existed in 1850. Although two Primitive Methodist chapels were opened after 1854 provision by the main nonconformist bodies failed to keep pace with population growth and the Church of England, after the frantic building from 1847 to 1852, opened no more churches in this period so that the overall state of religious provision in the town was even less adequate in 1870 than it had been at the time of the 1851 religious census. It should perhaps be added that the next thirty years have been described as "the great era of chapel building in the Potteries."[7]

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6. White's Staffordshire Directory of 1851 listed 92 beerhouses in the town. In 1875 Keates's Potteries Directory listed 184 beerhouses in addition to 56 off-licence premises.

7. V.C.H. Staffs. Vol. 8. pp. 278-279.

There is a generally accepted view that nationally the 1851 census stimulated religious Englishmen of every Church in the middle of the century to evangelize and civilize those who had been deprived of the Christian message by population growth and movement or by the neglect of previous decades.[8] In terms of church building this clearly did not happen in Hanley where the Anglican expansion preceded and the nonconformist expansion came twenty years after the census. Equally there is a complete absence of any evidence that the decline in church places relative to population was compensated for by more intensive use of existing buildings or by an improvement in the quality of religious life among those who did attend.

The impact of a mid-nineteenth century religious revival, if it existed in Hanley, is to be found only in the great school building programme of the 1850's.[9] The potential school population continued to increase rapidly after this expansion, as a result of the general rise in population and more particularly because the factory legislation of 1864 required the provision of

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8. G.Kitson Clark,'The Making of Victorian England' chapter VI and particularly p. 176.

9; Chapter One. p.64-65. (Chapter I. to 1850's school building programme).

part-time education for children employed in the pottery industry.[10] There was, however, a long pause before the impetus of the 1850's was re-newed for in 1875 the new School Board's six schools had all been inherited from their religious and charitable founders and there had then been no new school building in the town for twelve years. The mid-century expansion had been short-lived and between 1860 and 1875 there was a serious decline in the provision of school places relative to population.

Despite these persistent weaknesses in the provision of religious and secular education, there was a paradoxical improvement in the tone of life since the 1840's. The deep and bitter class divisions so evident in the earlier period had been papered over for, if the number of criminal cases in the courts did not apparently decline it is nevertheless clear that the fear of total anarchy had been lifted from the shoulders of the respectable inhabitants. Riots and public disorder on the pattern of 1842 seemed increasingly remote possibilities and police resources were no longer stretched to breaking-point, even at the time of the annual Wakes which were indeed becoming relatively

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10. The Inspector of Factories reported a 60% increase in the school population throughout the Potteries' district between 1864 and 1866. (Keates and Ford's Potteries Directory, 1867 p. 266).

peaceful affairs.[11] Increased prosperity after 1850 was more responsible for this improved state of affairs than efforts at evangelism.

Among respectable inhabitants an increasing number recognized the intolerable harshness of some aspects of life and sought to relieve this when they could. It was for example, the leading pottery manufacturers who petitioned for legislation to regulate the conditions of child labour in the pottery industry in an initiative which swept away one of the most evil features of the contemporary scene.[12] There was also an increase in the number of societies devoted to charitable and other humanitarian ends as well as an impressive public response to the appeal for funds with which to build a new infirmary.

It was indeed the institutionalization of many areas of public life which provided one of the most remarkable social changes of this period. Charity, which at the mid-century was

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11. Keates's Potteries' Directory, 1875, p. 82.

12. ibid. p. 63. The strength of their humanitarian feelings should not be exaggerated, such legislation had governed conditions in the textile industry for decades, and as the worst conditions prevailed under the small manufacturers who were most prone to indulge in price-cutting there was also a powerful economic motive for their action.

most often the concern of the private conscience or the subject of only spasmodic public appeals, had itself become more organized with discharged prisoners, the deaf and dumb, the victims of mining accidents and animals of all kinds among its recipients. Religion had its unions to defend the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England, to promote love and concord amongst the Sunday-school teachers of that body, and to cultivate Christian intercourse amongst the Congregational churches. In education there were associations of teachers, an adult education society and a prize scheme association. A similar trend was also evident in trade and industry as the pottery manufacturers re-organized their chamber of commerce and the mining engineers, the brick and tile manufacturers, the ironmasters and the licensed victuallers all formed associations. Significantly the great majority of all these bodies took in a larger unit than the single township and, by embracing the wider Potteries' district, pointed the future pattern for local government.

