

The Illegitimate Thread



A study of illegitimacy in
the parish of Addingham,
Cumberland, 1820-1939

Lydia Gray

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The dead don't go till you do, loved ones,
The dead are still here holding our hands.
Jackie Kay, *Darling*

To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born
is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of
human life, unless it is woven into the life of our
ancestors by the records of history?
Cicero

Cumberland and Westmorland
Antiquarian and Archaeological Society
Hon. General Editor
Professor Colin Richards

*The Illegitimate Thread: a study of illegitimacy
in the parish of Addingham, Cumberland, 1820-1939*

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List of Figures, Tables and Maps	iv
Abbreviations and Terminology	vi
Maps	ix
Preface	xi
Introduction	1
Methodology and Sources	9
Part One: The Core Group	
Demography	18
Part Two: The Biographical Group	
Introduction	40
The Mothers: Before Conception: The Background	41
Cultural attitudes to courtship and marriage	42
Childhood: housing, poverty and employment	49
Sex education and contraception	54
Seduction, rape and prostitution	58
Abandonment and desertion	64
Cohabitation, bigamy, adultery, divorce and incest	67
The Mothers: After Conception: Managing the Situation	76
Abortion	77
Infanticide or abandonment of the child	80
The workhouse	87
Marriage	98
Remaining unmarried	104
Affiliation	107
Adoption and fostering	117
The role of the extended family	122
The Children	129
The locals	130
The outsiders	142
The Fathers	149
Conclusion	161
Part Three: The Biographies	169
Bibliography	170
Primary Sources	170
Secondary Sources	176
Journals	182
Acknowledgements	189
Index	191

Figures

Fig. 1.	Baptisms: all baptisms, decadal totals, 1820-1929, mothers resident in Addingham parish.	20
Fig. 2.	Baptisms: legitimate and illegitimate, decadal totals, 1820-1929, mothers resident in Addingham parish.	21
Fig. 3.	Baptisms: illegitimacy ratio, 1820-1929, decadal totals, mothers resident in Addingham parish.	21
Fig. 4.	Baptisms: illegitimacy ratio, Addingham compared to England and Wales.	22
Fig. 5.	Population: Addingham parish, 1801-1931.	23
Fig. 6.	Population: Addingham parish in census years compared to baptisms in previous decade, 1831-1931.	24
Fig. 7.	Women: all women in Addingham aged 15-49, excluding the navy huts, compared to spinsters and widows 'at risk'.	24
Fig. 8.	Women: spinsters and widows 'at risk' as percentage of total women aged 15-49.	25
Fig. 9.	Women: aged 15-49 in the four different townships, excluding the navy huts, 1841-1911.	26
Fig. 10.	Women 'at risk': spinsters and widows, aged 15-49, township comparison, excluding navy huts, 1841-1911.	26
Fig. 11.	Marriage: age at marriage, all first-time brides, Addingham Church, 1838-1932.	31
Fig. 12.	Marriage: seasonality of marriage, all brides, 1838-1932.	34
Fig. 13.	Interval in years from illegitimate birth to marriage of mother.	100

Tables

Table 1.	Townships: percentage of households with at least one illegitimate member, 1841-1911, excluding the navy huts.	28
Table 2.	Townships: mothers of illegitimate children and illegitimate children as percentage of the population, 1841-1911, excluding the navy huts.	29
Table 3.	Mothers in the Biographical Group who bore more than one illegitimate child.	35
Table 4.	Mortality of illegitimate children in the Biographical Group, 1805-1931 <i>wherever baptised</i> .	37
Table 5.	Mortality of illegitimate children in the Biographical Group, 1805-1931 <i>baptised within Addingham</i> .	37
Table 6.	Comparison of houses, Addingham parish, 1911.	52
Table 7.	Marriage registration of couples presenting as married.	68
Table 8.	Inquests upon illegitimate babies, 1877-1928.	82
Table 9.	Unmarried mothers and marriage.	98
Table 10.	Mothers who did not marry.	104
Table 11.	Family involvement in bringing up the child.	123
Table 12.	Marital status for those born illegitimate and traced beyond the age of 15.	132
Table 13.	Where did the children marry?	133
Table 14.	Which children went on to have legitimate children themselves?	133
Table 15.	Father's occupations, affiliation applications, 1810-1879.	155
Table 16.	Father's occupations, Biographical Group.	155

Maps

- Map 1: Addingham in the context of Leath Ward and the ancient counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, courtesy of Cumbria County History Trust amended to include Addingham. ix
- Map 2: Addingham and the surrounding parishes and Poor Law Unions, courtesy of Alan Crosby. x
- Map 3: Addingham and its four townships, courtesy of Alan Crosby. x

Abbreviations

CAS(C): Cumbria Archive Service (Carlisle).

CAS(K): Cumbria Archive Service (Kendal).

TNA: The National Archives.

Documents held by the Cumbria Archive Service are given only a brief reference in the footnotes; please see the bibliography for the full description.

PLU: Poor Law Union.

BPP: British Parliamentary Papers.

GRO: General Register Office.

The General Register Office organises its records by quarters – January-March, April-June, July- September and October-December. I have referred to these as 1Q, 2Q, 3Q and 4Q.

CJ: Carlisle Journal

CP: Carlisle Patriot

Pacquet: Cumberland Pacquet

Advertiser: Cumberland and Westmorland Advertiser, and Penrith Literary Chronicle.

Herald: The paper known locally as simply the ‘*Herald*’ has gone under several different mastheads in its lifetime – the *Penrith Herald*, the *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald* etc. I have used the *Penrith Herald* in the text and *Herald* in the footnotes.

Observer: Penrith Observer.

Terminology

To avoid confusion, the term ‘church’ is used throughout to refer to the Anglican building and congregation, and ‘chapel’ to refer to the Methodist buildings and society, even though the Methodists at the later period often used the term ‘church’ for their buildings and denomination.

The word ‘Addingham’ refers to the Anglican parish church of St Michael, Addingham.

I have chosen to use the more geographically limited but historically accurate ‘Cumberland’ to describe the county in which Addingham lies, rather than ‘Cumbria’, which also encompasses the ancient county of Westmorland, Lancashire-over-the-sands and part of the former West Riding of Yorkshire. However, Addingham is close to the old Westmorland border, and its population had many cross-border links. I have therefore used Cumbria as well, on occasion, for the sake of brevity.

‘Illegitimate’ is now seen by some as a pejorative and unacceptable term when used in relation to an individual’s birth, although it no longer has any meaning in law since the Family Law Reform Act 1987, which removed all remaining legal distinctions between children born to married and unmarried parents. However, it was the term employed by local incumbents in the parish registers and it has been used for the sake of clarity and historical accuracy. ‘Bastard’ has been used only when quoting another source. An ‘illegitimate’ child is defined for the purposes of this research as one born at a time when its parents were not lawfully married to

each other, as a simple statement of the legal situation.

I have used the modern term ‘unmarried mother’ to refer to the mothers of illegitimate children, although a few were actually married, but not to the father, at the time of the birth. Some historians use the term ‘illegitimate mother’ but in the present work this risks confusion as some were both born illegitimate and became the mothers of illegitimate children.

I have used the singular and neutral ‘it’ to refer to a child in general terms, since using ‘they’ risks confusion and he/she is cumbersome.

I have given all monetary details as written in the original records, in terms of the ‘pounds, shillings and pence’ (expressed as £1. 1s. 1d.) used before 1971, without generally attempting to convert them into our present decimal system. I have occasionally used the website <https://www.measuringworth.com> for an updated comparison where the point being made requires it.

Nomenclature

This group of people quite often changed their surname; marriage resulted in a name change for the mother and quite often for her child also, presumably so that they fitted unobtrusively into the new family. This may have been intended to conceal or a simple kindness and acceptance. It was also not an offence – under English common law, the legal name is the one by which you are generally known and ‘it is still perfectly legal for anyone over the age of 16 to start using a new name at any time, as long as they are not doing so for a fraudulent or illegal reason.’¹ Birth certificates at this period did not state the surname, merely assuming it from the name of the father; if no father was named, the mother’s surname was assumed. Ginger Frost has written that illegitimates struggled with the lack of a ‘legal name’. She cites the case of Catherine Cookson, whose mother lied on her birth registration, presenting herself as the married ‘Catherine Davies formerly Fawcett’; Davies would have been assumed to be her child’s surname. She was later known as McMullen, after her step-grandfather. Neither name has any more actual legality than the other, although it is easy to see the upsetting reality for the child. Nevertheless, the case of Catherine Cookson illustrates how careful people could be to use what they believed to be the ‘legal’ name in cases such as school registrations, where they came into contact with the authorities.²

Legitimate and illegitimate children, alike, began life with an accepted surname. The same system of recording and allocation applied to baptism registers. However, a child registered under one surname could assume another one at baptism, perhaps if the mother had married after the birth; it could then appear on the census under yet another – and a female child might change her name again on marriage. Elsie, taken for baptism by her mother Margaret Watson, then became Cannon when living with her step-grandfather, then Watson again when living with her first stepfather, Joseph Simpson, then Simpson when living with her second stepfather, Thomas Longrigg, and finally Sayer when she married. The child can generally be located because of the mother and family recorded around it on the census, and the marriage

¹ <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/changes-of-name/#2-a-short-history-of-name-changing-in-the-uk>, accessed 13.2.2020.

² Ginger Frost, “The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep”; illegitimacy in the English working class, 1850-1939’, *Journal of Social History*, vol.37, no.2 (Winter 2003) 303; Kathleen Jones, *Seeking Catherine Cookson’s ‘Da’* (Constable, 2004) 20; Kathleen Jones, *Catherine Cookson* (Little Brown, 1999) 31. See also Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Penguin, 1945) 138.

of its mother can then usually be located. Women who left the child behind when they went on to marry are thus much harder to locate. The evidence in this study seems to show that many did, in fact, know their original name (and thus probably the fact of their illegitimacy) at least by the time they married; indeed, it has been claimed that 'many bastards were told at that point, and quoted it to the parson.'³ Some were very particular to be correct in the census about names and relationships and some were not. I suspect that renaming and hiding the relationship was easier if the family had moved away, and was not known to the enumerator, but I have not established any pattern to the records in this respect.

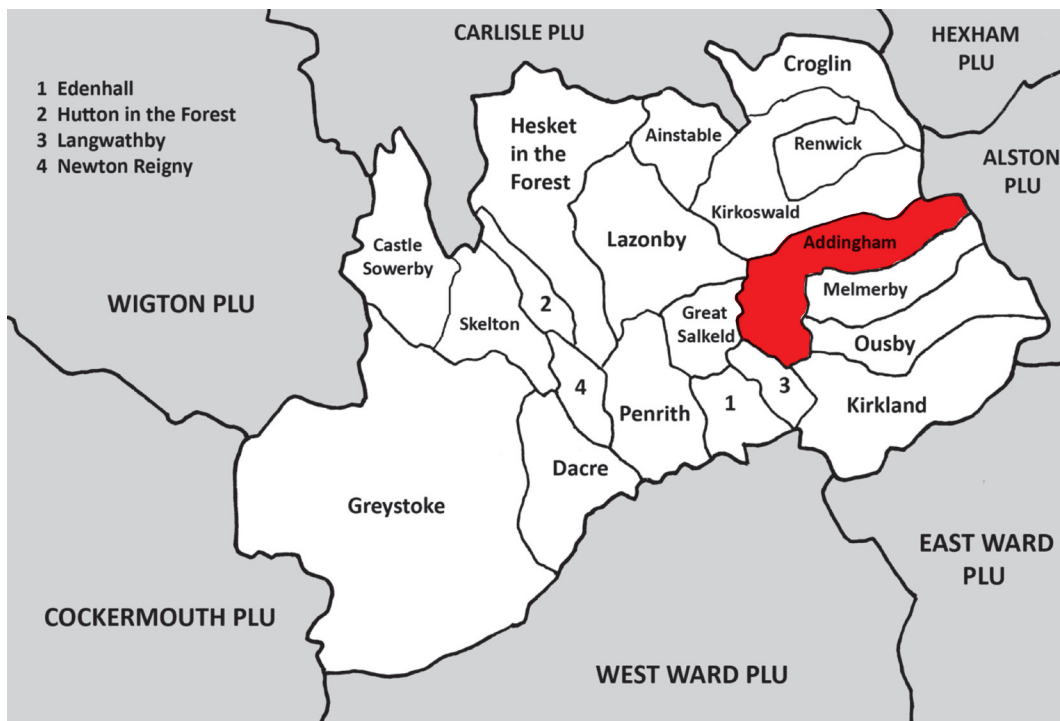
To cope with the problem of multiple names, and also to avoid having to use the descriptor 'née' frequently for married women, I have adopted the convention of giving both birth name and any subsequent names (whether legally or informally acquired) in an undivided chronological string, viz Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater, who was born Gedling, married Mr Collinson and although she did not marry Mr Slater, was often known by his name. Any names which are not expressed as a string are original birth names, viz Elizabeth Workman LancasterVarty, who was born Elizabeth Workman Lancaster and married Mr Varty. In her case, as in others, the middle name is the clue to her paternity. It looks rather cumbersome on the page but helps to identify the person accurately, while preserving important distinctions.

I was very keen to examine and describe individuals in this study. Much of the earlier research into illegitimacy looked only at people en masse, although more recent work, such as that by Ginger Frost, Kate Gibson and Ben Harvey, has certainly named names. However, using real names in describing what for some is only quite recent history may be seen as intrusive. Using just the Christian names and surname initial could be another possible solution but would make the research almost impossibly confusing to read in a community with such a limited stock of both Christian and surnames. It would thus seriously restrict its usefulness to family historians. I feel that giving people their actual names also allows them their real and proper place in the story of Addingham, even if sometimes I cannot be sure which name they actually used. I have therefore taken the risk of respectfully giving nearly all the people their real names. A few have been anonymised by removing personal details for reasons of privacy.

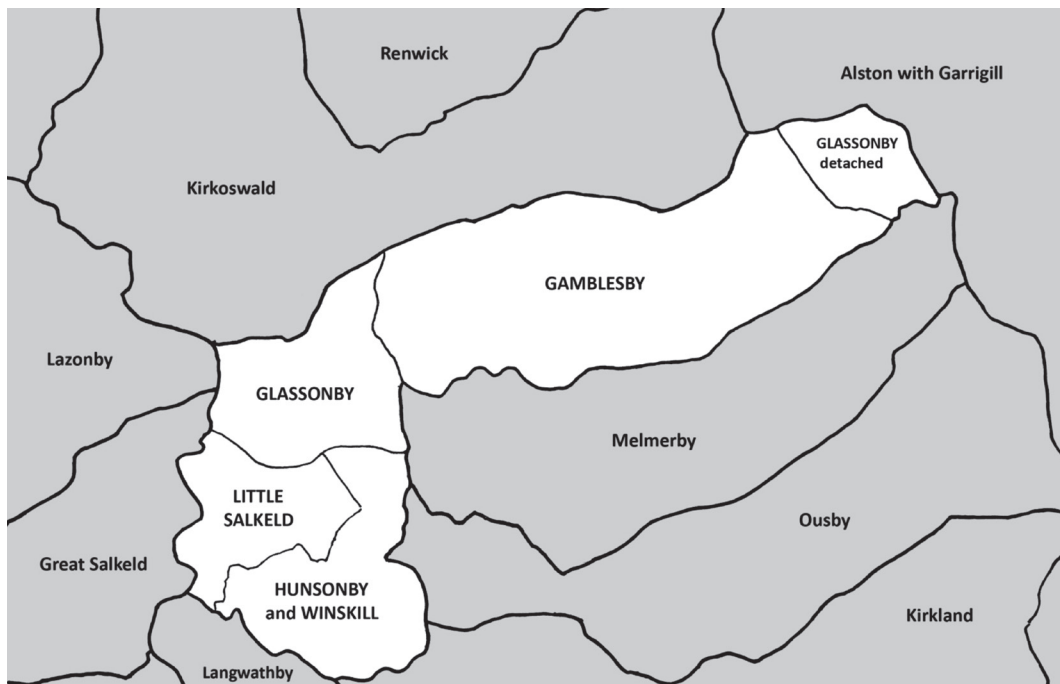
³ Eve McLaughlin, *Illegitimacy* (Varneys Press, 2009) 11.



Map 1. Addingham in the context of Leath Ward and the ancient counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, courtesy of Cumbria County History Trust amended to include Addingham.



Map 2. Addingham and surrounding parishes and Poor Law Unions, courtesy of Alan Crosby.



Map 3. Addingham and its four townships, courtesy of Alan Crosby.

Why the illegitimate thread?

Tell all the truth but tell it slant –
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind –

Emily Dickinson

The local history of the parish of Addingham has fascinated me ever since I moved here several years ago. It is a small Cumbrian parish, to the east of Penrith, which takes its name from a village reputed to have disappeared when the river Eden changed its course. There are four separate townships – Gamblesby, Glassonby, Little Salkeld and the joint township of Hunsonby with Winskill – which had a total population in Victorian times between about 600 and 900. The parish church of St Michael, Addingham lies just outside Glassonby. The parish sits under Cross Fell, the highest point of the Pennines, with about two-thirds of its acreage situated in the fertile Eden Valley, while another third climbs up the side of the fell. In the period covered by this work, its population largely worked in agriculture and the associated village trades – the men as builders and carpenters, or shoemakers and tailors, the young women as domestic servants, older unmarried women perhaps as dressmakers or victuallers, while wives worked in the house or helped on the farm. In the later nineteenth century, industry arrived in the shape of the gypsum mines at Long Meg, while the small paper mill at Glassonby Beck expanded when it moved its operation to be closer to the railway station at Little Salkeld. It is now once again largely agricultural, although with fewer farmers and agricultural workers, and the population has not increased significantly; many, as in the nineteenth century, are self-employed, although there are no longer any schools or pubs, many fewer children and more retired people. The church built in Gamblesby in the 1860s to supplement Addingham is now a house; only one chapel remains open of the five (three Methodist, one Independent/Congregational and one Anglican) available in Victorian times, and there is no longer a resident vicar.

Initially, I was interested in the Methodists of the parish in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but then my interest grew broader to encompass those who attended the Anglican church and the Independent/Congregational chapel at Park Head (just outside Addingham parish, in the parish of Kirkoswald). I became interested in how these people with different religious adherences all related to each other and decided to list the information I found about each individual on a simple Excel spreadsheet: I might never have started if I had realised quite how long it would take, but it has proved invaluable, the essential bedrock of the research. Each person who lived in Addingham and left a trace in any official record, and, in some cases, in private diaries that have been made available to me, is listed. In some cases there is only the one line, for a baptism or marriage, perhaps, but for many people, those who formed the stable heart of the community, there are many, many lines. I introduced a colour coding for each township, so that I could roughly distinguish the individuals and townships at a glance, and as I entered all the single lines of entry, I began to fancy that I was weaving the story of the parish,

both textually and visually, in warp and weft on the computer screen, the warp being the columns designating the general elements, such as name, address, age, or occupation, that run throughout any local history of a community, and the weft being the individual lines relating to one person found in any one type of record.

I had always fancied trying weaving, so it was but a short step to taking up the interlacing of warp and weft in reality. Learning this new skill delayed the research, and a woven piece of Addingham tweed has yet to appear, but weaving allows for a degree of contemplation, meaning that the original weaving metaphor was never entirely absent from my mind, and neither was the community. I began to consider the issue of illegitimacy, one of the many warps making up the Addingham pattern and indeed the national fabric, as a thread worth investigating. On investigation, illegitimacy proved to have many different sub-patterns, which have become chapters in the final work.

Words matter. 'We talk about lives hanging by a thread, being interwoven or being part of the social fabric...Fabric and its component parts have long been a figurative stand-in for the very stuff of human life.'¹ There is certainly an abundance of the stuff of human life woven into the Addingham story of illegitimacy. Synonyms for the noun 'warp' include deformation, deviation, perversion, all pejorative: was this how illegitimacy was viewed in Addingham? Spinsters, too, became an especially relevant term, being used both for the women (generally) who made the thread for the weavers (men, generally), but also, of course, used to indicate the unmarried woman. Spinning, the essential first step for weaving, was largely left to the women, as was the case, so often, with the raising of the illegitimate children.

In writing up much of the study, I have been looking for similarities, to see the patterns in the lives, to group people together, but in writing up their individual stories, I could not but be repeatedly reminded how very diverse these people and their lives were. I have long thought of them as a group, my 'Addingham Illegitimates', but they are also worthy of examination as much for their individuality as for any such fortuitous grouping.

'Taking custody of these other lives felt as large in its demands as birthing a child. Holding other eyes inside her line of sight, other futures and risks, would mean making something new – even if new was impossible because they were all made of just one set of molecules.'²

I have been very aware all the time while doing this research, and even more so when writing up the individual biographies, that I am 'taking custody' of other people's lives and revealing that which may have been well concealed. Occasionally in recounting the individual history I use the word 'story'; this makes me uncomfortable, since I am keenly aware that this is not fiction, that these were real lives. Indeed, they were lives that ran their course not so very long ago, that have left close and still-living descendants. Sometimes, I have speculated as to cause and effect, origin and outcome. I trust I do not cause offence; rather, it is hoped that by putting this research into the public domain, some people will recognise their forebears in it, and perhaps find their questions answered. Others may be curious about their links to the parish of Addingham and perhaps be led to contact me with further information about those featured in it. This would greatly enhance its interest, accuracy and scope.

Lydia Gray
2023

¹ Kassia St Clair, *The Golden Thread: how fabric changed history* (John Murray, 2018) 1.

² Barbara Kingsolver, *Unsheltered* (Faber and Faber, 2018) 452.

Much has been written about illegitimacy, from many angles. Is it (or was it, since the 1987 legal reforms abolished the legal concept) fundamentally an issue of morality and a danger to society, or an economic or social problem of great financial cost to the nation, or a legal classification, vital to the clear operating of the laws of inheritance? Historians have investigated it using a broad national, or even international, demographic approach to explain variations in the degree of illegitimacy at any one time, or used micro-examinations of the situation in particular communities, or even examinations of particular types of evidence – primarily life-writing in the case of Kate Gibson, for example; fifty letters relating to putative fathers in the case of Ben Harvey and newspaper reports of affiliation applications by Ginger Frost.¹ This study seeks to examine the situation in a small community over a defined period. It is geographically narrowly bounded but extensive chronologically and it encompasses a very broad range of documentary evidence. The microdemography of Addingham is placed within the macro context, and the parish community as a whole is examined, while maintaining the focus at all times upon those women, children and men who were most affected.

Many Victorians professed themselves shocked when the 1861 census revealed high illegitimacy rates in some parts of the country, including Cumberland and Westmorland. The local press, reporting in 1864 on the publication of statistics from the census, spoke of the ‘immorality of the two counties’, of ‘a stain’, and of the discredit that this was to individuals, the clergy and families.² Cumberland as a whole had a markedly higher rate of illegitimacy in Victorian times than most other areas of the country, while the local Addingham rate was on occasion double the national average during the period under review. Differing hypotheses have been advanced over the years to explain both the causes of illegitimacy and the variations in the rate spatially, and chronologically. Was illegitimacy the result of an interrupted courtship, where the parties had originally intended to marry? Were fluctuations in the rate caused by economic hardship, as suggested by Peter Laslett? ‘The more courtships, the more disappointments in courtship, and hence a rise in the numbers of illegitimates. When the climate changed and marriage prospects were felt to be worsening, courtship fell off, age at marriage went up, and sexual nonconformism lessened.’³

However, as Adair has pointed out, the ‘economic determinism’ of the failed courtship theory ‘can only take one so far towards an understanding of past societies.’⁴ So was illegitimacy the result in some areas and particular times of a bastardy-prone sub-society? One of the earliest theorists certainly thought so: ‘Differences in the annual prevalence of illegitimacy in different localities or sections of the same country are so marked, and so persistent, that only by the hypothesis of hereditary influence can we at present account for them.’⁵ Or was it caused by economic growth and urbanization giving women more opportunities to earn their

¹ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018); Ben Harvey, ‘The Putative Fathers of Swinton, England: Illegitimate Behavior under the Old Poor Laws, 1797-1835’, *Journal of Family History*, vol.40, no.3 (2015) 373-398; Ginger Frost, ‘Claiming Justice: Paternity Affiliation in South Wales, 1870-1900’, *Rural History*, vol.24, no.2 (2013) 177-198.

² *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

³ Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M Smith (eds) *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Edward Arnold, 1980) 57.

⁴ Richard Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester UP, 1996) 127.

⁵ Alfred Leffingwell, *Illegitimacy and the Influence of Seasons upon Conduct: two studies in demography* (Arno Press, 1976 [Reprint of 1892 ed.]) 86.

own income, and thus allow a new sexual freedom when the financial support obtained by marriage was less important?⁶ Or was it a change in sexual culture with increasing emphasis upon penetrative sex, rather than petting and bundling (the custom at some times and places of a couple sleeping together fully clothed)?⁷

These explanations and others will be considered in the course of this study but the real focus is not so much upon the theories that seek to explain numerical fluctuations, as upon the experience of illegitimacy for all concerned – the mothers, the fathers, the children and their extended families, and also the wider community of the township and parish in which they lived. It is narrowly focussed but digs deep and in examining a restricted geographic area it touches upon many aspects of the subject, including the practical issues such as housing, finance and employment, the physical, such as illness and mortality, the emotional, such as shame, and the cultural, such as deviancy.

It is useful to start with some discussion of what we mean by ‘illegitimacy’. For centuries this was largely a matter for ecclesiastical, rather than statute, law, and the Anglican church was responsible for dealing with violations of the moral code, such as adultery. Marriage could be seen as a process, rather than a contract entered into at a specific moment in time, and the acceptance of children as legitimate could vary in different parts of the country. Hardwicke’s Marriage Act of 1753 changed the situation by involving the state in the matter. It stipulated that to be valid a marriage had to be conducted according to the rites of the Church of England, after calling the banns in the parish churches of both parties or obtaining a licence, and with the presiding Anglican clergyman responsible for recording the event. The only exceptions made were for Quakers and Jews, who were allowed to conduct and record their own ceremonies. Informal marriages reliant upon consent between the couple and marked by ancient customs, such as jumping over broom sticks, were no longer officially recognised. Therefore, the children of such marriages, who may always have been accepted as legitimate by their communities, were at a stroke rendered illegitimate. Custom, however, is not so easily put aside in the popular mind and imagination, and local culture may well have carried on considering such children as legitimate and accepted within the community. As Laslett and Oosterveen have suggested, ‘It was public opinion and especially the opinion of the local community, the neighbours, which decided whether any particular association could be called a marriage, and not only the Church and the law. Public opinion on such matters might change, and so might the attitude of the clergy and the civil authorities.’⁸ In north-east Cumberland in the 1830s, as elsewhere, local officials made a distinction between moral issues, which were the business of the church, and the economic issue presented by an unsupported mother and child, which was a matter for the local overseers of the poor.⁹

Pinchbeck’s point that ‘illegitimacy can only be understood...in the light of its entire

⁶ See G. N. Gandy, *Illegitimacy in a Handloom Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culcheth, Lancs., 1781-1860*, D. Phil (Oxford, 1979); Emma Griffin, ‘Sex, illegitimacy and social change in industrializing Britain’, *Social History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013) 155-6.

⁷ Griffin, ‘Sex, illegitimacy and social change’, 141.

⁸ Peter Laslett and Karla Oosterveen, ‘Long-Term Trends in Bastardy in England: A Study of the Illegitimacy Figures in the Parish Registers and in the Reports of the Registrar General, 1561-1960’, *Population Studies*, vol.27, no.2 (July 1973), 258.

⁹ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster University, 2005) 78.

sociological setting, and it cannot, of course, be viewed as an index of sexual morality' is valid, but the prevailing legal situation is also essential to its understanding.¹⁰ Legally, the last vestiges of illegitimacy were removed by the Family Law Reform Act of 1987, since when all children are born equal in the eyes of the law. This equality was the culmination of a series of reforms over the previous sixty years. Until the Legitimacy Act of 1926, English common law had ordained that a person born illegitimate, to parents who were not legally married to each other at the time of the birth, remained so for life. Thereafter, the marriage of the parents, providing they were free to marry at the time of conception, and thus not in an adulterous relationship, allowed for the possibility of the child being legitimated from the date of the marriage. The Legitimacy Act 1959 extended legitimacy to those children whose parents had not been free to marry at the time of their birth but had subsequently married. The Family Law Reform Act 1969 allowed illegitimate children to inherit from a parent who died intestate and allowed a blood test to be ordered in cases of disputed paternity.¹¹ However, the Legitimacy Act 1976 confirmed the requirement that parents should re-register the child if they married after its birth, even if both parents were named at the original registration, in order to legitimate it. The parents are still, in theory, subject to a fine of 'up to £2' [sic] if they fail to do so within three months and a charge is made for a new birth certificate.¹²

In many ways, we have now, in 2023, reverted to a pre-Hardwicke situation, where unmarried couples set up home together and have children, and are accepted by much of society without condemnation. From an illegitimacy rate of 6% in the 1960s, via 30% by the end of the 1980s, the latest figures reveal that almost half of all children born today are the issue of two parents not married to each other at the time of the birth.¹³

Most of the individual investigations in this research started with a child known to be illegitimate. The first, statistical, part of the investigation is mostly devoted to those 'not born in lawful wedlock' within the parish of Addingham from about 1800 until 1932; these constitute the Core Addingham Group. The second part of the work investigates the individual stories, to see how mother, child and occasionally father, fared; these individuals form the rather larger Biographical Group. It is hoped that both approaches, the quantitative and qualitative, will contribute to an understanding of the relationship of illegitimacy to the stigma and shame implicit in the definition of 'illegitimate' offered by the Oxford English Dictionary, which includes:

not legitimate, not in accordance with or authorised by law; unauthorised, unwarranted, spurious; irregular, improper' and 'not born in lawful wedlock; not recognised by law as lawful offspring; spurious, bastard.'¹⁴

Was a child born out of wedlock indeed considered 'spurious, irregular, improper' in nineteenth and early twentieth century Addingham? By most people or just by some? Were mother and

¹⁰ I. Pinchbeck, 'Social Attitudes to the Problem of Illegitimacy', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.5, no.4 (Dec. 1954) 309.

¹¹ <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/overview/legitimacyadoption/> accessed 8 Sept. 2019.

¹² *The Times*, 24 Apr. 2017, 21.

¹³ Rebecca Probert, *Marriage Law for Genealogists: The Definitive Guide* (Takeaway, 2012) 33; <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsummarytables>, accessed 12 Mar. 2020.

¹⁴ <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91408?rskey=sjYVRe&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>, accessed 13 Aug. 2019.

child subjected to censure? Did they feel shame, disgraced by their situation? A recent popular guide to searching for illegitimate ancestors states that by the mid-nineteenth century the upper-class view that pregnancy in an unmarried girl was a matter for deep shame had filtered down to the working classes.¹⁵ Whenever I mention the subject of my research, I encounter a similar reaction: a general conviction that, to the Victorians, illegitimacy was a source of great shame. The mother was probably sent away and she and her illegitimate child were to be shunned, or the child would be brought up as the youngest child within the maternal family, believing that the grandmother was its mother and the mother was just an older sister. As will become clear from the research, I do not believe that this was by any means the universal story in Addingham, but the question arises of how it has come to be the common perception. Has it been fuelled by the many Victorian novelists who, while seeking to show the hypocrisy and injustice prevalent in society, often calling for greater understanding and sympathy, actually succeeded in making their fictions become the accepted universal truth, the inevitable fact? Has this been compounded in the popular imagination by a different post-1918, perhaps even post-1945, morality, by those brought up within a different moral climate? Has the common view accepted too readily that this stricter post-war moral outlook has been the norm across all classes and geographies until very recent times, and projected that belief back into earlier times?¹⁶

Certainly, there were plenty of people in the nineteenth century who believed that shame was the universal lot, although the thinking was already nuanced. The Registrar-General in 1842 believed it to be the case: when commenting upon the increased mortality of the illegitimate child, which is ‘no doubt greatly above the average’ he wrote ‘for without any crime whatever of his own, the illegitimate child is often exposed to dangers, hardships, and ignominy from his infancy; the law pronounces him *filius nullius* [child of nobody].’¹⁷ It is worth noting that this acknowledges that the child was not actually guilty for its own birth, even while believing that in practice it was subjected to stigma. Thomas Hardy, in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, published in 1891 but set in the 1870s, described how Tess found herself the object of stigma, and felt it deeply herself, when she met Angel Clare again, after the death of her illegitimate child:

She who knew herself to be more impassioned in nature, cleverer, more beautiful than they [her fellow dairymaids, who are attracted to Angel], was in the eyes of propriety far less worthy of him than the homelier ones whom he ignored.

O Mr Clare – I cannot be your wife – I cannot be!

Hardy also described how both her child and her family would be shunned:

Ever since the occurrence of the event which had cast such a shadow over Tess’s life, the Durbeyfield family...had been tacitly looked on as one which would have to go when their lease ended, if only in the interests of morality...By some means the village had to be kept pure.¹⁸

Dickens, too, invited ‘compassion rather than censure for women disgraced for sexual reasons... yet his presentation drew entirely on stereotypes of the Fallen Woman.’¹⁹ Alfred Leffingwell,

¹⁵ Ruth Paley, *My Ancestor was a Bastard* (Society of Genealogists, 2011) 20.

¹⁶ As I wrote this up, there was publicity about the moral climate of the 1950s to 1970s that led to many mothers being coerced into giving up children for adoption: see *The Times*, 26 May 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/mothers-demand-apology-for-decades-of-forced-adoptions-svvh5xfkr>, accessed 22 Jun. 2023.

¹⁷ Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1842) BBP 1844, xxiv.

¹⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (Macmillan, 1974) 188, 211, 401.

¹⁹ Claire Tomalin, *The Invisible Woman: the story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (Penguin, 1991) 87.

conducting what he believed to be the first investigation in the English language into the causes of illegitimacy in the 1890s, referred to ‘an evil...regarded as the unmentionable in social life’ producing ‘an annual harvest of sorrow and shame.’²⁰

Ginger Frost, a historian with a long record of research into illegitimacy, seems to take stigma as a given when she writes, ‘For the most part, despite the *shame* [my italics], relatives stepped in to care for their young kin.’²¹ Jim Walvin, writing of ‘fallen women’, concluded that, ‘Single women with a child suffered the worst of society’s punishments; ostracised and shunned, denied a place in the lying-in wards, such women endured the worst ravages of infant mortality and they themselves died in childbirth at a far higher rate than any other group.’²² Germaine Greer, in commenting on the views of another literary historian, queried his view of the issue in the 1580s, but apparently accepted it of the 1880s when she wrote ‘Faced with such evidence, one wonders how Greenblatt could allow himself to say that “an unmarried mother in the 1580s did not, *as she would in the 1880s* [my italics], routinely face fierce, unrelenting social stigmatization”.’²³

Many have also concluded that this stigma remained until very recent times, perhaps diminishing significantly only since the 1980s. Ginger Frost’s view is that ‘through the late Victorian period to World War II and even beyond, bastardy was a serious stigma legally, socially, and emotionally.’²⁴ Lucinda McCray Beier, using oral history evidence gathered by herself and Elizabeth Roberts in North-West England, agrees: ‘It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of respectability in early- and mid-twentieth century working-class communities...The effort to keep an out-of-wedlock pregnancy secret was motivated both by family shame and by the hope of preserving the girl’s chance of a respectable future.’²⁵ Jane Robinson illustrates the situation with many twentieth century examples of families seeking to deal with the problem by a shotgun marriage, an illegal abortion or adoption.²⁶ A study of the attitude of religious Nonconformity to illegitimacy in the twentieth century took it for granted that mother and child were the ‘source of each other’s disgrace. Their families and society as a whole were often ashamed of them and many were abandoned by both.’ ‘Within living memory, mothers of illegitimate babies were consigned to the workhouse.’²⁷

Others, however, both contemporary commentators and later historians, have found that shame and stigma were not inevitable, that the situation was more varied according to time, place and social position, that not all women felt degraded by illegitimacy and not all were shunned. In the Scottish Highlands, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, ‘single parenthood was not considered a disgrace’, while ‘during his visit to England in the 1830s de Tocqueville was

²⁰ Leffingwell, *Illegitimacy*, 2.7.

²¹ Ginger Frost, ‘The kindness of strangers revisited: Fostering, adoption and illegitimacy in England, 1860-1930’, ch.7 in Probert, Rebecca, *Cohabitation and Non-Marital births in England and Wales, 1600-2012* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 125.

²² James Walvin, *Victorian Values* (Sphere, 1988) 126.

²³ Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare’s Wife* (Bloomsbury, 2007) 80: Greer is referencing Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (Jonathan Cape, 2004) 123.

²⁴ Ginger Frost, “‘The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep’: illegitimacy in the English working class, 1850-1939’, *Journal of Social History*, vol.37, no.2 (Winter 2003) 293.

²⁵ Quoted in Jenny Keating, *A Child for Keeps: The History of Adoption in England, 1918-45* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 16.

²⁶ Jane Robinson, *In the Family Way: Illegitimacy Between the Great War and the Swinging Sixties* (Viking, 2015).

²⁷ Barbara Glasson, *Bastards and Nonconformists: changes in lone parenting since 1900 and the response of the Methodist Church in theology and practice*, unpublished Ph. D (Nottingham, 2001) 224-5, 4.

told that many peasant women admitted to being single mothers without displaying any sense of shame.²⁸ An article published in 1856 claimed that infanticide had become the rule in the working classes, with the ‘compactness and order of a recognised system...*She hides her shame, not because it is a shame, for it is the custom of the country* [my italics], but because she has already begun to contemplate the murder of her child.’²⁹ Peter Laslett concluded that ‘in a high proportion of all cases of illegitimacy and prenuptial pregnancy...the decision to copulate outside marriage, was made in clear disregard of established codes of conduct.’³⁰

Gandy in his study of illegitimacy in industrial Lancashire, however, concluded that illegitimacy was the result of divergent, rather than deviant, behaviour. Pregnancy was not always unintended on the part of the woman (or indeed the man); it could be both intentional and accepted by the local culture.³¹ Reay, in his study of Kent, found that it was ‘extremely difficult to determine the extent of the stigma attached to the bearers of illegitimate children, or indeed to the children themselves.’³² Ginger Frost demonstrated how reactions could be varied and nuanced, and apparently contradictory, when she recounted how Robert Roberts, writing in ‘The Classic Slum’ of early twentieth century Salford, could describe ‘a chain reaction of shame’ among all those related to the young unmarried mother, while also claiming that those who cohabited ‘came in for little criticism.’³³ People were quite able to be flexible in their judgements, according to circumstances, which makes for difficulties for the historian in assessing apparently conflicting evidence.

There is also the issue of to whom the shame, if it existed, applied. Did all women themselves become conscious of the fall from respectability and reputation, the immediate reaction of Jessie Phillips on being discovered merely kissing Frederic Dalton.³⁴ Or was it laid upon them by others, such as Miss Maxwell, determining that Frederic should either make good his promise of marriage to Jessie or commit to supporting the child so that Jessie could ‘withdraw herself from the scene of her disgrace, without having to endure any pecuniary difficulties, in addition to the sorrow and repentance that must inevitably be her lot.’³⁵

Was the sin also inevitably visited upon the child, as Kathleen Jones, biographer of the novelist Catherine Cookson, believed when writing of the birth of Catherine in 1906: ‘To conceive a child outside marriage was an unforgivable sin, a sully of moral purity that could never be redeemed. A woman who did so was irretrievably “fallen”, and the sin was also visited on the child, who was marked a bastard for the rest of his or her life’³⁶ Esther Summerson, in *Bleak House*, certainly initially believed that her very existence shamed her mother, Lady Dedlock, but later came to consider that ‘I was as innocent of my birth as a queen of hers.’³⁷

²⁸ R. Sauer, ‘Infanticide and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Population Studies*, vol.32, no.1 (Mar. 1978) 85.

²⁹ Quoted in Aeron Hunt, ‘Calculations and Concealments: Infanticide in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol.34, no.1 (2006) 73.

³⁰ Laslett et al., *Bastardy*, 52.

³¹ Gandy, *Illegitimacy*, 199.

³² Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 206.

³³ Ginger Frost, “‘As if she was my own child’: cohabitation, community, and the English criminal courts, 1855-1900”, *The History of the Family*, vol.20, no.4 (2015) 547.

³⁴ Fanny Trollope, *Jessie Phillips* (Nonsuch, 2006) 197.

³⁵ Trollope, *Jessie*, 278.

³⁶ Kathleen Jones, *Catherine Cookson* (Little Brown, 1999) 19.

³⁷ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Hazel, Watson and Viney, n.d.) 407, 409.

Did shame fall also upon family and friends, as Jessie Phillips feared, believing that ‘the very act of seeing me...will soon be counted a sin, and a disgrace against [Miss Maxwell].’³⁸ The *Cumberland and Westmorland Advertiser* undoubtedly thought that the high levels of local illegitimacy reflected badly on individuals, the clergy and families.³⁹

Was such shame ever visited upon the father? Frances Trollope thought it should be, railing at the inequity that subjected women to ‘all the pains and penalties, naturally consequent upon the faults committed by the protected class [of men]’ while the latter were free from the ‘consequences of their own voluntary indiscretions.’⁴⁰ So too, did the *Cumberland and Westmorland Advertiser*, pointing out that ‘while the seducer is looked upon as *merely* [italics sic] “sowing his wild oats” – as if that were an allowable thing to do – and is still admitted into respectable society, by not over-vigilant papas and mammas, the poor seduced one is harshly turned adrift...’⁴¹

It is this aspect of illegitimacy that has been more studied recently. Margot Finn and her co-authors put the question succinctly: ‘Above all, what are the tensions among what contemporaries considered morally legitimate, what they considered as legally legitimate, and what they considered as legitimate in social practice?’ Their work explores the question of ‘how far a person’s identity and standing in her family, her locality and in the wider world was determined by legal rules, and how far ideas of identity and legitimacy transcended law and were determined by ties of emotion.’⁴² Kate Gibson, also, in her recent unpublished thesis has sought to investigate issues of shame, stigma and exclusion more deeply in the period just prior to that covered by this study.⁴³

This investigation contributes to the discussion in the very particular setting of rural Addingham. The *Cumberland and Westmorland Advertiser* sought to explain the high incidence of illegitimacy by reference to particular local circumstances. It proposed several practical causes of ‘the evil’, including the unsuitable accommodation afforded to farm servants and the ‘mischievous tendency’ of the twice-yearly hiring fairs. It mentioned the distinctive difficulties encountered by farmers’ sons in saving sufficient capital to marry and maintain a family, which led them to ‘carry on’ with servants ‘just for a frolic’, with the inevitable result. Land reform, assisted emigration, and changing the law to allow the legitimating of the child by a subsequent marriage were all proffered as remedies. It suggested that this ‘*seeming* [italics sic]...blot upon the reputation of the county’ could even be partly a statistical anomaly.⁴⁴ However, it also recognised that the figures could be more than just that. In ‘seeking its cause, and searching for a remedy’, it suggested that another reason for the disproportion was evident in the local police court, where there was a ‘lamentable absence, amongst both parties to illegitimacy, of that *deep* [italics sic] sense of shame which pretty generally prevails amongst similar characters in neighbouring counties.’⁴⁵ The argument was that Cumbrian culture might indeed be different,

³⁸ Trollope, *Jessie*, 278.

³⁹ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

⁴⁰ Trollope, *Jessie*, 537.

⁴¹ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

⁴² Margot Finn, Michael Lobban, and Jenny Bourne Taylor (eds) *Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Nineteenth-Century Law, Literature and History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 4.

⁴³ Gibson, *Experiences*, 25-8.

⁴⁴ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

⁴⁵ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

less moral in one sense, in terms of illegitimate conceptions, but more moral in another, in that a larger percentage of babies survived and were registered.

Many historians search for patterns – to construct an overarching theory, to see cause and effect, the broad tides in human behaviour, to shape the past. However, local historians cannot help but get immersed in all the messy details: the exceptions, the specifics that often just do not fit into a neat structure without a degree of generalisation that obscures and ignores the particular. Many, I suspect, like me, are not drawn to theories but prefer the confused reality of individual people. Times have changed since Luke Nicholson was baptised at Addingham in January 1820, the first child baptised that year, and an illegitimate one with no father named, but have they changed so much for a child born, as he was, to a woman on her own and presumably deserted by the father? The concept of illegitimacy may have gone in law, as regards matters such as inheritance from mother or father, or the exercise of parental power, and the stigma may have disappeared now that the child born to unmarried parents is the norm in the UK but the single mother and her child will still encounter many of the same practical problems of finance and housing as their ancestors, and may make use of similar solutions. Society is still struggling to find the best way to enable the raising of a child born to a single mother.

Beginnings

This research has its origins in an investigation into the arrival and survival of Methodism in the parish of Addingham, and the effects of this new religious denomination upon the relationships within and between the four townships of the parish. I became interested in whether I would be able to discern a difference in behaviour between the Methodists and their neighbours. Could any difference be taken as an indicator of the forging of a new and different identity? And did religion then outweigh locality in the formation of a sense of identity? I decided to cover the years from about 1820, when Methodism was really taking root in the parish, until about 1932, when the various branches of Methodism were united in one church.

General Database construction

The initial question had to be ‘who were the Methodists?’ Apart from a few lists of members from the very earliest days of local Methodism, there is no conveniently compiled membership data and if the Methodists were to be placed in their local context, *all* the parishioners would become of interest and relevance. In order to facilitate this larger work, a database relating to all the individuals who lived in the parish from 1820-1932 was compiled, using the census records as a basis and then adding in the vital registration data from baptism, marriage and burial records for the Anglican Church; nearly all parishioners at this time seem to have been buried at the parish church of St Michael, Addingham, just outside the village of Glassonby. There was no other burial ground in the parish, apart from that owned by the Quakers, at Little Salkeld, which was sold off in 1831, having been found to be ‘of little use’.¹ A few individuals were buried at Park Head Independent/Congregational chapel, just outside the parish bounds.

Next, other records were incorporated, including baptism and marriage registers and other records produced by the Wesleyan Methodist circuits of Penrith and Kirkoswald, local chapel minutes and registers, the records of the other local congregations of Primitive Methodists and Independent/Congregationalists, where they named parish residents, and other Anglican parish archives such as the churchwardens’ accounts. Additional records consulted included wills, land tax and Inland Revenue assessments, polling records and electoral rolls, enclosure awards, workhouse admissions books, newspapers – anything that might flesh out the lives of these, apparently, essentially undocumented people. This created an Excel spreadsheet containing thousands of lines of information. Although technically not a database, this is how it is referred to in this book.

It was surprising to see how much could be gleaned from the official records, to see how considerable were the traces left by people who, in the main, left no personal diaries or letters – or at least none that were kept in the official archives – and fascinating to see how lives could be revealed and reconstructed once all these sources of information were combined to form sets of individual records for the hundreds of people who lived in the parish in the period being examined.

Why illegitimacy?

During this initial work of compilation, I observed that there were very few baptisms of babies identified as illegitimate in the Methodist records, but there seemed to be large numbers in the

¹ CAS(K) WDFC/F 2/4, 21 Apr. 1831.

Anglican registers. Could this be one way in which the Methodists were behaving differently? How could it be reconciled with Hazelhurst's finding in another local study that the Methodists were more welcoming to the single mother and baby than the Anglican church?² The apparently high rate of illegitimacy seemed to fit with the contemporary perception that the illegitimacy rate was particularly high in Cumberland, although not nearly as high as in parts of Scotland. The Victorians feared that the lives of many such babies were cut short, and the life chances of both mother and child in these circumstances also seemed worth investigating.

The research now took a different direction, setting out to explore whether Addingham as a parish conformed to the Cumberland situation of high illegitimacy. The circumstances leading up to the birth, and what happened to parent and child in later life, were investigated to see if any patterns of behaviour could be established. Using only the surviving official and public records meant that this was quite a challenge. However, much that is valuable about the lives of these 'illegitimates', mothers and children, was confidently established.³ It then became possible to make an inference, based upon the documentation available, about the circumstances. However, the frustration of not knowing what *really* happened, and why, when so much has been revealed, remains very real. As Hilary Mantel so rightly said 'From history, I know what they do, but I can't, with any certainty, know what they think or feel.'⁴

Methodology for 'The Illegitimate Thread'

Establishing the Core Group of illegitimate children and their mothers

I first established the Core Addingham Group, those mothers and their illegitimate children with close connections to Addingham, deciding for pragmatic reasons to stick to the chronological period between 1820 and 1932. The baptism records were extracted from the main database. During these years, there were 1535 baptisms in total in the Anglican parish registers, conducted in the main at the parish church of St Michael, Addingham; 115 were held at St John, Gamblesby, the Anglican chapel-of-ease opened in 1868, and 175 were at St Mary's Chapel in Little Salkeld, which was converted from the vicarage barn in the 1870s.

The Wesleyan Methodist registers covered the whole of the local circuit, the grouping of chapels which were based around Penrith until 1871, when the circuit was divided into two, and a new register was started for the Kirkoswald Circuit. The chapels in Hunsonby, Glassonby and Gamblesby fell within the latter circuit and would have been those attended by people living within Addingham parish. Additionally, for a short time from 1902-1921, a second register was kept for the southern half of the circuit, which included Hunsonby and Gamblesby. It is not always easy to be sure of the exact address of the parents but because of the detailed database information, it is possible to be confident that baptisms relating to people living within the parish boundaries have been identified with a high degree of accuracy. A total of 425 baptisms from these Methodist sources were included. There are also baptism registers extant for the local Primitive Methodists (in Penrith) and Independents/Congregationalists at

² R. Hazelhurst, *Mining for God: Methodism in the Lake District in the Nineteenth Century*, Diploma Dissertation (Lancaster University, 1998) 9; see also Henry W. Williams, *The Constitution and Polity of Wesleyan Methodism* (Wesleyan-Methodist Book-room, 1881) 302, for the official denominational point of view.

³ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018) 8, found the same, contrary 'to dominant historiographical opinion.'

⁴ Hilary Mantel, Reith Lecture, 1, BBC Radio 4, 17 June 2017, in response to a question.

Park Head Chapel. The latter was just outside the parish to the north of Glassonby; there was a congregation there from the seventeenth century, with a chapel dating from the early 1700s. The congregation seem to have had close links to Gamblesby, where they built another chapel in 1824. A few more baptisms that clearly related to Addingham parishioners were abstracted from these sources, eight for the Primitives and 108 for the Independent/Congregationalists, and finally a small number were found to be recorded in the local Methodist magazine, the *Monthly Record*, but not in the official registers.⁵

The total of baptisms for babies born between 1820 and 1932 to mothers apparently resident at the time of the birth in Addingham parish, culled from all these sources, came to 2092 – the odd person appeared to be baptised twice. The illegitimately-born children and their mothers were then extracted. One witness to an 1833 Parliamentary select committee complained that ‘registers are...singularly defective in regard to identity or particularisation of illegitimate persons.’⁶ However, Denman found baptism for both legitimate and illegitimate to be almost universal throughout his period in Longtown, in north-east Cumbria, and I believe this to be the case in Addingham, where it has proved straightforward to identify the illegitimate.⁷ It has also been estimated that probably 30% of such births went unrecorded;⁸ this seems extremely unlikely in Addingham. I have not found large numbers of children hidden as legitimate in the records or with an unrecorded baptism and I cannot believe that so many births were concealed.

A few more local mothers and babies were revealed in the Penrith Workhouse birth registers which fortunately survive for almost the entire period.⁹ Workhouse babies were normally baptised at St Andrew’s, Penrith.