All of these institutions originated with the middle classes for the working classes proved tragically incapable of emulating this approach in a joint effort to raise their own economic status. Until the twentieth century the potters failed to copy the national

example set by other skilled trades in establishing a viable union. The trade was too heterogeneous, the factories too small, wages too low, habits of independence too deeply ingrained for more than stunted associations, representing the fragmented crafts, to emerge and subside in a perpetual cycle producing few practicable benefits for their members. Perhaps as a result of this failure the increased prosperity enjoyed by the working classes after 1850 did not constitute the basis for further advances in succeeding decades.

In other ways the oppressive reality of everyday working-class life was in these years lightened as the town's declining rate of mortality testified.

Table of Annual Mortality (per 1,000 inhabitants)[13]

	Hanley and Shelton	National Urban Average
1851 - 60	26.70	24.7
1861 - 70	24.56	24.8
1871 - 80	23.59	23.5

The most dramatic improvement occurred between 1861 and 1870

13. Extracted from the Annual Reports of the Registrar General.

as the national figures showed a slight retrogression and at a time when there was no improvement in local water supplies compared with the previous decade[14] and possibly an actual deterioration in the quantity of medical help available in relation to the rising population.[15] The one new factor which could have brought about this improvement was the existence of an effective local authority which had to its credit in particular the provision of a spacious municipal cemetery, the regular inspection and removal of nuisances, and a series of bye-laws laying down minimum building standards in the new areas of the town. It is significant that the more dramatic decline in mortality occurred in the Shelton township where previous inadequacies in local government had created the town's worst public health blackspots.

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14. Chapter 5. p. 300.

15. It is arguable that medical facilities improved in 1869 when a more extensive North Staffordshire Infirmary was opened, or in 1874 when Hanley acquired a dispensary for the sick poor, but as late as 1875 the number of chemists in the town was barely keeping pace with the rise in population and the number of doctors failed to do so. In 1875 there were 15 chemists and 13 doctors in the town (Keates's Potteries' Directory) whereas in 1851 the figures were 7 and 9 respectively. (White's Staffordshire Directory).

Table of Annual Mortality in the townships of Hanley and Shelton
(per 1,000 inhabitants)

	Hanley	Shelton
1851 - 60	24.82	28.58
1861 - 70	22.65	26.27
1871 - 80	23.60	23.72

It has, however, been argued that the Council failed to carry out other essential sanitary improvements in these years. Specifically it failed to provide a comprehensive drainage scheme or make adequate arrangements for the satisfactory disposal of either liquid or solid sewage.[16] Eventually the continued pressure of population growth sought out these failures so that after 1870 there was a slowing down of the improvement in the rate of mortality. From 1871 to 1880 the death rate in Hanley was indeed again increasing and the further fall in the Shelton death rate may in part be attributed to the departure from the township of the district's only infirmary.

16. See Chapter 5. pp.306 - 318.

Despite the initial improvement in the death rate after the town was incorporated the long term mortality statistics provide no firm basis for a simple verdict on the effectiveness of the Council's sanitary work. During the 1850's it was probably the often inadequate efforts of the Waterworks Company which did most to halt the decline in public health standards evident during the preceding decade. After 1857 the Council provided a better regulated environment but laid no basis for long term improvements in life expectancy. Set against the high hopes raised prior to incorporation the Council's achievements appear modest for the town's death rate from 1871 to 1880 was still higher than the minimum which had been required for unilateral action by the General Board of Health almost thirty years earlier.