The illegitimacy was very occasionally indicated directly in the earlier records by the words ‘bastard’ or ‘illegitimate’, but as time went on the only indication was usually the occupation of the mother (given as ‘single’ or ‘spinster’) and eventually it was just the absence of the father’s name that indicated the illegitimate birth. There is a sense that the vicar, minister or pastor no longer wished to draw attention to the situation: the register was accurate, as far as he could tell from the information given to him, but not explicit. The vicar of St Andrew’s, Penrith in the 1840s, faced with baptising large numbers of illegitimate children from the workhouse, wrote ‘B.B’ (base-born) but this is unknown in the local registers.

Only three babies were identified as illegitimate in the burial records: Thomas, son of Ann Jackson in 1823, Thomas, son of Ruth Bird in 1842 and Joseph Thompson Jackson in 1875. There were also some clues from the Anglican and Methodist marriage registers, when a bride or groom failed to give the name of their father, or where father and son, or daughter, had different names; in several cases, there was no father named on the baptism certificate but he was named at the marriage of the child many years later. Early marriage registrations do not name either parent, but for most of the period being examined fathers were named. One certificate does include the mother’s name in place of the father’s – further investigation revealed this as an illegitimacy. The law was changed in 2019 to include mothers.

⁵ See the bibliography for the details of these records.

⁶ Select Committee on Parochial Registration, p.136, testimony of Joseph Parkes, quoted in Gibson, *Experiences*, 210.

⁷ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 21.

⁸ Ginger Frost, “‘The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep’: illegitimacy in the English working class, 1850-1939”, *Journal of Social History*, vol.37, no.2 (Winter 2003) 295, statistic attributed to Lionel Rose.

⁹ CAS(C), SPU/P, 1837-[1917].

In addition, census entries provided the odd clue to be checked, when a child was named as ‘child of wife’, ‘stepson’ or ‘stepdaughter’ or ‘son/daughter-in-law’ (often used to indicate a step – rather than a marital – relationship), with a name differing from that of the head of the household. In some families, there was one child whose baptism was missing but who was listed on the census with the rest of the family; often, but not always, this was the eldest child, who was baptised in the mother’s home parish. This may have been because the mother returned to her own mother and parish for the birth or because the child was born illegitimate. It was usually straightforward to locate the baptism elsewhere and to check whether the census name matched the mother’s maiden name and was the name under which the child was registered. ‘Nurse child’, or ‘boarder’ when applied to a young child, also prompted further research, although neither term necessarily indicates illegitimacy.

Of course, the data remains incomplete. Many children baptised in Addingham moved away and some were re-named when the mother married; they were then subsumed into what looks on the census to be an ordinary family with two married birth parents. There must also have been traffic the other way, illegitimate children baptised elsewhere but living in Addingham with a new family and under another name. If they did nothing while in the parish (such as register at school or marry) to draw attention to their illegitimate status, they remain hidden.

The Core Group established from this accumulation of information was 134 mothers, 191 children and 48 fathers, some of the latter more confidently identified than others. Several individuals fell into two categories, being both born illegitimate and subsequently being the parent of an illegitimate child. As the research continued, more and more relevant examples emerged. These have been investigated and the stories have contributed to the whole. However, in the interests of actually getting the research finished, it was decided not to keep adding them into the Core Group, which is used as the basis for the statistical examination of Addingham that forms Part One of this book, except where clearly stated otherwise.

Establishing the wider Biographical Group of illegitimate children, their mothers and their fathers

The Core Group was then examined in the full database entries, to see if it was possible to establish what had happened in the mother’s life before the illegitimate birth and what happened subsequently to mother, baby and, where possible, father. This often provided more information about their lives in the parish but, in many cases, the baptism or marriage was the only information available about an individual who was merely passing through the parish at a point in his or her life when they left an official mark. For those people where an educated guess at a location was possible, the baptism and marriage registers of other local parishes were again investigated. It was possible by then to see some distinct family groupings.

Further research about this Core Group was then done via the ‘Ancestry’ and ‘Find My Past’ genealogical websites, mainly tracking people through the censuses and vital registration data but also locating people in other records; military records proved especially useful for some.¹⁰ In the course of this research, many data corrections were sent to Ancestry. Family trees posted by users were sometimes helpful in providing the clue which unlocked the puzzle, but needed to be used with caution, since they contained errors. The owners of many family trees on the

¹⁰ www.ancestry.co.uk; www.findmypast.co.uk

site were contacted, both offering and asking for further information. The initial enquiry was worded very carefully, based upon what was clearly already known by the owner of the tree. There were many helpful and very interesting responses, resulting in extra details and even photographs. Nearly all replied, and nobody took offence, which was reassuring. The most common response was of great interest and gratitude for information I could provide.

The Penrith Petty Session records for bastardy bonds and affiliation proceedings were also searched, revealing a total of 53 relevant cases, not all of which had been previously identified; the court records proved especially helpful in identifying fathers, both those who had possibly fathered a child already in my Core Group, and Addingham men who were accused of fathering a child in another parish. These men would otherwise remain hidden and thus the records were invaluable in extending the scope of the study, although their children probably never actually lived in this parish. Some court records amounted to almost verbatim accounts of the claims made by mother and putative father. Finally, it was possible to almost hear the voices of some of 'my' people.¹¹

School records were also examined; the admissions records and log books for Hunsonby School appear to be lost but those for Maughanby and Langwathby (the latter in the adjacent parish) were used to establish at what date children were resident and the names of their parents. School photographs were also helpful, where names were recorded. Newspaper reports were explored next by using the online British Newspaper Archive.¹² This threw up five extra cases not previously encountered, either because the baptism took place elsewhere and the mother and child were never recorded in any local data, or because steps were taken to conceal a birth which then came to the attention of the law. The papers also, on occasion, revealed some background to those already identified. Again, it was illuminating to almost hear these people speaking for themselves, and to gain an insight from what others involved in the situation were recorded as saying.

And finally, needing to find out, as far as was possible, if my educated guesses were correct, I purchased a large number of certificates from the General Register Office. The birth certificates largely acted only to confirm assumptions, although on occasion they gave rise to questions about the accuracy of the baptism entries; the marriage certificates were often more revealing in making it obvious that what people said, or thought, was the truth, was in fact often not the case. Usually, the space for the name of the father was simply left blank but on a significant number of certificates the name given was clearly incorrect or was a name previously unknown to me.

Thus, the original Core Group of those baptised locally had grown substantially, as relationships were established, further unmarried mothers and children discovered, and putative fathers revealed. The final total of this wider cohort, the Biographical Group, was 173 mothers, 236 children (some fell into the categories of both mother and child) and 87 fathers; some of the information naming these men is open to question, as will be made clear later in the discussion.

I now had a list of some 500 individuals to investigate. It is this wider Biographical Group whose experiences are described and analysed in Part Two of this book. Their lives are written

¹¹ See bibliography for full list of Petty Sessions records consulted.

¹² www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

up in the biographies available on my website.¹³ It should be emphasised that, because of the wide net spread to locate these people, not all were born or even necessarily lived in the parish, but all were closely and intimately linked in some way to an illegitimate individual (child, mother or father) who *did* live in Addingham. This facilitated a very broad-based examination of the whole illegitimate culture and experience of the parish. The investigation, while still being primarily a parish study, goes way beyond the parish boundaries in tracing the lives of the subject group. Who would think that this small parish would have links throughout the world, and that the search would lead to both a painting in the Canadian parliament building, the gold rush in Australia and one of the last people to be hanged at Durham Gaol?

Somewhere along the way, the Methodists as a discrete group receded almost totally into the background and must await further research.

Methodological Difficulties

The point has been made in the context of Skye that some women did not return to their parish for the birth because their families refused to help. 'If a much higher proportion of Skye-born women were found to bear illegitimate children away from their home parish... this could be taken as indicative of a much lower tolerance of such behaviour in their home community.'¹⁴ It would be an enormous task in the Cumbrian context, where young women in search of employment were traditionally very mobile before marriage, to follow up all those girls who moved away to see if they bore illegitimate children elsewhere but it is worth considering that those mothers who baptised their babies at Addingham without having any apparent connection to the parish, may indeed have been more lacking in support than those who returned to their family and parish. In the twentieth century mothers began to return more often to their parish of birth, to what they saw as their home parish, for the baptism but not necessarily for the actual birth of their children, and so we begin to see an increasing number of baptisms of babies born to parents who live outside the area. The new practice may have been as a result of the increased likelihood of married couples moving completely away from the local area, or of the decrease in infant and post-natal mortality – baptism could now be delayed, confident in the belief that the child would survive, and travelling home was a more accessible possibility for the ordinary person. Despite this, such mobility after marriage may also make the later baptism registers less useful, as many of those who moved away probably chose to baptise their children elsewhere.

The methodology does not account in the same systematic way for those mothers who moved into the area after the baptism of an illegitimate child, unless they happened to get married there. Although some cases were picked up, this was by chance rather than a careful search. Neither does it pick up babies who died unbaptised or stillborn; this may have been proportionately higher for those born illegitimate. In April 1840, the wife of the vicar, William Sharpe, had a stillborn (legitimate) child whose birth was announced in the *Leeds Intelligencer* but there appears to be no local record. People of a lower class would presumably not announce it, thus leaving not even this minimal trace. The newspaper search revealed some infanticides,

¹³ www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk

¹⁴ Andrew Blaikie, Eilidh Garrett and Ros Davies, 'Migration, Living Strategies and Illegitimate Childbearing: A Comparison of Two Scottish Settings, 1871-1881', ch.9 in Levene, Alys, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 167.

but how many more mothers were successful in completely concealing a birth? We have no way of knowing. There may have been rather more illegitimate conceptions resulting in a live birth than have been discovered but I suspect not so many. Illegitimate conceptions resulting in a miscarriage are, of course, impossible to quantify.

Neither can this method detect all 'adulterine bastards', born by a woman legally married to one man but conceived with another: although there are three instances, they are probably cases that were as obvious at the time as they are in the records, the husbands being absent and none of the mothers claiming a father for their child at registration or baptism.¹⁵ Others, where husband and wife were still living together, may have been hidden, the child quietly absorbed within the family and community. Such children were legally the child of the husband; the nominal father may have been unaware of the deceit or perhaps accepting of it.¹⁶ DNA evidence can now establish paternity, but for the historian, any such cases remain hidden.

It was more difficult to trace those born before the 1841 census, when the information recorded was more limited. The mother may have subsequently married elsewhere than Addingham, and thus changed her name (and possibly that of the child). It was also difficult to trace those born at the end of the period, when no further census information is currently in the public domain. Local knowledge might help here, but the subject was deemed too sensitive to follow up. The census gives only a ten-yearly snapshot of a life; the person may have moved around several times between censuses. A life that appears rooted in one spot may not in fact have been so, and we have no clue as to all the visits and communications that may have taken place. Nevertheless, despite these limitations and frustrations, the methodology does enable a detailed study to be made of one parish of the reasonably large group of people within it with experience of illegitimacy and to assess how they may have fitted in to, and affected, the local culture and society. It demonstrates how often the barest details can be fleshed out, a series of relationships recognised, the description and explanation of a life arrived at.

In their study of the history of illegitimacy, Alys Levene and her colleagues note that historians have moved on from statistics towards studying the 'personal experiences of not only women, but also previously less visible men and children', aiming to 'move the study of modern British illegitimacy forward in 3 crucial respects, namely the consideration of the lived experience of bastardy, the use of varied sources and innovative methodologies, and a new focus upon the fathers of illegitimate children.'¹⁷ A considerable portion of my work necessarily deals with statistics, since it is impossible to comprehend the Addingham situation without first putting the local figures into the larger national and local context. Nevertheless, my aim has been similar, to reveal the 'lived experience of bastardy' within one particular parish. It remains true, of course, as was said by Hilary Mantel in her 2017 Reith Lectures, that:

Evidence is always partial. Facts are not truth, though they are part of it – information is not

¹⁵ See biographies of Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater, Jane Ann HopeSlee and Mary WatsonBowness at www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk

¹⁶ While this research was in progress, it was revealed that Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is such a child. An article commenting on this gave the Paternal Discrepancy rate in 2005 as 3.7%: see *The Independent*, 9 April 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/dna-test-reveals-archbishop-justin-welby-is-illegitimate-son-of-sir-winston-churchills-private-a6975936.html>; see also *The Times*, 21 June 2016, for a case affecting succession to a baronetcy. A more recent article in 2019 estimated paternal discrepancy to be as high as 10%: see *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 May 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/05/31/oneperson-10-mistaken-identity-father-reveals-nhs-chief/>, accessed 8 Aug. 2019.

¹⁷ Levene et al., *Illegitimacy*, 1, 2.

knowledge.’ History is ‘what’s left in the sieve when the centuries have run through it...it is the multiplication of the evidence of fallible and biased witnesses, combined with incomplete accounts of actions not fully understood by the people who performed them. It’s no more than the best we can do, and often it falls short on that.’¹⁸

At this very personal level, the writing of actual history is not so dissimilar in some respects to the writing of historical fiction; although, of course, nothing in these accounts is pure fiction (or at least not on the part of the author), there still remains the need for interpretation and surmise.

Accuracy of records

The Registrar-General in his sixth annual report, for 1842, considered that ‘In the country districts I see no reason to suppose that illegitimate children escape registration in greater proportion than children born in wedlock.’ He did, however, believe that the urban situation was likely to lead to underestimation.¹⁹ Few problems have been encountered in finding birth registrations in this research, and very few baptisms have not been located.²⁰ I believe that most of the baptism records are correct and that few people, legitimate and illegitimate, went unbaptised, although it is possible that some baptisms were simply not recorded; it seems unlikely that Sibyl Armstrong, born (legitimately) probably in 1866, the middle child of a couple long resident in Hunsonby, was baptised elsewhere, but nothing is recorded in the local Methodist or Anglican registers. Her siblings were all baptised at church or chapel. Few baptisms have been found to be inaccurate. In theory, the mother, when registering the child, could name anybody she chose as the father (although at the risk of perjury) until the 1874 Births and Marriages Registration Act tightened up the registration of illegitimate births by requiring the presence of the father of an illegitimate child before his name could be inserted.²¹ Without ready and free access to the civil registration records, the research has had largely to rely upon the baptism evidence, which would be hard to falsify in a small village; indeed in a few cases, the baptism registers expand the evidence of the civil registration record, when the minister named the man he believed to be the father. Identification is, however, very rare in Addingham, although the research has led to instances in other parishes.

Many of the marriage certificates name a father who is questionable in strict biological terms, and occasionally omit a father when there seems no reason why he should not be named. When Thomas Dayson married Jane Strong at Addingham in 1874, no father was named for either party, although when they were baptised both had named fathers, who then brought them up. It seems likely to have been a clerical oversight. The situation with one man, born in 1893 to a single woman, seems less readily explained. His father was not named on his marriage in 1922 but a name was half entered as ‘Joseph A’ and then crossed out; this could have been his stepfather (and very likely, his biological father) who married his mother when he was five, but did not bring him up. At the time of his wedding the bridegroom had not been legitimated

¹⁸ Hilary Mantel, Reith Lecture, 1, BBC Radio 4, 17 June 2017.

¹⁹ Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, 1842, BPP 1844, xx.

²⁰ Barbara Glasson, *Bastards and Nonconformists: changes in lone parenting since 1900 and the response of the Methodist Church in theology and practice*, Ph. D (Nottingham, 2001) 10, states that illegitimate children were not granted British citizenship and not given a birth certificate: they were in fact entitled to both, although citizenship at this time could come only through the *mother* of an illegitimate child.

²¹ 37 and 38 Vict., c.88; see www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/37-38/88/enacted, accessed 10 July 2021.

by his parents' subsequent marriage, since this was not possible until the 1926 Legitimacy Act. However, a marginal note 'legitimate' was added and initialled by the officiating clergyman, Hubert Bell Lester. Is it possible that Lester, a vicar from Nottingham who conducted only this one marriage in the parish and does not appear to have any other connection with the area, was persuaded to add the incorrect note? Did he add it at the time or at a later date? I have not found anything else like it in the registers; the vicar in 1922, T. W. Stephenson, was assiduous in conducting marriages himself, only occasionally delegating to his curate or another local vicar. Out of 112 marriages during his incumbency, a marriage was conducted by a complete outsider on only three occasions. Only very rarely were individuals actually named as illegitimate on their marriage certificate. James HodgsonDodd, married at Langwathby in 1898, was one such. The officiating clergyman was from Walney Island, near Barrow, and perhaps accustomed to a more precise way of filling in the form, or perhaps not so used to the local way of accepting the situation. Annas Beckton, baptised in Glassonby, married William Armstrong near Middleton-in-Teesdale in 1900, when the marriage registration shows that both she and her husband were 'born out of wedlock'. This bald statement is unknown among the Addingham records, where the space for the father's name is just left blank.

Entries that were crossed out can be useful, as in the case above, or puzzling. Why was the space for the father of legitimately-born Margaret Nanson Kidd so decisively crossed out when she married in 1874? The answer may lie with the accuracy of the officiating minister, John Wilson, who was also responsible for the Strong-Dayson marriage above.

Access to records

Over fifty marriage certificates were purchased from the General Register Office for this research, many of them for civil marriages; unlike church marriages, these are not available in any other way for scrutiny and large-scale statistical examination. Eight were chapel marriages, from a period when chapels often did not maintain their own registers; even after 1893, when the Methodists were allowed to conduct marriages without the registrar being present, many chose not to go to the expense of maintaining a register themselves. The civil registrar had to attend and the only record is in the civil registers. Fortunately, the detailed research gave sufficient confidence that the correct marriage had been identified, and the certificate therefore worth buying, although at significant cost.

The Hundred Years Rule

Many records of a personal nature are closed for 100 years, which has restricted access to the records of some institutions, such as the Garlands Mental Hospital in Carlisle and the Penrith Workhouse.

Census

Searching after 1911 is difficult; although the 1939 Register helps, the gap is a long one, allowing plenty of people to 'disappear'. The 1921 census will help in this respect but became available, at prohibitive cost, only after this book was finished.

Demography

Statistics can create a false sense of security, an over-confidence in their accuracy, when dealing with the messy lives of real people, more particularly when the group studied is relatively small. Nevertheless, the individuals and their lives may be better understood, and their potential distinctiveness or commonalities illuminated, by placing them within the broad national statistical context and by relating them to the general Addingham population, both legitimate and illegitimate. Unless explicitly stated, the data discusses the Core Group of individuals.

The National Context

In his sixth annual report the Registrar-General picked out seven counties with high illegitimacy rates in 1842, of which Cumberland was the highest, with a rate for the number of children born illegitimate of 11.4 per cent, more than double that for Cornwall, the lowest in the country with a rate of only 4.2 per cent. Quoting 'one of the ablest statistical writers of the present day', the report asked:

Who can doubt that their bringing up is much harder and more difficult? that the existence of a class of men, bound to society by few or no family ties, is not a matter of indifference to the State? [punctuation sic]...It is beyond doubt that fewer illegitimate children grow up to maturity; that they get through the world with more trouble; that more of them are poor; and that therefore more of them become criminals. Illegitimacy is in itself an evil to a man...¹

As will become clear, not all these dreadful prognostications applied to Addingham, but the fact remains that Cumberland registered many more illegitimate children than other counties in England. In 1845, Cumberland's rate of 11.1 per cent was still the highest.²

The Northern England and Cumberland Context

In 1842, within the northern Division (Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland), the Brampton and Longtown area had the highest rate, at 17.2 per cent, but the rather odd geographic grouping of Penrith, Alston and Bootle (near the west coast of Cumberland and over forty miles from Penrith) was the second highest at 12.5 per cent.³ On the national scale, this put the Penrith group in fourth position. By 1845, despite the rate rising to 13.1 per cent, the Penrith group had dropped slightly to seventh nationally, having been overtaken by Chorley, the Ludlow area and Wigton.⁴ Denman found a steady increase in illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland between 1815 and 1865, independent of changes to the bastardy laws. However, as he shows, the grouping of Penrith with Alston and Bootle served to give a slightly unbalanced reflection of the more local situation in 1851, with Penrith having a ratio of 11 to 12 per cent, while the other two were 1-2 per cent higher.⁵ When it was revealed in 1864 that the illegitimacy rate in Cumberland, at 12.1 per cent, was significantly higher than the national rate of 6.4 per cent, it was the cause of local disquiet. The *Cumberland*

¹ Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1842) BPP 1844, xxiv.

² Eighth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1845) BPP 1847-48, lxiii.

³ Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1842) BPP 1844, 29.

⁴ Eighth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1845) BPP 1847-48, lxvii.

⁵ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) ii, 17.

and *Westmorland Advertiser* proposed various explanations.⁶ It was suggested, firstly, that the figures, though accurate, did not in themselves explain what was happening; local registration was simply more accurate than that in London or Birmingham, where it was easy to get rid of an illegitimate baby. This situation could not, it was thought, be true of the small towns and villages of Cumberland and Westmorland, and 'hence the fruit of illegitimacy is brought forward with a prominence which guarantees the registry of all natural-born children.' It was also suggested that the healthiness of the population led to more children being born alive, thus removing 'one great temptation to conceal the birth of a natural-born child, in as much as murder would have to be added to the crime of concealment, and if discovered...lead to penal servitude, if not death on the gallows.' The local vicars, in replying every three years to the bishop's enquiries about the state of their parishes, confirm this account of a very healthy and well-paid labouring class.⁷

Henriques agrees that the statistics need treating with caution; 'in the country where people knew each other concealment was difficult. This, as much as the survival of the old custom of boarding farm servants in the house (to which it was usually ascribed), might help to explain the very high illegitimacy figures for Cumberland, Westmorland, Norfolk and Hereford.'⁸ Marshall and Walton accept the argument about the problems resulting from delayed marriage.⁹

The Addingham Context

Registration issues

How did Addingham fit into this county-wide picture of high illegitimacy? The baptism registers are the only readily accessible and realistic way to examine birth statistics for a small area over a long chronological period. The civil registers produced from 1837 are not available for examination on a parish basis, and over a broad chronological period; access is only by individual name and the certificates are expensive. Baptisms, therefore, became the proxy for examining the local birth rate, both legitimate and illegitimate, and for comparison with the national statistics of birth registration. I have found the Addingham registers to be generally accurate, and clear in indicating whether a child was legitimate or not. Baptisms do not equate to civil registration; some babies who were registered may never have been baptised and if they did not live long enough to be on a local census, they must remain unknown. However, the local incumbents believed that baptism was universal, while complaining about the number baptised privately by the Wesleyan Methodists;¹⁰ I have succeeded in most cases in finding a baptism somewhere in the nearby parishes for an individual of interest in the Biographical Group. I think the effect of any omissions upon the statistics is likely to be minimal, particularly in this place and this period, when moves were mainly local. Only at the end of the period do we see people returning from far away to baptise their child in their 'home' parish. The local press in 1864 may well have been right about the high

⁶ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

⁷ See, for example, CAS(C) DRC Acc HC 3966, 1861, Addingham, Kirkoswald and Melmerby.

⁸ U. R. Q. Henriques, 'Bastardy and the New Poor Law', *Past and Present*, no.37 (Jul. 1967) 123; Lionel Rose, *Massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 22, also sees value in this explanation.

⁹ J. D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century* (Manchester UP, 1981) 82. They find that farmers' sons were rarely mentioned in this context, although the *Advertiser* is specific in laying blame at their door.

¹⁰ CAS(C) DRC, Acc HC 3966, Addingham, 1864, 1881, 1884, 1887; Kirkoswald, 1881.

levels of Cumbrian birth registration, if the baptism registers can be seen as indicative of this, although whether it was right to suggest low levels elsewhere is beyond the scope of this study.

Baptism Trends (Figure 1)

Baptism numbers over the years in question were falling. They varied from year to year, and because the actual numbers were so small, an increase of just one or two baptisms could have a quite disproportionate effect on the statistics but using the decadal totals (baptisms within a decade 1830-1839, for example) makes the long-term trend clear: the 1820s saw a total of 240 baptisms for children born to mothers who were resident in the parish, while a century later the 1920s saw a total of 126.

Comparison of baptisms by the three main denominations attended by the residents of Addingham shows that numbers for the Church of England were declining over the century but began growing again in the 1920s, while the Methodists surged from 1862 into the 1880s, so that in some years there were more Methodist baptisms than Anglican. Indeed, in 1888, there were fewer Anglican baptisms than either the Methodists or Independents/Congregationalists for residents of Addingham. From about 1880 the Methodists showed a steady decline, while the Independents/Congregationalists were at their highest in the 1880s and 1890s.

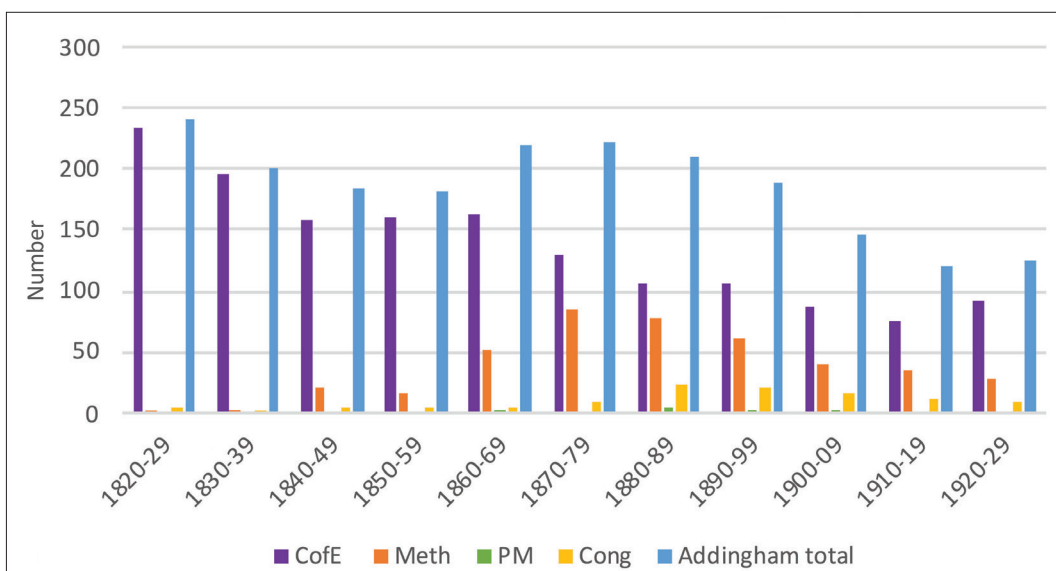


Fig. 1. Baptisms: all baptisms, decadal totals, 1820-1929, mothers resident in Addingham parish, taken from the Anglican baptism registers of Addingham, the Wesleyan Methodist registers of the Penrith and Kirkoswald Circuits, the Primitive Methodist Registers of the Penrith Circuit and Park Head Chapel.

Illegitimate Baptisms (Figure 2 and 3)

The number of illegitimate baptisms also fluctuated from year to year, at between 0 and 4, and between 11 and 17 per decade. There was a noticeable dip, both absolutely and relatively, in the 1860s (when the total number of baptisms was increasing) and even more obviously in the years of World War I (when all baptisms were falling). Numbers peaked in the 1890s. By 1929 such baptisms were showing signs of once again increasing.

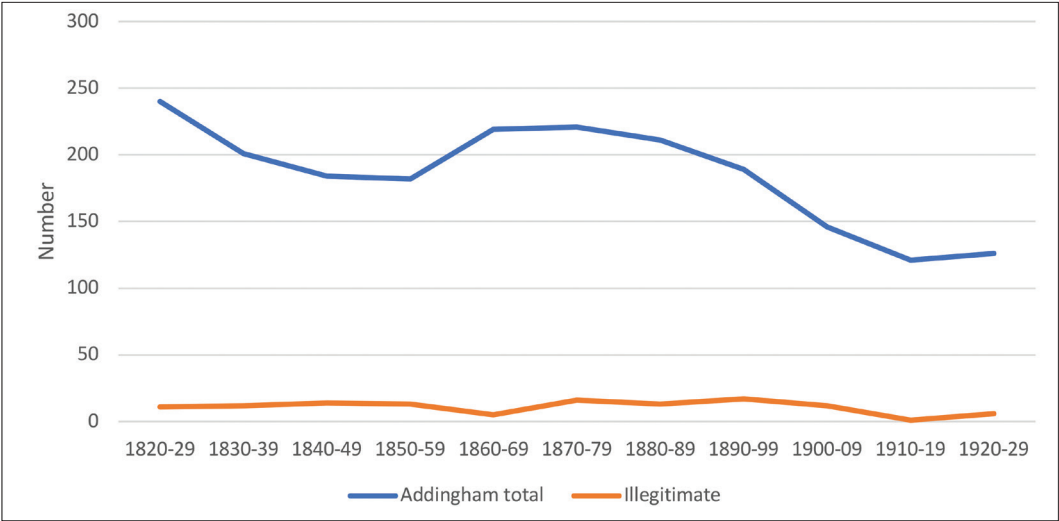


Fig. 2. Baptisms: legitimate and illegitimate, decadal totals, 1820-1929, mothers resident in Addingham parish, taken from the Anglican baptism registers of Addingham, the Wesleyan Methodist registers of the Penrith and Kirkoswald Circuits, the Primitive Methodist Registers of the Penrith Circuit and Park Head Chapel.

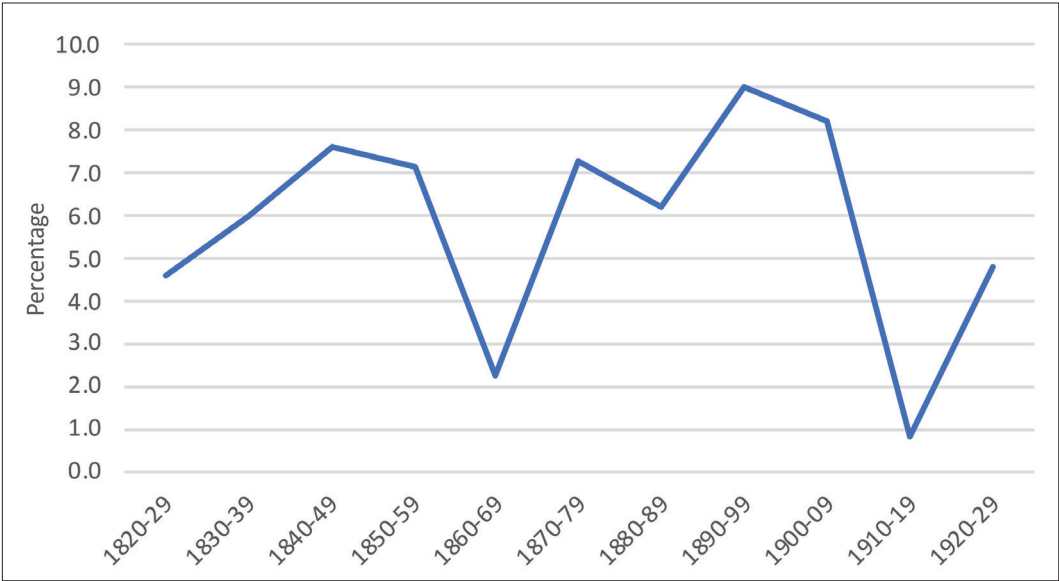


Fig. 3. Baptisms: illegitimacy ratio, 1820-1929, decadal totals, mothers resident in Addingham parish.

Figure 3 showing the illegitimate baptisms as a percentage of total baptisms, using decadal totals, highlights this pattern of trough and peak. It also shows that only in the 1890s did the ratio reach as high as 9 per cent, and in the 1860s, when the *Advertiser* was so concerned about the illegitimacy figures, the Addingham ratio dipped dramatically to 2.7 per cent, before returning to a rate of 7.2 per cent. It was the same vicar entering the figures until 1867, so under-recording seems unlikely. The population was growing in these years, and it may be that this was a period when employment and marriage prospects were better; the dip would thus

not accord with the courtship theory advanced to explain variations in illegitimacy levels.¹¹ However, it should be remembered again that we are dealing here only with small numbers – the peak of over 27 per cent in the year 1889 is owing to an abnormally low level of legitimate baptisms in that year, coupled with the to-be-expected three illegitimate babies. The numbers of illegitimate baptisms were not falling alongside the numbers of legitimate; does this perhaps point to the existence of a bastardy sub-society, who did not change their habits, even as their neighbours did? Is it possible that the legitimate births were falling as increasing knowledge and availability of contraception allowed married couples to limit their families? Most illegitimate births of which we have knowledge were first-born children, either the first child born to a woman who subsequently married and then perhaps limited her legitimate family, as those around her did, or the only child born to a woman who did not go on to have further children.

National comparison of legitimate and illegitimate births (Figure 4)

These figures are quite unlike the national statistics, as Fig. 4 makes plain. The two lines start at roughly the same figure but thereafter the national illegitimacy ratio falls steadily, apart from a small increase in the years of the First World War. In Addingham, the ratio normally exceeded the national ratio, indeed it was sometimes double the national ratio, although it never approached the Cumberland-wide figures of 1864. More surprisingly, perhaps, in view of the national picture, and with no obvious explanation, there were no illegitimate baptisms at all in the years 1912–1921, although there was a baptism of an illegitimate child at Park Head Congregational chapel, born to a woman with parents in Gamblesby, while the sad case of Jane Story, accused of infanticide in Hunsonby in 1916, reminds us that an illegitimate conception did not necessarily result in a baptism: some births were concealed, although not

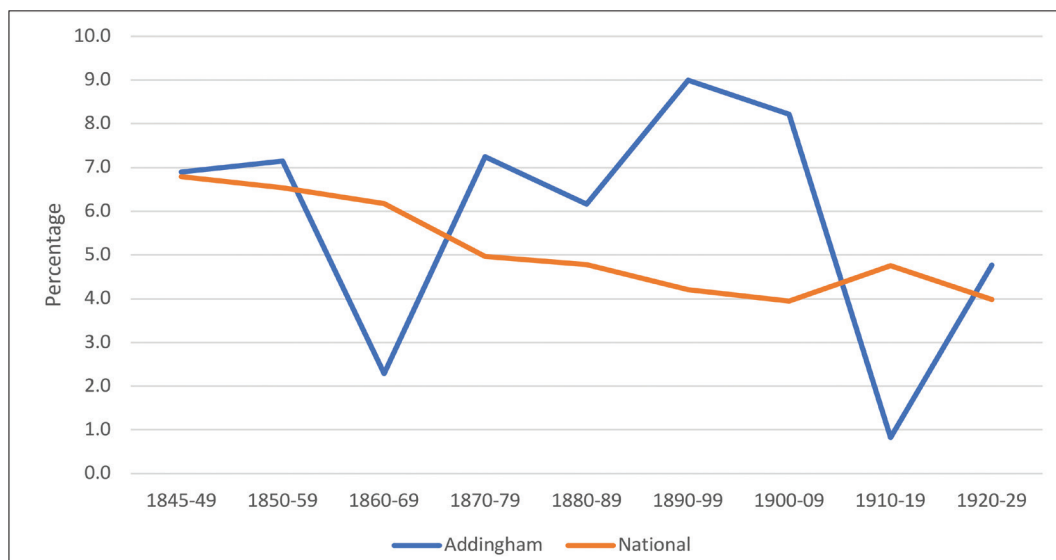


Fig. 4. Baptisms: illegitimacy ratio, Addingham compared to England and Wales. National figures from B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British National Statistics* (Cambridge UP, 1962) 29.

¹¹ See before, 1.

always successfully, either from the authorities or from history.¹² J. D. Marshall believed that ‘in many hundreds of instances the victims were young labouring women, born to lives of poverty and prone to escape from the very worst of that condition by securing themselves husbands’ although he found that a decrease in female farm servants in the second half of the nineteenth century coincided ‘almost too conveniently with a notable and apparently equivalent fall in Cumberland and Westmorland illegitimacy ratios.’¹³ Marshall assumed victimhood, and an economic rationale to behaviour, both of which may be questioned. It is also the case that the illegitimacy ratio in Addingham began to decline only rather later, and indeed was at its highest in the 1880s and 1890s, but it is possible that local young women found alternative employment and opportunities during the war, which affected their behaviour. One of the illegitimate children studied, having started in domestic service, then found employment at the munitions works at Annan, just over the Scottish border, while one other woman (not illegitimate) served as a nurse in France.

The Addingham Population Structure (Figure 5 and 6)

The ratios given above relate only to the total number of baptisms, and take no account of the size of the population living in the parish, still less of the number of women of fertile age, or of those unmarried women who could be considered as ‘at risk’ of bearing an illegitimate child; we need to examine how the variation in illegitimacy over the period relates to these figures. The total population for the parish grew only slowly from 1801 until 1861, before increasing more noticeably until 1881. There was also a significant, but purely temporary, blip in 1871 caused by the presence of a navy camp for the builders of the Settle-Carlisle line on the Hunsonby with Winskill border with Little Salkeld. If the navy camp is excluded from the calculations, the peak in 1871 is flattened and from 1881 the decline is gentle but consistent, although by

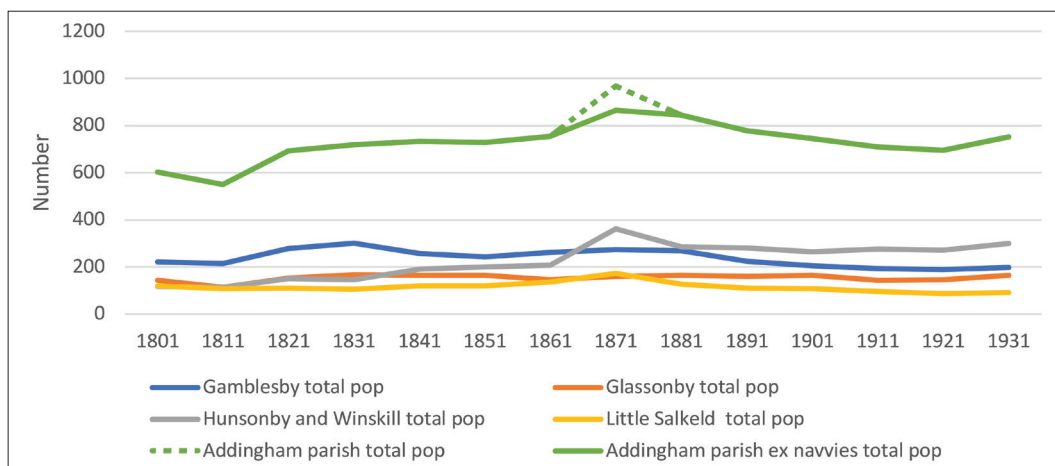


Fig. 5. Population: Addingham parish, 1801-1931, all figures from the census records.

¹² Pat Thane, ‘Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England’, *Women’s History Review*, vol.20, no.1 (Feb. 2011) 13, notes that the increase in illegitimacy during the First World War ‘often was, and is, attributed to a “loosening of morals” in wartime.’

¹³ J. D. Marshall, ‘Out of wedlock: perceptions of a Cumbrian social problem in the Victorian context’, *Northern History*, vol.31, no.1 (1995) 207.

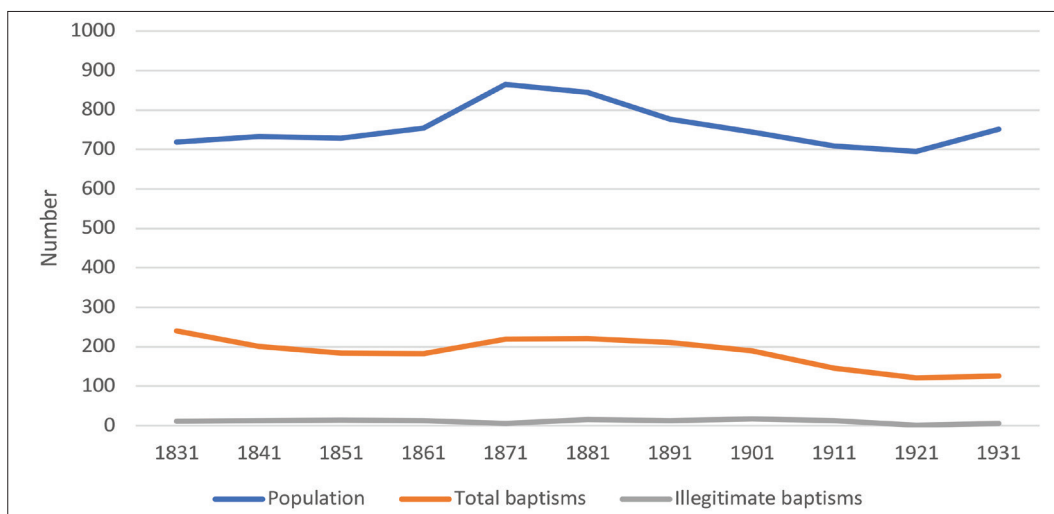


Fig. 6. Population: Addingham parish in census years compared to baptisms in previous decade, 1831-1931.

1931 it was showing evidence of a renewed rise. However, the parish total conceals a change in relative importance within Addingham: while Gamblesby was gently declining after 1831, the joint township of Hunsonby with Winskill was growing noticeably. Little Salkeld was the smallest of the townships in 1801 and remained so, with Glassonby somewhat larger.

When compared to the parish population (again excluding the navy camp), baptisms were slightly declining as the population increased up to the 1860s, but thereafter the population and baptism trajectories both showed a similar level of rise followed by decline, until the 1920s. The population then began to increase but the number of baptisms failed to keep pace. As seen earlier, the number of illegitimate baptisms remained fairly constant even as the population fell.

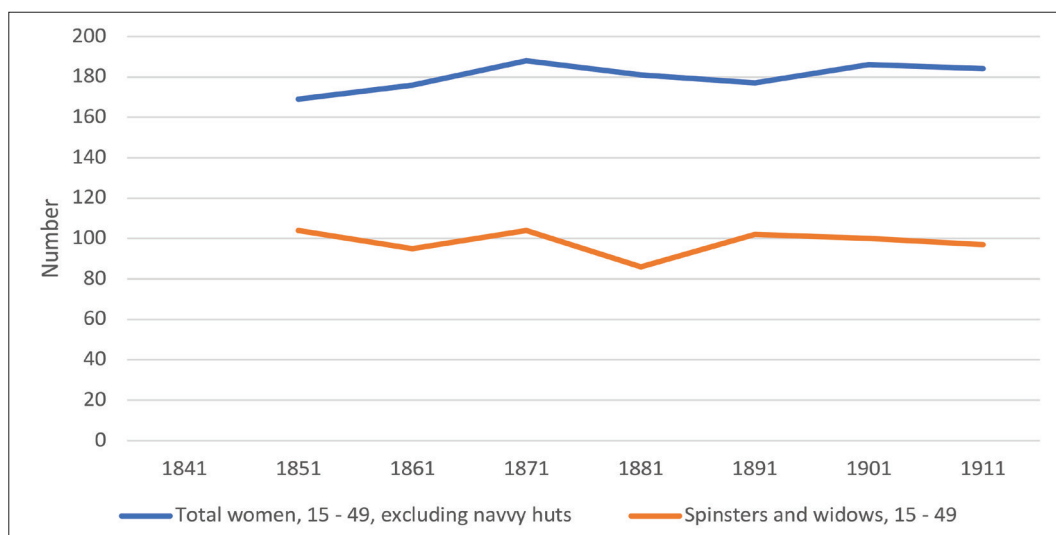


Fig. 7. Women: all women in Addingham aged 15-49, excluding the navy huts, compared to spinsters and widows 'at risk'.

Women in the population

For the purposes of this discussion, all the following calculations exclude figures from the navy huts, but still include a number of railway workers who lodged in the townships. I have found only one illegitimate baptism that obviously relates to the navy camp.

The number of females increased as the population grew, but there were always fewer females than males, falling from 48 per cent in 1841 to 44 per cent in 1881; this may have been caused by an increase in tradesmen moving into the area, particularly into Hunsonby with Winskill, starting before the building of the Settle-Carlisle line but accentuated by it. By 1901 the figure had returned to 48 per cent.

The male/female imbalance was always more pronounced in the townships of Hunsonby with Winskill, and Glassonby, than in Gamblesby and Little Salkeld. Indeed, in Little Salkeld, perhaps because of the employment of more female staff in the gentry household of Salkeld Hall, there were normally more women than men.

The fertile female population (Figures 7 and 8)

Given the nature of this research, it is the fertile women in the population who are most relevant. I have taken this to be all females aged 15-49.¹⁴ Over the whole period, this group increased slightly, but there was a noticeable decline in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, followed by a recovery.

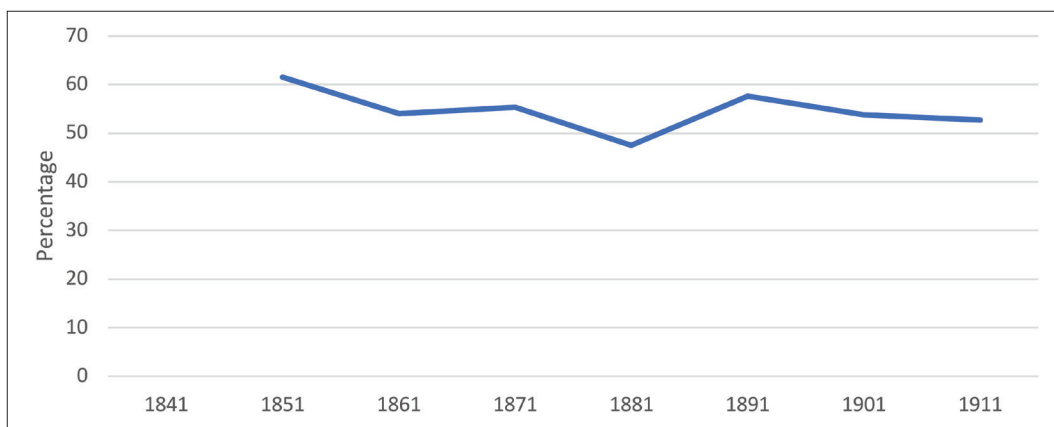


Fig. 8. Women: spinsters and widows 'at risk' as percentage of total women aged 15-49.

Women at risk

In terms of illegitimate births, the most pertinent section of the population are the 'at risk' women, the unmarried and the widowed of fertile age, since as far as can be observed in the records, few local married women bore illegitimate children. As some of the biographies show, a small number of children were born to deserted wives and were most probably illegitimate.

¹⁴ I have used the age range 15-49, following Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 6; B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge UP, 1962), 29, use all females aged 15-44, in their calculations of the total birth rate, while Barry Reay, 'Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century England: the social context of illegitimacy in rural Kent', *Rural History*, vol.1, no.2 (1990) 242, uses 15-45.

Overall, in the parish, as the population of women aged 15-49 increased slightly, the percentage of women at risk declined from 1851-1911, with a decided fall in both the actual and the proportion of women at risk in the years between 1871 and 1881 and then a rise again to 1891.

As seen previously, there was a significant reduction in illegitimate births in the 1860s, which may correspond to the fall in the women at risk, and a smaller reduction in the 1880s may correspond to a similar fall in women at risk, but the numbers are so small that this may be of little significance.

Townships compared (Figures 9 and 10)

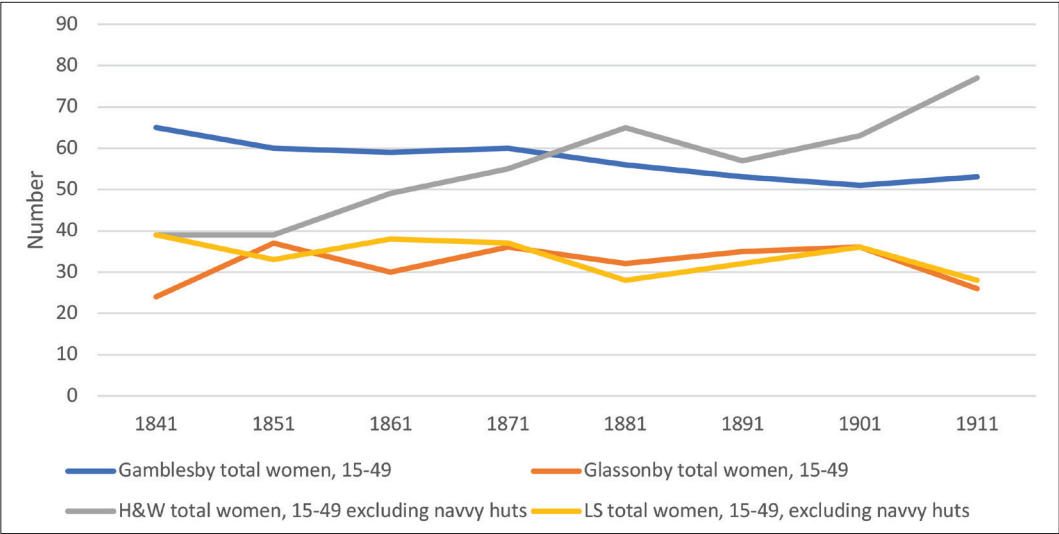


Fig. 9. Women: aged 15-49 in the four different townships, excluding the navy huts, 1841-1911.

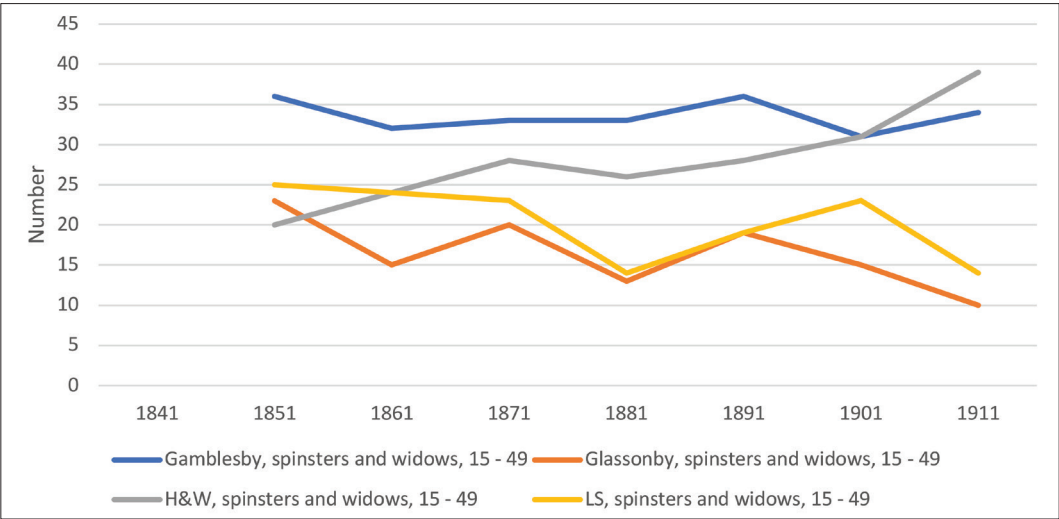


Fig. 10. Women 'at risk': spinsters and widows, aged 15-49, township comparison, excluding navy huts, 1841-1911.

The increase in fertile women was not spread equally throughout the townships. Numbers were declining throughout the period in Gamblesby and Little Salkeld, remaining much the same in Glassonby but growing significantly in Hunsonby with Winskill. Only Hunsonby with Winskill contributed an increasing number of women in this age group to the parish in 1901-1910; the number had almost doubled since 1851, from 39 to 77. It is therefore no surprise to find a much higher birth rate in Hunsonby with Winskill than in any other township.

Fig. 10 affords a more nuanced interpretation of the situation in the different townships than is evident from Fig. 9; until 1901 Gamblesby always had more women 'at risk' of an illegitimate pregnancy than the other townships.