This is not to deny the value of the reform in town government for in many ways Hanley was governed more efficiently, rate collection was more businesslike and less corrupt, a fully-fledged committee system had been developed to attend to business, there had been an increase in the number of officials employed, the town had its own bench of magistrates and after 1870 its own police force. Above all, as the town continued to grow and Parliament laid greater burdens on local authorities generally,

the new structure of borough government, whatever its defects, was able to adapt to changing circumstances and this in clear contrast to the earlier forms of local government in the town which had been so perilously close to breakdown as early as 1850.

The reform of local government in Hanley was followed by reforms in the other Potteries' towns and, as the new local authorities became entrenched the prospect of a district scheme of reform receded. Eventually the solution of many local problems could only be found within a regional framework but in the mid-nineteenth century local vision, finances and administrative resources were stretched to their limits in dealing with the problems be-setting each of the separate towns. Local government reform based on the individual towns, was, in view of the strong separatist feelings within the communities, an inevitable response to the growing sanitary chaos. The visionary schemes of a Potteries' Borough, which in area would have dwarfed the city of Manchester, would in the mid-nineteenth century have been thoroughly impracticable so that reform within each of the six towns was probably the only solution to the crisis in local government which threatened the district half a century prior to Federation.

The changes which took place in Hanley were part of that wider movement of mid-nineteenth century reform whose causes are the subject of vigorous debate at the present time as attention is drawn to the relative importance in this respect of Benthamite philosophy, religious belief and humanitarian feelings.[17] Eventually the problems posed by industrialization and urbanization could only be resolved by the creation of administrative machinery capable of interfering in a host of mundane fields. Today the chronology of that administrative growth and particularly the significance of the expansion which took place prior to 1870 is also a matter of some dispute.[18]

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17. In this far ranging debate the most important contributions include O. MacDonagh, 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government - a re-appraisal', (The Historical Journal, 1958), H. Parris, 'The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government - a reappraisal re-appraised', (ibid), 1960, and Mrs. J. Hart, 'Nineteenth Century Social Reform - a Tory Interpretation of History', (Past and Present, July, 1965).

18. The classic statement of significant growth prior to this date is in D. Roberts','Victorian Origins of the Welfare State', Criticism of this view appears in E. Midwinter, 'Victorian Social Reform', and in an article by the same author, 'A Tory Interpretation of History: Some Comments', in Past and Present, July, 1966.

Benthamite philosophy was not opposed to positive state action in the social or indeed in the economic field[19] so that the extent of administrative growth prior to 1870 does not necessarily have any bearing on the question of Bentham's influence in shaping the social reforms of the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed this study of Hanley suggests that in the reconstruction of local government to face the sanitary problems posed by town growth, the essential administrative framework had been created long before 1870 and it will later be argued that Benthamite influence played an important part locally in bringing about the modernization of the town's government.

In the search for the origins of the modern omnicompetent state, attention has been concentrated on the powers wielded by the agencies of central government to the neglect of the equally important increase in the power of local government bodies.[20] Here, as early as 1835, the Municipal Corporations Act had provided an effective and flexible framework for the future government of towns. The most important task undertaken by the municipalities

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19. A point made by L.J.Hume, in 'Jeremy Bentham and the Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government', (The Historical Journal, 1967.)

20. Two significant recent exceptions to this claim are articles by E.P. Hennock, 'Finance and Politics in Urban Local Government 1835-1900', (The Historical Journal, 1963) and R.M. Gutchen, 'Local Improvements and Centralization in Nineteenth Century England', (The Historical Journal, 1961).

in the nineteenth century was meeting the challenge of deteriorating sanitary conditions and here too the local administrative framework was laid at an early date when the 1848 Public Health Act enabled towns to establish local boards of health. The Sanitary Act of 1866 and the Public Health Act of 1875 were of great importance in strengthening the powers and increasing the obligations of local boards[21] but their impact on public health problems depended upon the local administrative framework established in the earlier legislation. Late nineteenth century local government legislation was in essence a tidying-up operation for before 1850, when town government in Hanley almost ground to a standstill, Parliament had already provided a new pattern of urban administration.