Illegitimate Baptisms by Township

In their replies to the commissioners enquiring into the poor laws in 1834, both Gamblesby and Little Salkeld acknowledged two illegitimate children chargeable to their township in the past five years, for whom they had recovered 100 per cent of their costs. Glassonby had had three and recovered nothing. The overseers for Hunsonby with Winskill declared three in each of the five years and had recovered about 77 per cent of their costs, all of it from the fathers and nothing from the mothers.¹⁵ Clearly even at this early time in the period under review, there were substantial differences between the townships.

Over the whole period of the study, Hunsonby with Winskill and Glassonby between them accounted for almost twice as many illegitimate baptisms as Gamblesby and Little Salkeld, which might be expected, since the former two townships were growing, while the latter two were not. However, the chronological pattern was different, with Glassonby accounting for more such baptisms in the early years of the study, and Hunsonby with Winskill for more towards the end. Indeed, between 1900 and 1922 neither Gamblesby nor Glassonby had any illegitimate baptisms. The numbers are small, but Hunsonby with Winskill was consistently producing more illegitimate children than the other townships. Was this due to some difference in the nature of their population, their occupations, perhaps, or their mobility, as well as population growth?

Denman found that 'high levels of illegitimacy were associated with agriculture, sustained by the produce of the land' but it seems that in Addingham, while the majority of parish cases were still within the farming community, the association in Hunsonby with Winskill and Glassonby was more particularly with the tradesman – the masons, millers, butchers and blacksmiths.¹⁶

It is also instructive to examine the penetration of illegitimacy into the local communities, as shown in Table 1 below, which gives the percentage of households in each township containing at least one 'illegitimate individual', either born illegitimate themselves or the parent of an illegitimate child.

Only the fathers whose identification seems reasonably certain have been included. The number of individual illegitimate children may be small, producing quite large percentage swings, and the lack of information about individuals in the earlier years may well lead to undercounting, but nevertheless the overall pattern seems clear: households containing at least

¹⁵ Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws. Report, Index; Appendix (B) Reports of Assistant Coms. House of Commons Papers, 1834, answers to questions 47-8.

¹⁶ Denman, *Illegitimacy*, 48

	Gamblesby%	Glassonby%	H&W%	LS%	Parish%
1841	7.5	20.0	21.9	10.0	14.1
1851	9.6	16.1	18.4	10.0	13.5
1861	8.9	23.3	21.4	14.3	16.0
1871	12.7	19.4	35.2	21.4	22.6
1881	12.3	19.4	25.4	11.1	17.8
1891	12.5	17.2	26.2	11.1	18.2
1901	13.0	12.5	28.8	17.4	19.2
1911	12.2	13.8	28.6	8.7	18.7

Table 1. Townships: percentage of households with at least one illegitimate member, 1841-1911, excluding the navy huts, using data from the case studies examined in the Biographical Group.

one illegitimate individual were common in the parish throughout the period and possibly higher in 1911 than 1841, although this situation may well be distorted by the better data available in the later period. Over a third of the households in Hunsonby with Winskill contained a person linked to illegitimacy in 1871; the figures are affected to a marked extent by the presence in the township of several putative fathers but since the Petty Sessions records for affiliation proceedings stop in 1879, identifying fathers thereafter becomes very difficult. The high percentage may also have been indicative of the occupational and social changes caused by the building of the Settle-Carlisle line. Despite the problems with using this data, the pattern of township disparity seems consistent: Hunsonby with Winskill still stood out from the rest of Addingham in 1911, with over a quarter of the households containing either a child born illegitimate, or the mother or father of such a child. In her study of Colyton, Robin suggested a number of reasons for 'colonies' of bastardy-connected households living in close proximity, including members desiring to live near each other, the rest of society wishing to avoid them, poor accommodation failing to appeal to anybody else or a deliberate segregation on the part of the parish authorities.¹⁷ There is no evidence to indicate whether any of these situations applied in Addingham but the social flux caused by the incomers needed for the railway may well have been important in relation to the Hunsonby with Winskill situation, as may social and religious differences, some of long standing. Both the vicar and Samuel Lacy, the major landowner in the early years, lived in Little Salkeld, while the landowning Rowley family settled in Glassonby in the 1880s. Addingham church was just outside Glassonby, the Methodists were active in Gamblesby from the mid-eighteenth century and St John's Anglican church was built there in 1864, while Little Salkeld acquired an Anglican chapel in about 1875. Methodism had arrived in Hunsonby by 1820 but it had to wait until 1905 for the Anglican church institute to be erected. Such distinctions may have affected attitudes and freedoms in the different townships.

Table 2 below shows the percentage of the population made up of mothers of illegitimate children and of children themselves born illegitimately. Again, Hunsonby with Winskill and

¹⁷ Jean Robin, 'Illegitimacy in Colyton, 1851-1881', *Continuity and Change*, vol.2, no.2 (1987) 335.

	Gamblesby	Glassonby	H&W	LS	Parish
1841	2.3	4.8	5.8	1.7	3.7
1851	2.9	6.7	5.0	1.7	4.1
1861	3.1	5.4	4.8	4.4	4.4
1871	3.3	3.8	6.8	5.2	4.9
1881	3.0	3.6	4.9	2.4	3.7
1891	3.6	3.1	6.0	4.5	4.5
1901	3.9	3.6	9.4	7.4	6.3
1911	3.1	4.9	10.5	3.1	6.3

Table 2. Townships: mothers of illegitimate children and illegitimate children as percentage of the population, 1841-1911, excluding the navy huts, using data from the case studies examined in the Biographical Group.

Gamblesby exhibit quite contrasting patterns, and in 1911, using this different measure, illegitimacy stood at its highest. The significant fall in 1881 is caused by a decline in the number of mothers, rather than children. Had more mothers moved away in search of work, or on marriage, leaving their children behind with their families?

Reay estimated that if the net was drawn wider in 1851 to include those who were 'either illegitimate themselves or whose father, mother, sister or brother had been born out of wedlock or had (or would have) an illegitimate child' more than a third of the households in Hernhill would have an illegitimate family member.¹⁸ Checking all the individuals in the parish against this measure would be an enormous task and I have not attempted to spread my net so wide, but even adding in only those men and women who would go on to have an illegitimate child increases the parish household percentage in 1871 to almost 30 per cent and in most decades to over 20 per cent. The social experience of illegitimacy was not, Reay suggests, a 'phenomenon limited to a small section of society' but rather 'if there was any "sub-society" in nineteenth century Blean, it was a society of the sexually "pure."'¹⁹ Reay's conclusion may well have applied to Addingham as well, in that contact with illegitimacy was widespread, although it appears that Hunsonby with Winskill was more affected than the other townships.

The Mothers

Where were they from?

Young women were mobile, commonly leaving home in their early teenage years to work as domestic servants in other households, normally within Cumberland or Westmorland but occasionally farther afield. Most mothers taking their children for baptism within the parish were from the surrounding area. Some people certainly had very deep roots in the parish, although the family that seems indigenous to Addingham in this research may a generation or two before have been seen as belonging to another local parish. Name changes on marriage

¹⁸ Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930*, (Cambridge UP, 1996) 210.

¹⁹ Reay, *Microhistories*, 210, 212.

can obscure this local ancestry. The census is a blunt tool for the observation of who was permanently resident in the parish at the time of the birth, but if a family had not been noted at an earlier date and if the parents of the mother had not been enumerated at a date near the birth of the child, it seems likely that the mother was there only temporarily, probably hired as a servant. Even if the parents are enumerated, the mother herself may have been living elsewhere when the child was conceived. Probably no more than ten of the mothers who took their baby for baptism in the parish had no local links at all and for only a very few is the baptism the only acknowledgment of their presence in the parish. Some were from the parish of Melmerby, which had very close links to Gamblesby, or the Kirkoswald/Viol Moor/ Park Head areas which had close links to both Glassonby and Gamblesby. Of the 173 mothers in the Biographical Group, probably 90 had spent some part of their childhood in Addingham, and of those 111 mothers who took an illegitimate child for baptism in Addingham, at least 73 had spent some part of their childhood in Addingham and another fifteen came from villages within about five miles. These were predominantly local mothers baptising locally-born babies.

Age at birth of the child

Maternal ages have been established as accurately as possible, often from birth certificates but also when necessary, and with an unavoidable degree of inaccuracy, from quarterly civil registration listings, baptism details (where the mother was born in the parish) and census data. Those who had legitimate children before giving birth to an illegitimate baby have been excluded from this discussion, since they form a distinct group.

The average age at which these first-time mothers gave birth to their illegitimate child was 23, with almost 50 per cent occurring between the ages of 19 and 24.²⁰ 13.7 per cent were between fifteen and eighteen. Most went on to marry, which they did at an average age of 28.6.

Age at marriage (Figure 11)

398 women married at Addingham between 1838 and 1932, of whom 224 (56 per cent) married for the first time and also declared their age; a quarter were described only as of 'full' age, while three were labelled 'minor'. The average age of these 224 was 25.8. This group also includes eighteen women with an average age of 27 who had already had an illegitimate child. If these are excluded the average age of the remaining 206 is reduced slightly to 25.7. Their bridegrooms were somewhat older, at an average age of 29.²¹ It would seem clear that in Addingham, the unmarried mothers were about 2.7 years younger at the time of the birth than the average age at marriage of those who married before having a child, although we cannot be sure that none of the latter had not already had a child who had not survived to be baptised.²² Given that those who waited to be married then normally went on to baptise their first child several months later, the average age of an unmarried mother at the birth of her first child would seem

²⁰ Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical Mobility, Cousin Marriage and Illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 196 found that the 'most common age group for single women to bear illegitimate children was 20-24 years'. The average age in Colyton was 21.89; see Robin, *Colyton*, 311.

²¹ This is somewhat older than the average age at marriage of farm servants (23.75 and 25.3) found in Devon: Caroline Verney with Janet Few, 'Is blood thicker than water? Farm servants and the family in nineteenth-century north Devon', *Local Population Studies*, no.91 (2013) 19.

²² The average age at marriage in Colyton was rather younger at 24.14, giving a similar *difference* in age between unmarried mothers and brides as in Addingham: see Robin, *Colyton*, 311.

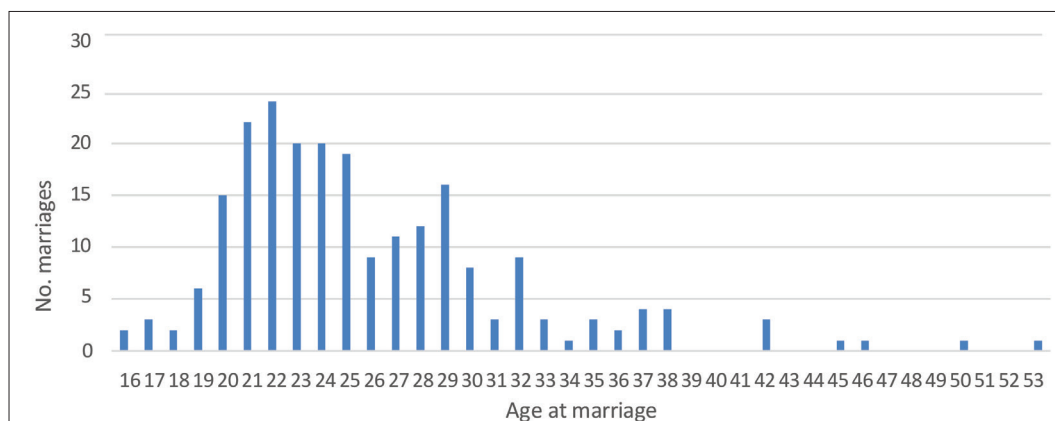


Fig. 11. Marriage: age at marriage, all first-time brides, Addingham Church, 1838-1932.

to be rather more than three years younger than those who married before having children.²³ This finding does not appear to be consistent with findings elsewhere that the ‘expected age for a woman to produce a child outside marriage was very much the same as the age at which she would produce her first child within marriage’, as required by the ‘failed courtship’ theory of illegitimacy.²⁴ Rather, it would seem to indicate that the unmarried mothers in Addingham were becoming sexually active at a younger age.

However, it has to be remembered that the average age at marriage is distorted by those brides who married very late; there were seven brides at Addingham between the ages of 40 and 53.

Removing these older brides and estimating the age of those given as a minor, reduced the average age at marriage to 25. Over 50 per cent of Addingham marriages involved a bride between 20 and 25, with 20 per cent aged 21 or 22. These figures are not so dissimilar to those for mothers of illegitimate children in the Biographical Group, 44 per cent of whom were aged between 20 and 25. Thus, despite the use of averages producing significantly younger unmarried mothers than brides, it seems that in reality many mothers were only slightly younger.

This conclusion is supported by the evidence obtained by examining the difference in age between those who were already pregnant at the time of their marriage and those who were not.²⁵ The pregnant brides (119) were an average age of 23, i.e. exactly the same as the unmarried mothers, while the non-pregnant brides (219) were aged 27.8. When these facts are taken into account, the figures seem to indicate that unmarried mothers did not necessarily become sexually active any younger than many whose first child was legitimate; some, perhaps, just became pregnant less quickly than others. If there was a bastardy-prone sub-society in Addingham, it amounted to about a third of the female population.

Pregnant brides

Probably a third of the 398 Addingham brides were already pregnant when they walked up the aisle, since many went on to present a child for baptism shortly thereafter. When the child was

²³ Denman, *Illegitimacy*, 46, found rather less than two years difference in the chapelry of Lorton, near Cockermouth, Cumberland.

²⁴ Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M. Smith (eds) *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Edward Arnold, 1980) 55.

²⁵ I have assumed that a child baptised within eight months of marriage indicates a pre-marital pregnancy.

born and presumably baptised elsewhere, I traced them via the next census after the marriage of their parents and then went back to the civil records of birth registration. I sometimes found a baptism in another local parish. 343 brides who married at Addingham were successfully traced to the baptism of a first child; some couples could not be traced at all and undoubtedly some women would have miscarried, while some children would have died before they could be recorded in the census. The mortality rate for first-born children tended to be higher than for subsequent children.²⁶ There, is therefore, a degree of uncertainty but I think any error is likely to lie on the side of under- rather than an over-estimation of bridal pregnancy. Rebecca Probert has questioned the notion that ‘in an agrarian society, couples wished to test each other’s fertility before embarking on marriage’, since ‘one would expect to find far higher levels of pre-marital pregnancy than in fact existed.’²⁷ It is impossible to say whether this desire to test fertility was a factor in Addingham; however, because the database for the parish is so extensive, I felt I was able to establish the situation for the vast majority of brides with a reasonable degree of certainty and accuracy. Probert’s view that pre-marital sex ‘exposed a woman to the very real possibility that she would be abandoned, pregnant and unmarried, by her lover’ and that the ‘lot of the single mother left to the mercy of the parish was an unenviable one’ has merit, but nevertheless many brides were already pregnant, some heavily so and, as we shall see, not many were left to the mercy of the parish.²⁸

If a child baptised less than eight months after the wedding is taken as evidence of pre-marital pregnancy, it has been established that 119 (30 per cent) were pregnant, while 219 (55 per cent) were not pregnant; the situation for 60 (15 per cent) remains unclear. If we exclude those whose situation remains uncertain, 35 per cent were pregnant, while 65 per cent were not. If we then include those who, while not pregnant at their wedding, had already had a child, the percentage of those women who had been or were pregnant, rises to 41 per cent. This figure rises again to 46 per cent if baptisms after 10 months are taken as evidence of pre-marital activity.²⁹ Seven women had already had a child and were pregnant again.

The Methodist marriage registers contain only twelve local marriages, as most couples continued to marry at the parish church, but they also point to a pregnancy figure of about 33 per cent.

Eight couples from Addingham chose to marry at Park Head, the Independent/Congregational chapel: one bride was pregnant and one already had an illegitimate child. As access to the civil records is at present very limited, except at significant cost, it has not been possible to determine the rate of pregnancy for those brides who married in a civil ceremony.

It is also difficult to establish the interval between marriage and birth in the absence of precise birth dates: the Anglican baptism registers at Addingham rarely give a birth date, except for the ten years from 1868-1878 and again from 1927, when the new register has a column for date of birth. The Methodists normally included this information, allowing the interval from marriage to baptism to be established. As far as can be seen, there is no particular pattern to the varying intervals between birth and baptism. The possibility that an extra-long interval might

²⁶ Alysa Levene, ‘The Mortality Penalty of Illegitimate Children: Foundlings and Poor Children in Eighteenth-Century England’, ch.3 in Levene et al., *Illegitimacy*, 47.

²⁷ Rebecca Probert, *Marriage Law for Genealogists: The Definitive Guide* (Takeaway, 2012) 41, 128.

²⁸ Probert, *Marriage Law*, 41.

²⁹ See Reay, *Microhistories*, 180-2 for comparisons: my figures are only slightly lower than his and seem in line with many other historians.

be connected with concealing a pre-marital pregnancy was considered, but in no case was the child the first one in the family.³⁰

A baptism after only eight months is not proof of pre-marital sex; a few children conceived immediately after the marriage would have been born prematurely and quickly baptised, but neither is the lack of such a baptism proof of non-pregnancy or lack of pre-marital sex, since some pregnancies will have failed to produce a live child; indeed Hair speculated that in the case of first children baptised more than two years after marriage 'it is likely that a good number...were in fact second pregnancies.'³¹ Some couples will have managed to avoid a pregnancy; perhaps they were less fertile (some indeed never went on to have children), more knowledgeable about contraception or chance played its part – or perhaps they really did follow a different moral code and became sexually active only after marriage.

Pre-marital sex was not confined to a particular area; on the national scale, it was estimated that almost 30 per cent of all first children born in 1938 and 1939 had been conceived out of wedlock.³² While acknowledging the difficulties with interpreting the evidence, it seems evident that many, indeed probably the majority of Addingham couples, had already engaged in pre-marital sex; it was, in fact, quite normal and the number of baptisms so soon after a marriage would have made it a commonly-known fact in the local community, accepted, even condoned, rather than a cause for shame. Some married very late on in the pregnancy: Frances Mary Blenkinsopp and John Graham married on 19 June, 1886, their daughter was born on 14 July, baptised on 15 July and buried aged 14 days on 30 July, before her birth could be registered on 31 July. Frances Mary's sister, Elizabeth, did not make it to the altar in time, since her son Alfred – who was registered twice, as both Alfred Nevison Blenkinship and Alfred Nevison Nevison³³ – was born on 30 June 1880, several weeks before she married John Thomas Nevison on 7 Aug 1880, followed by the baptism of their son the following day. The couple may have calculated that at least the last-minute marriage allowed the baptism register to give Alfred the surname of his father, a ploy rather defeated by the marginal note by the vicar in the baptism register on 8 August 1880 reading, 'see MR [Marriage Register] 169', which gives away the date of the marriage, and thus reveals the baby's illegitimate status.

As Reay has observed, 'Pre-marital sex was not a form of deviant behaviour.'³⁴ However, it was not apparently behaviour that was common in Addingham amongst the very young: only four pregnant brides were aged 18 or under (1.8 per cent), whereas Reay found that just under a third of his Kentish pregnant brides were aged 16, 17 or 18.³⁵ The figures from the Biographical Group (dealing only with the as yet unmarried) indicate a rather higher figure (13.7 per cent), perhaps because these younger women were the most likely to be deserted. There were very few brides or unmarried mothers under 21, the age of majority, but 20 per

³⁰ Although there is one example in the Biographical Group of a baptism apparently delayed in another local parish until the couple had married.

³¹ P. E. H. Hair, 'Bridal Pregnancy in Rural England in Earlier Centuries', *Population Studies*, vol.20, no.2 (Nov. 1966) 235, note 11.

³² Pat Thane, *Happy families? History and family policy* (British Academy, 2011) 52: the Registrar-General, in his first such investigation and with his ready access to accurate civil registration data, based his figures on those born within eight-and-a-half months of marriage, plus the number of illegitimate births.

³³ 3Q 1880. The General Register Office organises its records by quarters – January-March, April-June, July-September and October-December. I have referred to these as 1Q, 2Q, 3Q and 4Q.

³⁴ Reay, *Microhistories*, 181.

³⁵ Reay, *Microhistories*, 182.

cent of brides were aged 21 or 22; did many women knowingly and intentionally begin sexual relations when they knew they were free to marry without parental consent?

How many mothers went on to marry?

Two mothers, Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater and Jane Ann HopeSlee, were deserted wives at the time of their child's birth, and whether the law would have considered their children legitimate depended on when husband and wife had finally separated. All the evidence indicates that the husband in both cases was long absent. Neither woman went on to marry again. One other woman was described as a widow but no father was named when her twins were baptised.

I was able to trace a valid marriage for 64 (58 per cent) of the 110 women who took their illegitimate child for baptism in the parish, while marriages have been found for 102 (59 per cent) of the larger group of 173 mothers in the Biographical Group. Two of this group were widows who then went on to marry again after an illegitimate birth, five died unmarried when their child was still an infant, and no marriage has been found for 28 who had a normal life span and were traced until death. Some marriages were very likely to the father of the child but many were not. Almost 50 per cent of these marriages were in the five years after the birth and most women went on to have a second, legitimate, family. It would seem that an illegitimate child, or even more than one, was no substantial bar to a subsequent marriage.

Seasonality of Marriage (Figure 12)

The timing of marriages may be seen as one indicator of social pressure for pregnant women to marry. Addingham brides favoured November and June, presumably reflecting the local hiring fairs; the farm servants had been paid for the previous six months and they had a break between employers in which to get married. July to October, the months of harvest, were not favoured. Reay found that pregnant brides in Kent married at much the same time as those who were not pregnant, with October being the favoured month, and concluded that this

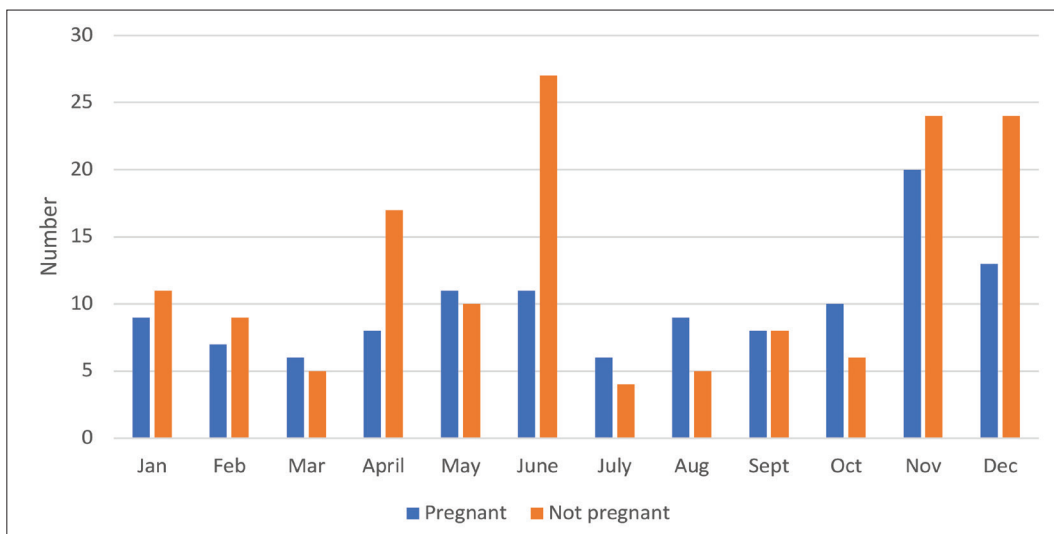


Fig. 12. Marriage: seasonality of marriage, all brides, 1838-1932.

indicated a lack of societal pressure to marry to avoid a scandal.³⁶ In Addingham, however, the pregnant brides showed rather less partiality for a particular month; although November was still a favourite, they married throughout the year, which may indicate some social pressure to marry before the child was born or, more likely, the fact that conceptions occurred throughout the year and people just expected to marry before the birth. If the bride was not pregnant they could wait for a convenient time, but this may have been a general cultural norm operating rather than a social pressure.

*'Repeaters' or mothers who had more than one illegitimate child. (Table 3)*³⁷

22 per cent of mothers who took their child for a local baptism bore more than one illegitimate child. The figure for the wider Biographical Group of 173 mothers was 23 per cent, the latter having 105 children (44 per cent of the total) between them.³⁸ One mother had six illegitimate children as well as at least three legitimate ones. Even multiple children did not seem to prevent 20 women from subsequently marrying.

The circumstances in which these children were conceived varied greatly, as will be seen in the individual stories – some were probably innocent or inadequate woman taken advantage of by men, some were living in settled, cohabiting relationships, while some men may have been persuaded to marry only after the birth of a second child. Some women seemed to raise their children, and indeed also the next generation, without having a man resident in the family, as far as can be seen from the census. The question of prostitution and incest has to be considered in some cases.

No. mothers	% of total (173) mothers	Children per mother	Total children	% of total (236) children
25	14	2	50	21
6	3	3	18	8
4	2	4	16	7
3	2	5	15	6
1	1	6	6	3
Total 39	23		105	44

Table 3. Mothers in the Biographical Group who bore more than one illegitimate child.

The 'repeaters' examined in the Biographical Group are spread throughout the period, without any obvious pattern; many were not born in Addingham and they did not bear all their children within the parish, indeed some (those identified through the affiliation proceedings) did not baptise any child within the parish, although the putative father was living locally. They

³⁶ Reay, *Microhistories*, 182; his graph in Reay, 'Sexuality', 222, differs somewhat from that in 'Microhistories', since it includes a different dataset, but his conclusion remains the same.

³⁷ See Karla Oosterveen, Richard M. Smith and Susan Stewart, 'Family reconstitution and the study of bastardy: evidence from certain English parishes', ch. 3 in Laslett et al., *Bastardy*, 86-91, for a discussion of repeaters.

³⁸ In Colyton, the figure was 30 per cent: see Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford UP, 199) 70; Reay, *Microhistories*, 188, found that 20 per cent of his sample had more than one illegitimate child.

are therefore indicative of a general culture surrounding the parish, rather than of Addingham specifically. However, the spread chronologically would seem not to support either Day, who found that the 'repeaters' declined over the century in her area of Wiltshire, as opportunities for paid employment decreased, or Laslett and Oosterveen, who noted that 'The inference we provisionally draw is that an increase in the proportion of illegitimate births is due more to those prone to such a form of child-bearing having a greater number of confinements than it is to the population at large becoming more liable to illegitimacy.'³⁹ There was an increase in the proportion of illegitimate births over time, but this was due to the married population at large becoming less fertile. A significant number of 'repeaters' would seem inconsistent with the courtship theory of illegitimacy, but not with the theory of a bastardy prone sub-society: some families recur repeatedly over the period and some women in the Biographical Group seem to be part of such a society in another parish.⁴⁰

Migration after birth

Of the 110 mothers who took a baby for local baptism, 39 (35 per cent) spent the rest of their lives in the nearby parishes, while 76 (69 per cent) stayed within the boundaries of modern-day Cumbria. Those who had spent their childhood in Addingham were more likely to carry on living there (32 per cent) than those who came from outside the parish (14 per cent) and were much less likely (14 per cent as opposed to 28 per cent) to migrate beyond the Cumbrian boundaries.

The movements of 30 of the mothers in the Biographical Group cannot be traced. Of the remaining 143, two went to London, one returned to her home county of Kent, four emigrated, three as young women to the US and one in old age to Australia. Most stayed in the English northern counties, or Dumfries, the adjoining Scottish county, with the overwhelming majority, 76 per cent not going beyond the boundaries of modern Cumbria. 40 per cent stayed, either in Addingham itself or within about six miles. It would seem, from examination of both the baptismal group and the Biographical Group, that most behaved much like their peers; this does not look like ostracism.

Mortality of mothers

Of those in the Biographical Group, only nineteen, nearly all of them the earliest-born mothers in the study, and therefore the hardest to locate in the census, could not be traced at all, leaving 154 women, of whom 78 per cent were traced to marriage, death or at least the age of 50.⁴¹ 65 per cent lived until at least the age of 50, while 34 per cent lived until at least 70. Fourteen per cent lived into their eighties.

83 per cent of the women who took a child for local baptism were traced to their death, marriage or at least the age of 50. Five per cent of the mothers who had their child baptised in the parish can be proved to have died under the age of 40, while only two per cent can definitely be found to have died aged 30 or under. Since those who were not traced did not necessarily

³⁹ Day, *Wiltshire*, 197; Peter Laslett, and Karla Osterveen, 'Long-Term Trends in Bastardy in England: A Study of the Illegitimacy Figures in the Parish Registers and in the Reports of the Registrar General, 1561-1960', *Population Studies*, vol.27, no.2 (July 1973), 282.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Mary Ann KennedyJohnstoneWatt, Mary DavidsonWilson, and Mary Rachel DavidsonHugill at www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk.

⁴¹ Cathy Day managed to trace 84 per cent of her sample in Wiltshire: Day, *Wiltshire*, 202.

die, the true numbers of those who lived a long life may well be even higher. It is possible that some of the local burials were of young, unmarried women who died in childbirth, with no child surviving to be baptised locally as the evidence that they were pregnant. However, mortality amongst those women who survived to take a child for baptism does not appear notably high.

The Children

Mortality of children (Tables 4 and 5)

Of 236 children in the Biographical Group, some of whom were born outside the parish, 217 (91 per cent) were successfully traced to either death at below the age of ten or beyond that age to establish mortality. Some of those born at the end of the period could not be traced simply for lack of census evidence but it is likely at this date that most survived.

We cannot be sure of the complete accuracy of the baptism and burial registers data in relation to total births and deaths – a child could have been smothered at birth and it was ‘not unheard of for premature and unbaptised infants to be handed to one of the local undertakers, a builder, for burial.’⁴² Even when the child lived, some mothers in the situation described by Thomas Hardy may have made shift as best they could without benefit of clergy or entry in the register. Tess, driven by her father’s refusal to allow entry to the parson, baptises her dying baby herself, ‘reasoning that if Providence would not ratify such an act of approximation she,

Age	No.	% of total
Uncertain	22	9
Died under 1	17	7
Died between ages 1 - 2	4	2
Died aged over 2, under 10	10	4
Traced alive over age of 10	183	78
Total illegitimate children	236	100

Table 4. Mortality of illegitimate children in the Biographical Group, 1805-1931, *wherever baptised*.

Age	No.	% of total
Uncertain	12	9
Died under 1	10	8
Died between ages 1 - 2	2	2
Died aged over 2, under 10	8	6
Traced alive over age of 10	97	75
Total children local baptism	129	100

Table 5. Mortality of illegitimate children in the Biographical Group, 1805-1931, *baptised within Addingham*.

⁴² Reay, *Microhistories*, 71, note 9.

for one, did not value the kind of heaven lost by the irregularity – either for herself or for the child.’ The kindly parson assures her that the baptism is as valid as any performed by himself but balks at actually giving the child a Christian burial and she buries him herself ‘in that shabby corner of God’s allotment where He lets the nettles grow, and where all unbaptised infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally damned are laid.’⁴³

Nevertheless, the speculation of the 1871 Select Committee on Infant Life Protection that as few as 10 per cent of illegitimates survived to adulthood seems extraordinary in light of this investigation.⁴⁴ The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for the Penrith urban area, in noting a high rate of infant mortality in 1881, was ‘disposed to attribute it in a great measure to the large numbers of illegitimate births and the enormous death rate which occurs among these unfortunate children from neglect. I find that 12.6 per cent of the total births are illegitimate and that 30.7 per cent of illegitimate children die before they are one year old.’ The *Penrith Observer* attributed this to a ‘system of parental recklessness, deliberate and intentional’, ‘[a] species of hardened cruelty, which represents a terrible want of ordinary human instinct.’⁴⁵ However, an earlier Penrith MOH report estimated that the rural areas produced death rates less than half those of Penrith itself.⁴⁶ 72 per cent of those in the Biographical Group, some of whom were born or brought up in Penrith itself, attained the age of fifteen, while only six per cent could not be traced at all. Seventeen per cent died under ten years old over the first 50 years of this study but only eleven per cent over the second half-century. And, as the tables above show, over the whole period of the study only seven per cent died under the age of one year. In 1907 the Registrar-General reported that the equivalent national death rate in rural areas was seventeen per cent.⁴⁷ Even if we assume that the fifteen who could not be traced after their birth/baptism had in fact all died as infants, the maximum death rate is still ‘only’ thirteen per cent. It has been noted that ‘areas with high rates of illegitimate fertility around 1860, such as Cumberland and parts of mid-Wales, had IMRs [Infant Mortality Rates] which were lower than we might expect given their overall mortality’, perhaps because on the family-run farms of the north, ‘childcare could conveniently be combined with farm work’ and the child’s own family were less likely to resort to dangerous potions to keep a child quiet than were child-minders.⁴⁸ Blaikie suggests that the relatively low infant mortality rates in Scotland may have been because ‘considerable numbers of illegitimate children must have been born and survived in conditions approximating those of their legitimate counterparts.’⁴⁹ This was probably true of Addingham, where, as we shall see, few babies were brought up outside their immediate family.

It is also worth noting that, over the whole period, 21 children under a month old were buried at Addingham who had not, as might be expected at such a young age, been baptised in the parish. Were these illegitimate children, born and baptised elsewhere and buried at

⁴³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (Macmillan, 1974) 129–132.

⁴⁴ Report of the Select Committee on the Protection of Infant Life, PP, 1871, vol. VII, v., quoted in Ann R. Higginbotham, ‘“Sin of the Age”; infanticide and illegitimacy in Victorian London’, *Victorian Studies*, no.32 (Spring 1989) 321.

⁴⁵ *Observer*, 7 Mar. 1882, 4.

⁴⁶ *Observer*, 23 Mar. 1875, 3.

⁴⁷ Seventieth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1907) BPP 1909 X [Cd.4464] 83, Table 38.

⁴⁸ Andrew Hinde and Victoria Fairhurst, ‘Why was Infant Mortality So High in Eastern England in the mid Nineteenth Century?’, *Local Population Studies*, no.94 (Spring 2015) 63–65.

⁴⁹ Andrew Blaikie, ‘Infant survival chances, unmarried motherhood and domestic arrangements in rural Scotland’, 1845–1945, *Local Population Studies*, no.60 (Spring 1998) 36.

Addingham after the mother returned to her family to live, or perhaps unbaptised? Although ecclesiastical law forbade the burial of the unbaptised in consecrated ground, not all clerics were as strict as Thomas Hardy's quoted earlier and in practice this prohibition was not always adhered to. This raises again the issue of the accuracy of the baptism registers, of whether all babies were in fact baptised and whether the illegitimate were less likely to be baptised. However, since eight of these very young babies have been readily established as legitimate, and only two as definitely illegitimate, any discrepancy is minor.⁵⁰

Conclusion

How are we to interpret this mass of statistics? What are they telling us? Primarily, that the rate of illegitimacy in Addingham, while higher than the national average, was not nearly as high as in the north-eastern part of Cumberland, nor as high as in Penrith itself and that the number of illegitimate babies born each year was remarkably stable, even as the parish birth rate fell. However, a large proportion of brides were pregnant when they married and despite the illegitimacy rate not being as high as might have been assumed from historical sources and more recent research, few households or families were unacquainted with illegitimacy in some way or other.

Most unmarried mothers had only one illegitimate child, at roughly the same age as their married neighbours and the majority went on to marry, usually within a few years, and attained a normal lifespan for the time. They stayed living quite locally, as again did most of their contemporaries. The infant mortality rate was not unusually high and most of the children, like their mothers, probably lived a normal lifespan, many within a domestic set-up akin to an ordinary family.

Hunsonby with Winskill, and to a lesser extent Glassonby, stand out as being different on several measures to the other townships, which may indicate a local culture that differed in some way from the rest of the parish.

The historian C.V. Wedgwood wrote that

The individual – stupendous and beautiful paradox – is at once infinitesimal dust and the cause of all things...I prefer this overestimate to the opposite method which treats developments as though they were the massive anonymous waves of an inhuman sea or pulverises the fallible surviving records of human life into a grey dust of statistics.⁵¹

It is time to move on to explore the experience of the real people whose lives generated this 'grey dust', to investigate what can be discovered about the circumstances which led to local women finding themselves pregnant and alone, and how they then coped with the situation.

⁵⁰ Pre-1837, the baptism register names only the father and after 1916 the civil registration birth index gives the mother's maiden name, which aided identification.

⁵¹ Kelly Boyd, *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing* (Fitzborn Dearborn, 1999) vol 2, 1228, accessed through google books, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0121vD9STIMC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>, 26 July 2021.

Introduction

Having placed the Addingham story within the national and regional framework, Part Two now locates the individual case studies within the statistical picture created in Part One, moving the analysis beyond the numerical and impersonal to the individual and particular, examining in turn the mothers, the children and the fathers. This is an examination of real people, living real lives. Each group is discussed separately, seeking to show the impact and relevance of specific themes – cohabitation, for example, or desertion – for the individuals. Some of the more eventful, or better documented, lives are inevitably encountered more than once within this overall structure.

The Core Group of mothers, children and fathers, established mainly from the parish records, was followed up in all manner of other records from many sources. The much larger Biographical Group that emerged, and was then investigated, demonstrated how illegitimacy affected the whole parish. The birth or baptism of a child locally happened, for some, almost by chance. Some mothers gave birth while hired in the parish for only a short time or they sought to affiliate their child upon a man whose residence there may have been equally transient. The link to Addingham may have been very tenuous but nevertheless, for a short time, their story was part of the whole. A large minority of mothers remain elusive: an early birth date may inhibit successful searching on the census, as may marriage and a change of name, or they may indeed have died. Those with strong local connections proved very much easier to trace.

The Mothers: Before Conception

The Background

This section considers the culture and conditions that surrounded the unmarried mothers of Addingham as they grew up, and the circumstances that may have led to them being pregnant and abandoned. Using local examples from the Biographies, it considers:

- Cultural attitudes to courtship and marriage
- Childhood: housing, poverty and employment
- Sex education and contraception
- Seduction, rape, and prostitution
- Abandonment and desertion
- Cohabitation, bigamy, adultery, divorce and incest

Cultural attitudes to courtship and marriage

‘Tis nater, after all, and what do please God!’¹

Mrs Durbeyfield’s response, after her initial surprise that her daughter Tess was pregnant but not about to be married to her seducer, was phlegmatic. Even after she had both born and buried the child, Tess still found ‘the country custom of unreserved comradeship out of doors during betrothal was the only custom she knew, and to her it had no strangeness.’ For her fiancé, Angel Clare, however, the son of a clergyman and perhaps used to a different set of social norms, the behaviour of Tess, the daughter of an agricultural labourer, was ‘oddly anticipative.’²

Many Victorian authorities and commentators concurred with Hardy’s depiction of Tess’s attitudes and behaviour. There is evidence for the belief throughout much of the period under review that pre-marital sex was quite usual in many parts of the country, a normal part of the courtship process for the working classes. The commissioners into the Rebecca Riots in South Wales between 1839 and 1843 said (of the situation under the Old Poor Law) that ‘subsequent marriage – and that not a forced one – ...almost invariably wiped out the light reproach which public opinion attached to a previous breach of chastity.’³ An article in 1856 agreed, attributing a degree of rational calculation to young women:

The fact unfortunately is, in too many instances, that young people “keep company” on the understanding that marriage is to be postponed till it becomes necessary. The girl generally selects this view of life as a safe investment, and makes up her mind to all chances.⁴

A clergyman giving evidence to the enquiry into the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, 1867-8, asserted that ‘Two-thirds or three-fourths of the women when married are in the family way but there is no prostitution, and no infidelity ever heard of after marriage, they simply don’t care much about the marriage ceremony.’⁵ A pregnancy could be seen as a good sign of fertility in a potential wife; one woman was quoted in the press in 1850 as saying that ‘the first child never counts for nothing: my husband acted on the old saying about here, “No child, no wife”, and I had one afore I was married.’⁶ Talking of the hamlet in Oxfordshire where she was brought up, Flora Thompson noted that, when the attendance register was called out at school in the 1880s, the eldest children of several families answered to a surname other than that borne by their brothers and sisters and by which they themselves were commonly known. ‘These would be the children of couples who had married after the birth of their first child, a common enough happening at that time and little thought of.’⁷ Charles Booth found in London that:

with the lowest classes, pre-marital relations are very common, perhaps even usual. Amongst the girls themselves nothing is thought of it if no consequences follow, and very little even if they do, should marriage follow, and more pity than reprobation, if it does not.

¹ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (Macmillan, 1974) 117.

² Hardy, *Tess*, 235.

³ Quoted in U. R. Q. Henriques, ‘Bastardy and the New Poor Law’, *Past and Present*, no.37 (July 1967) 118.

⁴ Aeron Hunt, ‘Calculations and Concealments: Infanticide in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol.34, no.1 (2006) 73, quoting an article in the *Saturday Review*, 9 Aug. 1856.

⁵ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge UP) 354.

⁶ Snell, *Annals*, 354; see also John R. Gillis, *For Better For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford UP, 1985) 127.

⁷ Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Penguin, 1973) 138.

Closer to home, Edward Short, writing of his childhood in Warcop, a Westmorland village not so far from Addingham, concurred with this view:

It was remarkable, in a village where many attitudes were still almost medieval, that no stigma attached to illegitimacy. Three of my best friends were without fathers...there were too many to ostracize.⁸

This interpretation has been supported by many historians. In his study of rural Kent, for example, Reay found that the majority of first children born between 1780 and 1851 were conceived before marriage, which 'makes nonsense of claims that sex before marriage was unusual at this time' while Robin, studying the following thirty years, until 1881, found 'an atmosphere of social tolerance' in rural Devon that resulted in more than half of the brides being pregnant.⁹ Snell, in his broad survey of the English poor over a long period, went further when he concluded that 'in many regions bastardy itself was not considered much of a stigma among the working classes.'¹⁰

This is evidence from 'Wessex', Oxfordshire, Kent, Devon, London and Westmorland: was the same true of Cumberland as of these other counties? It very probably was. J. D. Marshall, historian of the Lake Counties, while noting that Cumbria had more unmarried females than other counties, which could in itself have contributed to illegitimacy rates that were higher than the national average, suggested that many 'exhibited quite remarkable levels of tolerance and a capacity to absorb and contain the consequences of apparent moral frailty.'¹¹ He also refers to 'the sheer weight of custom, for nominally irregular sexual activity had long been encouraged by the night-courting in bedrooms which had been pursued by previous generations, and which was, to that extent, recognised by parents and grandparents.'¹² A newspaper report of a court case in 1862, when a father from Newton, near Penrith, sued for the loss of his daughter's services, under a form of law 'which enabled a father to recover for loss of service of his child, or a master to recover for loss of service of his servant', quoted the father as saying 'In the ordinary way of sweethearting in this county they sit up at nights. I did not counsel my daughter. There may be some light-headed characters in the country who sit up with each other at nights without any intention of marriage, but I do not know them.' The counsel for the defence then described 'the habits of the country people of this neighbourhood, [saying] that there was no exception in this case. She had just adopted the common farming and labouring people's code of morality. She sat up at nights with this man, and with even as much secrecy as a servant girl would have done.' Contradicting the father's emphasis on the importance placed upon the presumption that they would marry, he claimed that they, like many others, 'sat up with each other, and went on visiting each other without the slightest intention of marrying...it was an ordinary case of "misfortune"'.¹³

⁸ Pat Thane, 'Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England', *Women's History Review*, vol. 20, no.1 (Feb. 2011) 13; Edward Short, *I Knew My Place* (Macdonald, 1983) 134.

⁹ Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 210; Jean Robin, 'Illegitimacy in Colyton, 1851-1881', *Continuity and Change*, vol.2, no.2 (1987) 307.

¹⁰ Snell, *Annals*, 355. Richard Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester UP, 1996) 79-80, argues for a courtship regime which was distinctly different in the north-west from the 1600s but undermines his case somewhat by excluding the counties of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire from his eastern area because their figures were similar to the north-west and 'would artificially raise the level if included.'

¹¹ J. D. Marshall, 'Out of wedlock: perceptions of a Cumbrian social problem in the Victorian context', *Northern History*, vol.31, no.1 (1995) 197.

¹² Marshall, 'Out of wedlock', 201.

¹³ *CJ*, 11 Apr. 1862, 5.

The Penrith Medical Officer of Health commented in 1881 on 'the complete indifference with which illegitimacy is regarded by the public generally in this district [which] has, I consider, much to do with its frequency.'¹⁴ The oral testimony of women's lives in Lancaster, Preston and Barrow at the turn of the twentieth century, which found 'the most relaxed attitude...in the Cumbrian family of the mother of a Barrow respondent', indicates that tolerance may still have been the usual approach.¹⁵ Even the Anglican church seems to have accepted the prevailing morality.¹⁶ The wording of entries in the baptism registers may be indicative of this attitude. The vicar of Penrith habitually used the term 'B.B'. (base-born) in the registers but this is not a term I have encountered in other local registers during the period under review. Called upon as he was to baptise the workhouse babies, he may have felt more anxiety or outrage than some other incumbents. The local vicars did note that cases of 'unchastity' were too common: in 1897 Ainstable had a 'striking excess of immorality amongst young men and women as compared with the South: and a tendency to condone this on the part of the neighbours', while the vicar of Plumpton Wall noted that 'in most families of the north children are born before or very soon after matrimony.' The vicar of Langwathby seemed particularly exercised about this, with his suggestion that he should forward the names of the offending women and putative fathers to the bishop, so that he could add 'episcopal censure' to his own reproofs.¹⁷

Comments that 'parents and peer groups, among others, *most likely* [my italics] took care that individuals did not deviate too much from the social norms which governed the degree of intimacy that was allowed' (in early nineteenth century England) and that 'girls were under the – *presumably watchful* [my italics] – eye of relations, rather than the somewhat less careful scrutiny of an employer' inevitably raise the question of what constituted the local social norms and whether the same norms applied to all sections of society.¹⁸ It seems that in Cumberland, as in other parts of the country, illegitimacy was not invariably the result of young people rebelling against the parental norms. Rather, they were conforming to the local norms for their social group. An examination of the archives of the Foundling hospital in London, found that 'manifestations of parental authority were rare and rather perfunctory; as for employers, they showed an indulgence, or perhaps indifference, for which they were roundly criticised in some quarters.'¹⁹ Social controls were not entirely absent but were bent to a different end by both the young people and their parents.

Denman's objective in his examination of north-east Cumberland was to 'examine how illegitimacy was incorporated into a society when it was no longer the exception... but where it

¹⁴ TNA, MH/12/1624, Annual Report on the Health and Sanitary Conditions of the Penrith Urban Sanitary District for the year 1881, quoted in Lorna Mullet, *Poor Law Provision in Late Nineteenth Century Cumberland*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2004) 81-2.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1941* (Blackwell, 1984) 75-6.

¹⁶ J. D. Marshall and John K. Walton, *The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century* (Manchester UP, 1981) 148-9.

¹⁷ CAS(C) DRC, Acc HC 3966, Ainstable, Plumpton Wall: 1897; Langwathby: 1864, 1867, 1872.

¹⁸ Jona Schellekens, 'Courtship, the Clandestine Marriage Act, and Illegitimate Fertility in England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol.25, no.3 (Winter 1995) 436; Andrew Blaikie, Eilidh Garrett and Ros Davies, 'Migration, Living Strategies and Illegitimate Childbearing: A Comparison of Two Scottish Settings, 1871-1881', ch.9 in Levene, Alys, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 147.

¹⁹ Francoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality and Desire Among Working-Class Men and Women in Nineteenth-Century London*, trans by John Howe (Penguin, 1991) 93.

was normalised and accommodated.²⁰ The prevailing moral code attempted not so much to prevent sexual activity, as to regulate and cope with it, expecting marriage to follow a pregnancy, but then to pick up the pieces if it did not. Mrs Durbeyfield, having sent out her innocent daughter to entrap Alec and save the family fortunes, expostulates: 'You ought to have been more careful if you didn't mean to get him to make you his wife!'²¹

The social attitudes to courtship, which included a tolerance of pre-marital sex, provided the fundamental conditions for a high level of pre-marital conceptions, a proportion of which then inevitably resulted in an illegitimate child. If marriage became more difficult, perhaps for economic reasons, or unattractive, perhaps because support for mother and child could be obtained elsewhere (as was claimed to be the situation under the Old Poor Law) or even, as more recently, perceived as irrelevant, we would expect to see an increase in the number of children born to single women.²² Denman's evidence from the pre-1834 period led him to believe that the majority of the unmarried mothers (and fathers) were not of the poorest class, quoting a response from Heskett [sic], not so very far from Addingham, that 'of late very respectable farmer's daughters have been in that situation.'²³ It is hard to tell whether there was any change in attitudes over the course of the study period. Hera Cook observed a 'broad shift toward a more prudish and respectable female working-class culture in nineteenth-century England', which we might look to see reflected in the local statistics. However, the illegitimacy ratio dipped significantly only in the 1860s and the 1900s, and by 1929 it was the same as it had been in 1820.²⁴ The apparent return to earlier ratios of illegitimacy after the First World War drop may be a temporary deviation that only research after 1930 could verify or it could be an indication of the restoration of earlier prevailing cultural attitudes.

There is precious little data about how the Addingham courtships were conducted, although, as we have seen in Part One, the statistics point to much pre-marital sexual activity. The only personal evidence comes from the affiliation hearings; I have found 55 affiliation cases relating to the women in the biographies, of which the majority contain no details other than the form lodged by the mother, detailing her name and residence, the name and residence of the alleged father, and details of the sex and date of birth of the child.²⁵ Alongside some of these 'Bastardy Information' allegations in the bound volumes are other details, occasionally describing the relationship of mother and father in some detail, while sometimes particulars are also available from the records of the Petty Sessions. Most do not appear in the minutes of the hearings, however, leading to the assumption that the case was withdrawn or settled by the two parties without a legal hearing. In all except one of the cases that both came to court and have a clear resolution, the man was judged to be the father.

The other seventeen cases for which we have courtship evidence have much in common. Two may be instances of master/servant abuse but fifteen seem to relate to consensual relationships

²⁰ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 3.

²¹ Hardy, *Tess*, 117.

²² Marshall, 'Out of wedlock', 204; Levene et al., *Illegitimacy*, 8-9.

²³ Denman, *Illegitimacy*, 69.

²⁴ Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (Oxford UP, 2004) 67.

²⁵ See the bibliography and individual biographies for details of the affiliation records consulted on which the accounts are based.

between single people of roughly equal social status and similar age. Not all were living away from home: Ann Davidson was living with her father but visiting the mother of William Farrar when she and William had their first sexual encounter at his home, while Elizabeth Brown had been living with her uncle for some eighteen months when Robert Hind came a-courting. Most however, were working as live-in servants, the mother and putative father usually in different houses but occasionally both working for the same employer. Most of the courting took place in the kitchen, when other members of the household were present and able to observe the woman sitting on the knee of the man accused, or note his arm around her waist, and it continued after the rest of the household had gone to bed, often knowingly left alone by fellow servants, employers or family.²⁶ It was apparently not uncommon to stay up until four or five a.m., at which time their return to their bedroom was often observed by the same servants or family. Only Ann Bell, working in the same house as John Errington, reported having sex in her own bedroom. John's return to his own bed at between four and five a.m. was remembered by Ann's brother, also a servant in the same house and sharing a room with John. Barbara Sewell apparently had her own accommodation but still did her courting in the kitchen – possibly her three living illegitimate children were a hindrance. Hannah Farrar claimed to have had sex with Robert Bell at both her father's house and a Penrith pub, the latter attested to by her sister, who saw 'them together at the Star. I left them sitting together in a Room.' Isaac Vipond and Hannah Livick managed to have sex twice a week over the course of several months in the kitchen of her employer.

Only three women (Barbara Sewell, Alice Nicholson and Elizabeth Brown) claimed that there had been talk of marriage, and indeed Alice did subsequently marry her lover. Elizabeth Brown was very keen to present a picture of injured innocence, claiming that she and Robert Hind had courted for two years, talked about dates for their marriage and had sex only once before she fell pregnant. The offer of marriage was reiterated after she told him she was pregnant but was later repudiated. Her uncle considered 'he was courting her' and left them up together when he went to bed. She subsequently had two more illegitimate children and claimed that Hind was also father to her third child. Barbara Sewell was forced to admit under cross examination that she had had four children by her previous employer. Frost found that perhaps 45 per cent of affiliation cases indicated no serious intent to marry on either side, while Denman discussing the occupations of fathers of illegitimate children around the turn of the nineteenth century, occupations that should have allowed them to offer marriage, found that 'it cannot reasonably be proposed that marriage was the joint objective of the relationship, and the courtship hypothesis is therefore not a practical explanation.'²⁷ The women, of course, may have thought it *was* the joint objective when they consented to sex.

What is very evident is that the people around them often had sharp eyes, and very retentive memories where behaviour and dates considered critical to the disputed conception were concerned – or at least were prepared to swear they had such faculties in a court of law. Robert Hind, for example, brought along four witnesses to recount in detail occasions on which Elizabeth had been spotted keeping company with other men. John Hodgson had seen her with a man he did not recognize from the other side of the Eden (although he was sure it was not

²⁶ See, for example, CAS(C) QPL 14, 27 Nov. 1860, 29 Apr. 1862, 1 Jul. 1862.

²⁷ Ginger S. Frost, 'Claiming Justice: Paternity Affiliation in South Wales, 1870-1900', *Rural History*, vol.24, no.2 (2013) 182; Denman, *Illegitimacy*, 44.

Hind) but he could describe her clothing, and asserted that they lay down in the grass, that she adjusted her dress as she stood up and that 'his trousers were down.' Jane Cleminson had been seen by Isabella Renwick sitting with George Blenkinship late at night in the kitchen, and spotted sitting on his knee by William Cleminson, while Mary Westgarth had seen George throwing stones at a window and thought she had seen them together at the end of the barn, 'he stooped down.' On the other hand, Jane had also been seen by Isaac Lowthian with the arm of David Reeves around her, sitting by the fire late at night with Thomas Gibson, going into the house with Henry Nixon, and walking past the pub, and inside the boiler house of her employer, with Joseph Nicholson.

This all provides a fascinating insight into the ways of the local community; stones were thrown at windows, lovers were secretly let in late in the evening and then out again in the early hours – over the years, there must have been quite a number of men wandering around villages after dark, and servants going late to their beds and then having to get up to work again at an early hour. The affiliation evidence does not, however, permit generalisations about courtship behaviour in Addingham. Indeed, although all the cases relate to Addingham residents in some way, not all the specific events described in court took place within the parish. The detailed affiliation material is also but a tiny sample, a subset of the many allegations lodged which consist only of the bare 'Bastardy Information' details, which are themselves but a subset of the total illegitimacies. The evidence is, by its very nature, partial, since the hearings concern only the minority who failed to marry before the birth, not the majority who fulfilled the expectation of marrying before the birth; they may have behaved in an altogether different way. Laurence Stone commented of an earlier period that the rare example of a 'notoriously promiscuous girl who sooner or later became pregnant...was liable to be repudiated and scorned by the community'; it is quite possible that this is what we are seeing here in some of the affiliation proceedings.²⁸ Family and community pressure might persuade most couples to marry when a child was expected, or family might step in to help out when the marriage did not happen, but the situation perhaps was different if the woman was seen as promiscuous; local men might still have taken advantage of her but the community was perhaps less willing to support her and a recourse to the law was then her only avenue to obtain support. Elizabeth Brown was forced to deny that William Hetherington had given her money, while others were obliged to admit that they had already had an illegitimate child. Alternatively, we could be seeing the women resorting to law when community sanctions had been ineffective; it was commented, of South Wales under the new Poor Law, that the man 'evades or defies the law, with a confidence and effrontery which has outraged the moral feeling and provoked the indignation of the people to a degree that can hardly be described.'²⁹ The fact that so many of the court cases led to the man being ordered to support the child, could be seen as the law coming to the aid of the community.

We have no idea whether the other allegations of paternity that did not result in Petty Sessions hearings, or the other illegitimate births that led to no such proceedings, or the cases where the bride was pregnant when she married, were the result of similar courtship behaviour. More importantly, this limited evidence tells us nothing about the cases where the bride was *not* pregnant. She may have been more closely supervised by her family, or acting in accordance

²⁸ Laurence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (Pelican, 1979) 389.

²⁹ Henriques, 'Bastardy', 118.

with a different moral code, or circumstances may have enabled the couple to marry more readily and thus avoid a pre-marital conception – or they may have been simply less fertile or, indeed, more knowledgeable about matters of contraception.

Evidence from Lancashire handloom weavers led Gandy to suggest that many young women who had migrated to the mill towns of Lancashire were very realistic in their approach to life, and not necessarily seeking marriage. He suggested the ‘plausibility of a socio-economic rationale as having underlain U[nmarried] M[other]s’ behaviour’, while also concluding that although ‘it is pointless to seek to list the non-economic parameters’ their real influence could not be ignored.³⁰ The following chapters, therefore, discuss some of the other reasons, apart from a cultural attitude to courtship behaviour and to marriage, that might lead to a woman being left pregnant and alone, while always being mindful that we can have no idea about the emotional realities of the relationships, the unguarded passions, the lies that were told, the characters that were capricious, the misunderstandings that arose, the promises that were broken or the calculating behaviour that went wrong. We have to remember the ‘individuality of the courtship process,’ while also considering the ‘power of information, gossip and malicious interventions to upset, elongate or curtail courtships.’³¹ Matters of love are not always susceptible to rational explanation. Hurren and King, in their examination of evidence from coronial hearings, provide many examples of courtships ended for a variety of reasons, including ‘clear and unambiguous evidence of the power of women in the courtship process.’³² Addingham women were not afraid to take the man to court; it seems likely that it was not always the man who decided to end the relationship.

³⁰ G. N. Gandy, *Illegitimacy in a Handloom Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culcheth, Lancs, 1781-1860*, D. Phil (Oxford, 1979) 224, 376, 326; Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, (Oxford UP, 1995) 169-70, notes that rural illegitimacy rates were higher than urban and believed the urban working class to be *less* indifferent to illegitimate pregnancy.

³¹ Steven King, ‘Love, Religion and Power in the Making of Marriages in Early Nineteenth- Century Rural Industrial Lancashire’, *Rural History*, vol.21, no.1 (2010) 20, 18.

³² Elizabeth Hurren and Steven King, ‘Courtship at the coroner’s court’, *Social History*, vol. 40, no.2 (2015) 201, 207; see also Ginger Frost, ‘I am master here’: Illegitimacy, Masculinity’ and Violence in Victorian England, ch.1, 27-42, in Delap, L., Griffin, B., and Wills, A., (eds) *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain Since 1800* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 35-6.

Childhood: housing, poverty and employment

In 1848, while portraying the poverty and degraded living conditions of the English agricultural classes in his novel *Yeast*, Charles Kingsley included the following verses:

When, packed in one reeking chamber,
Man, maid, mother, and little ones lay;
While the rain pattered in on the rotting bride-bed,
And the walls let in the day.

When we lay in the burning fever
On the mud of the cold clay floor,
Till you parted us all for three months, squire,
At the dreary workhouse door.

We quarrelled like brutes, and who wonders?
What self-respect could we keep
Worse housed than your hacks and your pointers,
Worse fed than your hogs and your sheep?

Our daughters, with base-born babies,
Have wandered away in their shame;
If your misses had slept, Squire, where they did,
Your daughters might do the same! [italics sic]¹

Was this the usual situation for the women brought up in Addingham? Were they familiar with the workhouse in childhood? Were they packed into tiny damp houses? Did they wander away in their shame?

Although the nature and precision of occupational descriptions vary from census to census, it is evident that many of the mothers were from the agricultural labouring class, where poverty would have been the norm. Some mothers did undoubtedly have very hard, insecure childhoods, which perhaps made them more likely to fall prey to the abuse, or seduction described elsewhere.²

At least 22 were illegitimate themselves or came from a family where illegitimacy was common, where we might assume a less settled and perhaps impoverished upbringing. A workhouse childhood, however, was atypical. Sarah Elizabeth Nevison provides a rare example. Born in Stockton to a mother from the Shap/Bampton area in Westmorland, she was enumerated in 1861, at the age of six, living in the Eamont Bridge workhouse with her mother Margaret and three-year-old brother Thomas, also illegitimate; at the time of his baptism, in July 1858, Margaret was already resident in the workhouse, so he was probably born there and they may well have been long-term inmates. Unusually in my research, his father was named (as William Atkinson) at his baptism, and a man of the same name was living in the workhouse in 1861, and enumerated immediately before the children, so it is possible that both children were the result of a long-term relationship. However, as William Atkinson was also resident there in 1851, and described as an idiot, there may well be a bleaker explanation involving

¹ Charles Kingsley, *Yeast* (1851) ch.11, accessed via <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10364/10364-h/10364-h.htm> 8.3.2020.

² See after, 58-63.

abuse for Thomas's birth. Mother and son were still there ten years later, although Sarah was probably working as a servant in Stockport.³ However, by 1881, both mother and daughter were working in Penrith, Sarah as a servant and Margaret as a charwoman, a very lowly occupation but at least outside the workhouse, while Thomas was married to a woman from Little Salkeld, although not as yet living with her. She and their baby, baptised only the day after their wedding, were still living with her father. It was probably this local connection with the parish that explains the baptism of Sarah's illegitimate daughter, Frances, at Addingham in 1885. The one other mother with known links in her childhood to the workhouse was Jane Story, indicted for concealing the birth of her child in 1916; at the age of eight she had spent two days in the workhouse with her mother and siblings.

More typical was the childhood of Jemima Graham, born illegitimate in 1841, and living at the age of one month with her unmarried mother, Rachel, and her grandparents in Kirkoswald. They were still there in 1851, her widowed grandmother now described as a 'pauper' and her mother as a 'paper manufacturer', aged 30 and still unmarried, although there was now an additional grandchild in the house, her son John, aged 7. By 1861, Jemima was working as a servant in Helton. It seems likely that her mother had worked in the paper mill at Glassonby Beck and that Jemima, therefore, came back to friends or family to give birth to her own illegitimate daughter, Mary Jane, and to have the baby baptised at Addingham in 1862. She was certainly living in Glassonby when she initiated proceedings at the Penrith Petty Sessions to obtain child maintenance by affiliating her daughter, naming mason John Thomlinson of Birkenhead as the father. By 1871 she had married and moved to County Durham.

Some of the mothers born in such inauspicious circumstances fared rather better than Jemima. Jane Hodgson, the illegitimate child of a woman originally from Renwick, was born in 1857 in Liverpool. In 1861 her mother was working as a servant in Toxteth, Liverpool, while Jane was a three-year-old boarder nearby, a necessary arrangement if Elizabeth was to earn a living to support them both. In 1866, however, Elizabeth married John Dodd, a farmer living in Melmerby, and by 1871 the family, now with two more children, was living in Glassonby where Jane was correctly enumerated in the census as stepdaughter. John was farming 100 acres, so was probably quite prosperous by local standards. Despite this ostensible improvement in circumstances, she became one of the youngest of the mothers in this study, being only fifteen when her son was born in 1873.

Denman cautions against taking 'the occupation of a woman as a servant at the time of her child's baptism or on the census...as a statement of the class or wealth of her family. There is much evidence of farmer's daughters and landowners' daughters becoming single mothers.'⁴ He concluded that 'the high levels of illegitimacy [in NE Cumberland] were not correlated with poverty and economic motivation. Cumberland's well-educated population did not translate illegitimacy into improvident marriage, their offence being against conventional morality rather than Malthusian political economy.'⁵ Some of the unmarried mothers of Addingham had fathers who were described as husbandmen, or even yeoman farmers, or small tradesmen; they may well have been brought up in a stable and financially comfortable family, with both

³ Unfortunately, there are no surviving records for the Eamont Bridge Workhouse.

⁴ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 96.

⁵ Denman, *Illegitimacy*, 91.

parents surviving until the child was an adult. Jane Davidson was one of the oldest mothers in the research when she gave birth to her only child in Addingham in 1891. She had had an apparently secure childhood: her father was a substantial farmer, employing five servants, in Penrith in 1861 and 1871 and her mother carried on running the farm after his death. Mary Benson spent her whole childhood in Gamblesby, the daughter of a prominent Methodist, who was financially sound enough to act as a chapel trustee for thirteen local chapels and farmed 155 acres in 1881, a large holding by local standards. Mary was brought up in a large house of ten rooms and in about 1910 the Inland Revenue Survey shows her mother and uncle jointly to be the largest landowners in Gamblesby. Two women, sisters who each had an illegitimate child, spent much of their childhoods in Glassonby and Gamblesby. Like Mary Benson, they were from a strongly Methodist background, their father was a chapel trustee and local preacher, and in 1911 they too were living in a ten-roomed house.

However, the loss of a parent, particularly the father, would hit even a comfortably-off family hard financially. Twelve of the unmarried mothers lost their own mother before they were fifteen, while eight lost their father. Mary Elizabeth Beckton was perhaps originally from a more secure family than many: her mother was enumerated in 1851, before Mary's birth and as yet unmarried, as the proprietor of houses, while her father, William, employed two men on his farm of 140 acres in 1861. However, Mary Elizabeth was only 13 when her mother died and by 1871 she was a dairy maid at Staffield while her father was a widowed farm servant living with relatives; whatever modest prosperity the family had enjoyed had vanished. Mary Ann Wells had the unusual misfortune to lose both her parents before she was seven, after which, and again unusually, she was brought up by her father's family, who were supported by the parish for many years.

Few mothers had experience as children of living in the workhouse, but the families of some Addingham mothers received out-relief from the Guardians during their childhood and the Churchwardens' Accounts show that many were in receipt of support from the various parish charities. Individuals are frequently impossible to distinguish clearly but some names keep on cropping up year by year, indicative of continuing poverty. Matthew Watson, for example, father to two daughters who both had illegitimate children, had parish support for more than forty years. Money from the Addingham Poor's Land charity was shared equally between the townships, regardless of how many people were deemed to need support, so that the growing population of Hunsonby with Winskill fared worse individually than their neighbours in other townships.⁶ However, the Hutchinson Trust was limited to Hunsonby with Winskill, to the great benefit of Matthew's niece Ann Watson and her three surviving illegitimate children.⁷

The nature of childhood accommodation is difficult to establish. There was probably less overcrowding in the parish than in cities, where very often whole families shared one room, but many of these mothers would have spent their early childhood living with several siblings in small cottages, before leaving the parental home at the age of thirteen to be hired for domestic or farm service. In consequence, the house might then become less crowded for the younger siblings but those who had left often found themselves living once again in cramped quarters within the household of their employers, probably with complete strangers; after six months they might well be re-hired elsewhere and have to live with a different set of people. The high

⁶ CAS(C) PR 29/11, PR 29/12, PR 29/76, various.

⁷ CAS(C) PR 29/113, various; see below, 91-92.

rates of Cumbrian illegitimacy were frequently attributed to these overcrowded conditions. The *Carlisle Journal* in 1859, reporting on an affiliation case, described how ‘the mother admitted, in cross-examination, that she had been in the habit of sleeping in the same room as a young man of 25, named Lightfoot, who was her master’s son, and her cousin – only a low board separating their beds.’ ‘Admitted’ makes it sound to the modern ear as if she had some choice in the matter, which is unlikely. Lightfoot’s mother, her aunt and presumably also her employer, denied this arrangement but then declined to answer such ‘impudent talk’ when the magistrates pressed her.⁸ A local newspaper, reporting on proposed changes to the system for hiring servants, recorded that it was said of Wigton that ‘there was scarcely a farm house in this neighbourhood that had proper convenience for lodging male and female servants, and one effect of this was, that there was an immense account of illegitimacy.’ An increase in infanticide was also attributed to the ‘spread of immorality under the present system.’⁹

These circumstances were common both to mothers who bore illegitimate children and many who did not, and without census evidence, or precise details of where individuals were living, it has not been possible to establish any clear link between poor accommodation and illegitimacy in the early part of our period. The later censuses of 1891 and 1901 both specify houses with fewer than five rooms; the blended family of Elizabeth and William Whitehead, consisting of six children and including one illegitimate son, plus an elderly boarder, was certainly crowded in their four rooms in Little Salkeld in 1891. This was, however, unusual. The 1901 census reveals some disparity between the townships, in that Gamblesby had no houses with fewer than four rooms, while Hunsonby had thirteen (nineteen per cent of the total township stock). In 1911 (Table 6), when the total rooms per household are given, the average house in Gamblesby was surprisingly spacious, with 7.3 rooms, Glassonby and Little Salkeld houses (excluding the 22 rooms of Little Salkeld Hall) had an average of 6.4 and 6.3 respectively, while Hunsonby with Winskill houses averaged only 5.3.

1911 Census	Gamblesby	Glassonby	LS	H&W
Total Houses	48	28	22	70
Population	193	144	96	276
Total rooms	350	178	154	371
Average rooms per house	7.3	6.4	7/6.3	5.3
Average rooms per person	1.81	1.24	1.48	1.34
Fewer than 5 rooms	15%	21%	32%	37%

Table 6. Comparison of houses, Addingham parish, 1911. The figure for Little Salkeld excludes the distortion caused by Salkeld Hall and its inhabitants.

There may indeed be a link between poor housing and the higher rate of illegitimacy in Hunsonby with Winskill revealed in Part One, but as Michael Mason points out, this cannot be assumed and is not necessarily causal. ‘The tenor of the small number of nineteenth-century working-class autobiographies that touch on this subject is that restraints and separations were achieved, even if sexual knowledge was learnt early.’ Men might dress first, for example, and leave

⁸ *CJ*, 6 Dec. 1859.

⁹ *Advertiser*, 11 Aug. 1863, 4.

the house before the women dressed.¹⁰ Poverty, poor accommodation, emotional insecurity – all were common but by no means universal amongst this group of unmarried mothers, while neither stability nor financial comfort was a proof against unmarried motherhood. Equally, many of those who did *not* bear illegitimate children were similarly disadvantaged.

As is made clear in Part One, most unmarried mothers in Addingham had not, as Kingsley suggests, ‘wandered away in their shame.’ Some of the mothers taking babies for baptism were incomers to the parish, so we have to allow for there being traffic going the other way as well, for an unknown number of Addingham mothers baptising their babies elsewhere, undetected by this study, but many women returned to their families for support and moved away only when they married. The nature of their shame, if any, will be discussed in the conclusion, but suffice it to say here, that it was probably not as universally felt, and acted upon, in Addingham as Kingsley would have us believe.

¹⁰ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford UP, 1995) 142-3.

Sex education and contraception

Did the unmarried mothers of Addingham become pregnant out of sheer ignorance of their bodies and how babies were conceived, and of the possible methods that might be employed to prevent conception? Opinions have varied on the question of how much girls and young women knew about sex; it has been argued that even in a 'Victorian home swarming with children sex was a secret' and many girls were still ignorant on their wedding night – indeed, that even when already pregnant, some remained ignorant about where the baby would actually come from.¹ Cook emphasises that this secrecy, this 'profound sexual ignorance', became ever more strict as the century progressed, extending into the working classes, keen to emulate their 'betters' in matters of respectability: 'from the last quarter of the late nineteenth century the majority of British parents in all classes had tried to ensure their children did not obtain sexual knowledge...links between the sexual behaviour of animals and that of human beings...are not obvious or meaningful unless adult comments make them so.' This prolonged ignorance was relatively common until the early 1930s, even for some men.² Ignorance may have laid these women open to the advances of better-informed men and to 'going too far' with no knowledge of the consequences. As Tess of the d'Urbervilles said to her seducer, 'I didn't understand your meaning till it was too late' and to her mother, 'Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men-folk?'³

The implication of Cook's comment above is that such ignorance was not so common in the working classes for much of the nineteenth century, while Michael Mason, quoted in the previous chapter, allows for the possibility that 'sexual knowledge was learnt early' in crowded homes.⁴ Indeed, since about 40% of the Addingham brides were already pregnant or had already given birth at least once, wedding night 'innocence' was clearly far from universal, although, as with Tess, ignorance at the time of an unmarried conception may have been more common.

However, sheer ignorance could not have been the case for the 41 women who went on to have further illegitimate pregnancies. It is hard to believe that women raised in the tiny, thin-walled labourers' cottages usual in Addingham, sleeping in shared bedrooms, with plenty of older siblings and cousins to impart knowledge and with animals in the fields all around them, could have been totally oblivious of sex and reproduction. Walvin's view seems more realistic: 'Judged by modern standards of sex education, the great majority of Victorians, men and women, appear to have been remarkably ignorant about sex. This is not to say that they had not picked up that folklore of sex, from siblings, friends and others, which might have gone some way towards remedying the omissions of parents.'⁵ Edward Short, born in 1912 and writing of his childhood in Warcop, only a few miles from Addingham, would have agreed with Walvin:

May Wilkinson's passion for nature study as well as living in an agricultural village with farm animals performing on every side inevitably meant that I knew the facts of life at a quite early age and thought

¹ Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (Yale UP, 1957) 353; Margaret Llewellyn Davies, *Maternity: Letters from Working Women* (G.Bell, 1915) 30, accessed through <https://archive.org/details/maternityletters00womeuoft/page/n7/mode/2up>, Jul. 2021; Angus McLaren, *Birth Control in Nineteenth-Century England* (Holmes and Meier, 1978) 223.

² Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (Oxford UP, 2004) 169-170.

³ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Macmillan, 1974) 112, 117.

⁴ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford UP, 1995) 142.

⁵ James Walvin, *Victorian Values* (Sphere Books, 1988) 125.

nothing of it...nevertheless it came as something of a shock when another boy told me that babies were produced by the same process.⁶

Lionel Rose, too, is probably closer to the Addingham situation with his view that 'Girls who had come from the country, where poverty and overcrowding and rustic earthiness relaxed moral inhibitions, were quite likely to be sexually experienced already; no shame was attached to premarital pregnancy in many rural districts.'⁷ The women taking out affiliation proceedings certainly do not sound as if they were totally ignorant of what they were doing. Experimenting, taking a chance, expecting marriage to follow if necessary, overtaken by passion? Very possibly. But totally ignorant in a small parish society where there were several illegitimate births each year? Perhaps not. As M. K. Ashby said of her own grandmother, 'It seems unlikely that anything less than an impulse from her own nature had seduced her.'⁸

Cinnirella et al., found evidence of marital birth control before the nineteenth century: evidence of parity-dependent [birth] spacing holds across occupational groups and across centuries. Although changes in nutrition, health, and libido cannot be excluded as potential mechanisms, [the study's] findings are overall consistent with the hypothesis that couples adjusted the timing of their births in accordance not only with the prevalent economic conditions but also with their stock of dependent children.⁹

Mechanical methods of contraception were both known about and discussed among some sections of society in the nineteenth century, and attempts were made to disseminate this information among the working classes, although the debate was generally in the context of the desirability or otherwise of population growth and whether this should be encouraged or not among all classes.¹⁰ It was also clearly within the context of the family, taking into consideration the morality of the control of married women's fertility, either by themselves or with the involvement of their husbands. Indeed, traditional working-class morality would often have seen contraception as wrong, a vice that sought to interfere with the natural order.¹¹ It was not considered as a means of controlling illegitimacy; to have discussed contraception for the unmarried would have been seen as encouraging immorality and vice. Even feminists like Josephine Butler opposed birth control in the belief that it would encourage prostitution.¹² Medical men knew about barrier methods but their advice about the rhythm method was hampered by a misunderstanding of menstruation and its role in fertility; in consequence, their advice was all too likely to encourage conception rather than the reverse.¹³

The selling and advertising of contraceptives was happening in much of northern England from the later 1870s but those who sent appliances through the post were liable to prosecution, as were those who published information about birth control.¹⁴ However, the trial of Annie

⁶ Edward Short, *I Knew My Place* (Macdonald, 1983) 178.

⁷ Lionel Rose, *The massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 19.

⁸ M. K. Ashby, *Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1859-1919: A Study of English Village Life* (Merlin Press, 1974) 2.

⁹ Francesco Cinnirella, Marc Klemp and Jacob Weisdorf, 'Malthus in the Bedroom: Birth Spacing as Birth Control in Pre-Transition England', *Demography*, no.54 (2017) 434.

¹⁰ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 35, 51, 57; see also John Peel, 'The manufacture and retailing of contraceptives in England', *Population Studies*, vol.17, no.2 (Nov. 1963) 113-125.

¹¹ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 69, 75.

¹² McLaren, *Birth Control*, 82, 131; Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900* (Cambridge UP, 2003) 177.

¹³ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 125.

¹⁴ Mason, *Victorian Sexuality*, 62-63; Patricia Knight, 'Women and Abortion in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *History Workshop*, no.4 (Autumn 1977) 58.

Besant and Charles Bradlaugh in 1877, when they were accused of publishing the *Fruits of Philosophy*, a book by the American birth-control campaigner Charles Knowlton, served to give added publicity to their views and 'their intervention is seen to have marked a watershed in the reproductive practices of British families and the beginning of a fall in the birth rate.'¹⁵ The trial was reported at length in the Carlisle and Penrith papers. By the early twentieth century, the working classes in Salford, according to the autobiography of Robert Roberts, certainly had some knowledge about contraception and the 'bolder practice of abortion':

Homely safeguards against contraception had been known for generations, especially the small piece of oiled sponge with tapes hopefully attached adopted by women. Common, too, was the home-made pessary, a compound of lard (later margarine) and flour...[while] the sheath...had become familiar to many manual workers.¹⁶

How much of this information filtered down to, and was understood by, the population of Addingham and, even more pertinently, what effect it had upon the behaviour of local unmarried individuals is unknown. In a report published in 1914, it was stated that in Cumberland and Westmorland generally there was little active propagandism for family limitation but that in Maryport 'the sale of rubber preventatives has increased about five-fold in the last ten years and they are now sold even to the working-classes.' In the Penrith area,

there are a considerable number of illegitimate births...there is no local knowledge of active propagandism for the limitation of the family by public advertisements, but many notices of preventives have come by post since about the year 1889, and the methods of limitation are largely known and their use diffused; many girls are acquainted with such things though it is not possible to say where they obtained the information, and they are generally known and adopted by men, and this knowledge is largely responsible for the fall in the birth rate.

Of the Wigton area, it was reported that 'there seems to have been no active propagandism for the limitation of the family...and considering that out of 89 births in the town in 1910, 12 were illegitimate, the practice of prevention cannot yet be widely prevalent.'¹⁷ The mention of illegitimacy is noteworthy for the apparent expectation that the knowledgeable unmarried would adopt means of prevention; no longer was contraception being considered only in the context of marriage. Even as late as 1908, however, the Anglican Church officially condemned 'artificial means for the avoidance or prevention of child-bearing.'¹⁸

At the end of the period, knowledge of the methods and use of contraception spread as troops in the First World War were issued with free supplies of condoms, in an attempt to reduce the incidence of venereal disease. For most, however, condoms were an 'unattainable luxury.'¹⁹ Early withdrawal to avoid conception was free and available to all, of course, and may have been the most popular method of birth control attempted amongst the working classes.²⁰ Hera Cook, in her very detailed study, concluded, however, that while 'the evidence is sufficient to prove that withdrawal was used...it also reveals that the knowledge was not commonplace.'²¹ Restraint was also an option: 'there can be no doubt that both the fall in illegitimacy and

¹⁵ McDonagh, *Child murder*, 174.

¹⁶ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Penguin, 1990) 51-2.

¹⁷ Ethel M. Elderton, *Report on the English Birthrate: Part, England North of the Humber*, (Cambridge UP, 1914) 168, 169, 170.

¹⁸ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 208; J. A. Banks, and Olive Banks, *Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England* (Liverpool UP, 1964) 99.

¹⁹ Knight, 'Women and abortion', 59.

²⁰ Peel, 'Contraceptives', 115.

²¹ Cook, *Long Sexual Revolution*, 46-7.

the fall in the number of children born within marriage from the mid-nineteenth century was achieved by restraint. Edwardian adults, whether married or not, were having less sexual intercourse.²²

The evidence given at many affiliation proceedings, that the woman had been seen sitting on her lover's lap, may be indicative of an acknowledged coded way of a witness providing evidence not only of courtship but also of sexual activity; it is also possible that this position was believed to be a way to avoid conception.²³ A poem popular at the time, indicative of a widespread belief that the position adopted could prevent conception, went:

Thus in a Chair the cautious Dame,
Who loves a little of that Same,
Will take it on her Lover's Lap,
Sure to prevent, this way, Misshap:
Subtle Lechers! Knowing that,
They cannot so be got with Brat.²⁴

In the context of an agreement to marry if pregnancy occurred, contraception was perhaps not even considered necessary.²⁵ If these cases are indeed evidence of it being attempted, that, in itself, might indicate that there was no real agreement between the parties to marry.

Contraception, both in the public mind and in practical reality, was still largely limited to marriage and required a degree of organization and co-operation between partners. Regular cohabitation may have been more conducive to this, but the few examples in this study do not allow any firm conclusions to be drawn.

Nationally, few people, particularly of the working classes and even more particularly women, left any record of their attitudes to sexuality.²⁶ It may be that Addingham people *were* making attempts to avoid pregnancy and that they were successful; we may have knowledge only of the cases where the attempt failed, but the failure of illegitimate births to decline alongside legitimate in the parish would seem to indicate that contraception was not being employed by the unmarried, or at least not to any effective extent. Indeed, the national fall in illegitimacy rates from 1840 has been seen as reflecting changing levels of sexual activity outside marriage, rather than the effective use of contraception.²⁷ Addingham, whether owing to continuing higher levels of sexual activity or a continuing ignorance of contraception, failed to register such a decline in illegitimacy.

Some couples, planning to marry, may have been happy to countenance a baby at the time of conception but, for reasons unknown to posterity, may subsequently have had a change of heart and failed to marry. It would also be unwise to assume that women did not on occasion positively wish to conceive; some, like Esther Jackson, may have been trying to persuade an unwilling man to the altar, while some older single women may have yearned for a child regardless of the difficulties posed by its illegitimacy. Statistics present them as groups of people behaving in similar ways, but the individual and doubtless diverse motivations remain hidden.

²² McLaren, *Birth Control*, 221, quoting Paul Thompson.

²³ Cook, *Long Sexual Revolution*, 103-4, has an account of Hazlitt complaining about the behaviour of Sarah Walker, who would sit in his lap, letting him enjoy her through her petticoats, 'admitting of all sorts of indecent liberties' while refusing to marry him.

²⁴ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 30.

²⁵ Jona Schellekens, 'Courtship, the Clandestine Marriage Act and Illegitimate Fertility in England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol.25, no.3 (Winter 1995) 436.

²⁶ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 216.

²⁷ Cook, *Long Sexual Revolution*, 101.

Seduction, rape and prostitution

A seducer may be defined as ‘a person who entices, allures, or seduces, esp. one who entices another to engage in sexual intercourse.’¹ Any of the young men and women of Addingham may have been capable of such behaviour. Many of these unmarried mothers may have been seduced by a charming lover, promising marriage, into a consensual relationship after which the lover disappeared or failed to keep his word.

Most Cumbrian girls left home at thirteen to become a live-in servant with another family, where they could be targeted by fellow servants or the employer and his family. One case reported in the local press in 1827, involving an accusation of rape made by a servant girl of fifteen in Glassonby, illuminates the conditions with which young girls had to cope. Sarah Forster was sleeping in the same room as her male fellow servant: ‘he and me slept in the room – they had only one room’ and when another man came temporarily into the household to make a bed quilt, he joined them in this room.² Girls were often working in isolated fields, leaving them also vulnerable to passing strangers.³ Boys also left home early, to become agricultural labourers on local farms. In early twentieth century Warcop, a parish comparable to Addingham, ‘there were always between twenty and forty foot-loose farm workers in the parish, of any age from fourteen upward but mainly in their late teens or early twenties.’⁴ Many servants moved places every six months, leaving plenty of scope for broken relationships, intentional or otherwise, while the hiring fairs themselves were seen to be the cause of much reprehensible behaviour.⁵ George Moore, the Wigton-born philanthropist, noted that the farmers in the Penrith area had tried to set up a registry office system where both employers and employed could register their requirements. He attributed its failure to the unwillingness of servants to use the new system; many, it seems, may have enjoyed their youthful freedoms at the hiring fairs.⁶

Sarah Foster, however, was accusing her *employer* of rape. We are considering here not the normal negotiations, persuasions and promises of courtship but those relationships that overstepped a boundary into some form of abuse or coercion. Despite the recognition by contemporaries that ‘the vast majority of single mothers owed their predicament to one of their own class’, to a consensual relationship of social equals, a courtship that went too far or a relationship that broke down, there was also a ‘persistent belief that servants were especially vulnerable to “seduction” and betrayal by their social superiors’.⁷ Novelists encouraged this persistence; many Victorian novels, such as Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Fanny Trollope’s *Jessie Phillips* and Mrs Gaskell’s *Ruth*, describe an unequal relationship, where a disparity of age or social status introduces a different dynamic, one where marriage was never

¹ *Collins Concise English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (1992).

² *Paquet*, 13 Mar. 1827, 4.

³ Jill Barber, ‘“Stolen Goods”: The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth Century’, *Rural History*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Oct. 1993) 125.

⁴ Edward Short, *I Knew My Place* (Macdonald, 1983) 72.

⁵ J. D. Marshall, ‘Some aspects of the social history of 19th-century Cumbria; (ii) crime, police, morals and the countryman’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, vol. 70 (1970) 237-240; S. A. Caunce, ‘The Hiring Fairs of Northern England, 1890-1930; a regional analysis of commercial and social networking in agriculture’, *Past and Present*, no. 217 (Nov. 2012) 227. Caunce believes that fairs also acted to reinforce the family and communal ties that service disrupted: 246.

⁶ *Advertiser*, 11 Aug. 1863, 4.

⁷ Lionel Rose, *The massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 18.

even a consideration for the man. Evidence from elsewhere shows that seduction by the master was much less likely to be followed by marriage than seduction by a fellow servant.⁸

Although this made for a more interesting fictional dynamic than the rather more common scenario involving two servants, historians have recognised that it was a 'minority of bastardies which arose in situations of social asymmetry, that is from victimization, especially of women servants, from the keeping of mistresses and from casual encounters.'⁹ Richard Adair reached that conclusion for early modern England, albeit while recognising that it is an assumption 'not backed by firm evidence.'¹⁰ The evidence from this study is that most of the men accused of paternity in affiliation proceedings relating to Addingham came from much the same level of society as the mothers themselves, often, indeed, fellow servants. However, such proceedings are only part of the picture, since it is perhaps also the case that it would be an unusually brave servant girl (such as Sarah Forster, above) who would take her master to court, while the better-off seducer may have been more willing, and able, to pay her off without the need for an affiliation hearing – and if a child resulted from a chance attack in a field, the mother would have no case to take to affiliation proceedings. Despite the difficulties of obtaining such evidence, there are, nevertheless, some cases which suggest the possibility of abuse.

Three local cases of potential master/servant abuse emerged. When Mary Ann Potts married in the parish, in 1912, she named Edward Mandle [sic] as her father, thus calling immediate attention to the mismatch of surnames. Her mother, Elizabeth Potts, probably had a financially secure early childhood; her own father was a substantial farmer of 170 acres, with three servants, near Longtown in 1851, and although by 1861, when Elizabeth was ten, he had only 40 acres at Watermillock, he still had one servant. However, he died soon after the census was taken, leaving his widow Ann with three daughters still at home. By 1871, Ann and her eldest daughter Jane, were living together in Greystoke, with Jane described as an 'imbecile' and Ann as a pauper. Elizabeth Potts, nineteen, was working as a servant in the Mandale household in Mungrisdale, where Edward Mandale, 21, was the eldest son and working on the family farm. Mary Ann was then born to Elizabeth in 1873 and baptised at Barton, Westmorland, with no father named in the register. Elizabeth went on to have at least three more children, while going in and out of both Penrith workhouse and Garlands Mental Hospital in Carlisle. She died in Garlands, a certified 'lunatic', in 1905.

Meanwhile, in 1875, Edward married well, to the daughter of a farmer of over 300 acres and by 1881 was living in Mungrisdale with his family of three children; they were still there in 1891, with seven children. And then, in 1898, two of his children were admitted to Langwathby School and the family were living in Langwathby in the census of 1901, at the same time as Mary Ann was a servant in Culgaith. By 1911 Mary Ann was living in Gamblesby, while Edward, now a widower, was farming near Cockermouth, living in an eight-bedroomed house with four single adult children. Were Edward and Mary Ann actually living in adjoining parishes at some point? Did they ever meet? He died in Cockermouth in December 1924, leaving legacies to his legitimate children. The marriage of one of his sons was registered in 1926. Did he have to wait until his father was dead, and he was aged 45, to marry the woman

⁸ Barber 'Stolen Goods', 128.

⁹ Peter Laslett, 'Introduction', in Laslett, Peter, Oosterveen, Karla and Smith, Richard M. (eds) *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Edward Arnold, 1980) 56.

¹⁰ Richard Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester UP, 1996) 5-6.

who had been their maid in 1911? Had Edward indeed seduced the family servant? And did this in any way account for Elizabeth's mental ill-health, for her melancholia and delusions, her suicidal thoughts – or make her vulnerable to further abusive relationships, leading to more illegitimate children? Mary Ann's two brothers gave different men surnamed Potts as their own fathers when they married – she could have done the same for the sake of appearances but seemingly chose not to; was Mary Ann told the name of her father by her mother? It is hard to believe that Mary Ann just plucked the name out of thin air. Of course, it is always possible that her mother deliberately named the wrong man.

Mary Robson had been working for the family of Thomas Tinkler, one of the eight children of a yeoman farmer in Hunsonby; he was probably 34 when his child was born. Mary sued for support and he admitted paternity at the court hearing and was ordered to provide support. In a second successful case, Margaret Furness, aged 27, named John Lough of Hunsonby, aged 56 and unmarried, as the father of her son in affiliation proceedings in 1869; she then had to chase him for payment in 1871. Unfortunately, the court records give no account of their alleged relationship, so we have no way of knowing if Margaret had been working for John Lough, although that seems the most likely explanation, given the age disparity, and apparent difference in social status between the daughter of an agricultural and road labourer and a yeoman farmer.

We also have to consider the possibility that the women may have been the seducers. Some may have set out intentionally to entrap a man; 'pre-marital pregnancy was an answer to ensuring oneself a husband, and illegitimacy the consequence when such a tactic misfired.'¹¹ When Elizabeth Armstrong, aged 29, went to court for maintenance, John Hetherington, also aged 29, was found to be the father of her child born in 1868. John was the son of her Glassonby employer; he went on to father at least sixteen legitimate children by two wives.

Elizabeth was able to produce two letters from her lover, evidence perhaps that the relationship was much like most others, and perhaps went wrong for similar reasons. They were of equal age, if not social status, and Elizabeth may indeed have been hoping to make a good marriage to the son of a substantial farmer. In the case of Sarah Forster, above, a neighbour claimed that she [the neighbour] had been promised a 'glass of whiskey when [Sarah] was married [to her employer].' She was remembered as 'very often impudent', 'a very bad girl' and 'but indifferent, at times, as to modesty' and her case was dismissed.¹² Some may have been incited to make allegations by their family, as was Tess in '*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*'. Sarah Forster was certainly encouraged in her 1827 court action by her father, as was Hannah Nixon of Glassonby, in the only other Addingham case I have found where it was alleged that the child was the result of rape. In 1878, Hannah accused her neighbour, Henry Bleamires Metcalf, of raping her the previous year, resulting in the birth of a daughter, Annie Mary in November 1877. The allegation was made in support of an affiliation order, not in a criminal court, but Hannah had not been as prompt as most in laying her allegation and the affiliation proceedings did not begin until 7 May 1878. The Petty Sessions record is unusually full of detail, as Henry vigorously contested the allegation and both sides called several witnesses. It must have been a lively day in court. It was alleged that Hannah had been told by her father to 'tell nobody

¹¹ Barber, 'Stolen Goods', 126; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge UP, 1987) 349.

¹² *Pacquet*, 13 Mar. 1827, 4.

not till we get pay for baby from Harry Mecker.' Her father asserted in evidence that Henry Bleamires Metcalfe had said that 'if nobody had never touched her but him she is all right – Metcalf & his Wife have no children.' He must have considered this evidence of Metcalfe's guilt, a treacherous attempt at reassurance that she could not be pregnant, but the fact that he and his wife, long married by then, had no children could also be understood as a point supporting Henry's denials of paternity.

It is hard to know now what to make of the case, of all the claim and counter claim. Was Hannah perhaps a simple soul, ill-used by her neighbour? Unlike most of the women making such an allegation, she was unable to sign her name, while her evidence certainly gives the impression of a simple woman and the census evidence of later years may indicate an extended family caring for an unmarried, mentally and physically impaired sister. Or were her family, with or without her understanding and collusion, scheming together to extort money from a significant local farmer with a reputation to lose? Henry was a prominent Wesleyan Methodist, holding all the local offices (of steward, class leader and chapel trustee) open to a layman, except that of Local Preacher. Were the family taking advantage of her situation to make some money? It was, after all, this family that named Angus Kindley, a wealthy Carlisle businessman, as the father of Hannah's illegitimate half-sister Nanny (Milburn or Milburne), when she married in 1882, although no father had been named at her baptism.¹³ Were they deliberately attempting to deceive, to their own advantage, perhaps in both cases? There is also something anomalous about the third sister, Mary, who was married to Isaac Taylor; he was named in affiliation proceedings by another woman, Jane Hodgson (although no outcome is recorded) and the children of Mary and Isaac all ended up living with their grandfather in Glassonby, despite both parents being still alive. When their son William, born 27 October 1872, started school at Maughanby, no parent was named in the admissions register, although his parents had married in June 1872.

The court could not make an immediate decision for some reason, resulting in the case being adjourned for a week; since there were no further proceedings reported, we must assume the application was withdrawn. A pencil addition says that costs were paid but there is no note of an order to support the child; did Henry settle out of court to avoid a local scandal or did Hannah withdraw her allegation when her family realised that they could not make the charge stick?¹⁴

In 1881 Hannah and the child were both still living in Glassonby with her widowed father. Annie Mary started school in 1883 when the schoolmaster noted 'cannot talk to be understood'; further evidence, perhaps, of some genetic impairment. In November 1885, she had a doctor's note to explain her absence from school and then in February 1886 it was noted in the log that she had died. Annie Mary was buried at Addingham, a victim, perhaps, of the measles that had been prevalent in the area for several weeks previously. Henry Bleamires Metcalf and Hannah Nixon continued living as neighbours for many years and he would have seen Annie Mary grow up and known of her early death. The unmarried Hannah lived on into old age, living with various member of her family and recorded as 'slightly deaf also afflicted of speech' in 1911.¹⁵

¹³ See below, 152.

¹⁴ Ginger S. Frost, 'Claiming Justice: Paternity Affiliation in South Wales, 1870-1900', *Rural History*, vol.24, no.2 (2013) 183, concluded that rape charges had a lesser chance of success.

¹⁵ CAS(C) QPL/17, 27 Apr. 1878 and QPL/11, 7 May 1878, give the whole story in detail.

One other biography again involves an inequality of ages and social status. Elizabeth Bird had already had one illegitimate child, baptised at Gamblesby St John in 1893, when she gave birth to her second child in 1896, aged 23, and shortly thereafter married a 63-year-old bachelor, George Nicholson. She had made sure he was named as father on the birth certificate and both parents were named when the baby was baptised in Great Salkeld after their marriage. Hannah Nixon may have been encouraged by her family to ensnare a man, but Elizabeth Bird was perhaps sure enough of herself and her attractions, to do the seducing on her own.

Several of the biographies demonstrate connections to a public house, a place where inhibitions might be loosened by alcohol and seduction made easier, a place where strangers might be encountered, and acquaintance made; there were three in Hunsonby with Winskill, one in Glassonby, one in Little Salkeld and two in Gamblesby. Publicans, themselves, were 'notoriously fathers of bastards', while in Terling in an earlier century the 'village alehouses were...central to the social world of the bastardy principals.'¹⁶ I found only one innkeeper named in the petty sessions records as the father of a child in this study but eight mothers spent their childhoods in local pubs run by their parents, where they probably helped with the work. The mother of Cathleen Cookson, working in a village pub near Gateshead 'was used to being chatted up by hopeful pit lads and customers and she was practised at fending off their advances', but she still gave in to the pleas and promises of one particularly charming man.¹⁷

Pubs were also a place associated with prostitution, which has to be considered as a possible explanation for illegitimacy.¹⁸ A common assumption was that 'there are only two courses before the unfortunate [unmarried] mother, either to kill her child or support it by sin.'¹⁹ Walkowitz, however, found that illegitimacy was 'a social problem distinct from prostitution': one did not necessarily lead to the other and occupational dislocation was a more likely cause of prostitution.²⁰ I have found no positive evidence in any case but some biographies are suggestive. Mary Jane RitsonCurrie bore three children, in 1897, 1898 and 1904, all in the workhouse, and went in and out of it with great frequency, sometimes taking her children with her and sometimes not. Ruth GedlingFawcett (who was certainly deserted, although her child may or may not have been illegitimate) did the same; there are at least 65 admission entries for her between 1875 and 1893. Her life, spent moving between the workhouse, police courts and Carlisle gaol, can be observed in the local press; at one point she was described as 'a wretched-looking female, who appeared in the dock with her face blackened and bruised, and her dress torn...found...lying in the street in a helpless state of drunkenness' and on another occasion as a 'a dissipated looking female.'²¹ Margaret Ann Slater was another 'in and out', alternating between the workhouse and the Garlands Mental Hospital, but with periods managing on her own outside, with one child born in the workhouse and another born in Hesket. How were they living and feeding themselves (and acquiring alcohol) while outside and what drove them

¹⁶ Snell, *Annals*, 362; David Levine and Keith Wrightson, 'The social context of illegitimacy in early modern England' in Laslett et al., *Bastardy*, 168.

¹⁷ Kathleen Jones, *Seeking Catherine Cookson's 'Da': The Real Story of Finding Her Father* (Constable, 2004) 11.

¹⁸ Rebecca Probert, "'A Banbury Story': cohabitation and marriage among the Victorian poor in "notorious Neithrop", *Local Historian*, vol.44, no.4 (Oct. 2014) 292.

¹⁹ Quote from 1882 in Ann R. Higginbotham, "'Sin of the age": infanticide and illegitimacy in Victorian London', *Victorian Studies*, no.32 (Spring 1989) 322.

²⁰ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, class and the state* (Cambridge UP, 1980) 194.

²¹ *Herald*, 29 May 1875, 5; *Observer*, 24 Apr. 1877, 6.

back to the workhouse? Anne Digby noted how one woman in Norfolk came voluntarily to be treated for venereal disease, 'before speedily absenting herself once treatment was successful.'²² Walkowitz suggests that the income to be made by prostitution varied with the local trade cycle; streetwalking was a 'highly casual and seasonal occupation', affected by the poor harvests and poor employment prospects of their clientele.²³ The only other indication of prostitution comes from the story of Elizabeth Atkinson, whose link with Addingham is very tangential. She was reported to have been seen with a man in 1898 and 1899 in a common lodging house in Penrith, accommodation associated in the public mind with prostitution. Since she was in the company of the same man on both occasions this may have been an irregular relationship rather than prostitution, or he may have been her pimp, although Walkowitz believes pimps to have been much rarer in Victorian times than Dickens may lead us to believe.²⁴ She had deserted her two living illegitimate children, leaving them to the care of her mother, who managed to obtain out-relief from the workhouse Guardians.²⁵

²² Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 149.

²³ Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 23-4.

²⁴ Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 25.

²⁵ See below, 143-4.

Abandonment and desertion

The interrupted courtship theory of illegitimacy is dependent upon the premise that the couple had started a sexual relationship with the intention of marrying but that something prevented this intention becoming a reality. It could have been the death of the man, an unexpected employment issue requiring him to move, the loss of a job leading to the couple being too impoverished to marry – or perhaps them just having second thoughts. Given the cost and responsibility of raising a child, it was more likely to be the father changing his mind than the mother and it is probable that many of the mothers in my survey were simply abandoned by the father of their child. Denman, in his study of illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, found that many who had the means to marry, chose not to do so.¹ It is difficult without clear personal evidence to assess motivation but some evidence of the intentions of Addingham couples, which would seem to confirm Denman's findings, is contained in affiliation proceedings. It is, however, also obvious from the number of pregnant brides, and the marriages which appear to be to the father that took place not long after the birth, that most men observed the local social norms, some perhaps more willingly and promptly than others. I suspect that, while it may certainly be true that the women thought marriage was offered (and the affiliation proceedings attest to many women insisting that this was the case), the reasons for their being deserted would be altogether more varied and probably not entirely economic in origin. The man may never have honestly intended marriage, or either party may, rather belatedly, have thought better of it. It is also very possible that, while a relationship was consensual, no marriage had been agreed between the parties, that intercourse happened without pre-meditation or, indeed, that the parties were simply promiscuous.

Mary Gedling was unusual in being already a widow of 35 with five children, and licensee of the Hunters' Cottage Inn in Hunsonby, when she gave birth to her sixth child, Thomas Lancaster Gedling, in November 1861. A month later she sought to affiliate him upon Thomas Lancaster, by then a husbandman living in Newton, near Penrith, but on the census earlier that year he was described as a twenty-eight-year-old general servant in Hunsonby. Mary was named as a single woman on the application but correctly as a widow when the child was baptised; there is no record of a court hearing of the case, so we must assume that she withdrew her application. As was noted previously, the village pubs feature quite often in the illegitimacy records; they were places where relationships could be formed between locals and strangers, relationships which could easily be abandoned by those just passing through. Mary had been deserted but whether she had been promised marriage by this younger man remains unknown. By early 1865 she had found another man to marry and she gave birth to a daughter in December 1865. John Slater, her new husband, was nine years older than his wife and later events indicate that he may have been more attracted to her daughter than to Mary herself. He does not appear to have taken on her illegitimate child, since in 1871, after the death of his mother in September 1869, Thomas was enumerated on the census living with his 66-year-old grandmother; in yet another anomaly to confuse the family historian, he was described as her nephew. Mary's legitimate daughter, Mary Jane, had married aged only sixteen and was probably abandoned soon after by her husband, Gibson Collinson, when he emigrated to the

¹ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 54.