In Hanley 1857 marked a revolution in local government, the days of looking back to the chaos of local autonomy, characteristic of the early nineteenth century, were over and the town was fully integrated into a national pattern of municipal government which has in essence survived into the second half of the twentieth century. In the words of G. Kitson Clark, "... this is the critical period"[22] and if, as he adds, some people have great

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21. In Hanley the 1866 Sanitary Act brought about the first effective action over smoke control and increased activity in inspecting nuisances, its national significance is stressed by R.M.Gutchen, op. cit. The Historical Journal, 1961, p. 91

22. G. Kitson Clark, 'An Expanding Society: Britain 1830 - 1900. p. 162.

difficulty in recognizing this it is not likely that the inhabitants of Hanley in the mid-nineteenth century would have shared their incredulity.

There remains the more difficult problem of explaining the origins of the fashion for reform prevalent in the town after 1850 and this in turn may assist a judgement relevant to the wider issue of social reform generally in the mid-Victorian period.

In Hanley the first evidence of any concern with sanitary conditions is contained in the efforts in 1844 of a committee of leading inhabitants to answer the questionnaire, sent out by the Commissioners inquiring into the state of large towns, which was followed a year later by the first moves to form a waterworks company in the district. Concern revived with the onset of cholera in 1848 leading to the formation of committees of inspection in the Potteries' towns which petitioned for a public health inquiry under the procedures provided by the 1848 Public Health Act, a move with which a large number of the inhabitants of Hanley, particularly among the working-classes, disagreed. The inquiry in 1849, by Robert Rawlinson, compelled the inhabitants for the first time either to face up to, or to explain away the sanitary squalor amidst which they lived. Prominent among those

who took the former course were some of the wealthiest inhabitants, all of whom were associated with the town's religious life and for many of whom we have evidence of a genuine religious commitment allied to a real humanitarian concern for their less fortunate fellows.

The growth of public concern with Hanley's sanitary state, which was quickly transformed into a movement to obtain reform of the town's government, occurred only in response to persistent questioning from agencies established by the central government. There is no evidence that, without this outside stimulus, humanitarian concern within the town would eventually have realised how intolerable its sanitary state had become and have taken action to remedy it.[23] It is true that outside influences were most effective in playing on the consciences of men who in other fields already showed a genuine humanitarian concern for their fellows and most noticeably in rousing to fierce activity the ageing John Ridgway. Yet despite the latter's many good works it was during his lifetime that the town reached its evil state without any recorded protest and but little action on his

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23. The importance of a general humanitarian impulse in society which gradually recognized and sought to remedy abuses is argued by O. MacDonagh, op. cit. The Historical Journal, 1958, p. 58.

part until Rawlinson came into the town. The depth and direction of Victorian humanitarianism should indeed by questioned[24] for of lesser men than Ridgway it could be argued that personal fear, aroused by the onset of cholera, provided the first effective spur to even the most inadequate action over public health.

Much of the external pressure brought to bear on the inhabitants of this small unpretentious town can be attributed to the workings of Benthamite philosophy. The process of 'scientific' inquiry into abuses, of legislation to protect the public against them and the creation of an administrative machine to enforce the legislation were all largely Benthamite devices.[25] In an effort to re-assert Bentham's importance in the mid-Victorian reform movement it has recently been argued that men who never met or read Bentham could well have absorbed his ideas, perhaps without appreciating their origins.[26] In Hanley this view is subject to practical illustration for Edwin Chadwick is generally regarded as Bentham's most distinguished disciple and Robert

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24. As it is by J. Hart, (op. cit. Past and Present, July, 1965, pp. 48-57), who also objects to the 'intolerability theory' as making reform appear an automatic occurrence involving little individual effort and also because it tends to denigrate the influence of philosophic ideas in bringing about reform.