United States. After her mother's death (or possibly even before, since her first child was born only a year later) she cohabited with her stepfather in a long and fruitful union.²

Jane Ann HopeSlee was definitely deserted by her husband. Her first child was born legitimate but only just, since Jane Ann Hope had married Robert Robinson Slee only three weeks before. She had two further children with him but was forced to appear before the workhouse guardians to claim outdoor relief for three children in July 1894, when a warrant was issued for the apprehension of her husband.³ In 1898 she had a further son whose father's name was omitted when he was baptised. She continued to be enumerated as married but was on her own with the children in 1901 and 1911. Robert seems to have disappeared completely: a Robert R. Slee, of about the right age but claiming to be single went to Quebec in July 1894, a date which tallies with Jane needing outdoor relief. Another Robert Slee, again of the right age, came back in 1896. It is possible that Jane and her husband were briefly re-united and that he was the father of the last child – but if so, why was he not named as such at the baptism? When Herbert, the first child, married in 1916, his father was given as 'deceased', which invites the question as to whether this was indeed true and how the family knew of his death. Quite why Jane Ann was deserted is unknown, of course, but the coincidence of dates and the description of Robert as single may indicate that he was determined to start a new life on his own. He may have felt impelled by economic necessity to emigrate and seek a new life abroad, something which his wife was unwilling to contemplate. It was not an unknown situation, since 'Englishwomen...were notoriously reluctant to emigrate' and 'sometimes a wife was left behind by stealth or subterfuge, but sometimes only after violence, threats, argument, and persuasion had failed to move her.'⁴ The mother of the well-known music critic and cricket correspondent Neville Cardus married when her son was aged three months. Her husband almost immediately went to the United States to find work, sent money back to her and pleaded with her to go out to join her. When she refused, he came back in 1898 and divorced her.⁵

Another example is provided by Mary Bowness (or Bownas), who was married with a child when her husband sailed for the United States in 1891, leaving her and her son, aged two, to live with her father in Patterdale. In 1901 she named no father when she took her baby daughter, Annie, for baptism at St Mary's Chapel, Little Salkeld, and in 1911 Annie was boarded out in Little Salkeld while her mother worked in Plumpton Wall. In both 1901 and 1911 Mary was described as a widow; although her husband was on the Missouri census in 1910, he was claiming to be single, and I believe he died there in 1924. Mary may well have had no idea of his whereabouts, while the vicar may have intended to indicate some scepticism about her exact marital situation, and therefore about the legitimacy of Annie, when (very unusually) he stated the child's surname in filling in the register.⁶ It seems unlikely, but not impossible, in the cases

² See after, 69.

³ CAS(C) SPU/P 11, 24 July 1894.

⁴ Olive Anderson, 'Emigration and marriage break-up in mid-Victorian England', *Economic History Review*, vol. 50, no. 1 (1997), 107, 108. Anderson also has examples of the complexity of some emigrant relationships.

⁵ Duncan Hamilton, *The Great Romantic: Cricket and the Golden Age of Neville Cardus* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2019) read on BBC R4, 23 July 2019.

⁶ As long as the husband was alive and in England, the child was considered his and therefore legitimate: Laslett, Peter, Oosterveen, Karla and Smith, Richard M. (eds) *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Edward Arnold, 1980) 74.

of both Jane Ann Slee and Mary Bowness that the husband had returned to his wife, made her pregnant and then left again; the father of Catherine Cookson did indeed briefly return to his legal wife, and make her pregnant, before they separated for good.⁷

John Skelton was perhaps also intending to desert the pregnant Jane Peel in 1878. Her son John Skelton Peel was born in October 1878 and baptised at St Mary's Chapel, Little Salkeld the following December. Jane was probably in Winskill staying with her sister, Margaret Jackson, when she gave birth, but in an unusual entry, the vicar wrote that Jane was of Longtown or Hunsonby – such uncertainty is unique in this research. Jane was perhaps a determined woman, or just a hopeful and trusting one; she made sure that Skelton was part of John's name but waited until almost the last minute, in the following September, to instigate affiliation proceedings. John, by then living near Carlisle, appeared in court, accepted that the child was his and was ordered to support his son until he was thirteen. Perhaps John Skelton was forced to leave Jane to find work to support a family, and she had delayed instigating proceedings in the expectation that he would still marry her? Perhaps the threat of proceedings was intended to push him into marriage? If so, it seems he still delayed, since their banns were not finally called until May 1880, at Morton, near Bingley, Yorkshire, giving Jane as 'of this parish'; she was said to be marrying John Wood Skelton 'of the parish of Bowness' and their marriage was duly registered at Wigton in 1880. Their son John was now aged about eighteen months but the new family unit did not survive for long; Jane had two more children but her husband died in 1887, before the posthumous birth of their third child. The illegitimate John was enumerated as Skelton while living with his parents in 1881 but in 1891, when he was visiting his father's family, he was named as Peel, as he was again in 1901, by which time he was working. He and his relatives may have believed that this, the name under which he was registered, was his correct legal name.

⁷ Kathleen Jones, *Seeking Catherine Cookson's 'Da': The Real Story of Finding Her Father* (Constable, 2004) 115.

Cohabitation, bigamy, adultery, divorce and incest

The expense of divorce would have made it well-nigh impossible for ordinary people at this time. Amongst all the people investigated, and their wider families in succeeding generations, I came across only two divorces, one in 1902 and one in the 1940s; neither were relevant to the principle people in this study. Some couples therefore resorted to cohabitation, bigamy or adultery, with illegitimacy the inevitable consequence for their offspring; some of the children investigated, although legally illegitimate, were the result of a long-term quasi-married relationship.

Cohabitation

‘Come, sweet Audrey. We must be married, or we must live in bawdry.’¹ As we have seen, pre-marital sex was plainly common in Addingham, but little is known about the extent of extra-marital relationships. Historians have reached differing conclusions about levels of cohabitation. Barry Reay concluded that perhaps 10-15% of his sample in Kent were cohabiting and presenting as man and wife, while John R. Gillis suggested common law unions were a ‘functioning alternative’ to marriage for perhaps one in seven couples in rural areas. Pat Thane thought it common and widely accepted and Keith Snell agreed that long term cohabitation was more frequent than is often supposed.² More recently, however, Rebecca Probert has concluded that it was unusual.³ My research would seem to support her view. Very few in this particular rural area lived ‘in bawdry.’ Perhaps, as Ginger Frost suggests, anonymity was harder to achieve in rural than urban areas.⁴ A marriage registration was found for nearly all Addingham couples; in 1861 it was possible to trace 86% of marriages for those living as a couple and claiming to be married and by 1911 this had risen to 100%. Table 7 below gives the figures for those living together and presenting themselves as a married couple in the separate townships.

It is probable that the true marriage figure for 1861 was even higher, and that the difficulties of tracking down a marriage at this earlier time are the reason for the lower figures. This preference for legal marriage is contrary to the view expressed by the Registrar-General in 1851, when he complained that:

Seduction and polygamy are greatly facilitated – concubinage is concealed by the appearance of marriage – under the law of Scotland; and in the North of England the bargain to live together, and to marry conditionally is very much encouraged by the facility of going into Scotland and being married. The degree in which that takes place in the border counties is incredible. English

¹ Shakespeare, *As You Like it*, Act 3, Scene 3, Touchstone.

² Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 209; John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the present* (Oxford UP, 1985) 110, 219; Pat Thane, *Happy families? History and family policy* (British Academy, 2011) 9; K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor, Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (Cambridge UP, 1985) 354-5.

³ Rebecca Probert and Liam D’Arcy Brown, ‘Westmorland Weddings: A Study of the 1787 Census’, *Family and Community History*, vol.16, no.1 (April 2013) 42; Rebecca Probert, “‘A Banbury Story’: cohabitation and marriage among the Victorian poor in “notorious Neithrop””, *Local Historian*, vol.44, no.4 (Oct 2014) 292, 295, 297.

⁴ Ginger S. Frost, *Living in Sin: cohabiting as husband and wife in nineteenth century England* (Manchester UP, 2008) 5; Elizabeth Ross concluded that in the poor districts of East London between 1870 and 1918, ‘a great many marrying couples were actually cohabiting when they set out for the church’: quoted in Thane, ‘Happy families?’, 27.

	1861	1861		1911	1911	
Township	Couples	Marr. found	%	Couples	Marr. found	%
Little Salkeld	20	19	95	15	15	100
Glassonby	24	22	92	24	24	100
Hunsonby & Winskill	31	26	84	45	45	100
Gamblesby	36	29	81	30	30	100
Addingham Parish	111	96	86	114	114	100

Table 7. Marriage registration of couples presenting as married in 1861 and 1911.

minors are legally married, without the consent of their guardians, in Scotland; and at Gretna Green, one important object of the English Marriage Act of 1753 is defeated.⁵

Perhaps Gretna, thirty miles north of Addingham, was just that bit too far for the Addingham population to travel, or perhaps, and I think this more probable, they really did place a high value on legal marriage.

Very few of the illegitimate children baptised in the parish appear to have been the result of a discernible cohabitation. Ginger Frost defined a couple as cohabiting if they lived 'as husband and wife' for a month or more,⁶ a definition both broader (in its very brief time frame) and narrower than that used in this study, in that it requires that they presented themselves as husband and wife, rather than, for example, hiding the reality under the description in the census, and therefore most probably in the community, of head and housekeeper. Visibility is the important issue here, and the marriage register (which gives addresses) may be more useful than that for baptisms (which gives only the township) but even when a couple are found living at the same address, we cannot assume a settled cohabitation. William Greenhow, from Gamblesby, and Mary Emma Wilson were living at the same address in Burnley when they married in 1893, and since their first child was baptised less than six months later, they may indeed have been cohabiting. Mary Ann KennedyJohnstone was born illegitimate in Stapleton, in north-east Cumberland, her mother having had four children at comparatively long intervals before finally marrying in 1881, but never, according to the census, living with a man until 1891. Mary Ann was shown on the 1901 census living in the same house as the man she married two months later, which was certainly unusual; however, since they were both boarders and their first child was baptised over two years after their marriage, this may be nothing more than the need for a local address in order to marry in the parish, since both were incomers.

The evidence of multiple births is not necessarily convincing proof of regular cohabitation. Although it has been suggested that unmarried women were far less likely than their married sisters to go on to have a second child,⁷ 21 per cent of the mothers in the biographies did

⁵ Report on the census of 1851, the first Registrar-General, William Farr, quoted in Thane, *Happy families?*, 19.

⁶ Frost, *Living in Sin*, 5; none of the local mothers in this study claimed that this type of cohabitation had been the case, when seeking to affiliate their child.

⁷ Rebecca Probert, *Cohabitation and Non-Marital Births in England and Wales, 1600-2012* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 2.

indeed have more than one illegitimate child and in only five cases does cohabitation seem to be the likely explanation, although a continuing, but not cohabiting, relationship with the father does seem likely in a number of other cases. In Culcheth, Gandy believed that a regular cohabitation, accepted both by the community and the church, allowed any children to be registered as legitimate and that an 'illegitimate' registration meant that the parents were not cohabiting; I have not found anything in the Addingham records to indicate a similar official acceptance of cohabitation and pseudo-legitimacy, although the local community may well have exhibited a flexibility of response to some of the situations recounted below.⁸

Three women in the study were unable to make a legal marriage to the father of their child, even had they so wished. Mary Jane GedlingCollinson was married at sixteen but separated soon after from her husband, who, as we have seen, emigrated to the United States. She then went on to have at least five children with John Slater, her stepfather, the second of whom was baptised at Addingham. John was named in school records as their father and he was summonsed by the education authorities for failing to send his children to school. Mary Jane and their children took his name on some of the censuses, although they were never recorded living together. When John died, the newspaper called Mary Jane his wife and there were no more children. Since the prohibited degrees for marriage at that time included the stepfather relationship, it led to an outraged comment in the baptism register from the vicar: 'woman separated from her husband, living in incestuous adultery with her deceased mother's husband named Slater'. Mary Jane may have had no idea what had happened to her husband, and certainly no hope of a divorce at this date; that difficulty, plus the charge of incest, were two very good reasons for taking the route of cohabitation. Mary Jane's mother was probably dead, and she already a deserted wife, before the relationship started; neighbours and friends, could be understanding and supportive of a genuine consensual relationship facing such difficulties.⁹ Nevertheless, since John Slater was thirty years older and had appeared in her life when she was only seventeen, this relationship, with its hints of abuse, may have been difficult for even a flexible local community to accept. The family soon left the parish and moved first to Langwathby and then to Penrith.

One local woman, having left her illegitimate child behind with her parents, married an elderly husband who had always lived with his equally elderly brother a few miles away. He died shortly after, leaving her a young widow, and she then lived with her brother-in-law as his housekeeper. By 1911, with the brother-in-law also dead, she was living with her children and a lodger. She bore three further children after the death of her husband, with the lodger named as the father on one birth certificate. When he died, she was granted probate and was described in his will as 'my housekeeper.' She was a widow, he was unmarried – they could seemingly have married. Perhaps they knew that they were related too closely to marry legally, that their relationship was, in fact, incestuous, since they shared the same father, who had acknowledged the lodger as his son in an affiliation application some twelve years before the birth of his legitimate daughter. Did they hold the erroneous belief, as some others did, that illegitimate half-siblings were not included in the laws of consanguinity that were intended

⁸ G. N. Gandy, *Illegitimacy in a Handloom Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culcheth, Lancs, 1781-1860*, D. Phil (Oxford, 1979) 391-2.

⁹ Frost, *Living in Sin*, 52, 55.

to prevent sexual relations between relatives?¹⁰ McLaughlin suggests that ‘the product of an incestuous relationship within a close family unit was treated as a leper, and generally died mysteriously as an infant’: the survival of the children of this couple seems to give the lie to this latter claim and to support the statistics on mortality in Chapter 3.¹¹ Whether they were treated as lepers, however, we cannot tell. Did they perhaps choose to live in a very remote hamlet to escape censure – or was it the very remoteness that created the circumstances leading to cohabitation? As Laurie Lee wrote of remote Slad ‘quiet incest flourished where the roads were bad’, although nobody complained to the authorities and ‘their crimes were absorbed in the local scene and their punishment confined to the parish.’¹² Perhaps, indeed, they did *not* know they were related, and were, instead, an example of the dangers of unintentional incest within a close-knit and settled community. Writing in 1907, Margaret Loane, district nurse and observer of working-class life, believed that ‘Even thirty years ago...absent relatives were soon lost sight of, and a generation was long enough to obscure the relationships of those living in different parts of the same parish.’ By 1907, however, she believed the poor had developed a ‘heightened awareness of kinship.’¹³ Joseph Blenkinship had three children by three different mothers, all living locally, while Thomas Gibson fathered two children by different mothers. Would community memory and sanctions have been sufficiently effective to prevent undesirable relationships?

At this date the law did not differentiate between affinal relationships (as with Mary Jane GedlingCollinson and John Slater) and consanguineous ones (as described above). Until 1908 incest was seen as a matter for the church rather than the courts, part of the church’s function in regulating marriage. A marriage within the prohibited degrees could be annulled but a cohabitation such as that of the widow and her lodger was seen as fornication rather than a criminal offence.¹⁴ After 1908, although some in-law marriages (such as between Mary Jane GedlingCollinson and John Slater) were still forbidden, they were no longer deemed incestuous.¹⁵ The cohabitation between widow and lodger, however, now became criminally incestuous, provided they knew of their relationship.¹⁶

Martha’s situation was very unusual. Between 1878, when she was 21, and 1892 she presented five babies for baptism in a parish near Wigton. During this time, and until 1901, she was enumerated on each census living with her family, including her grandfather (until his death in 1892) and older brother Henry. By 1901 she was living alone with Henry, both of them unmarried. In 1911, Henry having died, she was living alone with her two youngest children, one of whom subsequently married at Addingham; the marriage registration revealed her illegitimate status and prompted this investigation into her childhood. Just who was her father? The regular arrival of a new child must surely raise questions about incest or abuse. Martha was unable to sign her own name when she registered the birth of her daughter and

¹⁰ Frost, *Living in Sin*, 15.

¹¹ Eve McLaughlin, *Illegitimacy* (Varneys Press, 2009) 3.

¹² Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie* (Penguin, 1998) 206.

¹³ Quoted in George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: the English Home and Its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford UP, 1998) 122.

¹⁴ Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical Mobility, Cousin Marriage and Illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 150.

¹⁵ Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford UP, 2012) 219.

¹⁶ Sybil Wolfram, *In-laws and Outlaws: Kinship and Marriage in England* (Croom Helm, 1987) 3, 42-44.

yet that daughter managed to get an education that enabled her to attend a teacher-training college in Aberdeen, and to move out of the labouring classes and into the professional middle class. Was Martha actually in a relationship with some other man, who was able and willing to support his daughter but not able, or disposed, to live with her mother? Perhaps the rector, living next door to, and observing, this irregular household, would have had a good idea of the truth of the matter. Unfortunately, the Petty Sessions records for Wigton, which might have shown whether any affiliation proceedings were initiated, were lost in a fire.

The extent of incest in our period has been debated. F. M. L. Thompson believed that 'the incest taboo seems to have been as firmly held by the labouring as by other classes and...it is unlikely ever to have been anything other than exceptional.'¹⁷ However, in Kent it has been found that 'judges assumed that young girls assented to sexual relations', while 'Victorian courts rarely prosecuted incest cases with older girls as victims.' It is therefore difficult to assess the prevalence of incest within households since 'with the courts so hostile, few girls complained.'¹⁸ Victorian social researchers felt that incest was a common result of overcrowding in towns; the mother of the illegitimate Catherine Cookson was the subject of abuse in her Tyneside home by both her stepfather and her half-brother; 'incest, the invisible sin, was prevalent in the overcrowded dwellings of the poor – a crude local joke defined a virgin as "a lass that can run faster than her brother".'¹⁹ The small rural cottages of Addingham may also have put women at real risk of incest, although as we saw earlier, efforts were often made to maintain decent separation of the sexes.²⁰ Anthea Newman in her study of a parish in Kent concluded that 'three sisters all from the same family bearing bastards might suggest incest.'²¹ However, although three sisters in Gamblesby all bore illegitimate children, Esther named the putative father in seeking affiliation (and then married him) and Sarah probably also married the father of her child.

It is also entirely possible that others living together, perhaps as employer and housekeeper but making no claim to be husband and wife, were in fact cohabiting in a sexual relationship. Probert cautions against Davidoff's view that 'the position of housekeeper very easily ran into common law wife', suggesting instead that in interpreting census data 'the term should be taken at face value – as denoting someone engaged in housework – unless there is reason to suspect a more intimate relationship.'²² In Addingham there were many unmarried women described as 'housekeepers.' A child in the household may be suggestive of paternity and cohabitation but is inconclusive without other corroboration. Thomas Ellwood was employing the unmarried Mary Kidd as his housekeeper in 1851, while the child in his household, Mark Ellwood Kidd, was described as the son of the head, i.e. Thomas. Thomas was unmarried or possibly widowed; the entry has been amended to read the latter, perhaps to explain the presence of the boy. The census entry conceals the fact that Mary was his mother, since he was baptised as Mark, illegitimate son of Mary Kidd, single woman of Gamblesby, at Addingham

¹⁷ F. M. L. Thompson, 'Landowners and the Rural Community', ch.33 in Mingay, G. E., ed., *The Victorian Countryside*, 2 vols (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 470.

¹⁸ Frost, *Living in Sin*, 58.

¹⁹ James Walvin, *Victorian Values*, (Sphere, 1988) 129; Kathleen Jones, *Catherine Cookson*, (Little Brown, 1999) 61.

²⁰ See before, 51-53.

²¹ Anthea Newman, 'An evaluation of bastardy recordings in an east Kent parish', in Laslett, Peter, Oosterveen, Karla and Smith, Richard M. (eds) *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Edward Arnold, 1980) 153.

²² Probert, 'A Banbury Story', 293, 5.

in 1845; the clear statement of illegitimacy was rare and perhaps indicated a strong degree of disapproval on the part of the incumbent. His birth was registered as Mark Ellwood Kidd. There appears to be no reason why Mary Kidd did not marry the apparent father of her child; they were of similar age and both apparently unmarried. We have only the one census entry to go on, so it could, of course, be that this was not a genuine voluntary cohabitation, and that the middle name was chosen by Mary to allocate guilt and accountability, rather than paternal pride or acknowledgment – but then why did she not give it at baptism also? Thomas Ellwood cannot be found after 1851 but Mary and Mark continued to live together until her death, even after he married. In the 1861 census, Mary and Mark Ellwood [both *sic*] were still living in Melmerby, Mary unmarried and working as a general labourer, and Mark a scholar, both unusual occupations; I have not come across many women working as general labourers and most boys of fifteen, from this background, were working as servants on the local farms. However, as a result, Mark may well have been better educated than many, as evidenced by his appointment by the Post Office in August 1864 (named as Mark Ellwood Kidd) as a messenger from Melmerby to Kirkland. In 1871, Mary and Mark Kidd [both *sic*] were living together in Langwathby, she named as a widowed lodging-house keeper and Mark as a ‘timekeeper and clerk’; we learn from his obituary that this was in connection with the construction of the Settle-Carlisle Railway. When Mark married, in May 1875, he named his father as Thomas Kidd, farmer, which looks very much like a combination of his father’s Christian name with his own surname in order to produce something that looked correct, although we have no way of knowing whether the subterfuge was his, or his mother’s.

Barbara Sewell provides a rare clear case of either cohabitation or master/servant abuse. She was forced to admit in court in 1853, while seeking to affiliate her fifth illegitimate child upon Robert Goodfellow, a widower of Gamblesby, that she had already had four children, fathered by her master in Glassonby, by then deceased.²³ All of these children were baptised at Addingham between 1844 and 1850. It is possible to work out from these details that Matthew Harrison of Glassonby, who was living with his mother in 1841 but who died immediately before the census in 1851, was the likely father of these children, although not possible to be sure why they did not marry or whether she was a willing cohabitee. Only the last of the children was designated ‘illegitimate’ in the baptism register, significantly in a ceremony conducted not by the incumbent but by the rector of Melmerby.

Another possible case of cohabitation emerged by chance. Caroline Stubbs was born in 1805, the daughter of Mary Stubbs and Samuel Lacy, owner of Salkeld Hall and the only obvious member of the gentry in the parish. His paternity emerged almost by chance. Caroline was not only an unusual name in this area but also, rather oddly, the name of Lacy’s dead wife. Mary may well have been a servant subjected to abuse, or even in a consensual union; perhaps she was just not considered a suitable wife for a wealthy widower. She gave birth to a second daughter before dying, aged only 22. Of this second child there is no further trace, and indeed she may have had a different father. Everything indicates that Caroline was completely accepted as Lacy’s daughter; although she did not name her father on her marriage certificate, she did call her only child Samuel Lacy William Sanderson, putting her father’s names before those of her husband; the latter appears to have emigrated to the United States without her and probably

²³ CAS(C) QPL 13, 12 Oct. 1853; CAS(C) QPL 3, 25 Oct. 1853.

died there. Caroline and her father spent much time together, travelling back and forth to the Isle of Man, and she was provided for very generously in his will, which may indicate a genuine affection for her mother as well as for Caroline herself. She and her son lived at different times (but not, on the limited census evidence, together) in the house Samuel built for himself at Eden Lacy. Lacy's memorial in Addingham church states that it was erected by his grandson, Samuel Lacy William Sanderson, thus providing the first clue to the whole story. It is clear that Caroline was not ashamed to own the connection to the mother she never really knew; Mary Ann and Caroline, who died in 1870, lie next to each other in Addingham churchyard, where Mary Ann's memorial states that it was erected by her daughter Caroline. For these gentry folk, at least, shame did not seem to be an issue. Caroline's own son married very late, aged sixty, in 1891, but by then his wife had already had an illegitimate child, then aged nine, and had been presenting herself on the London census as Mrs Sanderson ten years before. This does look very like regular cohabitation, with a young woman set up in her own household by her rather older lover, but I have found no obvious explanation for their delayed marriage.

Bigamy has been found to be involved in only two cases of illegitimacy in Addingham, when a child was born following a bigamous marriage and was therefore probably legally illegitimate. The case of Ann Reay seems straightforward; her husband Thomas Atkinson had contracted an irregular, but valid, marriage at Gretna Green in 1838 and married Ann at Addingham shortly thereafter, in January 1839. In March he was taken before the magistrates for failing to support his wife, sentenced to three weeks in the lock-up and cautioned against marrying again by the overseer for Penrith. The exact sequence of events is unclear, but he was convicted of bigamy later that year and served six months with hard labour in Carlisle gaol; however, the couple seem to have stayed together, probably until his death in 1849, and had several children, all initially brought up in a family unit with both parents.²⁴

The case of Jane Ann LancasterGreenhow is altogether different and more complicated. She may or may not have known that the man she was about to marry, in 1902, was already married and had a wife and several children living in Burnley, despite describing himself on the marriage certificate as a widower. William Greenhow was born in Gamblesby in 1863 and brought up in the parish before moving to Burnley at some point in the 1880s. He married there in 1893; as we saw earlier, both he and Mary Emma, his wife, were resident at the same address and were perhaps already cohabiting. Jane Ann Lancaster had two children before she 'married', the first in 1892 (before William's marriage) and the second in 1897, neither with a father named at their baptism. William's legitimate children were born in 1894, 1895, 1898, and possibly 1899 and 1901. Jane Ann had another child in 1902 (after her bigamous marriage) and then William's next child with Emma was Arthur, born in 1903 and baptised 16 August 1903 in Burnley; the vicar conducting the baptism was Thomas Westgarth, who had himself been born in Hunsonby in 1869, but was the incumbent of St Andrew's, Burnley, between 1902 and 1904. Westgarth still had family in Hunsonby and may have known of William Greenhow in his childhood; had he not heard about William's other 'wife'? Jane Ann had another child in 1904 and Elsie was then born to William and Mary Emma in 1905 and was baptised that year, on the same day as her much older sister Mabel.

²⁴ *CJ*, 10 Aug. 1839, 4. Magistrates, who had to cope with the poor law implications of illegitimate children, could be harder than the judiciary in such cases: Frost, *Living in Sin*, 87-93, discusses differing approaches.

Finally, Fred was born in August 1908. The sequence of births may well indicate a situation where William moved back and forth between two women, rather than a settled cohabitation with Jane Ann, and it seems likely that he probably spent most of his time in Burnley. By 1911 Jane Ann was enumerated in Hunsonby as a widow, while Mary Emma, still describing herself as married, was lodging with her children in a household that did not include William. It rather looks as if both had been deserted. In 1939 William was a retired gamekeeper living on his own in Nelson but designated as married.

It is possible that there were other cases of bigamy. People could move away from their area in order to get married and the clergyman would have to take their word for their marital status. I have found marriage registrations for nearly all the couples living in Addingham but there still remains the possibility that some were just as invalid as those described, and that their children were therefore not identified as illegitimate.²⁵ Only research into the background of Jane Ann Lancaster's 'husband', or the newspaper evidence relating to Ann ReayAtkinson, serves to alert the researcher to the possibility. Both the Anglican church and the state considered the children of a bigamous union legitimate, if one party was unaware that the marriage was bigamous and therefore there remains the possibility that Jane Ann Lancaster had no idea that William Greenhow was not free to marry, and that the children were actually legitimate.²⁶ The decision to marry at the register office in Penrith, and the choice of two young farm servants with no known connection to Addingham as their witnesses, does make it look as if something was being concealed, but we cannot tell if this was hidden from Jane Ann as well as the wider community. Ann ReayAtkinson, too, may have been unaware at the time that she was marrying a married man but could plead no such ignorance after her husband's conviction.

Adultery is even harder to detect. The vicar of Addingham, knew of 'no infractions' of conjugal fidelity in 1861, while the vicar of Melmerby found 'Adultery is unknown but Bastardy is too common.'²⁷ No doubt, then as now, children were conceived by married women in an adulterous relationship and brought up within her family by her husband; he may have known and accepted the child or may have been deceived just as much as the modern researcher. Jane Ann HopeSlee, having been deserted by her husband, was perhaps committing adultery when she conceived her last child, although as we have seen earlier, Robert Robinson Slee may possibly have briefly returned. Mary Jane GedlingCollinson, separated from her husband, was probably adulterous as well as legally incestuous in her relationship with her stepfather, John Slater. One other case emerged with a tangential connection to Addingham. Margaret Kitching, then of Hunsonby, alleged at the Penrith Petty Sessions in August 1872 that Thomas Blenkarn of Keisley, Westmorland, was the father of her son, John, born almost four years earlier, in November 1868. She gave proof that he had supported the child within twelve months of his birth, evidence that was necessary as there was usually a twelve-month limit after the birth for making an application for affiliation. Margaret seems to have been determined not to allow Thomas Blenkarn to ignore his responsibility.

However, pencilled in at the top of the page recording the allegation, is the comment 'order cannot be made.' Perhaps she was too late, or perhaps the Penrith court did not have jurisdiction – I believe the baby was registered at Kendal. In 1871 the infant John was living with his maternal grandparents at Crackenthorpe, Westmorland, while his mother was working

²⁵ Frost, *Living in Sin*, 72, writes that only about 1 in 5 cases made it to court.

²⁶ Day, *Wiltshire*, 215; Laslett et al., *Bastardy*, 74.

²⁷ CAS(C) DRC Acc HC 3966, 1861, Addingham and Melmerby.

as a servant at Ellercow, within the parish of Addingham and the township of Hunsonby, thus making her temporarily 'of Hunsonby.' He was registered at Langwathby School in 1875 but died in 1876. The most likely Thomas Blenkarn was a married farmer of 240 acres, with a wife and four children, living in Keisley, near Dufton in Westmorland in 1871. His eldest child was eight, so he must have been married when Margaret's child was born. The naming of a married man at an affiliation hearing was unusual, although as we have seen with Henry Bleamires Metcalf, not unknown.²⁸ Were married men more likely to offer voluntary support to avoid a court case, as Thomas Blenkarn had originally done? Or did women know that there was less chance of them getting a verdict in their favour, since a consensual relationship with a married man would render it more difficult to maintain the advantageous image of an innocent maiden?

We have examined, as far as is possible with limited records, how the women of Addingham found themselves pregnant and unmarried. Perhaps the only general conclusion that can be reached about the group as a whole is that the routes to unmarried motherhood were many and varied: some probably conformed to one of the two suggested Victorian stereotypes of 'passive, exploited female, and the sexually aggressive harlot', but most probably did not.²⁹ These are the extremes, and extremes are not helpful to understanding the typical; many explanations were probably banal, muddled, a confusion of motivations and actions, as individual as the women (and men) themselves.

²⁸ See before, 60-61.

²⁹ Levene, Alys, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 15.

The Mothers: After Conception

Managing the Situation

Each woman, pregnant and unmarried, would have been forced to consider her options. For some it would have spelt disaster and hardship, for others merely a trip to church to tie the knot as expected. Using examples from the Biographies, this section considers:

- Abortion
- Infanticide or abandonment of the child
- The workhouse
- Marriage
- Remaining unmarried
- Affiliation
- Adoption and fostering
- The role of the extended family

Abortion

The woman found herself pregnant. What should she do? Some, the most desperate and alone, will undoubtedly have considered abortion but this, by its very nature, is almost impossible for the historian to examine. If successful, and the mother avoided detection, there is no documentary evidence, while if she failed there was probably only an innocuous-looking record of an illegitimate baptism. It is possible that some young women would have died as a result, but as cause of death is not given in the burial registers, this has been impossible to determine without buying actual death certificates.

I have chosen to treat abortion as an option after conception, and quite separate from the question of contraception intended to prevent it, although as Angus McLaren makes clear, it was 'for a number of reasons a logical form of birth control for the working-class woman to adopt.' Elizabeth Roberts believed the extent of abortion before 1914 impossible to estimate: the evidence is 'simply not available.'¹ However, Patricia Knight considered that the practice was widespread and an 'accepted part of working-class life' although 'like birth control, abortion was less frequently attempted in rural districts, partly because of problems of obtaining information and remedies.' She concluded that both birth control and abortion were more likely to be attempted by married women, keen to control the size of their family, than by the young and unmarried.² Until the Ellenborough Act of 1803, abortion did not constitute a statutory offence, and even then, the new law did not see the aborting of an unquickened foetus (i.e. before the mother had felt the foetus move) as a serious crime.³ However, an act of 1837 made abortion at any stage of pregnancy a punishable offence, with a maximum sentence of transportation for life. This was made more stringent still by a further act in 1861.⁴ The Church of England regarded procuring a miscarriage as a mortal sin, 'a grievously sinful attempt to destroy the life which God has given.'⁵ Despite this, the continuing belief that life did not begin until 'quickening' permitted many women, and even some doctors, to continue to view the inducing of an early miscarriage as a simple restoration of the normal menstrual regularity.⁶

Many commercial products were available that promised to do this, and there were adverts for such products in the *Carlisle Journal* as early as 1803.⁷ A search for the term 'abortion' revealed a large number of reports in the local newspapers (but not all relating to local cases) which described the various methods attempted; a literate person could have acquired knowledge in this way, although as most of the reports are of inquests, they might have doubted its safety.⁸ Recipes were also printed using commonly available herbs, such as pennyroyal (menthe

¹ Angus McLaren, *Birth Control in Nineteenth-Century England* (Holmes and Meier, 1978) 244; Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890-1940* (Blackwell, 1984) 97.

² Patricia Knight, 'Women and Abortion in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *History Workshop*, no.4 (Autumn 1977) 57-58.

³ R. Sauer, 'Infanticide and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Population Studies*, vol.32, no.1 (Mar. 1978) 84.

⁴ Sauer, 'Infanticide', 84; Margaret Arnot, 'Infant death, child care and the state: the baby-farming scandal and the first infant life protection legislation of 1872', *Continuity and Change*, vol.9, no.2 (1994) 304, note 29.

⁵ Knight, 'Women and Abortion', 62-3.

⁶ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 31, 123.

⁷ *CJ*, 12 Feb. 1803, 1; see also *CP*, 11 Aug. 1860, 2.

⁸ See, for example, *Herald*, 16 Jul. 1861, 2.

pulegium), that promised to provoke 'women's courses.' A report from the British Medical Association described these so-called 'female medicines' as 'one of the largest classes of proprietary nostrums, and one in which most of the evils connected with secret medicines may be seen at their worst.' Many were 'the subject of more or less thinly veiled recommendations that they should be used for cutting short an unwelcome pregnancy, and although some of them would be but little likely to be efficacious for this purpose, some contain irritants which are highly dangerous.'⁹ A search of the Penrith newspapers for the many brands named in the report revealed adverts for 'female pills' available by post throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.¹⁰

Historians have reached different conclusions in assessing the efficacy of these remedies. McLaren believes that 'the very fact that certain drugs were recommended by midwives and older women generation after generation implies that some were found to be relatively effective.'¹¹ Moreover, 'the low illegitimacy rate of the factory towns of Lancashire was frequently attributed to working-class women's recourse to abortifacients', part of a 'widespread tradition of abortion based on folk remedies.'¹² Rose writes that public concern was increasing from the 1890s onwards about the widespread knowledge of the methods to procure an abortion, which was linked by some to a rising level of infant mortality caused by the resulting premature births.¹³ However, Hera Cook in her study of contraception notes that while 'some of the ingredients [of traditional recipes] did possess abortifacient or contraceptive properties', 'by the late nineteenth century the knowledge required to make effective and safe potions from plants was lost, if it had ever existed.'¹⁴ This didn't stop people trying. The regular advertising of such products in the press indicates a ready market for such preparations. In 1898, a trio of London criminals, having advertised and sold useless products to desperate women, then sought to blackmail customers, sending off over 8,000 letters demanding money and receiving over 3,000 replies in a few days.¹⁵

Only one Addingham case of a possible attempt at abortion has been uncovered. Frances Dent was accused in 1889 of unlawfully abandoning a child under the age of 2 years 'whereby its life was endangered'; at her trial it was revealed that Mrs Ann Hodgson, her employer's wife, had had her suspicions that Frances was pregnant, but she denied it. When Mrs Hodgson found her feeling ill one morning, she advised her to 'take some pills and castor oil', and to go to bed. Later that afternoon she came across her in the stackyard and told her to go into the house. Her husband then found the baby dumped outside, under a pile of leaves. It was established at the subsequent trial that the baby was premature. The judge, in speaking to the jury, said that Frances 'was to be pitied, because the medicine given with the kindest

⁹ British Medical Association, *More Secret Remedies: what they cost and what they contain*, 2nd series (British Medical Association, 1912) 184-5.

¹⁰ The adverts seem to cease about 1910 but there was a brief resumption of one named brand, now promoting itself as remedy 'for ladies for Anaemia and Lassitude', in the 1950s.

¹¹ McLaren, *Birth Control*, 34.

¹² McLaren, *Birth Control*, 81, 232.

¹³ Lionel Rose, *The massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 134.

¹⁴ Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (Oxford UP, 2004) 44.

¹⁵ McLaren, *Birth Control* 231-40.

intention by Mrs Hodgson had probably brought on premature confinement.¹⁶ Castor oil was a known abortifacient and, as we have seen, it was possible to buy pills for 'regulating' delayed menstruation.¹⁷

The case raises several issues: could an employer honestly claim to be ignorant of a servant's pregnancy and the birth of a child in her own house, which is a repeated feature of such accounts? Rural Addingham may have been a place where 'women's bodies were subject to public scrutiny', where the 'ruthless efficiency of the rural community [would discover] illegitimate mothers in their midst', but Mrs Hodgson, at least, may well have turned a blind eye to the situation until forced to confront it.¹⁸ Was Mrs Hodgson's intent 'kindly' in the sense of seeking to alleviate Frances's illness, as the judge's direction sought to imply, or in the sense of helping her to get rid of the child by her desire and with her consent, or actually malevolent in bringing on an abortion without Florence knowing or understanding what she was taking with the pills and castor oil? Even the judge accepted that the medication and the subsequent birth were connected. Although the newspaper account claimed that the unnamed child was premature, and it was certainly of a low birth weight, it had lived for two days. It was named as Margaret in the coroner's court, she was buried at Addingham, and both her birth and death were registered.

¹⁶ *Herald*, 9 Nov. 1889, 8; *CP*, 22 Nov. 1889, 7.

¹⁷ Ann Elizabeth Davidson, a woman from Skirwith, a parish adjoining Addingham, had been working in Addingham in 1861. Later, in 1874, she apparently took potions and succeeded in bringing on a miscarriage, but died shortly after: see *Herald*, 17 Jan. 1874, 4.

¹⁸ Anne-Marie Kilday and Katherine D. Watson, 'Infanticide, religion and community in the British Isles, 1720-1920: introduction', *Family and Community History*, vol.11, no.2 (Nov. 2008) 89.

Infanticide or abandonment of the child

A bortion may have been tried and the attempt been unsuccessful, or the woman may have lacked the knowledge or the wish to attempt that route out of her dilemma; some will have been ignorant of what was happening to their bodies or trying to ignore what was becoming obvious. Whatever the reason, some new mothers found themselves alone, with a new-born child and no preparations made for its care. Some may have attempted to conceal the birth, to abandon the baby, or to commit infanticide. This is commonly taken to mean the murder of a new-born child, although the legal definition covers children up to a year old.

An Act of 1624 laid down that unless the mother could prove by one witness that the child had been born dead, she was guilty of murder and liable to the death penalty. In 1803, the law was amended to create the offence, initially for single women only, of 'concealment of birth'; this carried a lower sentence of a maximum of two years' imprisonment in the hope that the change would result in juries being more willing to convict of the lesser offence.¹ Judges in the nineteenth century were often sympathetic in their summing up and directions, while juries were unwilling to convict an unmarried mother of infanticide, with its inevitable consequence of a conviction for murder and a possible death penalty; indeed 'many members of male juries probably shifted uncomfortably in their seats when confronted with the tragic results of another man's sexual transgressions.'²

Some of the opponents of the 1834 new Poor Law based their opposition upon worries that the infanticide rate would rise as a result of women no longer being able to rely upon support from the putative father or from their parish. They feared that desperation would lead them to murder their own child. In 1845 Benjamin Disraeli was convinced that:

There are great bodies of the working classes of this country nearer the condition of brutes than they have been at any time since the Conquest...Incest and infanticide are as common among them as among the lower animals. The domestic principle wanes weaker and weaker every year in England.³

The novel *Adam Bede*, in which the willingly-seduced Hetty Sorrel abandons her baby to its death, testifies to mid-nineteenth century concerns that the problem was real and growing, a concern justified by the national statistics. Between 1838 and 1840, 76 infants aged less than one year were reported as murdered in England and Wales, between 1852 and 1858 the annual average was 78, and by 1866, when returns were more accurate, the number of convictions had risen to 166. Such figures may well have been an understatement, given that they relate only to those mothers who were both discovered and convicted: it has been suggested that a multiplier of 2.5 would provide a more realistic estimate.⁴ Between 1863 and 1887, 63% of homicide cases involved infants under a year, whereas in 1977 the figure was 6.1%; 'mid-Victorian infants clearly were more apt to be killed than people of all other age groups combined.'⁵ As with so

¹ Anne-Marie Kilday and Katherine D. Watson, 'Infanticide, religion and community in the British Isles, 1720-1920: introduction', *Family and Community History*, vol.11, no.2 (Nov. 2008) 93.

² Margaret Arnot, 'Infant death, child care and the state: the baby-farming scandal and the first infant life protection legislation of 1872', *Continuity and Change*, vol.9, no.2 (1994) 298.

³ Quoted in Pat Thane, *Happy families? History and family policy* (British Academy, 2011) 62.

⁴ Russell Grigg, 'Getting away with murder? Infanticide in Wales, 1730-1908', *Local Historian*, vol.44, no.2 (Apr. 2014) 127.

⁵ George K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford UP, 1982) 18.

much else in this research, however, historians have differed in their assessments. Josephine McDonagh, for example, sees the figures as a 'statistical "mirage"' and the 'epidemic a strangely ephemeral affair, a phantom of public opinion', promoted by coroners keen to enhance their own importance.⁶ From 1915 onwards all births, including stillbirths, had to be notified to the Medical Officer of Health within 36 hours, allowing a health visitor to call round to check that all was well. In 1922, infanticide became a distinct offence, with the death penalty abolished for infanticide while the balance of the mind was disturbed as a result of giving birth.

Like abortion, examples of infanticide, or the lesser crime of concealment of birth, are very difficult to detect in official records. The data on which this study is based relies largely on the registration of the *baptism* of a living child. The Registrar-General in 1842, again quoting 'one of the ablest statistical writers of the present day' was clear that the 'invariable fact [is] that the mortality among the illegitimate is far greater than among the legitimate, and that many more of them are still-born.'⁷ If the baby was stifled at birth and the mother succeeded in disposing of it, we have no way of knowing that it existed at all. Midwives could be complicit – some thought the baby a 'trouble to the mother from which she would be well relieved' and therefore from 1926 all stillbirths were required to be registered to alleviate fears that 'unscrupulous midwives and maternity home proprietors colluded in disposing of live babies after declaring them to be stillborn.'⁸

If the child lived but died unbaptised, it was probably not entered in the burial register either: 'the burial of babies' bodies in back gardens was neither unknown nor illegal' and happened not only for those who met a violent death, as it saved on burial fees.⁹ The chances of an unbaptised baby being picked up by the census soon after birth, thus alerting the investigator to a civil birth registration record, are low. These were circumstances that could on occasion be totally hidden from the authorities, and thus remain hidden to the historian now. However, Kate Gibson suggests that we should be cautious about 'overemphasising abandonment and infanticide as the majority experience due to the richness of the sources', such as those for the Foundling Hospital.¹⁰ In the case of a parish study such as this, the personal accounts are more limited than for such a large institution and we cannot know how many cases we may be missing. Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that the local press suggested that the difficulty of concealing a birth in a small village (as opposed to a large town) might well account for the higher-than-average local registration of illegitimate births.¹¹

Commonly-used soothing syrups for infants often contained alcohol and at least one included morphine, raising the question whether they were used with or without the intention to harm.¹² Thomas Wakley, the prominent Middlesex coroner 'notorious for his rigorous

⁶ Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900* (Cambridge UP, 2003) 126.

⁷ Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, 1842, BBP, 1844 (540) xxiv., quoting D. Chr. Bernoulli. The Penrith Workhouse register of births is the only place where local stillbirths can be identified before 1927: CAS(C) SPU/P 128-129.

⁸ Lionel Rose, *The massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 88; Ruth Paley, *My Ancestor was a Bastard* (Society of Genealogists, 2011) 22.

⁹ Rose, *Massacre*, 105.

¹⁰ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018) 18.

¹¹ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864.

¹² British Medical Association, *More Secret Remedies: what they cost and what they contain*, 2nd series (British Medical Association, 1912) 147-151.

investigations', concluded that 'only a tiny proportion of children supposedly overlain in bed had actually been killed by the pressure of persons sleeping with them.' Coroners had to be alive to all possibilities, since as Behlmer points out, 'infanticide could be accomplished by omission as well as commission.'¹³ However, infant deaths were not unusual and were probably more often the result of ignorance and poverty than they were of intent: babies died from all sorts of causes and disease, neglect, poor feeding and overlying, intentional or otherwise, were common.

The death of an illegitimate child may have been a loss and a sorrow to the mother; alternatively, whether deliberate or not, it may have been a relief, with any stain of illegitimacy removed, the past hidden and one less mouth to feed, and thus an opportunity to move on with their lives unencumbered. We can only guess at the feelings of the Addingham mothers and wonder about the circumstances.

The East Cumberland coroner's records indicate how many deaths were brought to the attention of the authorities. He investigated 71 instances of the sudden death of an illegitimate baby between the years 1877 to 1928 and ordered inquests to be held for 51. When these figures are looked at in decades (Table 8), although the numbers are small, there does, nevertheless, seem to have been a distinct diminution around the turn of the century and then an increase beginning in 1908.

Year	No. sudden infant deaths	No. inquests
1877-1886	21	16
1887-1896	16	14
1897-1906	6	4
1907-1916	16	10
1917-1926	12	7

Table 8. Inquests upon illegitimate babies, 1877-1928: CAS(C) TCR1/1-3, East Cumberland Coroner, Abstract Book of Inquests 1877-1928.

Several explanations come to mind for this reduction in deaths arousing sufficient suspicion for the coroner to be involved. The mothers were perhaps becoming more knowledgeable about how to procure an abortion; it has even been suggested that infanticide was no longer seen as a big problem because 'comparatively safe abortion' was more widely available.¹⁴ Perhaps they may simply have been more successful at concealing the birth and disposing of the body, although this seems unlikely, or perhaps they had a better chance of marriage at this time and were thus less desperate, so that fewer babies were murdered. None of these suggestions would explain why the numbers rose again after 1908. However, this increase coincided with the Children's Act 1908, which sought to regulate baby-farming and wet nursing and introduced

¹³ George K. Behlmer, 'Deadly Motherhood: Infanticide and Medical Opinion in Mid-Victorian England', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, vol.34, no.4 (Oct. 1979) 409, 412.

¹⁴ R. Sauer, 'Infanticide and Abortion in Nineteenth century Britain', *Population Studies*, vol.32, no.1 (Mar. 1978) 92.

the registration of foster parents. The laudable intention was to stamp out infanticide by the supposed carers; is it possible that in East Cumberland it left women with fewer informal options to board out their infants, and thus made babies even more vulnerable? It has also been suggested that nationally there may at this time have been a 'greater police vigilance and a lower public tolerance of infant disposal', which may have led to more cases being notified to the coroner.¹⁵

Out of the 236 children in the Biographies, it has been ascertained that seventeen (7.2%) died under the age of one year, of which eight (3.4%) were under one month. Only three aroused the suspicions of the authorities, as far as it is possible to tell, but it remains possible that some others investigated also died an early and possibly unnatural death, since fifteen have not been traced beyond the record of their birth or baptism. No local Addingham cases extra to those already identified from other sources were found in the coroner's records and in the three cases pertaining to women resident in Addingham (none of whom were baptised there), the mothers seem to have been treated with clemency by the legal system. The local inquest records generally demonstrate an unwillingness to convict mothers of a crime; phrases such as 'no evidence of life', 'no evidence of violence', 'accidentally overlaid' indicate both the difficulty, with the prevailing state of medical knowledge, of being certain of the cause of death but also the uncertainty that surrounded motive. In the early years of the period under investigation, babies were usually identified as illegitimate and the mother was frequently named but by the end neither baby nor mother, even when known, was named. In the years 1877-1926, only two verdicts of 'wilful murder' were found, neither relating to Addingham.

The inquest on Mary Jane Wilson, born illegitimate in Glassonby in 1885 to Mary Wilson, raises the likelihood of neighbours noticing something unusual, or possibly criminal, and then reporting it. Technically speaking, a suspicious death had to be formally notified to the coroner before he could act. Somebody local must have approached the local magistrates, since they then encouraged the coroner to open an inquest, even though the child had already been buried.

According to testimony given at the inquest in September 1886, Mary left the baby in the care of Dinah Greenhow, a woman with three illegitimate children of her own, who worked variously as a rag sorter at the Kirkoswald paper mill and as a charwoman. Mary did not visit the child and Dinah could not manage when Mary failed to keep up her payments; death was particularly likely to occur when payments ceased.¹⁶ In August 1886, the impoverished Dinah took the baby to Penrith, where she found Mary Wilson staying with friends, who were apparently ignorant of the child's existence.

Mary claimed that her desire for secrecy then caused her to set off to visit her mother in Glassonby, a walk of eight hours through an August night, during which time the child cried incessantly and had neither food nor water. By the time she arrived at 4 a.m. the baby was dead. The coroner initially decided that an inquest was not necessary, but he then received further information, causing him two weeks later to order that the body be exhumed and an inquest held. Mary does not feature on any parish records and seems not to have been a local person. Since the neighbourhood could be 'a locus of protective surveillance for women' but one distrusting of outsiders, it is possible that her mother's neighbours were not only more

¹⁵ Rose, *Massacre*, 167.

¹⁶ Sauer, *Infanticide*, 87.

suspicious but also less understanding of her than they would have been of a local woman.¹⁷ Mary told the court there had been no attempt to affiliate the baby because the father was abroad. The coroner was sympathetic, saying that she had given her evidence in a 'very candid and straightforward manner' and that the sympathies of the jurors must be with the mother 'who had been placed in a very trying position', and had 'decided to adopt a very natural course' in taking the child to her mother. A verdict was returned of natural causes, caused by convulsions accelerated by exposure. There is no Addingham record of the child being either exhumed or re-buried.¹⁸

Would we think this the sensible action of a caring mother or the desperate resort of an unwilling one, who had apparently kept the baby's existence from her friends, whose own mother would not take her in (according to the evidence of Dinah Greenhow), and who had, indeed, not bothered to visit her baby at all from Whitsun to August 1886? Was it neglectful at best and criminal at worst? It is difficult for the historian, reading inquest accounts after all this time, to reach a conclusion. I have failed to trace Mary Wilson thereafter – the name is too common.

An article in 1856 claimed that:

In the farmer class, the girl, if the man repents of his bargain, has the action for seduction and breach of promise to fall back upon – in the labouring classes, it seems to be the rule that infanticide should clear off the score. We say "the rule", because judging from the newspaper reports, the thing has grown into the compactness and order of a recognised system....She goes about her daily work – she suppresses every natural emotion – she becomes a mother without a single shriek; and after depositing her "birth-strangled babe" in the nearest dunghill or well, or concealing it under the mattress, she goes about her work as if nothing had happened.¹⁹

This contemporary view, that infanticide was a rational choice, made by a cold-hearted woman, a system to 'clear off the score', is quite hard to stomach in the twenty-first century, when we are more likely to interpret it as an act of desperation. However, we have to consider whether such murderous intent did apply to Frances Dent and Jane Story, two other women, whose cases came before the courts. Frances has already been discussed in the context of abortion,²⁰ but after the coroner's court had given a verdict of 'sudden death' she was charged at the Petty Sessions in October 1889 with abandoning a child under the age of one day 'whereby its life was endangered.' The newspaper reports described her as 'delicate-looking young girl'. Her defending solicitor said that she lacked a motive for killing the child, for, although the courtship had resulted in a pregnancy,

as it too frequently does among husbandry servants...the fact of her giving birth to a child before marriage would not be considered a very serious matter among people of her class and, besides, her sweetheart was ready and willing to marry her and make her what is called an honest woman.

¹⁷ Katherine D. Watson, 'Religion, community and the infanticidal mother: evidence from 1840s rural Wiltshire', *Family and Community History*, vol.11, no.2 (Nov. 2008) 122; Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie* (Penguin, 1998) 95–98, describes a situation where the local community in Slad colluded to successfully protect a group of local men who had conspired to commit murder: 'They were not treated as outcasts, nor did they appear to live under any special strain. They belonged to the village and the village looked after them.'

¹⁸ See inquest reports: *CP*, 3 Sept 1886, 7; *Observer*, 7 Sept. 1886, 6.

¹⁹ Aeron Hunt, 'Calculations and Concealments: Infanticide in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol.34, no.1 (2006) 73, quoting *Saturday Review*, 9 Aug. 1856; see also Samantha Williams, 'The Experience of Pregnancy and Childbirth for Unmarried Mothers in London, 1760–1866', *Women's History Review*, vol.20, no.1 (2011) 67–86, for many examples of women charged with infanticide.

²⁰ See before, 78–9.

The defence tried hard to present Frances as a frightened child: 'The fact of her having given evasive answers and of having denied the fact altogether is only what might be expected of any young girl'; 'thinking the child dead the mother in her fright and pain would think it no crime to leave it as it was found.' And her solicitor twisted the doctor's evidence to cast doubt upon the idea that the child's life was endangered by being left in the yard, suggesting instead that it was in any case underweight and 'very weakly.' The magistrates were not convinced and Frances was referred to the next assizes at Carlisle in November 1889. The assize judge, taking the same line as her defence, was very sympathetic and directed the jury to find her not guilty.²¹ By 1891 Frances was working in Maulds Meaburn as a general servant and still unmarried. Thereafter I cannot trace her.

Jane Story, brought up in an impoverished family in Penrith, was 20 when she was charged in 1916 with concealment of a birth, having given birth alone, at night, in her bedroom while employed on a farm at Hunsonby. She said she heard the baby cry once but she then lapsed into unconsciousness and remembered nothing more until she came around and found the baby dead on the floor. She then laid the fire downstairs, before throwing the infant into the farm pond, where a farm hand saw the body but made no attempt to retrieve it, calling instead for the local policeman, who pulled the body out. Her employer knew his servant was pregnant, as did two other employees and had, he said, noticed a change in her condition on the morning of the discovery. The doctor believed the child was alive when thrown in the pond but did not believe he had drowned. The coroner suggested a verdict of inattention at birth and 'that the mother was for some time after in a state of coma' and the jury, all local men, took only five minutes to agree; at the subsequent trial at Carlisle Assizes Jane was bound over and liberated.²² In all these three cases, the child had clearly been born alive, which was necessary to prove infanticide, but the authorities were sympathetic in dealing with the mothers.

Perhaps these three women, none of them brought up in Addingham or the surrounding parishes, had no family on whom to fall back in their worry and distress, and carried on working when some servants would have returned home. Employers were often denounced for immediately dismissing a pregnant servant and young women 'were usually only employed on the basis that they remained single and childless. The loss of reputation to a household employing an unmarried pregnant servant would rarely be tolerated; she would inevitably be dismissed without a reference' and thus infanticide by a desperate mother might be more likely.²³ However, dismissal was not universal. Neither Frances Dent nor Jane Story, both working for ordinary Addingham farmers, was immediately dismissed, despite their employers strongly suspecting that they were pregnant. Edith Tapley, employed by the wealthiest family in the parish, was, indeed, actively supported by her employers when she became pregnant, rather than dismissed.²⁴ In 1866, an employer in the next-door parish of Skirwith aided concealment, by giving orders to his servants that the body was 'to be put away somewhere.' The servants buried the child in a field but later had second thoughts and reported the burial. The

²¹ *Herald*, 26 Oct. 1889, 4; 9 Nov. 1889, 8; *CP*, 22 Nov. 1889, 7.

²² *Herald*, 21 Oct. 1916, 1; 4 Nov. 1916; *Observer*, 7 Nov. 1916, 6.

²³ Anne-Marie Kilday, 'Desperate Measures or Cruel Intentions; Infanticide in Britain since 1600', ch.3 in Anne-Marie Kilday and David Nash, *Histories of Crime: Britain 1600-2000* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 69.

²⁴ See after, 115-116; see also Francoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria: Sexuality and Desire Among Working-Class Men and Women in Nineteenth-Century London*, trans by John Howe (Penguin, 1991) 172-3.

employer carried on employing the girl and later agreed to stand bail for his servant until her trial for concealment at the assizes, where she pleaded guilty and was sentenced to one week's imprisonment with hard labour, a sympathetic verdict at that time, in the circumstances.²⁵

One other case has also emerged from the study. The mother of John George Stephenson, who spent part of his childhood fostered in the parish, had already been convicted of manslaughter before his birth in Penrith. In 1894, married with two children (the first illegitimate) but separated from her husband, Isabella Stephenson was convicted of the manslaughter (reduced from wilful murder) of her third baby, also born illegitimate. She had left him exposed in fields near the workhouse but with their manslaughter verdict the jury showed a degree of sympathy to a woman 'who had been disgraced by a man, deserted, and starved.'²⁶ She served five years' penal servitude. In 1901, released from prison, she was living with her parents, and her two older children in a yard in Penrith, where she gave birth in 1902 to John George, her fourth (and third illegitimate) child. The workhouse Guardians were sufficiently worried about his safety to admit him to the workhouse on his own in 1906.²⁷

²⁵ *CJ*, 20 Mar. 1866, 2; 20 July 1866, 3. Many were sympathetic, including Charles Dickens, when he served on a coroner's inquest jury, and 'helped to get the sentence on an unmarried girl accused of killing her baby lightened': Claire Tomalin, *The Invisible Woman: the story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (Penguin, 1991) 85.

²⁶ *Observer*, 30 Oct. 1894, 3.

²⁷ See after, 147-8, for further details of John George's difficult life.

The workhouse

We have no way of knowing how many conceptions might have been successfully aborted or naturally miscarried, but all the mothers in our investigation reached the stage where they were soon to give birth. Some, perhaps the very young, or those with less familial support, those with their heads in the sand or with no real understanding of what was happening to them, gave birth alone; this was the case, as we have seen, with Frances Dent and Jane Story and was perhaps also true of others lacking a family connection to the parish.

An alternative possibility was recourse to the workhouse. Was this the choice for the average unmarried mother? Many recent historians certainly seem to think so; it has been suggested that 'illegitimacy was a major trigger for women entering the workhouse, and was the reason many children were abandoned and grew up in the workhouse.'¹ And again 'Within living memory, mothers of illegitimate children were consigned to the workhouse' and 'Unmarried women had no alternative to the workhouse, where they were separated from the child at the age of three months...mother and child had to remain in the workhouse until the child was sixteen or able to support itself.'² And yet again that '...by the mid-nineteenth century...probably well over fifty thousand children a year were born out of wedlock, most ending up in the workhouse – if they survived.'³ And again, that in 1880, 'five per cent of births were still out of wedlock and likely to take place in the workhouse.'⁴

While it is certainly the case that most of the babies born in the Penrith workhouse were illegitimate, these were but a small percentage of those born illegitimate within the area covered by Penrith Union. Neither the high mortality implied here, nor the 'ending up' in the workhouse, nor the requirement to stay in the workhouse (at this period, certainly, there was no requirement for the mother to stay in the workhouse until the child was sixteen), nor the abandonment of the child, applied to the vast majority of either the mothers or children in Addingham.⁵ These mothers and babies normally survived, and they stayed overwhelmingly in the community. Derek Denman found a similar situation in north-east Cumberland, where only seven per cent of the illegitimate children registered in the Longtown district in the 1860s were born in the workhouse, none of whom became long-term residents.⁶

There was, however, some limited interaction between the Penrith workhouse and the people of Addingham at three main junctures – firstly, when the mother needed somewhere to give birth, secondly, when she needed support thereafter (which might take the form of out-relief, rather than entry into the workhouse), and thirdly, when the workhouse Guardians took

¹ Cara Dobbing, 'An Undiscovered Victorian Institution of Care: A Short Introduction to the Cumberland and Westmorland Joint Lunatic Asylum', *Family & Community History*, vol.19, no.1 (2016) 11.

² Barbara Glasson, *Bastards and Nonconformists: changes in lone parenting since 1900 and the response of the Methodist Church in theology and practice*, Ph. D (Nottingham, 2001) 4, 10-11.

³ Kate Adie, *Nobody's Child* (Hodder, 2005) 310.

⁴ Simon Fowler, *Workhouse: The People, the Places, the Life Behind Doors* (National Archives, 2007) 96.

⁵ Such an age requirement was not in orders issued by the Poor Law authorities in either 1847 or 1913: see 'The Workhouse', <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/gco/gco1847.shtml> for the Consolidated Rules of 1847, Art.115, and <http://www.workhouses.org/pllo/pllo1913.pdf> for the Statutory Rules, 1913. Kathleen Jones, *Catherine Cookson* (Little Brown, 1999) 20, states that women had to stay until the child was fourteen.

⁶ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 43.

over the care of a child. This latter situation will be examined later, in the chapter on the child's experience.⁷

Were those who turned to the workhouse the most friendless and desperate, initially denied out-relief under the new Poor Law of 1834 and lacking the family support that a married woman could expect? Or the most brazen (or the bravest) at living with any potential publicity and humiliation? Or the more astute and aware of their rights, perhaps one of the 'in and outs', who used the system as suited them best? Some may indeed, like Jessie Phillips, the eponymous heroine of the novel by Fanny Trollope, have been wanting to keep their situation hidden from family and friends by moving away from the village.⁸ Or perhaps, given that it was over seven miles from the nearest Addingham townships to the Penrith workhouse, it was only the most determined, or the healthiest, or those able to beg a lift in a cart, who were able to make it there. Thompson, in his study of the poor law in Cumbria, concluded that, although the workhouse was still feared and people felt stigmatized at being placed in a 'repository of social failure', 'we may seriously doubt whether the deterrent workhouse, as conceived by the Poor Law Commission, ever really existed in Cumbria.'⁹ In Ireland 'the image of unmarried mothers as vulnerable and dependent has been countered to some degree...their resourcefulness [has been noted], a canny ability to avail of economic opportunity, medical attention, or opportunities to work, even apparently using their vulnerability to achieve entry to the workhouse or participation in an emigration scheme.'¹⁰ Were the Cumbrian women as resourceful as the Irish women referred to here? In the matter of pursuing affiliation many were indeed pro-active; however, after the imposition of the new Poor Law Act of 1834, the unmarried mother, if she wished to be certain of immediate relief, had no alternative but to enter the workhouse. A few of the Addingham women, at this difficult time in their lives, may have been realistic enough or sufficiently unworried by any social stigma to accept what they saw as the best option for the actual birth. In the workhouse they could at least hope to have a roof over their heads for a few weeks before the birth, some basic nursing assistance, the hope of more help from a doctor if needed, and a period to lie-in afterwards.

According to Thompson 'it is extremely doubtful that any of the boards of guardians in Cumbria really believed that the threat of the workhouse would deter single women from any temptation to "immorality".'¹¹ The Penrith Guardians liked the so-called 'Bastardy Clauses' in the new Poor Law no more than many other similarly placed officials and much public opinion; in 1839, they appointed a committee to draw up a petition against the clauses.¹² However, they had to follow the dictates of the law. Thompson says that this policy resulted in a significant imbalance in the Cumbrian workhouse population, with 'the overwhelming majority of able-bodied adults [being] single able-bodied women', most of whom were the

⁷ See after, 142.

⁸ Fanny Trollope, *Jessie Phillips* (Nonsuch Publishing, 2006) 278-9.

⁹ R. N. Thompson, *The New Poor Law in Cumberland and Westmorland 1834-1871*, Ph. D (Newcastle, 1976) 588, 373-4.

¹⁰ Liam Kennedy and Paul Gray, 'Famine, Illegitimacy, and the Workhouse in Western Ireland: Kilrush, County Clare', ch.8 in Levene, Alys, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 133.

¹¹ Thompson, *New Poor Law*, 369.

¹² CAS(C) SPU/P 1, 23 Apr. 1839.

mothers of illegitimate children.¹³ This does not hold true for Penrith, where the proportion of adult women (over the age of fifteen) – single, married and widowed – stayed relatively constant at an average of 36 per cent of the total adult population from 1841 to 1911, with a maximum of 58 per cent in 1861. It is impossible to tell if they were able-bodied or not. Whilst it is true that the vast majority of Penrith workhouse births were to the unmarried, and that on average 65 per cent of adult female inmates during these years were unmarried, this figure includes all those over fifteen and census returns indicate that not all younger single women were mothers. On average only a third of the unmarried women appear to be mothers or awaiting the birth, although some had more than one child with them. The eleven of 1861 had declined to seven by 1911, although as the proportion of unmarried women in the workhouse had also declined, these seven did constitute half of the adult women, the highest proportion since 1841. It seems likely that some unmarried mothers took advantage of the workhouse to give birth and to lie-in afterwards, but then left and did not return.

In the seventy-one years between 1837, when the register starts, and 1918 (after which the 100-year access rule prevented examination of the register), there were a total of 689 births in the workhouse, of which 635 (92 per cent) were illegitimate.¹⁴ There were never more illegitimate births per annum in the workhouse than the 22 born in both 1845 and 1859; this does not seem an enormous number considering the total number of illegitimate births in the area covered by the union. In 1859, for example, while the Registrar-General noted 88 illegitimate births for the Penrith registration district, only 22 (25 per cent) are in the workhouse births register. In 1869, the equivalent figures were 12 out of 72 (17 per cent).¹⁵ In the six months from October 1873 to March 1874, the Penrith Medical Officer of Health reported 25 illegitimate births in his area (both rural and urban) but the births register accounts for only six, while for the whole of 1896 the equivalent figures are 30 (urban area only) and five.¹⁶ It has been suggested that in Hertfordshire, as a result of the new Poor Law, 'although difficult to quantify, it is probable that many unwed mothers were forced – through their poverty and the difficulty in obtaining an affiliation order – into the union workhouse.'¹⁷ In the Nottingham Union, similarly, 'the number of very young, probably single, women giving birth in the workhouse is evidence of the poverty associated with being a single parent and the lack of alternative support for unmarried mothers.'¹⁸ It is clear that in the Penrith area most unmarried mothers managed without resort to the workhouse and avoided it ever more successfully as the years passed.

It is possible that in *Jessie Phillips*, the anti-Poor Law novel by Fanny Trollope, we have an insight into what living in the Penrith workhouse would have been like in the later 1830s. Mrs

¹³ Thompson, *New Poor Law*, 369, 373; on page 373 he says that mothers of illegitimate children comprised 12% of the workhouse population.

¹⁴ CAS(C) SPU/P 128-9, 1837-1918; Samantha Williams, 'Unmarried mothers and the new poor law in Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, no.91 (Autumn 2013) 30, gives equivalent rates of 90 per cent in Winchester and 77 per cent nationally.

¹⁵ CAS(C) SPU/P 128-9, 1859, 1869; Twenty-second Annual report of the Registrar-General (1859) BPP 1861 and Thirty-second Annual report of the Registrar-General (1869) BPP 1871.

¹⁶ *Herald*, 17 Jan. 1874, 4; 9 May 1874, 4; 6 Mar. 1897, 5.

¹⁷ Williams, 'Unmarried mothers', 42, but she adds that 'over time, fewer unmarried pregnant women entered Hatfield workhouse for delivery.'

¹⁸ Johanna Purser, 'The workhouse population of the Nottingham Union, 1881-1882', *Local Population Studies*, no.99 (Autumn 2017) 77.

Trollope was living in Penrith at the time she was writing the book, where she was entertained by Sir George Musgrave of Edenhall, who, in 1838, was chairman of the workhouse Guardians; the book is set in the fictional Deepbrook in a 'favoured' Midland county, 'important as the centre of a rich agricultural neighbourhood, comprehending one or two of the finest estates in the kingdom.'¹⁹ It is very tempting, despite the Midland setting, to speculate that the Penrith workhouse and Guardians may have been in Fanny Trollope's mind when she wrote of 'the terrible discomfort of that melancholy abode.'²⁰ Her son, Tom, claimed that she left her newly-completed house, in the spring of 1843, because she 'found our neighbours too dull and stupid'; however, it is possible that, having begun publishing the first parts of such a forceful novel at the very end of 1842, she also felt it politic to move away.²¹ Shortly after, in 1844, the infamous 'Bastardy Clauses', that she thought so iniquitous, were amended.

Trollope, on behalf of her heroine Jessie, rails at 'this ludicrously useless proviso' that permitted only the Guardians (not the mother) to pursue a putative father to pay the workhouse charges and she paints a picture of the pregnant Jessie appearing before the Board of Guardians, begging for admittance, only to be told by the vicar that 'I am certain that the Board will not permit your coming in here to live in idleness when you are so perfectly well able to maintain yourself.'²² When she faints, she is granted admittance, given union clothing to wear and has her head shaved. Jessie then joins the 'miserably idle inmates' forced to just stand around all day, or prop themselves against the bench along the wall, denied even the comfort of the activity and gossip around the washtub.²³ Trollope, however, was writing with a political purpose. Workhouse clothing and a thorough cleansing were part of the normal admissions procedure system but shaving the hair was not. Recent research has led to a

rethinking of the nature and consequences of workhouse regimes. Just as autobiographies have suggested that workhouses were not as loathsome to the sentiments of the poor as earlier commentators have suggested, so we might suspect that, in terms of education, medical care and nutrition, workhouse inmates were in a better position than their immediate counterparts outside the workhouse.

Reluctance to enter or active avoidance of the workhouse was not a uniform sentiment and practice. There were regional, situational and personal influences on attitude and it could not have escaped the notice of some prospective or actual paupers (for instance pregnant women) that the treatment they were likely to receive in the workhouse was better than that to be obtained through personal or neighbourhood provision.²⁴

Did such awareness persuade a small number of women connected to Addingham to resort to the workhouse to give birth? I have traced only nine local women – Mary Holmes the elder of Little Salkeld, Mary Ann Salkeld of Gamblesby, Ann Watson Kindred of Winskill, Mary

¹⁹ Trollope, *Jessie*, 13, 16.

²⁰ Trollope, *Jessie*, 279; Teresa Ransom, *Fanny Trollope: a remarkable life* (Alan Sutton, 1995) 107, writes that Trollope constantly made pseudonymous use of people and places she knew in her work but suggests Hadley, just north of London, was the real Deepbrook; Victoria Glendinning writes in the introduction to Ransom's book that 'her settings are nearly always based on where she was living at the time, or on a place she had just left': xiii.

²¹ Ransom, *Fanny Trollope*, 149.

²² Trollope, *Jessie*, 397, 288.

²³ Trollope, *Jessie*, 287.

²⁴ Steven King, 'Thinking and Rethinking the New Poor Law', *Local Population Studies*, no.99 (Autumn 2017) 10, 14-15.

Holmes the younger of Little Salkeld, Ann Jackson of Little Salkeld, Mary RobinsonMarshall of Glassonby, Margaret Ann Slater of Hunsonby, Kate Thompson of Hunsonby, and Bessie Nicholson of Hunsonby – giving birth to an illegitimate child in the workhouse over the course of eighty years, from 1837 to 1918.

Mary Holmes took her two older children with her when she entered the old workhouse, in the centre of Penrith, in 1837. There she gave birth to John, her third illegitimate child, most probably in the ordinary adult female accommodation.²⁵ In July 1837, the Poor Law Guardians directed that Margaret Holmes, aged three, should be discharged from the workhouse and sent to the country into the care of ‘a person’ at 1/8d per week, as the doctor felt country air would be beneficial.²⁶ She must have been ailing, but it seems as if this change of scene was to no avail, since she was probably the Margaret Holmes whose death was registered in Penrith later in 1837. Her sister Sarah died in the workhouse, aged two, in December 1837.²⁷

The Penrith Guardians decided that the old workhouse was unsuitable to enact the provisions of the new Poor Law and in 1838 opened a new institution on the Greystoke Road, just outside the town. It was one of only three new workhouses built in the early years of the new Poor Law in Cumberland and Westmorland, and the second largest after Cockermouth, with accommodation for 250 inmates.²⁸ It never seems to have been anywhere near full at the time of the census: in 1851 there were 214 inmates and the next highest census total was 153 in 1841. The only extant plan of the new workhouse gives no precise information about the internal layout, so we cannot tell whether, in 1839, Mary Holmes would have borne another daughter, her fourth illegitimate child, in a dedicated lying-in ward but conditions in most workhouse lying-in wards at that time were still abysmal, ‘even by the undemanding standards of the time.’²⁹ She may have been attended by only a pauper nurse but the workhouse did at least employ a doctor who could be called upon if needed; such assistance may have been more than she could expect to receive at home. Mary herself died, aged 46 and still an inmate of the workhouse, in 1844. The care of the workhouse authorities may have been the saving of her two youngest children, John and Mary. It seems likely they were the children shown in the care of Ann Bowman, an agricultural labourer, at Newbiggin, near Dacre, in 1841, having been boarded out by the Guardians. John was probably in Glassonby in 1851, fending for himself as a twelve-year-old servant and receiving parochial charitable support in 1851-2; he was still there in 1861. His sister Mary was back living in the workhouse in 1851 but a Mary Holmes had charitable support from the parish in 1853-5, indicating perhaps that brother and sister both returned to their mother’s parish. Mary may well have had an illegitimate child herself in the workhouse in 1864. The name is too common to be sure, but the mother was from Little Salkeld. Nothing more is known about her or her child (yet another Mary), although a Mary Holmes died in Penrith in 1864.

Nothing further has been established about Mary Ann Salkeld and her child.

Ann WatsonKindred was herself illegitimate, brought up, it would seem, by her grandparents.

²⁵ Map 1822, Penrith Library, shows the workhouse apparently just behind Work House Lane, now Albert Street; Frank Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Sutton, 1997) 98.

²⁶ CAS(C) SPU/P 1, July 1837.

²⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 130, 31 Dec. 1837.

²⁸ Thompson, *New Poor Law*, 326.

²⁹ Norman Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (Pimlico, 2003) 157.

She knew enough about her rights to attempt to affiliate her first illegitimate son, whose putative father was ordered to support his child; however, since he promptly took himself off to Devon, where he married and lived for the rest of his life, it seems unlikely that this support was forthcoming.³⁰ Ann then bore a second son in 1856. Neither of these children was born in the workhouse. Like Mary Holmes, therefore, she already had two illegitimate children by the time she gave birth to her third, stillborn, baby in the workhouse, in 1861. Despite giving birth to a fourth illegitimate child, in 1865, while living in Glenridding, she managed to avoid entering the workhouse again while raising the three surviving children to adulthood. In 1867 she did finally marry, and very probably to the father of William, her last child, but her husband Joseph Kindred then disappeared to Australia. Some of her extended family were still living in the parish but were probably in no position to help her; however, Hunsonby with Winskill benefitted from The Hutchinson Trust, a charity endowed by the will of a resident in the previous century from which Ann derived much benefit. In 1861, for example (when the record book starts), she received eight payments totalling £7. 10s. 6d., while sums were also being disbursed to cover the lodging of her sons, and for clothing and shoes for them – even for books. In fourteen months in 1861-2 Joseph received benefits on fifteen occasions, and Thomas on eight. In 1866 Ann received £4. 0s. 0d, clothing was bought for both her sons, and ‘indenters’ were paid for Thomas in April 1867.³¹ Could she have managed to avoid the workhouse without such substantial charitable support? Several others in this research similarly received significant help.

Ann Jackson gave birth to two children in the workhouse, John William in January 1863 and Mary Elizabeth in 1864. In November 1863 an argument between Ann and the workhouse staff resulted in her being incarcerated in the workhouse lock-up. She clearly knew her rights; she had already sought (unsuccessfully it would seem) to affiliate her son³² and she demanded to have him returned to her care, knowing that this would mean she would have to be released from the lock-up. When this was refused, she asked to go before the Guardians but this also was not permitted. She then demanded to leave the house, and did so, but was not allowed to take her child with her. She later returned, claimed she had been mistreated and took the matron to court, where counter claims of violence were made. The subsequent court case, conducted according to the newspaper account ‘with great patience and impartiality’, resulted in her claim being dismissed; she then left the workhouse with her child but almost immediately abandoned him, ‘leaving it on the doorstep of the Workhouse’ at 8.30pm on a November night; it was perhaps not surprising that John died in the workhouse just short of his first birthday.³³ Ann was later sentenced, in June 1864, to eight months’ hard labour in Carlisle Gaol for the abandonment of her son.³⁴ She was already pregnant again and her second child was born in the workhouse at the end of September 1864. This daughter probably also died as an infant and in 1875 Ann was classified as a workhouse lunatic and could thus be detained there.³⁵

³⁰ CAS(C) QPL 2, 7 May 1850.

³¹ CAS(C) PR 29/113.

³² CAS(C) QPL 14, 3 Mar. 1863.

³³ CAS(C) SPU/P 130, 15 Jan. 1864.

³⁴ *Advertiser*, 1 Dec. 1863, 2; *Observer*, 14 Jun. 1864, 4, says her sentence was ‘three months’ but the minutes of the court appear to say ‘8’: CAS(C), QPL 7, 14 Jun. 1864.

³⁵ CAS(C) SPU/P 187, 8 Oct. 1879.

Mary Robinson gave birth to her second illegitimate child, Frances, in the workhouse in December 1870 and they were both still there the following April, when the 1871 census was taken. Mary was attributed to Renwick parish when her child was born,³⁶ although in 1869, at the time her first child was baptised by the Methodist minister, she was living in Glassonby; this child died as an infant. She was again at Glassonby Beck when her third, Joseph, was baptised with the Anglican rite at Addingham in 1876. Her mother, having had at least three illegitimate children herself, had finally married at Addingham in 1875, aged 50. Like several of the families I have investigated, both mother and daughter appear on successive censuses with an assortment of children whose parentage is not always clear. Mary herself married in 1879, the only one of this group of women who gave birth in the workhouse to establish a married household, although she had no more children.

Margaret Ann Slater, part of an extended family that features several times in this study, entered the workhouse for the birth of her daughter in February 1885, when her place of residence was given as Hunsonby.³⁷ Her family had numerous connections with the parish (and with the workhouse), although she herself was born at Eamont Bridge. She probably lived in Winskill when very young, but her mother died when she was only three and by 1871 she was living with her uncle and aunt in Yanwath. She also lived with her half-sister, Mary Jane GedlingCollinson Slater, who was cohabiting with Margaret Ann's father, John Slater; she was enrolled at Langwathby School in 1876 with her father named correctly,³⁸ and by 1881 she was a servant in Penrith. Margaret Ann gave birth in the workhouse in June 1885; the birth was not entered into the workhouse register, but the baby was given as 'born in the workhouse' in the admissions register on the day she was born. Mother and baby may have benefitted from the services of the nurse appointed in early 1875; the vote amongst the Guardians on the need for a nurse was close, at nine for and eight against, so clearly not all saw the need and she was probably still untrained.³⁹ Margaret Ann left with her seven-week-old daughter in July and the baby probably died very shortly after. Margaret Ann clearly led a troubled life, becoming an 'in and out' at the workhouse, who came and went apparently more or less as she pleased after the birth of her child. Peter Higginbotham quotes extensively from *Indoor Paupers*, published in 1885, which purported to be the view from inside the workhouse by an inmate; it sees the 'ins and outs' as a predominantly male group, using the house and its benefits for their own purposes, while also acknowledging the women 'who have fallen somehow into the trick of alternating spells of indoor pauper life with spells of common prostitution.'⁴⁰

Margaret Ann was possibly a servant at Dacre in 1891 and spent time in the Garlands Mental Hospital in Carlisle in February 1892, when her half-sister Mary Jane, with whom she had been living, was given as her step-mother and next-of-kin, her father (described in the notes as 'stupid and dangerous, very passionate') by then being dead. Her uncle, Thomas Slater, it was noted, was also an inmate of an asylum, in Northumberland. The Garlands notes say that she was a 'small stupid sort of girl, looks younger than 26', that she had been a 'nice quiet girl' but had 'sad surroundings at home'; Mary Jane reported that she kept leaving her situation

³⁶ CAS(C) SPU/P 128, 11 Dec. 1870.

³⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 74, 5 Feb. 1885.

³⁸ CAS(C) DS 113, May 1876.

³⁹ CAS(C) SPU/P 4, 5 Jan. 1875.

⁴⁰ Peter Higginbotham, *Voices from the Workhouse* (The History Press, 2012) 54, 52.

‘without cause or a moment’s notice’ and had threatened her with a carving knife. Margaret Ann was discharged, apparently recovered, in July, was back in the workhouse in September and in November was sent from there to Garlands again, where, perhaps surprisingly in view of the earlier assessment, she was described as ‘a dull wretched-looking woman: old looking for her years’, who had had several bouts of mania or depression.⁴¹ One wonders what the modern-day diagnosis of this would be? She was back in the workhouse in October 1893, in April 1894 for the best part of a year, for six weeks in August 1896 and in November 1898 she was admitted with her illegitimate baby son, James, born in Hesket the previous year, who then went in and out with her for several years.⁴²

In 1903, Margaret Ann, like Ann Jackson, was finally declared a pauper lunatic and could thus be detained in the workhouse. She was described as having been ill for 29 years, ‘simple in manner and easily influenced – carries a bag about containing all sort of things tea cakes [sic]...is not fit to take care of herself and her boy’ and ‘easily imposed on.’ Her nearest relative was then given as Mrs. Annie Wilson of Yanwath, a cousin.⁴³ She managed to abscond in 1908 and was possibly working as a servant in Distington in 1911.⁴⁴ Her death in the workhouse (by then renamed the Public Assistance Institution) was registered in 1939 by the workhouse authorities.

Neither Kate Thompson, aged 28 in 1895, nor Bessie Nicholson, aged 19 in 1901, who were both apparently of Hunsonby when admitted for their confinement, seem to have been truly local people. The story of Kate and her child William Graham is given elsewhere, since the link is very possibly erroneous.⁴⁵ Bessie, herself born illegitimate, was perhaps working in the village and the father of the child she named Harry may have been local. She was admitted to the workhouse a month before the birth and was enumerated there with her baby on the 1901 census, when both were listed as inmates. She would have found conditions considerably improved compared to those prevailing when Mary Holmes gave birth in the 1830s. Infectious paupers were now sent to the Fairhill Hospital, while the former infectious block had become the infirmary for sick inmates with a paid and professional nurse, appointed in 1892; by 1901 two nurses were employed.⁴⁶ In April 1901 Bessie was found to have £2 in her possession, making her the object of some suspicion, since money and valuables were normally taken away for safe keeping when people entered the house.⁴⁷ It was decided that she should be allowed to take only £1 with her when she left.⁴⁸ Her baby died in the house before he was a month old and she left four days later. Was she sad – or perhaps relieved? Nothing more is known of Bessie and she is the last mother from Addingham that I have found in the workhouse records.

This may be not unconnected to two subsequent decisions on the part of the workhouse Guardians. In 1905, they agreed to petition the Local Government Board, suggesting that,

⁴¹ CAS(C) THOS/8/4/1/34, Feb. 1892; THOS/8/4/40/2 and 3, 9 Feb. 1892, 29 Nov. 1892.

⁴² CAS(C) SPU/P 74-80, various.

⁴³ CAS(C) SPU/P 188, 5 Jan. 1903.

⁴⁴ CAS(C) SPU/P 80, 5 Oct. 1908.

⁴⁵ See www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk.

⁴⁶ Although see *Local Population Studies*, vol. 98, Spring 2017, 109, for a review by Samantha Williams of Kim Price, *Medical Negligence in Victorian Britain*, which notes that the book disputes the view that conditions were improving. The old infirmary block is the only building still standing (2019).

⁴⁷ Higginbotham, *Voices*, 112.

⁴⁸ CAS(C) SPU/P 13, 9 Apr. 1901.

in view of the increase of paternity suits, Guardians should have powers to detain all mothers of illegitimate children for up to a year after the birth of child. It is not clear what happened but the petition is indicative of the way such women were now viewed and raises the question of what they thought such detention would achieve. Was it to punish or to prevent further conceptions?⁴⁹ In 1909, under the heading 'Midwifery Orders' the Guardians resolved that all single women applying for 'medical relief on confinement' should be offered an order for the workhouse (and married women should understand that any relief should be repaid.) This implies the existing possibility of relief to cover childbirth *outside* the workhouse, and hints that other women may have taken advantage of this.⁵⁰ The association with prostitution, coupled with the policy to force women into the workhouse and then, if possible, to detain them, may well have acted as a very strong incentive to keep out at all costs.

As is clear from these accounts the babies born in the workhouse to Addingham mothers did not usually survive for very long. The two children born to Mary Holmes in the 1830s may have lived through the good offices of the Guardians, made necessary and possible because of the death of their mother, but only the child born to Kate Thompson in 1895 and later seemingly deserted by her, can be definitely traced, aged five and on his own in the workhouse, and later also as an adult.⁵¹ That most of the others were stillborn or died as babies may be related to the quality of the workhouse facilities; Crowther does not paint a pretty picture of the nursing care available in the early years in the workhouse and it was not until 1902 that the Midwives' Act demanded certain qualifications of nurses in charge of confinement.⁵² An investigation by the Royal Commission on the Poor Law (1905-1909) revealed the maternity wards to be 'relatively poor both in medical care and accommodation...[a situation which] was widely attributed to the association of the workhouse maternity wards with prostitution.'⁵³ The increased likelihood of infection in an institution would certainly be an issue but the mortality rate was probably also connected to the irregular lives, and the lack of wider family support, that characterise the small number of Addingham mothers who resorted to the workhouse for the birth of a child.

These were also characteristics of the unmarried mothers who made use of the workhouse facilities after the birth, although again, in the context of the total number of illegitimate births to local women, their number was few; I have found only five such mothers to add to those already described. Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater, for example, born and raised in Winskill, entered the workhouse together with her four children on two brief occasions in May 1880; thereafter, she managed somehow to maintain them all outside the house, living mainly in Penrith. However, her daughter, Margaret Jane Maria CollinsonSlater, had recourse to the workhouse in 1906 to give birth to a stillborn daughter; she left four months later, but was admitted again in 1912, when she had a second illegitimate daughter.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ CAS(C) SPU/P 14, 21 Feb. 1905.

⁵⁰ CAS(C) SPU/P 5, 28 Sep. 1909.

⁵¹ See www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk.

⁵² M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: the history of an English social institution* (Batsford Academic, 1981) 165, 178.

⁵³ Pat Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop*, no.6 (Autumn 1978) 39.

⁵⁴ CAS(C) SPU/P 128, 29 Sept. 1906, 20 Oct. 1912. She is named as Maria in the register but was registered at birth as Margaret Jane Maria.

Ruth GedlingFawcett, also brought up in Winskill, was the sister to Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater, and, like Margaret Ann Slater, her half-sister, was an erratic but frequent 'in and out'; they were often in the house at the same time. Her daughter, Mary Jane Fawcett, although born in the house in 1876, was at least technically (and perhaps in fact) legitimate, since her mother was listed as a deserted wife. Legally, much depended on where her husband was at the time of conception and whether he had had 'access' to his wife. Mary Jane must have endured a chronic instability for the first nine years of her life, as her mother went 'in and out' of the workhouse; providing notice was given, a woman and her child could not be detained. She was, indeed, supposed to take her child with her, since leaving the child behind while she looked for work was not permitted; this was viewed as giving a premium to vice by relieving her of the care of her child. Women were thus put in an impossible situation, unable to look for work and unlikely in such circumstances to find a husband who could provide support.⁵⁵ There was always a Christmas treat given by wealthy donors and in 1881 a trip out to Morecambe is mentioned but Mary Jane must often have missed out on the treats, just as she missed out on the education.⁵⁶ However, as we have seen with Ann Jackson above, occasionally the workhouse authorities would intervene and retain the child, and Mary Jane Fawcett seems often to have been in the house on her own, including a period of two years between the ages of three and five when her mother was admitted for only brief periods. In 1882 Ruth was classified as a 'pauper lunatic', allowing her to be detained in the workhouse, although in January 1885, still apparently at large, she was charged with returning drunk to the workhouse and assaulting the master. A successful application was made to the magistrates to send her child, who had been found wandering and begging in the streets of Penrith, apparently in fear of her mother, to the Glasgow Industrial School at Maryhill.⁵⁷

Maryhill was a residential establishment run much like a workhouse, with accommodation for two hundred girls whose families could not support them. It had recently been the subject of a scandal, when the assistant superintendent resigned following a public outcry over her flogging of a child.⁵⁸ Mary Jane was listed there on the census in 1891, along with 87 other girls and thirteen teachers, but I have not been able to trace her thereafter. She now gained, perhaps, a measure of stability and more assorted company but whether her life was any pleasanter, or her later prospects improved, we cannot tell. She was still living in an institution, far removed from the sort of life her contemporaries would live, the life she would have to adjust to as a domestic servant, the most likely employment open to her.⁵⁹ Was her life there one of 'intense dullness', likely to produce 'a type of character peculiarly hard, helpless and apathetic, incapable of adapting itself to persons and circumstances, and presenting a remarkable degree of stubbornness and violence in a large number of instances', as one Poor Law inspector described the district schools in 1873?⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Ginger Frost, 'Under the Guardians' Supervision: Illegitimacy, Family and the English Poor Law, 1870-1930', *Journal of Family History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013) 123.

⁵⁶ CAS(C) SPU/P 6, 26 July 1881.

⁵⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 187, 23 Mar. 1882; CAS(C) SPU/P 74, 7 Jan. 1885; *Herald*, 3 Jan. 1885, 8.

⁵⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 6 Dec. 1881, 3; *North British Daily Mail*, 8 Dec. 1881, 4.

⁵⁹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History*, pt. 2, vol.1, *The Last Hundred Years*, (Frank Cass, 1963) 285.

⁶⁰ Mrs Jane Nassau Senior, quoted in Simon Fowler, *Workhouse: The People, the Places, the Life Behind Doors* (National Archives, 2007) 138.

Elizabeth StamperLeggett was left a widow with four children in 1882. She then had a further illegitimate child in 1889 in Little Salkeld, before marrying William Whitehead, a widowed labourer and miner, in 1890; between them they now had seven children. Perhaps sheer poverty was enough to send her to the workhouse for extended periods in 1910, 1912 and 1915.⁶¹ Or perhaps she fell out with William, who was on the census in 1911 as a boarder in Glassonby, while she was in Penrith visiting her illegitimate son, James.

Ginger Frost suggests that society was more concerned about rescuing girls than boys from harmful environments and that mothers, therefore, were more likely to lose their daughters to the care of the state or private charity than they were to lose their sons, although my small sample is too small to test this.⁶² The workhouse records do bear witness to the Guardians supporting the establishment of an industrial school in Cumberland and making efforts to maintain children at more suitable institutions – sending girls in the 1890s to a home for friendless girls in Carlisle, a school for the blind in Liverpool, and to Kendal Orphanage.⁶³ As we shall see later, the Guardians also made efforts for the boys in this study. Was this a case of enlightened care or was it an ‘evasion’ and the children ‘disposed of’? Both attitudes could be read into some of the lives examined.⁶⁴

Few Addingham mothers made use of the workhouse, either at the time of birth or any later stage, and those that did so, not surprisingly, seem to have come from the most unstable and impoverished families. Several probably had no family link to the parish. Very few children had the experience of *Oliver Twist*:

But now he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once – a parish child – the orphan of a workhouse – the humble, half-starved drudge – to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none.⁶⁵

The question, therefore, is how the mothers of Addingham succeeded in bringing up their children on their own. What strategies did they employ? The following sections seek to examine and elucidate their options.

⁶¹ CAS(C) SPU/P 80, 81, 82, 6 June 1910, 7 Mar. 1912, 15 May 1915.

⁶² Ginger Frost, “‘The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep’: illegitimacy in the English working class, 1850-1939’, *Journal of Social History* (Winter, 2003) 299.

⁶³ See, for example, CAS(C) SPU/P 10, 29 Dec. 1891, 18 Oct. 1892; SPU/P 12, 8 Dec. 1896, 16 Feb. 1897. See also Webb, *English Poor Law History*, pt. 2, vol. 1, 268. See after, 193-202.

⁶⁴ See after, 142-148.

⁶⁵ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Hazell, Watson and Viney, n.d.) 13.

Marriage

It must surely be correct to acknowledge, as Cathy Day does in her study of Wiltshire parishes, that not ‘every woman or every man actually sought marriage.’¹ Some may have been able to manage adequately without and even those who struggled may have preferred to bring up their child independently; John Dodgson of Bewcastle, in his replies to the Poor Law Commission in 1833, mentioned two bastard children supported by the parish ‘whose mothers have landed property of their own, and who would not marry the fathers of their children.’² It has been pointed out that the unmarried women ‘had...one advantage over the respectably married. They had common law rights over their children which the married mother lost entirely to her husband. This enabled them to retain permanent access to and responsibility for their children.’³ The typical young mother in Addingham may not have been aware of such common law rights, and even if they were, those rights may have been a lesser consideration than they would be to mothers at a different level of society. Until 1926, the child would not have been legitimated by a subsequent marriage. Perhaps that too, was not a great concern, in a society where illegitimacy was not uncommon and people generally had little property to consider.

If any Addingham women felt such an acute sense of dishonour as Tess of the d’Urbervilles, most, it seems, like Tess herself, overcame it. The difference between Tess and the majority of the Addingham mothers was that the children of the latter were, in the main, still living. To most, marriage must have seemed the best option for obtaining long-term financial and emotional support. According to Cathy Day ‘women who did not marry often had a physical or social reason for not marrying, such as having a physical disability or having a child born out of wedlock’ but the Addingham evidence does not confirm this barrier in the case of the unmarried mother.⁴ Most mothers married within a few years of the birth, normally, as far as can be ascertained, to a man other than the father. Only a few married after a longer period, some perhaps at the expense of leaving their illegitimate child behind.

Table 9 shows how many of the 173 mothers in the biographies married after the birth of the first illegitimate child. Given that some of the uncertain cases will very likely have married, although the marriage has proved impossible to

Status	No.	%
Married after illegitimate birth	101*	58
Probably married	1	1
Not married	30	17
Probably not married	2	1
Died young	5	3
Uncertain	34	20
	173*	100

Table 9. Unmarried mothers and marriage. *Including one bigamous marriage.

¹ Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical Mobility, Cousin Marriage and Illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 91.

² Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A., (Lancaster, 2005) 46.

³ Pat Thane, ‘Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England’, *History Workshop*, no. 6 (Autumn 1978) 32.

⁴ Day, *Wiltshire*, 91.

trace, it is probable that over two-thirds of the sample did eventually marry.⁵

The speed with which the marriage took place, or other evidence such as affiliation proceedings and wills, suggests that fifteen (nine per cent) of these women married the father. Day made the assumption that 'if the father of an illegitimate child was not identified from other sources, and the mother married within 12 months of the birth of the child...the man whom the mother married was also the father of the illegitimate child', leading her to a much higher estimate of 27 per cent of mothers marrying the father.⁶ Only twelve Addingham women married within a year, eight probably to the father. Both Elizabeth Stamper Leggatt Whitehead and Mary Benson Ansell, two women from very different social backgrounds, married within a year of the birth, but not, I think, to the father of the child. I have also found marriages to the man I believe to be the father after a longer interval.

Hannah Bell Latimer had to take her man to court, and wait a year to marry, after which the couple emigrated to the United States and had five more children. Frances Furness married Richard Parmley three months after their son was born, taking their child for baptism only once they were married; they too emigrated and their son adopted his father's name. Jane Peel successfully took out proceedings in September 1879, alleging that John Wood Skelton of Blackhall, Carlisle, was the father of her son born 19 October 1878 and claiming that he had already given her money. He finally married her in the summer of 1880. Hannah Westgarth waited well over three years to marry and Elizabeth Watson waited ten years, in both cases perhaps because the fathers were extremely young when the child was born – only fourteen in the first case, although they could have married, since this was the legal age for marriage for a boy until 1929.⁷

All these mothers probably married the father. In several cases, however, the child had died before the mother married. The death of her son, before his second birthday in 1851, may have allowed Hannah Brown to move on and marry in 1854, seemingly not to the father. However, if the first child had been the result of an interrupted courtship, she was not deterred by her two failed affiliation applications nor by the possibility of the same happening again, since she baptised her next child only four months after the wedding. In eight cases the child was an adult before the mother married; Jane Hodgson Allan (herself illegitimate) delayed marriage for fourteen years, but was then still only twenty-nine, and able to go on to have six more children. However, her illegitimate son, James, stayed on with his grandmother and step-grandfather in Edenhall, where he was enumerated in 1891 as James Dodd, having taken the step-grandfather's surname. He used Dodd in 1898 when he married Rhoda Selina Coady, a widow with three young children; she was 38 while he was only 25. Of all the mothers in the research, Hannah Jackson delayed the longest, marrying thirty-two years after the birth of her child.

However, it would seem that even having a young illegitimate child was not a bar to a

⁵ Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 206, estimated that 'a majority of women in both Hernhill and Dunkirk and 40 per cent of those in Boughton were able to marry after the [illegitimate] birth'; Jean Robin, 'Illegitimacy in Colyton, 1851-1881', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1987) 313, estimated that 52 per cent married but she did not trace the individuals until death, as this study has done.

⁶ Day, *Wiltshire*, 191, 202; see also Denman, *Illegitimacy*, 50-2, whose equivalent estimate is 10 per cent for the township of Lorton in West Cumberland.

⁷ Rebecca Probert, *Marriage Law for Genealogists: The Definitive Guide* (Takeaway, 2012), 110.

subsequent marriage to a different man, as I believe almost half did in the five years after the birth, illustrated by the chart (Fig. 13) below.⁸

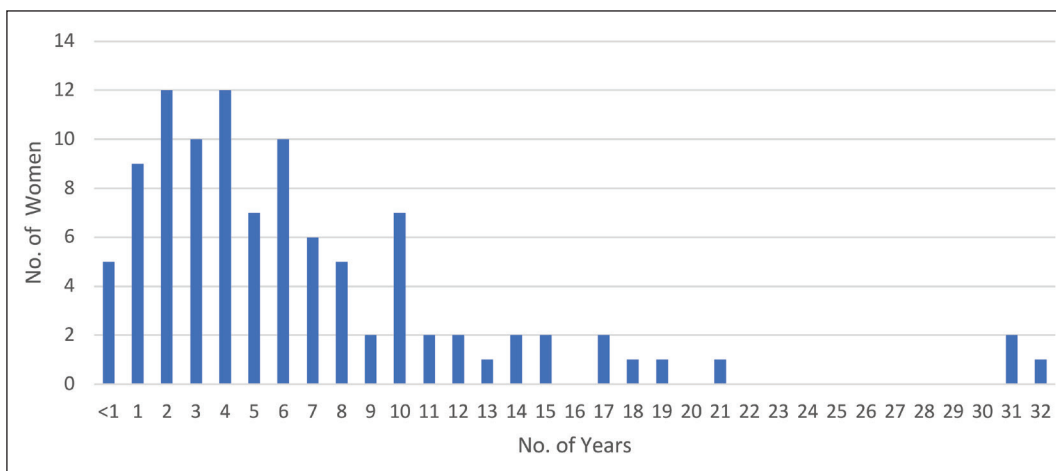


Fig. 13. Interval in years from illegitimate birth to marriage of mother.

Even an early marriage did not guarantee support for the illegitimate child, although the 1834 Poor Law Act made the stepfather responsible for his wife's illegitimate children. Kate Gibson concluded on the basis of a small sample of pauper letters that the existence of a stepfather 'generally encouraged cohabitation between mother and child'.⁹ My larger sample, from the period immediately following hers, would lead to a different conclusion. For reasons which can only be conjectured, many mothers chose to leave their child behind when they married. Of the 90 who married before the first illegitimate child was fourteen, probably a third left behind at least one child, and sometimes a very young child, in the care of their family, including several of those who appear to have married the father. The lives of Elizabeth DowsonIrving and her son, John, look to have run on separate tracks for many years. In 1851 John was living with his grandparents, aunts and uncles in Gamblesby, and described as grandson, while his mother was living in Great Salkeld with her new husband, John Irving, a man sixteen years older than herself, whom she had married in 1850. She also named her first legitimate son John; in a similar case elsewhere, it has been suggested that this perhaps indicated that she did not expect to maintain a relationship with her first-born illegitimate child.¹⁰ Perhaps she didn't, or perhaps her husband knew nothing of the child's existence and wanted his son named after him. Whatever the initial intention, subsequent events show that they clearly did keep in touch.¹¹

In 1885, Mary Benson left her one-year-old daughter to be brought up by her own family when she married, moved away from the area and subsequently had six more children, while

⁸ Robin, 'Colyton', 315, reached the same conclusion: 'bearing an illegitimate child fathered by one man did not prevent marriage to another.'

⁹ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (University of Sheffield, 2018) 115.

¹⁰ Emma Griffin, 'Sex, illegitimacy and social change in industrializing Britain', *Social History*, vol. 38, no.2 (2013) 159.

¹¹ See after, 125.

Hannah NelsonMallinson left her two-year-old son with her own parents after her marriage to a railway platelayer, with whom she had six more children as they moved around northern England and Scotland. Elizabeth Kidd took one child but left the other in 1845, as did Esther Jackson when she married George Hetherington in 1873: the couple left the elder boy with Esther's parents, although she had named George as the father of both sons at the Petty Sessions. Martha Graham left two children behind when she married in 1878 and one of these, Sarah Ann, left her own child behind with Martha in 1905. Elizabeth Glaister left her own eleven-year-old child behind in 1910 but took on the care of two stepchildren. These women had obtained financial support and the prospect of normal family life for themselves, but not necessarily for their child.

Other life events could also intervene to prevent the illegitimate child gaining a new family: divorce, desertion, bigamy and death all feature in the biographies. Ann WatsonKindred, for example, already the mother of two living illegitimate children, and another stillborn, seems to have married the father of her fourth child, who promptly deserted her and emigrated to Australia, while Florence GrahamVickers sought a judicial separation from her husband after fewer than three years of marriage, even though she had two children, one illegitimate and one legitimate, and another one on the way.

However, for many women (52 out of the 103 who married) marriage probably *was* an effective strategy, with the child raised within an ordinary two-parent family, merely the eldest child, with origins obscured and surname sometimes, but no means always, changed to that of the stepfather. Charlotte Brown took the five-year-old Sarah Isobel with her when she married in 1892; thereafter Sarah Isobel lived with her mother and stepfather, recorded as Marshall (her stepfather's name) on all the censuses, but was registered as Brown when she married in 1913. This was perhaps a nod to the idea of a legal name, the name assumed at registration or baptism, even if she had been known as something else. Whether, and how, this change of name was explained to her we cannot tell. The illegitimate daughter of unmarried Margaret Hannah Watson was registered in 1889 as Elsie Mary Watson, and was initially cared for by her grandparents, enumerated under their name as Elsie M. Cannon in 1891. After the marriage of her mother to Joseph Simpson, and now living with her mother and stepfather, she became Clara M. Watson in the 1901 census. Could Clara just be an enumerator's mistake? In 1911, after the death of Joseph and her mother's remarriage to Thomas Longrigg, she was named as Elsie Simpson and she later married as Elsie M. Simpson, naming Joseph Simpson as her father, and became Elsie Sayer. Elsie Watson, Elsie Cannon, Clara Watson, Elsie Simpson, Elsie Sayer. It takes detailed research to realise that these are all the same person. Was Elsie actually known by all these different names? Or were the names an attempt to make the census entry appear 'normal'? This is the most extreme example of renaming that I have come across but taking the stepfather's name on the census was not uncommon.