25. J. Hart, ibid. pp. 41-44

26. J. Hart, ibid. p. 45.

Rawlinson was in turn a close supporter and vigorous exponent of Chadwick's public health programme. Rawlinson's visit in 1849 provoked a debate in the town that did not end until its government had been equipped to deal with the sanitary problems. Pressure of local and national opinion prevented the immediate application of Chadwick's ideas and in 1854 Hanley failed to obtain its local board of health. This failure could be seen as an example of the failure of Benthamite ideas and institutions to influence events but this would be to miss the significant impact that the public health debate from 1849 to 1854, had on the climate of opinion in the town. The vast mass of influential opinion in Hanley could no longer ignore the insanitary condition of the town which was indeed then felt to be intolerable. It was, however, Robert Rawlinson, the disciple of Chadwick, who had demonstrated just how intolerable it was.

The local light thrown on some peripheral aspects of the debate on the origins of social reform is more slight but, in Hanley at least, the claim that the Victorian middle classes were unready for an advanced social policy[27] should be qualified by the admission that in matters of local government reform and

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27. J. Redlich and F.W.Hirst, 'The History of Local Government in England', (1958 edition edited by B. Keith-Lucas), p. 149.

expenditure on public health improvements they were far more ready than the working classes beneath them. It is an assertion that depends too heavily on one's definition of 'advanced'. The even larger claim that the increased local electoral influence of the poor in this period was a positive factor encouraging the development of public health services[28] is flatly contradicted by the experiences in Hanley of working-class opposition to such schemes as the provision of drainage.[29] In Hanley there is again no evidence that reports of inefficiency in the conduct of the Crimean War, despite the great local interest in its course, had the impact on the course of local government reform which has been attributed to them.[30]

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28. As advanced by J.L.Hammond in 'The Age of the Chartists', pp. 50 - 51.

29. Evidence that this was not a purely local phenomenon is put forward by B. Keith-Lucas, 'The English Local Government Franchise', p. 70.

30. O. Anderson takes the view that the Crimean experiences gave a great impetus to the "cult of local self-government" whereas in Hanley the 'anti-centralization movement' achieved its great victory in 1854 prior to the outbreak of the war. The later reform movement, leading to incorporation, was never related to "impatience with the narrow cliquishness exhibited in Government-making" or "contempt for bureaucracy and resentment of central direction". (O. Anderson, 'A Liberal State at War', pp. 279-280). It was rather aimed at providing solutions to pressing local problems far removed from any Crimean experiences.

The impulses which led men to demand reforms were complex in origin but too often humanitarian feeling, inspired by religious conscience, was dissipated in acts of private charity that were at best merely palliative in character. Such impulses too often lacked coherence and a sense of direction so that a solution to the problems caused by urban growth could only be found in administrative reforms made possible by legislation. It has been held that once the process of administrative growth had begun it acquired its own inherent momentum which revealed further abuses requiring government interference in new areas of contemporary life and hence further expansion of the administrative machine.[31] Only in one narrow field has it been clearly demonstrated that Benthamism played a negligible part in this process[32] and in the vastly more important area governed by public health legislation the careers of men like Chadwick and Rawlinson would suggest that much of this inherent momentum did in fact derive from Benthamite ideas.

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31. O. MacDonagh, op. cit. (The Historical Journal), 1958. p. 59.

32. This was in relation to the growth of regulations governing conditions on emigrant ships. O. MacDonagh, 'Emigration and the State, 1833-1855: An Essay in Administrative History', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 1955, pp. 133-159.

In Hanley, Bentham's disciples played a direct and decisive part in arousing the leading inhabitants from their apathy in matters of public health. Local pressures and vested interests were able to delay and to mould the course of reform, local inertia prevented all its benefits being realised, but the arrival of Robert Rawlinson opened a new era in the history of the town. Events in Hanley in the mid-nineteenth century suggests that Mrs. Hart's effort to re-instate Jeremy Bentham as the chief inspiration of Victorian social reform are well justified. Local humanitarian impulses had to be aroused and directed to improve conditions which were indeed intolerable. Reform then followed, not as the result of the workings of blind historical forces or from some inherent momentum for reform but because an increasing number of local men, often sacrificing their own vested interest in the status quo, fought every obstacle to achieve it.

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