In her study of a number of Wiltshire parishes, Cathy Day reached the conclusion that towards the end of the nineteenth century, 'Women who were able to have several illegitimate children and maintain their own home disappeared as it became progressively harder for women to find work in agricultural areas. Being the mother of an illegitimate child was becoming less socially acceptable and less economically viable.'¹² Hera Cook has taken a similar line,

¹² Day, *Wiltshire*, 196.

suggesting that 'the boundaries between respectable women and others hardened' from the second quarter of the century; lone mothers struggled even more without a man to support them and 'marriage or cohabitation [became] their trade.'¹³ The Addingham sample is small and not necessarily statistically representative, including as it does mothers garnered from a whole variety of sources, all Cumbrian but with sometimes only a weak connection to the parish. The civil registration of marriages after 1837, and the extra detail in the census after 1851 improve the success rate in tracing marriages, and this affects the validity of the statistics. Nevertheless, the trend appears consistent: the percentage of mothers marrying grew over the course of the century, from 55 per cent who were born in the first quarter, 60 per cent in the second, 67 per cent in the third and 76 per cent in the final quarter. It may, however, be that marriage was becoming easier as the unmarried mother became *more* socially and financially acceptable *as a bride* (rather than unacceptable to society as an unmarried mother) aided by the change in the law in 1872, after which maintenance was still payable by the putative father, even if the mother married another man.¹⁴

A few even re-married, some, like Elizabeth StamperLeggettWhitehead and Mary GrisdaleGedlingSlater, after bearing an illegitimate child as a widow, perhaps having mistakenly believed that the father would marry them. Hannah Nelson from Renwick married Robert Mallinson in Yorkshire in 1880, aged 20. They had two sons, both of whom died as babies and her husband then died in July 1883. The baptism of Hannah's son, Arthur William, was conducted privately at her mother's house in Glassonby; Hannah had perhaps returned home for the birth. The entry did not immediately stand out since Hannah was described as a widow; this was true, but her husband had been dead too long for Arthur William to be his posthumous son. When Hannah and James Lancaster Forsyth (himself illegitimate) attempted to have the banns read for their wedding in May 1886, his mother forbade them on the grounds that he was underage.¹⁵ Had they managed to marry without her knowledge, the marriage would have been valid but if secrecy was desired, reading the banns in the parish church was not a good idea.¹⁶ Was James the actual father of Hannah's child, seeking now that he was about to come of age to marry the mother, or was Hannah trying to secure a father for her child by another man, and some support in raising him? We can only speculate but despite James reaching the age of 21 at the end of May 1886, they did not then attempt to marry and Hannah, already pregnant again, married another man in June 1887; she went on to have six more children.

Mary Ann Wells of Little Salkeld took her two-year-old illegitimate child, Mary Grace, with her when she married Augustus Kipling in 1886. She was already pregnant again, but Augustus died shortly after the marriage and she then gave birth to his posthumous child. She thus had two young children to care for on her own so perhaps a second marriage was a sensible strategy. In 1890 Mary Ann married George Trotter, at Romalldkirk, Yorkshire, where her first husband had lived. She was once again already pregnant; on the 1891 census Mary

¹³ Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975* (Oxford UP, 2004) 65.

¹⁴ Lionel Rose, *The massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 115.

¹⁵ Probert, *Marriage Law*, 114, says that, in this context 'illegitimate children enjoyed a rare advantage: there was nobody who could legally forbid the banns'; presumably nobody knew that legal nicety in Addingham.

¹⁶ Rebecca Probert and Liam D'Arcy Brown, 'Westmorland Weddings: A Study of the 1787 Census', *Family and Community History*, vol.16, no.1 (Apr. 2013) 37.

Ann and George were living as lodger and his wife with Jane Kipling, the mother of Mary Ann's late husband. Mary Grace Wells was with them (also as a lodger), plus Jane Ann Kipling (described as a granddaughter) and baby George Trotter, the latter with no relationship to any of the household ascribed. Perhaps the exact nature of his place in this complicated household defeated even the descriptive ingenuity of the enumerator. It seems likely that Mary Ann had continued living with her mother-in-law in Cotherstone, after the death of her first husband, and the second husband simply joined the household. She now had three young children, all half-siblings with different fathers and different surnames, and all probably conceived outside wedlock. Mary Grace was enumerated twice in the 1901 census, once as Mary Grace Trotter with her mother and stepfather in Hartlepool and once as Mary Grace Wells with her uncle in Winskill. Mary Grace was no longer with the Trotters in 1911. Now named Wells, she was working as a servant in a substantial house in Clapham, Yorkshire.¹⁷

A few women, as seen in the earlier chapter on cohabitation, were probably in fact in a long-term cohabitation with the father of their illegitimate children, a marriage in all but name, which may have provided similar support. It is impossible to tell whether this was by choice or some form of coercion, but it is clear that such cohabitating relationships were rare in Addingham. Marriage mattered, was sought and was increasingly possible as the century progressed for the mothers of illegitimate children.

¹⁷ She was not forgotten by her Addingham family. In her will dated 1908, her aunt, Eliza Tinkler, specifically remembered her niece Mary Ann Trotter and 'her illegitimate child, Mary Grace Wells.'

Remaining unmarried

‘The old story,’ he said, shaking his head: ‘no wedding ring, I see.’¹

As has been shown, over 50 per cent of mothers married at some point after the birth of an illegitimate child. However, not all married when the child was young and were thus effectively single mothers for the vital years of childhood; some never married, some were unable to marry, a few mothers died very young. Table 10, below, relates to the 46 women in this group, who remained unmarried during their child’s early years.

It seems that at least 41 women found themselves alone and having to provide for themselves and their children; in the majority of cases, they probably coped with the help of their extended family and a combination of other resources including poor relief, local charities, affiliation and employment. A few, but only a few, seem to have managed entirely on their own without recourse to either family or workhouse. Denman similarly found a few lone mothers, living independently, in north-east Cumberland.²

Catherine Westgarth of Gamblesby was one such, unusually old at 37, and with both parents dead when her son Thomas was born in 1835. However, she seems to have been reasonably comfortably off, since she was listed in the Slater’s directory of 1855 under ‘nobility, gentry and clergy’ in the Kirkoswald area, and was described as ‘landowner’ and ‘landed proprietor’ in the census. She is also unusual in apparently raising her son entirely on her own, and in leaving a will, naming her ‘natural son’ as her heir; her effects were valued at £100. Mother and son had always lived together; Thomas remained unmarried, without issue as far as can be ascertained, and left his money to various relatives. Isabella Goulding was even older, at 39 when her daughter was born and also probably rather poorer, since she supported herself and her daughter by taking in railway navvies as lodgers during the building of the Settle-Carlisle line, by working as a charwoman and by taking in a ‘nurse child’ herself, presumably for payment. She had sought to affiliate Sarah, naming John Hutchinson of Blencow as the father; there is no record of a hearing or a decision but she may have received some voluntary support from the father. Her daughter became an assistant schoolmistress and married an insurance agent. Margaret Furness of Calthwaite did succeed in affiliating her son upon John Lough of Hunsonby; she was 27 and he was 56, and unmarried, when the child was born in 1869. She had to pursue John at the Petty Sessions in 1871 for arrears and since he died shortly thereafter, having been bankrupted, she may not have received much maintenance. In 1881 she and her son were living at Hesket-in-the-Forest, where she was working as an agricultural labourer. Margaret later worked as a letter carrier, while Thomas worked as an agricultural labourer and horseman. Sarah Livock of Glassonby also brought up her child alone, working as a dressmaker, while her daughter later worked as a labourer and then as a staymaker. Theirs is a very sparse

Never married	28
Married when child over 13	11
Mother died young	5
Unable to marry	2
Total	46

Table 10. Mothers who did not marry.

¹ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Hazell, Watson and Viney, n.d.) 12.
² This has also been found to be an unusual situation in Kent: see Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 209; Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 47.

account compared to many: mother and child stayed together, neither married, there were no further children, and, unlike many, they do not feature in family trees on Ancestry.

Going into service, the usual employment for young unmarried women and a route to obtaining accommodation, was normally no longer an option for the unmarried mother and child but it provided a solution, apparently, for Dinah Banks. She had two illegitimate children, born fifteen years apart, whom she seems to have brought up on her own; the first, Mary, was ten in 1871, and living with her mother in the household where she was employed as housekeeper, a very unusual arrangement. Kate Gibson quotes the example of Sally Bradford, who at first hid the existence of her illegitimate daughter from her employer, and 'only persuaded him to accept her into his household after embarking on a sexual relationship with him. As [the employer] noted, "sending for & keeping the child was what not one in twenty [men, or employers] would have done". Most servants lacked this persuasive power.'³ Was this what was happening here and was the second child the result? Her son, William Joseph Watson Banks, was born in 1875 while Dinah was the licensee of the Hunters' Cottage Inn, on the main road just outside Hunsonby. By 1879 she was running the Queen's College Inn in Renwick,⁴ and later moved to a pub in Penrith but by 1891 mother and son were back at the Hunters' Cottage, where William carried on as licensee after the death of his mother, aided by the widowed Mary. Neither Mary nor William had children themselves.

As we have seen, only the most troubled women seem to have resorted to the workhouse but it was also possible to request outdoor relief support from the workhouse Guardians; after 1852, deserted women with dependent children, where the husband was not in the workhouse, were entitled to outdoor relief if they requested it, while widows who had legitimate children and then an illegitimate one could be given discretionary relief. The Guardians could also give relief to an illegitimate child whose mother was away in service, if the child was not residing with its mother.⁵ A few examples show that such help was available from the Penrith Guardians. In 1894 Jane Ann HopeSlee appeared before the Guardians, to claim outdoor relief for her three (legitimate) children. She was allowed £0. 8s. 0d. fortnightly for eight weeks and a warrant was issued for the apprehension of Robert Robinson Slee, 'the father of the above children.'⁶ No further application for assistance has been found, or any further reference as to the success of the warrant. Margaret Atkinson, whose own illegitimate daughter, Elizabeth, had at least three illegitimate children herself, applied to the Guardians in May 1898 for relief for two grandchildren, Alice and Walter. They agreed to consider the case, and in July noted that the point at issue was whether the children had indeed been deserted by their mother, Elizabeth; however, they granted outdoor relief for one month. In August 1898 they noted that the mother had been seen in Penrith in a common lodging house with a man named Carter, with whom she was 'wandering about the country.' They resolved to take no proceedings against her 'at present.' In February 1899 they noted that Elizabeth had been seen once more in Penrith, again with Carter. The Guardians applied to the Local Government Board (LGB) 'under the special circumstances of the case' to sanction the continued payment

³ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018) 65.

⁴ *Herald*, 25 Oct. 1879, 8.

⁵ K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge UP, 2006) 249.

⁶ CAS(C) SPU/P 11, 24 Jul. 1894.

of outdoor relief. In March 1899 the LGB said this was permissible, as the children had been deserted by their mother. The Guardians minuted that the children were now in their care until they were aged sixteen and that outdoor relief could be continued. Elizabeth must have been living in Alston by July 1899, when the Guardians of the Alston workhouse wrote to Penrith, and arrangements were made for Elizabeth to be admitted to the Penrith workhouse.⁷ I believe she died there in June 1901. Alice and Walter were living in Kirkland with their grandmother Margaret and an uncle in 1901; presumably the Guardians had agreed to the children being boarded-out (i.e. fostered, for payment) with their grandmother and uncle or were continuing to pay outdoor relief.

Mothers could also seek support from local parish-wide charities. The township of Hunsonby with Winskill additionally had the benefit of the particularly generous Hutchinson Trust; at least 25 mothers received some support, while Sarah Livock and Jane Nicholson, both bringing up their child unmarried, were helped for many years.⁸ Isabella Ruddock, whose parents had received long-term support from the parish charity, was given assistance herself in 1877, the year after her illegitimate son Thomas was born. Ann Watson Kindred and her children received sustained and substantial support over many years,⁹ as did Jane Ann HopeSlee, in addition to the outdoor relief mentioned above; both these deserted wives had deep local roots. It has been pointed out that:

the trustees of local charities were disproportionately likely to recognise the poverty and need of people with good kinship connections, and to do so over long periods. This is perhaps not surprising given the terms under which many benefactions were made, and the wider need to show respectability in order to receive charity, something which could be done by pointing to dense kinship connections.¹⁰

Perhaps Barbara Sewell, the mother of three surviving children born to a local man but not herself locally born, and with no local kin, was deemed ineligible for assistance from parish charities and therefore had to move away to Penrith to survive. The individual sums given were often small, and sometimes the Hutchinson Trust gave practical aid rather than money, but cumulatively the help could be considerable; for women living on the margins it would have been significant, although hardly sufficient on its own to maintain mother and child. How then, if they remained unmarried, avoided the workhouse and could not live on parochial charity alone, did they manage? The next chapters consider their options.

⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 12-13, 24 May 1898, 16 Aug. 1898, 14 Feb. 1899, 14 Mar. 1899, 1 Aug. 1899; CAS(C) SPU/P 130, 8 June 1901.

⁸ The Addingham Churchwardens' Accounts list the payments made each year to the poor, from 1841-1903, while the Hunsonby Overseers' Book covers 1837-44, and 1860-1931, and includes accounts for the Hutchinson Trust: see CAS (C) PR 29/11&12, PR 29/76; PR29/113.

⁹ See before, 92.

¹⁰ Sam Barrett, 'Kinship, poor relief and the welfare process in early modern England', ch.7 in King, and Tomkins, *The Poor in England*, 218.

Affiliation

The baby was born, still alive, and the mother had to find a means of support. Some took the route of legal affiliation, applying to the court to have the man they named adjudged to be the father and ordered to support his child financially. Men could also be ordered to pay the costs of the midwife and lying-in. Mothers could seek voluntary maintenance from the father: such provision may well have been more common among people of greater means and a higher social class than most of the residents of Addingham.¹ Margaret Kitching waited almost four years after the birth of her son before taking court action, when his father ceased to pay voluntary support; the probable father was indeed of higher social standing, being a substantial (and married) local farmer. There is evidence, however, that this was happening locally among the labouring classes as well. William Westgarth voluntarily paid £0. 1s. 6d support for his child by Mary Clark of Newton for five years but stopped at the time he married in 1862. Perhaps he thought he could no longer afford it, or perhaps he had not told his new wife about the child? When payments ceased, Mary Clark took advantage of the other option available to her, seeking to affiliate the child officially upon the father through legal proceedings; she had to prove that support had already been given, since the application was made outside the legal limit of one year. She was successful, winning an increased payment of £0.1s.8d;² William Westgarth, with five legitimate children of his own, was in need of support himself from the parish charity by 1868 and continued to receive it until his death in 1901.³ This case only came to light because payments stopped and Mary pursued the matter in court; there may well have been other cases that were quietly settled between the couple, whatever their social standing, and thus left no written record.

It seems as if Mary was not alone in knowing of her rights and being prepared to use them. Research by Steven King has uncovered evidence that a ‘culturally and morally distinct group’ in Lancashire, members of ‘family groupings where illegitimacy was common’, could be very confident, defiant and aggressive in asserting their rights.⁴ In searching the records of the Quarter Sessions, held in Carlisle, and Leath Ward Petty Sessions, held in Penrith, sixteen further illegitimacies relating to Addingham residents were uncovered that were apparent in no other documents. A few cases have been discovered between 1810 and 1832, while between 1848 and 1879 the records appear to be complete; thereafter the Petty Sessions records are not in the Cumbrian archives. Ginger Frost has made extensive use of local newspapers in her research but the local press in Penrith became increasingly unwilling to report affiliation proceedings, deeming the details ‘quite unfit for family reading.’⁵ Some proceedings were dismissed with the mere mention that cases were heard, without names or details and many were not mentioned in any way. However, the Petty Sessions’ minutes of such cases provide one of the few occasions

¹ Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical Mobility, Cousin Marriage and Illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 199.

² CAS(C) QPL 14, 1 July 1862; CAS(C) QPL 7, 29 July 1862.

³ CAS(C) PR 29/113, various.

⁴ Steven King, ‘The Bastardy Prone Sub-society Again: Bastards and Their Fathers and Mothers in Lancashire, Wiltshire, and Somerset, 1800-1840’, ch.5 in Levene, Alysa, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 84.

⁵ Ginger Frost, ‘Claiming Justice: Paternity Affiliation in South Wales, 1870-1900’, *Rural History*, vol.24, no.2 (2013) 177-198; *Herald*, 29 Oct. 1892, 5.

on which it is almost possible to hear people speak, through the sometimes nearly verbatim notes of the legal proceedings, affording considerable detail of the lives and courtships of the men and women involved. The system functioned very speedily, with the women able to apply soon after the birth, and to get a hearing and verdict within weeks, indeed often within days.

The law relating to affiliation changed several times during the period under review, reflecting changing public anxieties and fresh approaches to a perennial problem. Until the 1834 Poor Law Act, unmarried mothers had a right to relief from the parish overseers; the overseers could then take legal action to seek to force the putative father to make regular maintenance payments for seven years, even though, as a 'filius nullius' under common law, the child technically had no parents obliged to support it.⁶ After this, the child was considered to be self-sufficient, or was maintained as a parish pauper in its own right.⁷ A man named as father by the mother could be imprisoned for three months if he failed to support his child or could have his goods and chattels seized. Many fathers absconded, leaving the mother and child to receive their support from the parish, but the Poor Law Commissioners were also concerned that women of immoral habits could be *too* effective in obtaining payments from several fathers and thus 'profit' from their sins, while failing to learn the error of their ways.⁸ The overseers were also likely to try to encourage the couple to marry, sometimes rather forcefully. It is clear from the answers sent from the Addingham townships to enquiries from the Poor Law Commissioners that they had a varying degree of success in recovering payment from the alleged fathers, or perhaps had differing degrees of motivation to do so. Their usual payment to support mother and child was £0. 1s. 8d, which was considered to be sufficient if she nursed the child herself; she was then deemed to have paid her contribution. This was above the Cumberland average of £0. 1s. 6½d but slightly below the national average for rural parishes of almost £0. 1s. 9d.⁹ The law allowing a 'lewd' woman to be punished by imprisonment for twelve months was not enforced in Addingham. The replies in answer to the question about the number of bastards born in each township, and the costs to the parish successfully recovered from the parents, are revealing. Gamblesby (the largest township) and Little Salkeld (the smallest) had each had two cases in the previous five years and were happy that they had recovered all the costs, mostly from the fathers; some money had been recovered from the mothers in Gamblesby, while the mothers of Little Salkeld 'nursed the Children themselves, consequently the whole has been recovered'. Glassonby had had three illegitimate children born but had recovered none of the cost.¹⁰ This is perhaps not surprising since the mothers included Hannah Kidd, who died a few months after the birth of her second child, and Sarah Livock, a long-term recipient of parish charity.

What *is* notable is the situation in Hunsonby with Winskill, where there had been three illegitimacies in each of the five years, that is fifteen altogether, but only 77 per cent of the cost

⁶ Ruth Paley, *My Ancestor was a Bastard* (Society of Genealogists, 2011) 24. For the Poor Law in this context see Thomas Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the myth of the old poor law and the making of the new', *Economic History Review*, vol.63, no.2 (2010) 335-361.

⁷ Margaret A. Lyle, 'Regionality in the Late Old Poor Law: The Treatment of Chargeable Bastards from Rural Queries', *The Agricultural History Review*, vol.53, no.2 (2005) 145.

⁸ Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility', 338-9.

⁹ Lyle, 'Regionality', 148.

¹⁰ Royal Commission of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws (1834): Appendix B, Answers to Rural Queries, questions 47-49, four Addingham townships.

had been recovered from the fathers and nothing from the mothers. Why was this township so different? Was nothing apparently recovered from the women because, as in Little Salkeld, they were nursing the children themselves or had they simply evaded payment? Whatever the cause, the figures seem to be further evidence of the separate culture prevailing in Hunsonby with Winskill already evinced by the statistics. Using the baptism registers, four illegitimate births can be identified in Glassonby, three in Little Salkeld and one in Gamblesby – but only one of the fifteen attributed to Hunsonby with Winskill in the replies to the Commissioners can be found. The township recovery rate there was also below the average northern rate of 83 per cent (as opposed to a southern counties rate of only 41 per cent).¹¹

The new Poor Law was the result of a complete change of thinking. Thomas Malthus was of the view in 1798 that,

The father of the child may not always be known, but the same uncertainty cannot easily exist with regard to the mother. Where the evidence of the offence was most complete, and the inconvenience to the society at the same time the greatest, there it was agreed that the large share of the blame shall fall.¹²

By 1834 the Poor Law Commissioners had come to agree: 'A base-born child should be a burden to its mother, as Providence evidently intended' was now the prevailing view and in consequence mothers could no longer expect to get outdoor relief from the overseers but were expected instead, if destitute, to go into the workhouse.¹³ Neither could they themselves apply for the putative father to support the child, although the parish overseers could apply to the Quarter Sessions for an order against the man named, in order to force him to reimburse the costs to the parish of maintaining his child until the age of seven. The costs of applying to the Quarter Sessions were significant and if the action failed the parish was expected to bear the burden. The overseers might choose to apply if the mother was ill or had died, or if the father failed to provide some support of his own free will. After protests, the hearings were moved to the Petty Sessions in 1839. Since no father who failed to pay could now be imprisoned, although he could find his belongings seized or his wages attached, many were likely to see the advantage to themselves of being able to walk away from a problematic pregnancy. Fanny Trollope, writing while she was building her new house in Penrith, described the consequences in her novel, *Jessie Phillips*, with condemning clarity:

The terror that formerly kept so many libertines of all classes in check was no longer before him [Frederic Dalton], the legislature having, in its collective wisdom, deemed it "discreetest, best," that the male part of the population should be guarded, protected, sheltered, and insured from all the pains and penalties arising from the crime he meditated... "there is no more swearing away a gentleman's incognito now [he thought]."¹⁴

The drafters of the new Poor Law feared that the direct payment of child support rendered a woman either more attractive as a marriage partner or better able to raise an illegitimate family on the parish, both of which situations, in their view, were liable to increase the illegitimate birth rate; they therefore ordained that in the event of a successful affiliation application, no

¹¹ Samantha Williams, *Unmarried Motherhood in the Metropolis, 1700-1850: Pregnancy, the Poor Law and Provision* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 170.

¹² Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility', 355.

¹³ Paley, *My Ancestor*, 26-7.

¹⁴ Fanny Trollope, *Jessie Phillips* (Nonsuch, 2006) 108.

money was now to go directly to the mother, and any man who married a woman with an illegitimate child had to support it until the age of 16, thus making a woman with a child a positive liability. With no support in prospect immediately from the natural father and a reduced chance of obtaining support from another man in the future, the theory was that women would become rational, pragmatic and cautious in their relationships and not allow themselves to get pregnant. Forcing a marriage was no longer seen as a good idea, since it was now believed to encourage early and improvident unions and the consequent creation of a legitimate, but very likely pauper, family in need of parish support.

The whole problem of an illegitimate pregnancy was therefore loaded upon the mother, as Fanny Trollope's Jessie was told dismissively when she consulted a lawyer:

If it turns out, indeed, that you can't manage to maintain it yourself, and that it is actually and *bonâ fide* thrown upon the ratepayers, why then *they* may look about them, if they like it, and if they can prove, without any help of yours, mind you, that this one or that one is the father, why then, by bringing forward their proof, they may make him just pay the workhouse charges, and no more. But *you*, and the like of you, have no more to do with it than the man in the moon. [italics original]¹⁵

As was intended, the result of the new Poor Law was an immediate national decline in affiliation orders between 1835 and 1838; this was replicated in Cumberland, although there is evidence in the minutes of the Penrith Poor Law Guardians that they did institute proceedings against two fathers in 1838 and in October that year they were chasing a husband in London to persuade him to support his wife's child before marriage.¹⁶ The law was amended several times over the course of the fifty years after 1834 until finally the wheel of opinion had turned full circle; in discussions in Parliament about the proposed new Bill in 1872 the House was reminded that, 'penalties upon the seducer were more likely to discourage immorality than severe and oppressive laws upon the seduced.'¹⁷

So how did the mothers of Addingham make use of the changing prospects of securing affiliation and support? From 1810 to 1832 there were seven cases heard at the Quarter Sessions relating to people resident in Addingham – five mothers and two putative fathers named by women living elsewhere. This was perhaps a quarter of the total illegitimate births in the parish. As far as can be ascertained, four out of the thirteen women who gave birth to illegitimate children baptised in the parish between 1820 and 1832 went to court.

Mary Lancaster of Hunsonby, for example, sought support in 1823 from John Workman, also of Hunsonby, for her daughter Elizabeth Workman Lancaster. She was successful in winning an order until Elizabeth was seven but John was discharged early in 1828 – by which time she also had a son Joseph, for whom she did not seek support.¹⁸ In 1839 she married Joseph Forsyth, who was possibly the father of her third child, Margaret, although in 1841, while she was living in Westmorland with her husband, both her daughters were living in Hunsonby with their uncle, John Lancaster, and their grandmother Elizabeth. In 1851 Mary was back in Hunsonby, running the Cross Keys Inn and calling herself a widow. When Elizabeth married, in 1846, John Workman was named as her father on her marriage certificate – this is one of

¹⁵ Trollope, *Jessie*, 396.

¹⁶ Orders of affiliation, Return of the number of orders of affiliation made under the provisions of the act 4 & 5 Will. IV., c. 76, s. 72 (1837-38) (449), Cumberland; CAS(C) SPU/P 1, 27 Mar. 1838, 12 Jun. 1838, 30 Oct. 1838.

¹⁷ U. R. Q. Henriques, 'Bastardy and the New Poor Law', *Past and Present*, no. 37 (Jul. 1967) 120.

¹⁸ CAS(C) Q 5/8, Christmas, 1823-4.

several cases where a father, unnamed at baptism, is named at marriage. Mary LancasterForsyth was part of a whole web of related illegitimacies; her daughter Margaret affiliated her own son, in 1865, upon a Penrith man, who, unusually, was willing and able to produce three witnesses to support his denial of paternity. The case appears to have been withdrawn, since no hearing or order for support has been found.¹⁹

We met Samuel Lacy earlier in the context of cohabitation; he owned Little Salkeld Hall and at this time was probably the only representative of the gentry in the parish. In 1810 he was accused by Bridgett Little of Penrith of being the father of her child.²⁰ What happened to her daughter Margaret has not been established, but this was not his first illegitimate child: after Lacy's wife died, and with three legitimate children, he had fathered a daughter by Mary Stubbs of Hunsonby in 1805. She then had another daughter in 1806 but died eight months later and her second child cannot be traced. Mary does not seem to have sought to affiliate either child. Her elder daughter, however, as we have seen, seems to have been completely accepted as Lacy's child.²¹

In 1844 affiliation and maintenance were taken out of the hands of the overseers and women were again given the right to apply to what has been described as the 'cheap and summary jurisdiction of the Petty Sessions' for maintenance for a child up to the age of 13, either before or up to one year after birth.²² They could also apply for reimbursement of the costs of the summons fee and the expenses of the summoning officer; these were actually not inconsiderable amounts to meet in advance and to risk losing.²³ The woman also faced a demeaning and unpleasant task in attempting to prove paternity, with the possibility of a scrutiny in open court of her life and conduct. Successful mothers could expect to gain £0. 0s. 10d. for the midwife's costs and £0. 2s. 6d weekly until the child was 13, while fathers who failed to pay were once again liable to imprisonment for three months. Thus, in 1851, Richard Spedding was brought up from Knightsbridge to answer for failing to comply with an order to support Margaret Robinson of Winskill; he was ordered to pay both his arrears and the costs of bringing him from London, a total of over £11, on pain of three months' imprisonment with hard labour.²⁴ Ann WatsonKindred won her case for support from Thomas Morton of Gamblesby in 1850 but by 1851 Thomas was an agricultural labourer down in Devon, employed by a man born in Cumberland. He married in 1856, spending the rest of his life in Cornwall. His father was farming 555 acres at Gale Hall, Melmerby, in 1851, and employing five servants, which made him a very substantial farmer for the area, and the rest of the family seem to have remained living locally. Thomas had migrated over an unusually large distance – was he sent away to work for a Cumberland acquaintance? And would this have been for bringing shame upon his family? Or did he take flight to escape paying for the child? Did Ann actually receive any financial benefit from the successful court action? Perhaps she did, and it helped her, along with the Hutchinson Trust, to sustain herself and her children without resort to either the workhouse or her family.²⁵

¹⁹ CAS(C) QPL 15, 13 Jul. 1865.

²⁰ CAS(C) Q 5/6, Easter, 1810.

²¹ See before, 72-3.

²² Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History*, pt.2, vol.1, *The Last Hundred Years* (Frank Cass, 1963) 177.

²³ Paley, *My Ancestor*, 27.

²⁴ CAS(C) QPL 3, 25 Aug. 1851.

²⁵ CAS(C) QPL 2, 7 May 1850.

It has been suggested that 'few working-class women were likely, without the intervention of the parish officers, to start their own action before the magistrates. The majority were probably unaware of their right to do so,' while Gillis suggests that from about 1870 onwards 'only a quarter of unwed mothers applied [for affiliation] and, of these, only a tenth were successful.'²⁶ The mothers of Addingham may have been both more knowledgeable of their rights, and more willing to enforce them, than such comments might lead us to believe and they began to take advantage of the opportunity offered to them. Between 1845 and 1846 the number of applications throughout Cumberland increased by over a third, followed by a sharp fall but numbers peaked again in 1850 before slowly declining back to the 1845 level.²⁷ 76 per cent of cases heard in these years resulted in a maintenance order. Perhaps they were more like the pauper woman of Lancashire, investigated by Steven King, who wrote letters or gave verbal evidence 'shot through with defiance and the language of expansive rights and limited obligations', corroborating an alternative view that 'some working-class individuals saw the police court as an agency whose coercive power could be harnessed to their own ends' and that 'working-class wives could also be well versed in matrimonial law.'²⁸ Anthea Trodd has suggested, that while 'the distinctive status of the middle-class home was seen to lie in its claim to privacy...working-class homes were often regarded as being in the public domain.'²⁹ The working-class woman could afford to be more open and honest in court because she had less to protect. Indeed, the maid, Bridget, in Anthony Trollope's novel *Orly Farm*, 'has no problems about appearing in public because she has no home.'³⁰

Figures from the Registrar-General show that in the years 1845-1859 the number of bastardy summonses issued in Cumberland amounted to 2.4 per cent of the 1851 population, and 2.2 per cent in Westmorland. Yet in Norfolk, which had an illegitimacy rate almost as high as Cumberland (10.8 per cent, as opposed to 11.1 per cent in 1845) the bastardy summonses amounted to only 1.2 per cent per head of population, while Shropshire, with an illegitimacy rate of 10.5, had a bastardy summons rate of only 0.7 per cent. Evidently the mothers of Cumberland were applying much more often to the courts for affiliation than in some other areas. Durham, with an illegitimacy rate of only 6.3 per cent, had a bastardy summons rate of 1.5, the same as in Yorkshire.³¹ Were northern women different or was access to the law perhaps easier?

There were 15 illegitimate babies baptised in the parish between 1848 and 1859: only four of these mothers applied for affiliation but a total of seven mothers who gave their address as Addingham applied for affiliation in these years. Hannah Brown was so determined in 1850 that

²⁶ Henriques, 'Bastardy' 119; John R. Gillis, *For Better for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the present* (Oxford UP, 1985) 258.

²⁷ Return of the number of summonses, applications and orders made or refused in bastardy in England and Wales (1845-1859) House of Commons Papers, 1861.

²⁸ Steven King, 'The Bastardy Prone Sub-society Again: Bastards and Their Fathers and Mothers in Lancashire, Wiltshire, and Somerset, 1800-1840', ch.5 in Levene, Alys, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 83; George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: the English home and its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford UP, 1998) 200, 201.

²⁹ Anthea Trodd, *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* (Macmillan, 1989) 156.

³⁰ Trodd, *Domestic Crime*, 146.

³¹ Return of the number of summonses, applications and orders made or refused in bastardy in England and Wales (1845-1859) House of Commons Papers (1861); Eighth Annual Report of the Registrar-General (1845) BPP 1847-48.

she applied twice to affiliate the same child upon the same man; both attempts were dismissed, the only cases clearly rejected out of fifty-six examined in the course of this research.³² She must have found some new evidence in order to pursue the second case, but clearly it was not compelling. In Cumberland as a whole that year thirteen per cent of applications heard were dismissed, while for the period 1845-1859, the average was ten per cent.³³

Barry Reay, in his microhistory of the Blean area of Kent, concluded, like Gillis and Henriques, that women were unlikely to pursue affiliation; if the father was an impoverished labourer she might expect to gain little monetarily from the public exposure. He found that only twelve of 51 possible cases (23.5 per cent) came to court between 1860 and 1871.³⁴ However, between 1860 and 1871 there were a total of sixteen cases relating to a mother *or* father resident in Addingham at the local Petty Sessions and of the ten illegitimate babies taken for baptism by women resident in Addingham, six mothers (60 per cent) sought affiliation. One of these ten babies died shortly after birth and one mother was from an itinerant navy family, which makes the local application rate seem even higher. My numbers are very small but they do seem consistent over a number of years; the women of Addingham were both able and willing to enforce their rights against a mixture of farm servants, husbandmen, farmers' sons and tradesmen.³⁵

In 1868 and 1872 the law changed yet again: under the 1872 Bastardy Law Amendment Act, the mother could still bring proceedings on her own but now the Board of Guardians was also allowed to initiate proceedings on her behalf and, if she married, her new husband was not expected to bear the total cost of raising her child, since maintenance was now still due even if the mother had married another man. Women had to collect the money each week, which must have been both inconvenient and demeaning. Men could once again be imprisoned. The sum payable was increased to the 'paltry' maximum of £0. 5s. 0d. a week, although in 1874 Elizabeth Moore was awarded rather less, at £0. 2s. 6d for the first six weeks and £0. 1s 8d thereafter, and none of the Addingham mothers were awarded as much as £0. 5s. 0d.³⁶

Between 1860 and 1879, 21 illegitimate children were baptised in the parish, one of whom died as a baby. Twelve of the mothers (60 per cent) applied for affiliation. Only five were clearly awarded support, while one application is marked 'compromise', and one mother married the father shortly after; perhaps the threat of action was sufficient to persuade two reluctant fathers to accept their responsibilities. One application was the subject of a hard-fought battle, resulting in pages and pages of court testimony, although the outcome is still unclear. Nothing is recorded in either the Petty Session minutes, or on the applications, for the remaining four cases. Perhaps the application was withdrawn, as the result of a private agreement, or when the mother realised she had a poor case or could not face the scrutiny. It seems, therefore, that

³² CAS(C) QPL 2, 15 Jan. 1850, 29 Jan. 1850. Frost, 'Claiming Justice', 183, found a success rate for the men in getting the case dismissed of 19 per cent, in her larger sample between 1870 and 1900.

³³ Return of the number of summonses, applications and orders made or refused in bastardy in England and Wales (1845-1859) House of Commons Papers, 1861.

³⁴ Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930*, (Cambridge UP, 1996) 198.

³⁵ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 63, found that bastardy applications for Cumberland 1846-1855 were equal to 49% of illegitimate births and orders were made for 38% of such births.

³⁶ Margaret Arnot, 'Infant death, child care and the state: the baby-farming scandal and the first infant life protection legislation of 1872', *Continuity and Change*, vol.9, no.2 (1994) 299; CAS(C) QPL 17, 14 July 1874.

out of twenty surviving babies, resulting in twelve applications, seven produced an outcome favourable to the woman. Indeed, a marriage may well have been seen as a rather better outcome than an order to support that might not be adhered to; Ginger Frost points out that ‘as with many other suits, winning in court was not the same thing as receiving money in hand.’³⁷ One woman, Jane PeelSkelton, succeeded in getting both an affiliation order *and*, eventually, marriage.

For much of this period, applications were not the result of direct action by the overseers, since this was permitted again only after 1872, although they may, of course, have been very helpful in informing the women of their rights, and persuasive about the need to pursue action in court.

The number of applications does not seem to indicate that either ignorance or fear were common to all; somehow these women knew their rights, were able to pay the costs of the allegation and were confident enough to contemplate a court hearing, at least initially. Esther Jackson named George Hetherington twice during this period. Was she an unusually determined woman, unambiguously naming her second son George Hetherington Jackson and pursuing the father again at the Petty Sessions, or was she fairly typical? The outcome is unclear, but she did eventually secure her man, since within six months of bringing the second case, George Hetherington had married her, after which there were then no further children baptised for the next seven years. She left William, her first child, behind to be brought up by his grandparents when she married and he perhaps never knew who his father was, since he named no father on his own marriage certificate. Or perhaps it is wrong to assume that Esther was being honest in naming George Hetherington as the father of William?³⁸

Women had their ways of getting the necessary corroboration to prove paternity; Gillis suggests that they felt that sex involved mutual obligations and ‘for this reason they made sure that others knew about their intimacies...women suspecting that men were about to abscond felt no shame in telling their friends of their situation.’³⁹ There are plenty of examples in the allegations relating to Addingham of a fellow servant being fully aware of what was going on and willing to stand up in court and give evidence. Ann Bell brought along her brother to swear that he had seen her with John Errington of Glassonby, sitting up late at night together in the kitchen of their employer, and that she did not come to bed until between four and five; since she and her brother shared a room, he was in a position to know.⁴⁰ Sometimes their witnesses had surprisingly accurate and long memories – Elizabeth Dodd in 1862 could remember the events of 1856 in support of her friend Mary Clark. She had seen Mary and William Westgarth courting in the kitchen, with Mary sitting on his knee, a scenario featuring in several accounts, which leaves the historian wondering about the degree of collusion involved in these cases. Did they share information about the type of evidence needed to convince the court; did they, like paupers, share common ‘rhetorical strategies’ when dealing with the authorities?⁴¹

³⁷ Frost, ‘Claiming Justice’, 180.

³⁸ CAS(C) QPL 15, 31 Mar. 1868; QPL 16, 15 Apr. 1873.

³⁹ Gillis, *For Better for Worse*, 182.

⁴⁰ CAS(C) QPL 14, 29 Apr. 1862.

⁴¹ CAS(C) QPL 14, 1 July 1862; Joanne Bailey, “‘Think wot a mother must feel’: Parenting in English pauper letters c.1760-1834’, *Family and Community History*, vol.13 no.1 (May 2010) 11; Samantha A. Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor law practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester UP, 2017) 21, comments on the shared ‘linguistic register’ found by other historians in pauper letters.

Many rebutted the allegation, although none as strongly as Henry Bleamires Metcalf, as we saw earlier.⁴² However, five men admitted to fatherhood in court and several had already voluntarily admitted their paternity to a friend or relative; John Jackson had admitted it to Elizabeth Moore's brother, who appeared as a witness, while Mary Ellison produced her sister, who swore that Joseph Blenkinship had offered voluntarily to pay for her child, a sure sign to the court of paternity. Thomas Tinkler's defending solicitor said the child was his, the result, apparently, of Mary Robson living with him 'as his servant.'⁴³

Gillis also suggests that many servants took the risk of telling their master or mistress, in the hope that pressure would be brought to bear that way.⁴⁴ Since they were likely to be immediately dismissed, this was a real risk, and as we saw earlier in the discussion of infanticide, some mothers went to great lengths to conceal the situation. However, the Rowley case possibly provides an example of disclosure. Edith Tapley accused John Glaister of being the father of her child and was supported to an uncommon degree by her employer, William Rowley, resident in Glassonby and by far the biggest landowner in the parish at that time. The case was heard at Westminster Police Court, in a series of hearings from January to March 1902, during the course of which the baby died. Rowley had apparently tried to bully Glaister, a local stonemason, into admitting paternity, had arranged for Edith to have her baby at a mother and baby home in London, and his wife had taken her back into her service after the birth. The case was widely reported in both the national and Cumbrian press and must have caused something of a local sensation.⁴⁵ The defence, in querying why it had not been heard in either Penrith or Edith's home county of Kent, speculated about the motives for doing so, since London seemed designed to cause maximum difficulty for the defendant. Rowley admitted he had paid all the costs of the case but said he was merely defending his servant as he would have defended a dog in his household, which hardly flattered his servant. There were also suggestions that Edith was rather flighty, and inconsistent in her accusation of paternity. Eventually, however, Glaister was adjudged to be the father, the cause of much local rejoicing by Rowley's estate workers. The *Penrith Herald* reported that:

when the wire was received in Glassonby containing the information that Miss Tapley had won her case, 95 per cent. of the people turned out to cheer. A big bonfire was built on the village green, and for two hours the residents continued to cheer, ring bells, and beat cans.⁴⁶

No costs were awarded, which might indicate that the magistrate did not entirely believe Rowley's version of events. Gibson notes evidence from Essex of better-off fathers, conscious of a reputation to lose, encouraging mothers to mis-affiliate: 'in all these cases the father was of higher social status than both the mother or the man falsely accused, and often the mother's employer.'⁴⁷ It was the mother's word against the putative father's, as it always was, until blood tests became feasible in the 1930s; they were still only 60 per cent accurate and could only exclude, not positively identify, the father. A bill to make such a test compulsory in affiliation

⁴² See before, 60-1.

⁴³ CAS(C) QPL 17, 14 Jul. 1874; 3 Apr. 1879; QPL 3, 10 Jan. 1854.

⁴⁴ Gillis, *For Better for Worse*, 182.

⁴⁵ All newspapers accessed through the British Newspaper Archive, www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

⁴⁶ *Herald*, 8 Mar. 1902, 6.

⁴⁷ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018) 57.

cases failed to become law in 1938 and it was not until 1969 that a court could order one.⁴⁸

Was the noisy celebration evidence of unadulterated joy at the news that the outsider Edith and their landlord had been vindicated, or was it mixed with relief that Glaister, a local man, had not been burdened with a huge bill for costs? During the course of the case it was claimed that Rowley had bought the Glaisters' house and run them off his estate, and indeed, by 1911, John Glaister was living in the north-east while his parents were in Langwathby. Now unhampered by the baby, Edith married in 1905 and settled in her home county of Kent. Rowley died of gunshot wounds in 1904; the inquest deemed it an accident.⁴⁹

We know of the Rowley case only because it was reported in detail in the press, locally and nationally. This was unusual: the local press generally reported only the barest details that affiliation cases had been heard, often with not even the names of the parties mentioned.⁵⁰ Courts might be cleared of women and young people if the proceedings were felt to be too salacious. In 1865, a letter in the local press from a J.P. pronounced evidence heard in open court and the likelihood of laughter to be 'most pernicious to public morality' and recommended that the cases should be heard last and the court should be cleared of women and youths.⁵¹ This seems to have happened on occasion.⁵² However, it was clearly not universal, as in 1890 the editorial, while noting that 'these cases are always ignored by the press as unfit for publication' still felt obliged to point out that 'the same objections which lead to their exclusion from the columns of a newspaper apply, if not in kind in degree, with equal force to their hearing before the public...the moral contamination engendered is an incalculable public evil.' The Leath Ward Petty Sessions were held to be worse in this respect than Carlisle and other local courts.⁵³ When, in 1892, the chairman of the Quarter Sessions pointed out that perjury in affiliation hearings was prevalent and suggested that publicity in newspapers would be a remedy, since 'it would tend to increase responsibility and check such reckless false swearing', the editorial responded with 'I hope the newspapers will decline with thanks.' The details were 'quite unfit for family reading.'⁵⁴ The prevailing local view was obviously very different to that found by Ginger Frost in South Wales at this time, where she found many detailed newspaper reports of such cases, which made up for a lack of court reports.⁵⁵ In Penrith, when the legal records are still extant the detail they give can vary, as we have seen above, from the basic to an almost verbatim report of great length but the press generally refused to do more than acknowledge that a case had been heard.

⁴⁸ Pat Thane, 'Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England', *Women's History Review*, vol.20, no.1 (Feb. 2011) 17; Virginia Wimperis, *The Unmarried Mother and her Child* (George Allen and Unwin, 1960) 138; in 2008, nearly one in five paternity claims handled by the child support agency revealed that the mother had either deliberately or inadvertently misidentified the father: see *Sunday Times Magazine*, 3 Mar. 2019. See also *The Times*, 11.4.2016, *The Daily Telegraph*, 31.5.2019 and *The Times*, 15 Nov. 2019 for differing estimates of the 'Paternal Discrepancy' rate, the latter, based upon genetic research in Belgium and the Netherlands, suggesting that the rural rate may be lower than the urban.

⁴⁹ *Herald*, 23 Jan. 1904, 3.

⁵⁰ See, for example, *Advertiser*, 7 Mar. 1865, 3, and 18 Jul. 1865, 2.

⁵¹ *Advertiser*, 6 Jun. 1865, 3.

⁵² See, for example, *Advertiser*, 27 Sept. 1864, 3, and 20 Jun. 1865, 2.

⁵³ *Herald*, 8 Feb. 1890, 5.

⁵⁴ *Herald*, 29 Oct. 1892, 5.

⁵⁵ Frost, 'Claiming Justice', 177-198.

Adoption and fostering

‘O my child, my child! Not dead in the first hours of her life, as my cruel sister told me; but sternly nurtured by her, after she had renounced me and my name! O my child, O my child!’¹

Until the 1926 Adoption Act, adoption as we know it now was not possible. Indeed, most Victorian rescue workers opposed the adoption of illegitimate children since it removed the burden of support from the mother; it was felt that the constant reminder of her sin would prevent her falling into it again. ‘The rescue worker’s first concern was the restoration of the woman to a moral life, not the welfare of her child.’² Informal adoption certainly existed, and there are many examples in this research of family members taking on the full-time care of an illegitimate young relative, but there was no legal mechanism for a mother to transfer her full parental rights and responsibilities to another person, whether related or not.³ There was, however, the possibility of appointing a legal guardian if the mother was dead.⁴ Under legislation of 1889 the workhouse Guardians could adopt a child but this could later be rescinded and the child returned to the care of the mother. The option taken by so many mothers after 1926 of giving the child up for legal and final adoption, and thereby severing all links, was simply not available and a child, illegitimate or legitimate, living with anybody other than a parent was in a potentially unstable situation, where the informal adoptive arrangement could easily fail. The 1926 Act was intended to give security to all involved, the birth mother, the adoptive parents and the child.⁵

I have come across only four people described in the Addingham census records as adopted. Florence Burrett Wilson was born in 1897 in Long Benton, Northumberland. She was listed as Florence Barratt in the 1901 census, as Florence Burritt in the 1911 census and by the full name given on her birth certificate, Florence Burrett Wilson, only when she married in 1922. She was raised by her aunt and uncle, Thomas Lancelot and Mary Jane Jackson, the latter being the sister to her mother, Irvine Wilson, who by 1901 was working as a housemaid in Westminster. In the family bible Florence is added in after the couple’s own two children, and the child of her aunt’s first marriage, and the surname appears to be spelt ‘Birrett’. It almost appears as if they could not quite decide how to spell this name, as if they knew it was perhaps not quite correct, or even slightly irrelevant. Perhaps the full name was not given on the census, or her blood relationship to the head of the household acknowledged (as in most such cases it was) in order to conceal the illegitimacy, which raises the question of who was being misled – merely the neighbours or Florence herself? Like Catherine Cookson, who felt that her husband ‘made an illegitimate legitimate by giving me his name’, Florence may have felt relieved to take on the security of her husband’s name.⁶ It looks very much as if Florence had been completely

¹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Hazell, Watson & Viney, n.d.) 327.

² Gail Malmgreen, *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (Croom Helm, 1986) 225.

³ Ruth Paley, *My Ancestor was a Bastard* (Society of Genealogists, 2011) 34; see Jenny Keating, *A Child for Keeps: The History of Adoption in England, 1918-45* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) ch.1, for a clear summary of the history of child protection and adoption legislation.

⁴ CAS(C) QPL 2, 6 May 1851: John Hoggarth of Ainstable was appointed guardian for the illegitimate child of his dead daughter Jane.

⁵ George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford UP, 1998) 272-308 is a good general account of the legislation designed to create ‘artificial families.’

⁶ Kathleen Jones, *Catherine Cookson* (Little Brown, 1999) 152.

handed over by her mother to be raised by Thomas and Mary Jane Jackson as their own child.

Edwin Falder Jackson was born to Sarah Falder in 1904, her second illegitimate son. The first, Fred Cecil, was raised by his maternal great aunt and uncle, but described in the census as their nephew. When they died, he went to live with his maternal uncle and aunt, again listed as nephew. Edwin Falder Jackson was also brought up by a maternal relative but, unlike his brother, Edwin was not baptised locally, he was enumerated in 1911 as 'adopted son' and he took his adoptive father's surname. The two boys were raised in the same locality but identified, and therefore possibly treated, differently; did they even know they were brothers? A family tree kept by a close relative would seem to indicate that Edwin, at least, knew nothing of his brother.⁷ Sarah has not been traced further but Edwin later emigrated and any continuing contact with his mother looks unlikely.

In 1901 Albert Edward Potts was also enumerated as an adopted child, the son of George and Nancy Bugbee, then living in Little Salkeld with their daughter Sarah Bugbee. In fact, he was their grandson and quite where Potts came from is unclear – he was registered only as Albert Edward, son of Sarah Elizabeth Bugbee in 1893. This family was very keen to keep his origins well hidden, since even when he started school he was described as an orphan, despite his mother being alive. He used the name Potts on all the official documents I have seen, including his marriage registration, naming John Potts as his father. However, it seems as if he must have been privy to at least part of the truth of his parentage. His military papers clearly named his grandfather as Mr Bugbee and at his demobilisation his next-of-kin was given as 'Mother, Sarah Little, Green Head, Maryport, Cumbd.'⁸ In these three cases, the use of 'adopted' seems designed to hide a relationship and to explain a difference in surname. Perhaps at this later period, and particularly for the Bugbees, as incomers to the parish, such deception was considered necessary to allow the family to appear 'respectable'.⁹ The fourth child shown as adopted, Amy Toppin in Gamblesby in 1911, I have not been able to clarify; she may well, of course, have been legitimate.

Adoption allowed the mother to leave her child behind and to continue working, as Irvine Wilson did. Placing the child with a foster mother, was another way to manage. As with 'adopted', the term 'nurse child', or a child described as a 'boarder', acts as a red flag when encountered in the census, although it is possible that a child put out to nurse was legitimately born.¹⁰ Some mothers in this investigation put their child with a family, or more likely a woman raising children on her own, by private arrangement for payment, thus allowing them to work to maintain both mother and child. Some of the Addingham examples look very much as if they were intended to be short-term, until the mother was in a position to take her child back. Jane Thompson, however, the mother of two illegitimate daughters, probably died only two weeks after the birth of Mary, who was living in 1851 as a three-year-old nurse child

⁷ See <http://person.ancestry.co.uk/tree/18496447/person/667329007/facts>, accessed 30 Jul. 2021.

⁸ British Army World War I, Service Records 1914-1920, https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1219&ch=1608685&tid=&pid=&queryId=4042e28b32a8746ca85f73c25cded8e7&usePUB=true&_phsrc=osQ2&_phstart=successSource, accessed 30 Jun. 2021.

⁹ Laura Cumming, *On Chapel Sands: My Mother and Other Missing Persons* (Chatto and Windus, 2019) 171, refers to the fiction of adoption behind which 'Veda – and of course George himself – could carry on living their respectable lives in the village of Chapel St Leonards.'

¹⁰ Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford UP, 2012) 111, refers to the not uncommon practice of sending legitimate children out for wet-nursing even when the mother was alive.

in Glassonby with Jane Tinion. Jane, apparently married but living on her own with three children, then also died and by 1861 Mary was listed as the daughter of one John Thompson and his wife. I have not established any family relationship between him and her mother but when Mary married, she named a John Thompson as her father. As in many such cases, we are left wondering whether he was the actual biological father or named because he had had the fatherly care of her.

After several scandals concerning baby farming and its very high mortality rate in the mid-nineteenth century, private fostering had begun to be regulated from 1872 onwards; the workhouse guardians now inspected the house before giving their permission to individuals wanting to take more than one child as a private arrangement. Several local people were approved by the Guardians to take children for 'hire or reward'. James Elliott of Unthank, Mary Ann Beatham of Glassonby and Joseph Robert Blenkinsip Davidson of Glassonby (all of whom feature elsewhere in this study), Thomas William Nelson of Hunsonby and Alice Chapman of Gamblesby were all inspected so that they could make private arrangements to take in children for payment.¹¹ The mothers involved were probably not totally destitute, since they could manage to pay for their child's keep, but the children would very likely be illegitimate. Annie Elizabeth Abbott, for example, was a fourteen-year-old servant in Hunsonby in 1901, but by 1911 she was working in Glassonby, while her illegitimate baby daughter was a nurse child with Mary Ann Beatham in the same village. The household was mixed: Mary Ann had been suddenly widowed in July 1910 and was living with her two legitimate children, her eldest illegitimate child, and William Whitehead, an adult boarder fallen upon hard times, who also features in this research.

The outlook for nurse children could be very poor.¹² We have seen that Mary Jane Wilson's daughter, born in 1885, was returned to her mother unexpectedly and subsequently died.¹³ However, the evidence of the cases detailed below shows many privately fostered children also survived and that contact was generally maintained between mother and child. In some cases, it can appear from the official evidence that the mother had perhaps deserted the child, but research can reveal very enduring relationships and it is therefore worth looking at the Addingham examples in some detail.

It looks very much as if Annie Elizabeth Abbott managed to maintain her child and to keep in touch; Amy Eileen, born in 1910, did not leave Hunsonby Sunday School until 1918, probably to move away with her mother when she married the following year. In 1871, Catherine Lowther was boarding-out her four-year-old son James (born when she was living in Winskill) in Appleby, while she was working in nearby Soulby; she married in 1879 and had further children and although James cannot be traced for certain, census evidence seems to indicate that he survived and that mother and son lived close to each other in both Kendal and the Fylde area of Lancashire, well outside the normal range of migration; it seems highly likely, therefore, that they kept in touch.

Mary Elizabeth Beckton had two illegitimate children, Annas, baptised in Addingham in

¹¹ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 15 Mar. 1910, 6 Dec. 1910; SPU/P 16, 1 Jun. 1915, 13 Jun. 1916; SPU/P 17, 5 Mar. 1918.

¹² See Ginger Frost, 'The kindness of strangers revisited: fostering, adoption and illegitimacy in England, 1860-1930', ch.7 in Probert, Rebecca, *Cohabitation and Non-Marital births in England and Wales, 1600-2012* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 129-30; John R. Gillis, *For Better for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford UP, 1985) 241.

¹³ See before, 83-4.

1876, and William, baptised at Barton in 1885. Annas was boarded-out in Glassonby in 1881 while her mother worked as a servant in Barton. William was described in 1891 as an 'adopted son' with an elderly couple in Penrith, while his mother worked in Clifton and his sister was a servant at Houghton; ten years later, by which time his mother was working in Middleton-in-Teesdale, William was enumerated as a 'boarder' with the same couple. Annas was by then married and living near Barnard Castle, less than ten miles from her mother. Unusually among the records I have looked at, when she married, she and her husband were both described as 'born out of wedlock.' Continued contact with William did not look promising. However, all three ended up living near each other in the north-east, and Mary's will named both children as her executors. She left effects worth £800, a substantial amount for an unmarried servant at this time.

Hannah Jackson had an illegitimate daughter baptised in the parish in 1872 but Mary Elizabeth died aged six. Her illegitimate son born in 1877 appears to have been raised by his maternal grandparents while Hannah carried on working in the local area. It could appear from the census entries she had little contact with him. However, in 1911, we find his own (legitimate) daughter Jessie living as a 'boarder' with an apparently unrelated couple, William and Hannah Watson, in Temple Sowerby; Hannah was, in fact, her grandmother, who had maintained sufficient contact with Thomas George to be available to take in her granddaughter when needed.

Sarah Ann Graham boarded-out her son Isaac, then aged five, in 1901 with Elizabeth StamperLeggattWhitehead (herself the mother of an illegitimate son) in Little Salkeld, while she worked in Appleby, and by 1911 he was working on his maternal grandmother's farm, where he was enumerated only as a 'servant', rather than as a grandson. His mother, by now married and called Fothergill, was enumerated in the same household as a 'visitor'; clearly grandmother, mother and son were in contact but the relationships are all hidden in the census. Isaac himself clearly knew the truth in 1914, when he gave his next-of-kin as Sarah Ann Graham on signing up for military service; her marriage seems to have broken down and Sarah Ann reverted to her maiden name. Mother and son were both living in the Bradford area after the war.

Jane Hodgson, who had an illegitimate child in the parish in 1873 at the unusually young age of 15, had herself been boarded-out by her unmarried mother, Elizabeth, in Liverpool. Jane was born in Toxteth in 1857 and in 1861 she was still there, while her mother worked nearby as a house servant to a widowed silk mercer. Extraordinarily, Jane is enumerated as a three-year-old boarder living on her own in a stable. Elizabeth later married and returned to her native Cumberland to live at Glassonby, where she and Jane lived with her new husband until Jane herself married when her son was fourteen, and old enough to earn his own living.

Sarah Elizabeth Nevison was also herself born illegitimate and, as we saw earlier, spent time with her mother and brother in the workhouse in Eamont Bridge. Her daughter Frances may have been baptised at Addingham in 1885 because her brother was married by then and living in Little Salkeld; such family links are often the explanation for apparently random baptisms. By 1891, aged six, Frances was living in Great Salkeld, in a curiously mixed household containing three other boarders, all middle-aged males, while Sarah herself seems to have been working as a servant to a young solicitor and his brother, both unmarried, near Clitheroe and her own mother was 'on parochial relief and knitting' in Kendal. By 1901, however, Sarah Elizabeth was reunited not only with her daughter, now working as a tailoress, but also with her own mother; their household in Hebden Bridge contained just the three women, all unmarried. Somewhat

against the apparent odds, this family unit too had survived. Although Frances married early in 1910, she had no children by the time of the 1911 census – perhaps the cycle of illegitimacy had been broken.

Annie Bownas (or Bowness) was born in Penrith in 1900 but baptised in Little Salkeld and still living there in 1911, again in a rather mixed household, headed by Maria and Thomas Goulding and including Maria's illegitimate son Robert, aged 38. Annie's mother, apparently a widow (but more likely a deserted wife) was working as a housekeeper for three unmarried brothers in Plumpton. When Annie was briefly admitted to Maughanby School, in 1913, Robert Goulding was named as her guardian. She left for Penrith after only a month. No more is known about mother or child. Was Mary paying the Gouldings to care for her child – or was Robert, in fact, her father?

Clara Sewell, baptised in Little Salkeld in 1906, was enumerated in 1911 as a five-year-old 'visitor' in Maryport with an apparently unrelated family, while her mother Agnes was a servant in Cockermouth in a substantial household headed by Robinson Mitchell, the local auctioneer. It seems probable that she had been boarded out by her mother while she worked a few miles away to support them both.

It seems likely from the above evidence that boarding-out was usually adopted as a temporary expedient to allow the mother to work to maintain herself and her child or lasted only until she married; in this sample, at least, most children survived and maintained good contact with their mothers. It should also be noted that there was a fine line between fostering, adoption and the family helping out. 'Adopted' Florence Burrett Wilson and Edwin Falder Jackson were in reality in the same situation as many of the others described in the next chapter, who were living with their extended family but enumerated accurately as niece or nephew. However, it is possible that the family in these particular cases, in choosing this term for the census, were describing a different and longer-term arrangement than mere fostering, one where the mother had completely given up her child and where perhaps there was a concerted attempt to maintain a fiction with both the child and the neighbours.

The role of the extended family

‘...what Providence appears to have ordained that it should be, a burthen on its mother, and, where she cannot maintain it, on her parents.’¹

The Poor Law Commissioners were quite clear about the allocation of responsibility in their declaration of 1834; neither the father nor his family should be expected to bear any responsibility for an illegitimate child. It was a complete change in outlook from the pre-1834 principle, that while the mother should care for the child, the father should contribute financially. The purity of this approach did not last long, being gradually eroded over succeeding decades.² As we have seen earlier, even in the early days of the new Poor Law efforts were made by the Penrith Guardians to gain financial support from fathers but I have no evidence relating to Addingham.³ It remained true throughout the period of this study, that the child was normally brought up by the mother or her family or a combination of both. Even if the father paid some maintenance, it was very likely insufficient to keep mother and baby, and if the mother had to work, some kind of childcare was necessary. It was a rare unmarried mother who received no help from her family at some stage of her child’s life, but this was equally true for her married siblings, when the death of a husband or wife could easily lead to the remaining partner falling back upon the family for help. Those women who were themselves illegitimate will have had fewer family members to fall back on and the problem would have been compounded for those who were born of a succession of unmarried mothers. Women who lacked male relatives in general, not only male partners, were more likely to have to turn to the Poor Law.⁴

However, some families in Cumberland were seen as almost *too* willing to keep the unmarried mother and her child at home. John Dodgson of Bewcastle, in northern Cumberland, informed the Poor Law Commissioners in 1833 that ‘The daughters of some farmers and even land-owners have bastard children, who keep their daughters and children with them, and regularly keep back their poor-rate, to meet the parish allowances for their daughters’ bastards. We have no doubt the same grievance exists in many other parishes.’⁵ An unmarried daughter at home in Addingham could still usefully contribute to the family economy; she could not make lace, as in Colyton, or work in the mills, as in Culcheth, but she could work on the land or perhaps act as the family childminder if there were several young children in the household. Mother and child were not necessarily a financial drain.⁶ Once married, they would normally move away to their husband’s parish and their contribution would be lost.

¹ Report from H.M. Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws (London, 1834) 197, quoted in U. R. Q. Henriques, ‘Bastardy and the New Poor Law’, *Past and Present*, no.37 (Jul. 1967) 109.

² Thomas Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the myth of the old poor law and the making of the new’, *Economic History Review*, vol.63, no.2 (2010) 358.

³ See before, 110.

⁴ Sam Barrett, ‘Kinship, poor relief and the welfare process in early modern England’, ch.7 in King, Steven and Tomkins, Alannah, *The poor in England, 1700-1850: an economy of makeshifts* (Manchester UP, 2003) 215.

⁵ Derek Denman, *Illegitimacy in north-east Cumberland, 1815-1864; and legislative reform, 1834-1844*, M.A. (Lancaster, 2005) 46.

⁶ Jean Robin, ‘Illegitimacy in Colyton, 1851-1881’, *Continuity and Change*, vol.2, no.2 (1987) 323; G. N. Gandy, *Illegitimacy in a Handloom Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culcheth, Lancs, 1781-1860*, D. Phil (Oxford, 1979) 192, 199.

It is impossible from the limited evidence available to be quite sure how these women managed, since a lot may have happened between the census snapshots. Nevertheless, as Table 11 makes clear, the overwhelming majority of illegitimate children connected to Addingham were raised within their own family, and, again overwhelmingly, the maternal family.

	No.	Family involvement established	Mother took child when married
Unsure whether mother married	33	7 (21%)	
Mother probably married father	15	7 (47%)	11 (73%)
Mother married another man	88	66 (75%)	42 (48%)
Raised child unmarried	30	13 (43%)	
Mother died	7	5 (71%)	
Total	173	98 (57%)	53 (31%)

Table 11. Family involvement in bringing up the child.

Whatever the situation, whether the mother married the father or a different man, or she remained unmarried, or, indeed, she died young, her family often helped out at some point. Such help was, not unnaturally perhaps, much more common where the mother married a man who was not the father, or in the few cases where the mother died. Many children therefore stayed in the parish of their birth, or the surrounding local villages, where their origins were likely to be remembered. I have only one example of a child apparently completely abandoned from birth in the workhouse and only a few who were boarded-out with strangers from babyhood; the mothers of these children had no proven Addingham connections.⁷

Many mothers and their illegitimate babies were captured by the census living at home with their parents and it thus seems very unlikely that 'home deliveries were out of the question for most women faced with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, primarily because of the risk of discovery.'⁸ The family was called upon from the very beginning and many children at least in their infancy were cared for partly by their mother. Many women subsequently married but a significant number, probably about half of the total (where a subsequent marriage can be established, the child was still alive and under 14) did not take their illegitimate child with them into the new marital home. In most cases it was then the maternal family who raised the child, with aunts and uncles often taking over when the grandparents died. They also stepped in if the mother died young. What the child understood of its parentage, and how many believed themselves to be the youngest child of their grandparents, cannot be ascertained but if the census entries are to be believed, the authorities, at least, were not usually misled in this way. This evidence would seem to contradict the very common assumption that many illegitimate children believed their mother to be their sister, since most children were correctly enumerated *vis-a-vis* this relationship. However, the accounts from individuals are so numerous that it has

⁷ See www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk for William Graham Thompson, who was brought up in the workhouse.

⁸ Jessica A. Sheetz-Nguyen, *Victorian Women, Unwed Mothers and the London Foundling Hospital* (Continuum, 2012) 42.

to be taken seriously as a possible strategy, one strand of the many in which the extended family stepped in. Catherine Cookson, the author, was one such raised with this belief and 'even as a small child Catherine sensed a tense atmosphere whenever Kate was there; the unspoken resentment between Rose [the grandmother] and Kate [the mother], the money handed over, the curtailed affection' as grandmother and mother competed for the child's love. She found out the truth from another child when she was seven but told nobody that she knew.⁹ However, on the 1911 census she too, like so many Addingham children, was correctly enumerated as granddaughter, with her mother also in the house and seemingly living there.¹⁰

Even if the child was left behind on marriage, most mothers did not move far, and it would have been relatively easy for mother and child to keep in touch. Sarah Jane Calvert did not take her illegitimate son George with her when she married in 1898, even though she may well have married his father, but instead left him to the care of her own siblings. Esther Jackson also left one son behind with her parents but took his younger (and also illegitimate) brother with her when, in 1873, she married the man she had named as father to them both at the affiliation proceedings. However, they all carried on living in Gamblesby and the elder boy was correctly enumerated as 'grandson'. Elizabeth Kidd also left one child, Ann, behind, with her mother and sisters, but took one with her to Penrith when she married in 1845. Clearly, however, they all remained in touch, as Ann later employed her half-sister in her millinery business in Penrith. Mary Lancaster left her three illegitimate children behind with her family when she married in 1839, but by 1851 she had resumed life in Hunsonby, running the pub for many years and bringing up her youngest child there. Sarah Bugbee Little, who was so determined to hide her child's origins that she changed his surname to Potts and described him as the 'adopted son' of her own father in 1901, is a rare census example of both mother and child being described as children of the head of the household. Elizabeth Moore left her son behind in Gamblesby with her parents, while she worked for many years as a housekeeper in Penrith, but mother and son must have been in touch, since he and his mother were remembered generously in the will of her long-term employer, a man of some means (but not the man named as the father at affiliation proceedings).

Elizabeth Bird Nicholson left her daughter Ethel, then almost four, with her family when she married in 1897, and then, after her husband's death, she went on to have several more children in an irregular relationship. Ethel was raised by her grandparents, along with another illegitimate grandchild – mother and daughter were living only a few miles apart. Elizabeth Jackson had two illegitimate children, one of whom died, before she married in 1893 and moved to Penrith, leaving her daughter Catherine or Kate behind with her own parents. Kate Jackson was a rare baby designated in the Addingham baptism registers as 'illegitimate'. She was registered at Langwathby School in 1898, with her grandfather George named as her father but in 1901 she was correctly enumerated as his granddaughter. In 1911 she was still with them (as their granddaughter) along with another grandchild. Confusingly, her marriage certificate states George Jackson to be her father, but the account of the wedding in the local Methodist

⁹ Kathleen Jones, *Seeking Catherine Cookson's 'Da': The Real Story of Finding Her Father* (Constable, 2004) 23, 27.

¹⁰ Sir Paul Nurse, ironically a Nobel prize-winning geneticist, was another raised with the same understanding, his grandmother having gone to extreme lengths in 1949 to conceal the relationship. That, however, was in a very different time and place: see <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/aug/09/paul-nurse-birth-certificate-not-mothers-name>, accessed 6 July 2019. The article includes a link to his quite fascinating ten-minute talk on the way he discovered the truth.

circuit magazine describes him as her grandfather. The grandparents had clearly brought her up but whether they were trying to pass her off as their own child is unclear. In neither case is there any documentary evidence of mother and child maintaining contact but they were all living within a few miles of each other – surely they would have come across each other, even if some fiction was maintained about the relationship?¹¹

These examples serve to illustrate the common point, that mother and child almost always maintained contact. Barbara SewellBurrell, whose complicated life features in several chapters of this book, having brought up her illegitimate children without family support, provided it for the next generation. After her own children had grown up, she often lived in a household of assorted younger family members and their illegitimate children. In 1901, aged 81, we find her living with two granddaughters and three great-grandchildren in two rooms. Throughout, however, there is a striking absence of men on census night – only the presence of children indicates their contribution. Where distance intervened, when people migrated, particularly to the north-east and to Liverpool, kinship networks were often still maintained and even geographically distant family helped out. Elizabeth DowsonIrving, for example, may have left her three-year-old son behind with her parents when she married in 1857, but when that son was himself widowed, she cared for his children, while he remained working in Liverpool. Even Ruth Fawcett, whose child was removed from her care by the Guardians and sent to an industrial school in Glasgow, somehow maintained contact. She was discharged from the workhouse in 1893 and died shortly thereafter, run over by a carriage in the dark near Keswick. Touchingly, a recent letter from her daughter was found in her pocket.¹²

Nevertheless, geographical mobility would have made maintaining contact much more difficult. Mary BensonAnsell married when her child was only a year old but left Florence behind with her family in Gamblesby when she moved, first to Halifax and then to Middlesbrough. She had six more children. Some evidence of possible further contact comes from the will left by a Benson uncle, remembering both Florence and her Ansell half-siblings. Mary Ann BrownriggTebay left four-year-old Richard behind with her parents when she married in 1857, subsequently moving to Clitheroe and later Gisburn. Richard then moved with his grandparents and adult aunts and uncles to Carlisle, where he died aged only 19. Ann Reay gave birth to William while living in a navy hut at Little Salkeld in 1871. She may have died or just disappeared, since William was brought up by his grandmother and an assortment of relatives. William's childhood is likely to have been hard, uncertain and disrupted, but the family were still together in 1891, when he was in charge of a navy hut at Ellesmere Port. Thereafter, the confusion over the spelling of names – the surname was variously spelt as Wray, Ray or Rea – places of birth and relationships has made it impossible to trace them. When Sarah, the daughter of Ann MosesWilson, was baptised in 1858, Ann's own parents were named in the register as the parents, one of only three cases where I can be certain that the wrong mother is named. Curiously, this is despite Ann and Daniel Wilson being married before Sarah's birth, her birth registration being correct and her taking the surname Wilson. It is a strange mistake for the vicar to make. Even odder, is that Sarah was left behind when her parents moved to London and subsequently emigrated with their other children. She was raised by an uncle and later moved to Liverpool to live with an aunt.

¹¹ See after, 139–40.

¹² *Observer*, 7 Nov. 1893, 3; see before, 96.

Isabella MacgregorMillican left three-year-old Marjorie behind with her own aunt and uncle, William and Jane Glaister (who may have already brought up Isabella) when she married John George Millican in 1911 and almost immediately emigrated to the United States. When Marjorie started at Maughanby School she was registered as Marjorie Macgregor Glaister, with William Glaister named as her guardian. Both Glaisters died in Kirkby Thore, Westmorland, in the early 1930s and by 1939 Marjorie Glaister (without the Macgregor) was working as an elementary school teacher in Royston, Yorkshire, unmarried and living in what looks like lodgings, with an elderly couple. Another Macgregor great-aunt and her family had moved to Doncaster, so perhaps this was what drew her to the area. Although she seems to have used the name Glaister consistently, her death was registered twice in the Barnsley area in 1994, under her two surnames of Macgregor and Glaister – clearly it was known that she was registered at birth as Macgregor. Her mother had returned to Carlisle in 1929 after the death of her husband but died herself the year after. Had mother and daughter managed to meet up before Isabella's death? Indeed, did either Marjorie or Isabella wish to meet?

It was not only the mothers who were mobile. Ruth WilsonLancaster left her son Joshua, aged six with her parents when she married in 1877 and moved away to the Dacre area, where she had sixteen further children. Joshua was raised by his grandparents in Glassonby and enumerated as their grandson. As with many cases, if Ruth kept in touch with her family in Glassonby, then mother and son cannot fail to have known each other well as he was growing up, but the relationship may not have been acknowledged. By the age of 20, however, he was on his own, working on the railways before joining the army, and eventually emigrating with his wife and family to Canada in 1906. Both when he joined up and when he married, he named his grandfather as his father. The census enumeration may have been correct but Joshua himself may have been told differently.

I have found only two examples of an illegitimate child brought up by the paternal family. The unusual situation of Caroline StubbsSanderson, brought up by her father, has been discussed in the context of cohabitation.¹³ The birth of Elsie Millican [Blenkinsopp], the daughter of Fanny Blenkinsopp [sic] of Little Salkeld was registered in 1902, when her mother was only sixteen. Her birth certificate was later officially amended to give her the baptismal names of Fanny Blenkinship [Blenkinsopp] [sic] but there was no local baptism. By 1911 the child, Fanny Blenkinship [sic], was living in Carlisle with her Millican grandmother, several adult aunts and uncles, and an older grandchild. Her Blenkinship grandparents were living on their own in Little Salkeld. Why was Fanny not living where she was born, with her maternal grandparents, which would have been the much more usual situation? All the Blenkinship children were baptised in the Primitive Methodist church at Sandgate Chapel in Penrith, which was itself an unusual allegiance in the parish. Had the Blenkinships thrown their daughter out, outraged at her pregnancy by their lodger, forcing her to turn to her lover's family? Or was this a pragmatic solution, with the Millicans perhaps better able to take in an extra child? By 1911, mother Fanny had moved right away from the area and was working as a housemaid in a large house in Preston, headed by a newspaper publisher. She married there in 1920, after the death of her daughter aged only fourteen, but kept her local links and visited her Blenkinship family.¹⁴ If there had been a rupture, it had clearly been healed. The younger

¹³ See before, 72-3.

¹⁴ CAS(C) DX 2421, 12 Oct. 1932, 1 Aug. 1936.

Fanny's gravestone describes her as the 'beloved daughter of J.G. Millican, U.S.A', whom we have just encountered marrying Isabella Macgregor, the mother of another illegitimate child.

From this small selection of case studies, it is evident that the Addingham families were as complex, and as flexible, as many modern families, and as adaptable as the middle-class families examined by Davidoff, where within:

the flexible parameters of large broods there were cases where one or more children were turned over to the households of aunts and uncles for shorter or longer periods, perhaps permanently. For the receiving household the costs of care could be offset by investment in the child's labour and/or companionship. Sponsorship and apprenticeship could also take older boys into the homes of a more prosperous aunt and uncle, especially if the elder generation was unmarried or without children.¹⁵

Margot Finn's account of the Barlow family in the East India service and at home shows the extended family operating 'within dense, consanguineal reticulations of kin', while Naomi Tadmor has suggested the term 'household family' to address 'the shifting and hybrid constituencies' of Georgian families.¹⁶ Addingham families may not have been so very different in some ways from these families of an earlier age and different class.

However, Ginger Frost concluded from her examination of two Poor Law Unions that: Single parents, especially mothers, had the unenviable challenge of rearing children with highly limited social support and low-paying employment. In particular, illegitimate children, legally without kin as long as they were unmarried, were theoretically on their own. Their mothers often could not support them, and the rest of the family had no legal obligation to do so. They were unwanted, legally fatherless, and symbols of their mothers' shame. Unsurprisingly, they and their mothers ended up in the workhouse all too often.¹⁷

As we have seen, the situation in Addingham was quite otherwise: challenging it may well have been to bring up an illegitimate child in a poor rural community, but it was also challenging for their married neighbours to raise their children. The Addingham grandparents may have felt like the cottager in Norfolk in 1863, who, when asked about the baby sleeping on rags on the floor, replied, 'our grand-daughter, we don't know who the father is. Another mouth to feed. We could ha' done without that.'¹⁸ However, whatever the legal obligation, whether the illegitimate child was wanted or not (and history is silent on this point in the Addingham cases), whether they were seen as a symbol of shame or not, the family stepped in when needed. I suspect that the attitude of the Norfolk cottager was more common in Addingham than that of 'the sufferer' Miss Barbary, aunt to the illegitimate Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*, who had 'forgiven her [sister]...the wrong she did to me...though it was greater than you will ever

¹⁵ Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford UP, 2012) 170.

¹⁶ Margot Finn, 'The Barlow Bastards: Romance Comes Home from the Empire', ch.2 in Finn, Margot, Lobban, Michael and Taylor, Jenny Bourne (eds) *Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Nineteenth Century Law, Literature and History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 28, 26 (referring to Tadmor).

¹⁷ Ginger Frost, 'Under the Guardians' Supervision: Illegitimacy, Family and the English Poor Law, 1870-1930', *Journal of Family History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013) 122-3.

¹⁸ Robert Lee, *Unquiet Country: Voices of the Rural Poor, 1820-1880* (Windgather Press, 2005) 8; Elizabeth Roberts found the same in her study of north-west communities in the interwar years – see Ginger Frost, "'The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep': illegitimacy in the English working class, 1850-1939', *Journal of Social History*, vol.37, no.2 (Winter 2003) 295-296; Reay found that 27 per cent of the illegitimates in his Kentish area lived in the houses of their grandparents: Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930*, (Cambridge UP, 1996) 169.

know.¹⁹ Making use of the whole mixture of opportunities detailed above, the majority of women coped and neither they nor their children ‘all too often’ ended up in the workhouse.²⁰ Affiliating a child did not preclude a later marriage, while boarding-out could be merely a temporary expedient, allowing the mother to earn her living until she could get a home together. The family, normally the maternal family, would step in at many different stages as needed. Just as illegitimacy is a common thread running through parish life, the family is the durable warp, creating, sustaining and enabling. Given the general atmosphere of acceptance of the situation, it is hardly surprising that those who had spent their childhood in the parish were more likely to remain living there with their child.

Andrew Blaikie found a ‘finely tuned balance of community and kin support [which] provided something like a safety net’ for the unmarried mothers in his survey.²¹ Such assistance could well have been called upon by the parents of both legitimate and illegitimate children. Indeed, in a small parish like Addingham, where people usually found their marriage partners very locally, it would have been very difficult to entirely separate kin from community. Many families would have faced coping with the death of a parent, or indeed both, or the arrival of a step-parent and step-siblings, and then the birth of half-siblings; the youngest in a large family would have had a very different experience as the child of older parents, similar to the situation of many of these illegitimate children raised by grandparents, just as the eldest child in a family of half-siblings might not have such a different life to the eldest born to a married couple. I do not mean to underestimate the difficulties faced by the single mother, but for the children life may not have been as different from their peers as we might imagine and their illegitimacy much less remarked upon. Indeed, Ginger Frost makes the point that individual families had to co-operate together to survive, whether they approved of their neighbours or not. ‘Ostracism was often not a real option.’²²

¹⁹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Hazel, Watson and Viney, n.d.) 21.

²⁰ Indeed, Frost says as much, on the same page as the quote on the previous page (see note 17): ‘only a minority went to the workhouse’: Ginger Frost, ‘Under the Guardians’ Supervision: Illegitimacy, Family and the English Poor Law, 1870-1930’, *Journal of Family History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013) 123.

²¹ Andrew Blaikie, ‘Infant survival chances, unmarried motherhood and domestic arrangements in rural Scotland’, 1845-1945, *Local Population Studies*, no.60 (Spring 1998) 44.

²² Ginger Frost, “‘As if she was my own child’: cohabitation, community, and the English criminal courts, 1855-1900’, *The History of the Family*, vol.20, pt.4 (2015) 559.

The Children

The children fell into two groups, the majority, who had local biological links and family, and the minority who were total incomers to the parish, living with an unrelated family. They are examined separately:

- The locals
- The outsiders

The locals

‘Two thousand a year without debt or drawback – except the little love-child, indeed; aye, I had forgot her; but she may be ‘prenticed out at a small cost, and then what does it signify?’¹

Attitudes such as that expressed here by Mrs Jennings in *Sense and Sensibility*, or by Thomas Malthus in 1798 that ‘The infant is, comparatively speaking, of no value to the society, as others will immediately supply its place,’ or by Lord Brougham in 1834 that ‘Any hospital for the reception of foundlings...is a public nuisance, and ought to be... put down as an outrage on public morals’, have been influential in creating an expectation that these were universal views, that illegitimate children were merely an inconsequential nuisance, or, like their mothers, a disgrace.² In either case, ‘society’ could, or even should, ignore them.

Much of the large body of work on illegitimacy has been devoted to theories about causation, and statistics illustrating the rise and fall in numbers, or the experience of the foundling child in an institution rich in records, or of the elite who left diaries to describe their life. More recent historians, such as Ginger Frost and Samantha Williams, have investigated women of a lower social class at a more individual level. The experience of the ordinary illegitimate child has been rather less examined by historians, perhaps because of the obvious problem of investigating those who left few personal and publicly available records. There is also the issue of distortion, since even when illegitimate members of the poorer classes did leave diaries and autobiographies, it is likely that it is largely those who felt scarred by their situation who felt impelled to write about it.³ Those who had an adequately contented childhood, much like their peers perhaps, may not have felt the need to write about it in the same way as those who suffered. Such evidence, along with that to be found in the realms of fiction, much of it Victorian, where the illegitimate child often had to die because of the extreme shame it created for all around it, lead to a partial understanding. A few quotes will serve to illustrate the common fictional view:

Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers.’ ‘You are different from other children, Esther, because you were not born, like them, in common sinfulness and wrath. You are set apart. (Miss Barbary, Esther’s Godmother and unacknowledged aunt in *Bleak House*.)⁴

That very child and heir of shame to associate with my own innocent children! I trust they are not contaminated. (Mr Bradshaw, employer of *Ruth*, the mother of an illegitimate child.)⁵

It is right that they should be [dead]! ... They were sin-begotten. They were sacrificed to teach me how to live! (Sue Bridehead, mother of children conceived in an adulterous cohabitation with *Jude the Obscure*.)⁶

¹ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, Chapter 30, 169, accessed 17 July 2019 via <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21839/21839-h/21839-h.htm>.

² Thomas Nutt, ‘Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the myth of the old poor law and the making of the new’, *Economic History Review*, vol.63, no.2, (2010) 355; Lisa Forman Cody, ‘The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform: Women, Reproduction, and Political Economy in England’s New Poor Law of 1834’, *Journal of Women’s History*, vol.11, no.4 (Winter 2000), 135.

³ Catherine Cookson wrote a semi-autobiographical account of her childhood in ‘*Our Kate*’ for example.

⁴ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Hazel, Watson and Viney, n.d.) 21.

⁵ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth* (Penguin, 2004) 279.

⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (Macmillan, 1974) 383; Nicola J. L. Shutt, *Nobody’s Child: the theme of illegitimacy in the novels of Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Wilkie Collins*, D. Phil (York, 1990), is a detailed examination of fictional treatment of the illegitimate child.

An alternative and non-fictional view came from Dr Louis Parkes, Medical Officer of Health for Chelsea, in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in 1912. He made a distinction between the casual and the irregular union. Asked 'Where that is the case [an irregular but 'respectable' union] you have found the children growing up quite as well as if there had been a marriage?', his reply was clear:

I think so, and I do not think in that class they are under any disability in future life. They are not known to be illegitimate and it is not brought up against them. They have no property to succeed to. It does not affect that class

The children have all the advantages of everybody else. The children of irregular unions go to school and are put out into the world, and they are under no disadvantage or disability I am aware of.⁷

The comment provides a contemporary counterpoint, with an awareness of the class nuances, to assessments which emphasise only shame and difficulty. For most there was no question of property to inherit at this period. The overwhelming majority of unions in Addingham were 'regular' (that is, the parents were legally married to each other) but the census records for these families sometimes conceal, intentionally or not, an illegitimate child. Illegitimacy was probably easier to conceal completely for incomers than for those born and bred in the parish. Were such children indeed 'set apart' in Addingham, disadvantaged by the mere fact of their illegitimacy? Were they really rejected and shamed? Certainly some locals took a hard line: a committee of the Penrith Guardians, when discussing the advisability of boarding-out children in 1886, were of the opinion that it constituted a 'hereditary moral taint [which] cannot be thus readily eradicated' but was it true here, as Ginger Frost, one of those who have examined the working-class child's experience of illegitimacy, writes, that 'through the late Victorian period to World War II and even beyond, bastardy was a serious stigma legally, socially, and emotionally'?⁸

The individual Addingham stories do allow some general observations to be made. Most children were brought up within some sort of family unit, commonly that of the extended maternal family, or the new step-family created when the mother married. It was not uncommon for siblings to be separated after a marriage, with only one child moving on with the mother and her new husband. In general, the census evidence is accurate, with the birth name (i.e. the mother's maiden surname) frequently being retained and care taken to distinguish the step-relationship. Marriage registrations are also generally accurate in respect to surnames; indeed, it is noticeable that some people took care to use their original birth name, even if the evidence shows that they may have been commonly known by another. Many, however, when asked to name their father, named a step-father (who may or may not have been the biological father) or an apparently fictitious man.

Most of the cases researched for the Biographies started with a baptism entry naming mother and child; the children feature in all the previous chapters, subjected as they were to

⁷ Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, Minutes of evidence, vol. III, 1912, cd. 6481, questions 36,284 and 36,297, 119.

⁸ CAS(C) SPU/P 7, 25 May 1886; Ginger Frost, "'The Black Lamb of the 'Black Sheep': illegitimacy in the English working class', 1850-1939, *Journal of Social History* (Winter 2003) 293. Her article raises many issues about the childhoods of illegitimate children in the working classes; it is based on memoirs generally written by the unhappy, while acknowledging that this was not the universal situation: see 312-3.

the strategies for survival employed by their mothers, over which they had no control. It is time to bring them properly into focus as individuals. Children, however, are often harder to trace than their mothers, particularly as we come closer to the present; with no census to confidently identify the child living with its mother or other relatives, it is easy for the child to be lost. The gap between the 1911 census and the 1939 Register allows a child to disappear into work, an independent life, marriage and a possible name change.⁹ Only the date of birth in the 1939 Register sometimes allow links to be made. Even in the census period, children often changed their surname when their mothers married (in some cases erratically, changing from census to census) while it seems likely that children who had an uncertain start were often unsure of quite where they were born, a key piece of information in identifying them at a later stage. Moreover, there was another small group of individuals (numbering sixteen) where the search was initiated by a marriage registration within the parish, when no father was named for bride or groom or the surnames did not match. In these cases, the mother was normally not recorded on the registration, and thus attaching the child to the correct mother was complicated. Two named their mother instead of their father.

In the absence of personal diaries or similar, it is only by looking at these children as adults – at the decisions they made, the people they married, the places they lived, the occupations they followed, even what they left in their wills – that we can attempt to assess whether they suffered from any form of disadvantage, and to consider whether any such disadvantage may have derived not so much from moral disapprobation as from poverty, an unsettled childhood, the lack of a paternal relationship or, indeed, of a maternal relationship. All these latter situations were not uncommon among their legitimately-born peers in the days of higher maternal death rates, agricultural accidents, and an uncertain employment and housing market, so the problem becomes one of judging what was the norm and what distinctive.

Marriage prospects

Frost cites evidence that a fear of sexuality, of ‘falling’ into disgrace as their mothers had done, deterred some women from marriage and motherhood¹⁰ but, initially at least, the Addingham children seem to have followed the usual path followed by their peers. Throughout this period, it was generally the case that 8-9 per cent of parish residents over the age of 40 had never been married; given the uncertainty over the marital status of seventeen per cent of the sample, the eleven per cent shown in Table 12 as definitely unmarried does not seem extraordinary.

The average age of the brides, 26.0, was only slightly older than the average for all brides, 25.8. The men were slightly older, again following the normal pattern for age at marriage of bridegrooms; it does not appear, therefore, that these illegitimate children were

Status	Number	%
Married	117*	69
Not married	18	11
Uncertain	29	17
Died young	5	3
Total	169	100

Table 12. Marital status for those born illegitimate and traced beyond the age of 15. *Including one bigamous marriage.

⁹ The 1921 census became available only after this work was completed.

¹⁰ Frost, ‘Black Lamb’, 311.

disadvantaged when it came to marriage.¹¹ The twelve children for whom a marriage has been found after having an illegitimate child themselves may indeed have been disadvantaged since they were significantly older, at an average age of almost 30.

Where did they marry?

If illegitimate mothers and children were indeed shunned, we might expect to see this reflected in where they lived and married. Of the total children in the biographies (236), 130 were baptised within Addingham parish. If we exclude all those who definitely died young or unmarried, 92 remain. Of these, a marriage has been traced for 63. The sample is small but not insignificant.

The figures in Table 13 demonstrate that 24 per cent (about half male and half female) of those for whom a marriage has been traced, wed in the parish where they were baptised. There were good reasons, applying equally to both legitimate and illegitimate children, why people would not be married in the parish of their birth: many men, for example, would normally marry in the parish of their bride, while many women moved away after their marriage, taking their illegitimate child with them. The child would then naturally marry outside the parish of their birth. Several children in the sample chose, like their neighbours, to be married at the Penrith register office. The only reason particular to the illegitimate is that probably 25 of the mothers had no obvious connection

with Addingham to keep them living there long-term with their child. Given all this, the figures do not indicate that all illegitimate children were shunned and therefore more likely to move away.

	No.	%
Married in Addingham parish	15	24
Married elsewhere in Cumberland	23	37
Married in Westmorland	6	10
Married elsewhere	19	30
All for whom marriage traced, male and female	63	100

Table 13. Where did the children marry?

Who went on to have legitimate children? (Table 14)

Of the 236 children, a marriage was traced for 117 (including one bigamous), of which 22 were childless. Thirteen cases remained unclear, leaving 82 (70%) who had children. If we add back in the 13 unclear cases, then the percentage increases to 80%.

	No.	No.	% of 117
Had children	82		70
1		10	
2		24	
3 or more		48	

Table 14. Which children went on to have legitimate children themselves?

¹¹ Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical Mobility, Cousin Marriage and Illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 212, reached a similar conclusion.

No attempt has been made to compare this with their legitimate peers, but in 1911, the only year in which the census gives information about the number of children born to a marriage, 79 per cent of married females in the parish had children. This figure is most probably an underestimate, as the question asked only about children born to the existing marriage, while some women were only newly married and yet to bear children, and the widows were not required to give such information. Given the uncertainty over some individuals, it seems that the childbearing figures for both legitimately and illegitimately born adults may have been very similar. In addition, at least sixteen girls and one boy went on to have one or more *illegitimate* children themselves.

Did they carry on living in the parish?

Forty per cent of those baptised in Addingham vanished from the parish without further trace, which is unsurprising given that many of the mothers (about half) were incomers to begin with and many moved away on subsequent marriage. However, almost a third of those baptised in the parish who survived beyond infancy could still be found there after the age of thirteen, while fourteen per cent (sixteen individuals) spent their whole lives there. Presumably the local reaction to their illegitimacy was not so bad as to make their life there intolerable. George Allison Calvert, for example, is one such who seems to have been totally integrated. His mother lived locally after her marriage and although she left him living with his wider family, mother and son were clearly in touch and probate for her will was granted to him and his half-brother. He lived, married and baptised two children in the parish. Similarly, his illegitimate cousin seems to have spent her entire life in the parish.

Migration

Twenty per cent of those baptised in Addingham can be shown to have moved as adults, mostly to the surrounding northern counties. For some the pull back to Cumbria was strong: Mary ThompsonBlenkinsopp, despite spending all her married life in Liverpool, and retiring to Westmorland, was brought back to Addingham to be buried; Thomas Lancaster Gedling moved around with his work for the Midland Railway but was back in Carlisle when he died; Ann KiddWelford probably met and married her husband in Durham but returned to run her millinery business in Penrith. Only three people migrated very far south, Florence BensonHarrison to Gloucestershire, Joshua Wilson to Kent (and then on to Canada) and Mary Jane ClementsonJohnstoneFroessner to Norfolk and London. Six emigrated as adults, five to Canada, and one to the United States, while Mary Jane ClementsonJohnstoneFroessner emigrated to Australia in old age with her children.

Mary Jane's story is one of the most unusual ones. She was the daughter of Isabella Clementson, a member of a Gamblesby family much prone to illegitimacy. She was baptised at Gamblesby in 1871 and Thomas Gibson of Winskill was named as her father at affiliation proceedings but she moved to Penrith after her mother's marriage to Thomas Johnstone. She was brought up there, an only child, and worked for a time as a nurse but had left by 1896. Her parents were then approved by the Guardians to take in privately fostered children. Perhaps it was this seemingly stable childhood that gave her the confidence to move away to Liverpool where she married Charles Ferdinand Froessner in June 1896. Charles was a German, born in Stuttgart but working as a hotel assistant in Tunbridge Wells, while Mary Jane was living (and

presumably working) at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. She named Thomas Johnstone as her father, which to all practical intents and purposes he clearly was, although not biologically, if her mother's affiliation application is to be believed. Charles's father, described as a 'gentleman', was dead by the time he got married. The family had been hoteliers in Bad Cannstatt, near Stuttgart, in the early nineteenth century. Mary Jane's first child was born in January 1897, so she was most likely pregnant at the time of her marriage. By 1901 they were living in London, where Charles was working as a club steward; he was now enumerated as Karl and they had three children, four servants and a nurse. At first glance, it looks as if they were living with all these staff in a private house, but they were, in fact, living in the German Athenaeum Club, where Charles/Karl was working as a club steward. He was still there in 1905, when he sought to be naturalised as a British citizen.¹²

By January 1907 Charles/Karl was working in Norfolk as the licensee of the Red Lion in Cromer and the local newspapers include several mentions of the family, indicative of an active involvement in the community. He joined a branch of the Freemasons in December 1907 and was involved with the local lifeboat committee. It would seem they were doing well. However, in August 1909 the press announced an auction of the entire contents of the Red Lion, which indicates the scale of their enterprise; the hotel had 48 rooms, all furnished. In September Karl was made bankrupt and in December he committed suicide. It would seem from the newspaper account of his death that he had failed to find anybody willing to take over his mortgage and was overwhelmed by money troubles. He locked himself in his room and turned on the gas. The maid said it was not uncommon for him to sleep until lunch time and it took a day from the last sighting of him until the police broke down the bedroom door and found him dead in bed; the explosion caused by a candle injured several people. The inquest called a number of witnesses but there is no mention of his wife or his children. It seems likely that Mary Jane would have missed him rather earlier than the staff, had she been there. Their youngest child, Doris, was only three weeks old, which makes it even odder that she was not apparently at home. The child was registered in Willesden, Middlesex. Perhaps Mary Jane had already left her husband in the by-now empty hotel, taking the children to find accommodation for the family in London? Or had she, in fact, already decided to leave her marriage?

By 16 January 1910, when baby Doris and her elder brother, aged almost 2, were both baptised in London, only six weeks after Charles/Karl's death, Mary's address was given as Bermondsey. Perhaps she was able to fall back on old friends? At the end of March 1910 an application was successfully made to have the receiving order made against Charles/Karl rescinded. Thus by 1911, widowed with seven young children, Mary Jane was running a boarding house in Hackney, but had only one resident boarder. A descendent has said that she was still running the boarding house in partnership with another family during the war, giving lodgings to ships' officers studying for their certificates. Her eldest daughter, Edith, married and had a child in 1916, aged probably just nineteen. The second daughter married an Australian in 1919, and emigrated in 1922 to Western Australia, along with her infant son, and three of her siblings, aged nineteen, sixteen and fourteen. A fourth also went at some point and in 1927, aged 56, Mary Jane and Doris finally went too, intending to settle permanently. In 1939 she was on the electoral roll in Victoria, while Doris worked as a saleswoman. Mary

¹² See <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1267276>; <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/27850/page/7345>, both accessed 12 June 2023.

Jane died there aged 95 in 1965. Only Edith stayed in England and those in Australia changed their surnames, most choosing the anglicised Fraser but one choosing Johnson [sic], perhaps in tribute to their mother, but ironically the name of a man to whom the family had no biological connection. Did the new Mr Johnson know this? Indeed, did Mary Jane know this herself? We have no way of answering this question. It seems as if the English line, at least, did not know of Charles/Karl's suicide, since the descendent has commented that 'Family legend is that the family were well connected but some incident occurred that caused their downfall.'¹³

Mary Jane had moved far away from her roots geographically and married well outside the usual local and rural society. When young she may well have been the beneficiary of her mother's marriage, and of being the only child in a stable family. She would certainly have needed resilience to cope with all that life subsequently threw at her.

Occupations

Could subsequent occupation be an indicator of disadvantage? Adult occupations could be found for about half the children, taking the husband's employment as proxy for the female children who married, few of whom worked outside the home. Most showed no signs of social mobility. William Reay, born to a navvy's daughter in a navvies' hut in Little Salkeld, was to be found twenty years later living in another hut in Ellesmere Port and working on the canal, while Adam Hope, grandson of a Hunsonby mason, became one himself. They found employment in the usual rural assortment of occupations – farm workers, miners, small tradesmen – although there were also hoteliers, clerks, insurance agents, even a pharmacist.

However, there are some cases that stand out as particularly notable for their distinct improvement in circumstances. We met Thomas Watson earlier, one of four illegitimate children born to a mother living an erratic life while working in the lowly occupations of charwoman and labourer.¹⁴ He became a boarder and apprentice in Winskill to John Wilson, master stonemason and Methodist local preacher, and himself illegitimate. Thomas, aided by parochial charity support, was pulling himself up in the world. Masonry was a good occupation to follow at this time, with the building of the Settle-Carlisle line on the edge of the village. The railways presented new opportunities to those who, because of their birth, may have been less wedded to the land. Thomas's younger brother, William Watson alias Kindred and his wife had ten children, of whom only one died, a good survival rate for the time. Life would have been hard with a family of that size but he had a steady and responsible job as a railway shunter and in 1907 he was promoted to head guard on the Midland Railway. He still held this position in 1911, when he was living in Carlisle with his family of nine children, all in five rooms. Likewise, Thomas Lancaster Gedling, became a head guard on the Midland Railway, Mark Ellwood Kidd worked for a time as a railway cashier, while Joshua Wilson worked on the railways before trying the army, a shell factory and finally emigration to Canada, where he worked as a 'purchasing agent.' James Slater, born to a mother who was constantly in and out of the workhouse before being certified a lunatic, and part of a large family apparently prone to instability and mental problems, had one of the more troubled childhoods. He may actually have benefitted from his years in the workhouse from 1902 until 1908 and subsequently from being boarded-out in Greystoke.

¹³ Private email correspondence with descendant, 2016, used with permission.

¹⁴ See before, 91-2.

Elizabeth BrownBowman, mother to three illegitimate children, eventually married a platelayer, but in 1881, while living with him, she was working on her own account as a milliner and dressmaker, employing both her two daughters and a young boarder; such an occupation, and being an employer, was less common for a married woman. Margaret BrownPotter, her eldest child, married a man working at the time of the marriage as a mason. He was from a comfortably-off local Methodist family but was later ordained as an Anglican priest; although he never became more than an assistant curate, by 1911 they were living in an eight-roomed house in Nottinghamshire. When Elizabeth's younger illegitimate daughter married, her marriage certificate was littered with inaccuracies, despite being signed by her brother-in-law James Potter as the officiating clergyman. Harriet Brown claimed to be 28 but was in fact 32, her father was named as George Brown (deceased), her husband, Jessie Plews, claimed to be a schoolmaster, but on all the census entries he was a pork butcher, while *his* father was described as a 'gentleman' but was actually working as a warehouseman in a cotton and worsted mill. Just how much of this detail did James know to be untrue? What did he know about the parentage of his wife and sister-in-law? He certainly knew that Margaret had not named a fictitious father when he married her but perhaps fifteen years after their marriage, living in a new area, and an ordained clergyman in the established church, he felt that a little subterfuge over origins was necessary. They had moved away both socially and geographically, as did Mary HetheringtonDrydenSharpe when she married a young medical student; by 1911 Dr. and Mrs Sharpe were living in Lytham St Annes, in Lancashire, with their four adult children.

Rebecca West, writing in 1913, asked her readers to consider that:

a servant who has an illegitimate child loses her situation, that the Board of Education suspends the certificate of a school-mistress, that no hospital nurse or typist would expect for a second to keep her position...And the social stigma [of the illegitimate child] is an indefensible but quite real consequence of the degradation of the unmarried mother. The child sees its mother shunned by the godly, associates itself with her disgrace and grows up to think of itself as a pariah.¹⁵

Ginger Frost found evidence of employment discrimination in the 1920s and 1930s, giving the example of a woman denied a nursing post because her birth certificate showed her to be illegitimate.¹⁶ However, this does not seem to have prevented several local women pursuing teaching careers. We have seen how one woman made her way to college in Aberdeen from one of the most unlikely backgrounds and went on to become a head teacher, before marrying into a comfortably middle-class family.¹⁷ Both Annie Sowerby and Marjorie Macgregor Glaister also became head teachers; Annie did not marry until late in life and Marjorie remained single. Sarah GouldingHanson was an assistant schoolmistress until her marriage to a farmer, while Mary Jane Graham became a pupil teacher, a position calling for studying and examinations which could lead to better prospects.

At opposite ends of the social spectrum, John George Stephenson stands out as a petty criminal, as does, for very different reasons, Caroline StubbsSanderson, the acknowledged daughter of the wealthiest man in the parish, who remained a lady of property, despite

¹⁵ Quoted in Jenny Keating, *A Child for Keeps: The History of Adoption in England, 1918-45* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 35.

¹⁶ Frost, 'Black Lamb', 314.

¹⁷ See before, 70-1.

separating from her husband.¹⁸ Her son, however, seems to have lost this financial security. He died in a lunatic asylum in 1912, while in 1911 her daughter-in-law was working as a cook in a refuge in Pimlico run by religious sisters for ‘fallen women’; her granddaughter worked as a shop assistant and by 1939 was living in Wisbech with her husband, a fitter, turner and general engineer. This seems quite a change, socially and economically, for the great-granddaughter of the man who had built his country house at Eden Lacy.

A shame and disgrace?

The Registrar-General may have been concerned at the ‘existence of a class of men bound to society by few or no family ties’ but most of the children in the Biographies were brought up in a situation resembling an ordinary Addingham family of the period, and the family ties were often both strong and enduring.¹⁹ As we have seen in preceding chapters, most illegitimate children were brought up by relatives (usually the maternal grandparents) or within the family created when their mother married; at least half of the mothers also had other legitimate children. They thus often formed the tail end of the mother’s siblings, or the eldest of a family of step-siblings. A few, where their parents simply cohabited, were brought up with full siblings. As such, they did not lack for young companions in a quasi-sibling relationship that may have provided the ‘sibling bond [that] could prove crucial for emotional well-being.’²⁰ It was a rare child that was brought up without young companionship at home; even the workhouse children had company, although less as the century progressed, and this situation hardly compared to that of siblings. Even more unusual was the mother who lived entirely alone with her child. I have found only five examples of this and in only one case does the household look notably impoverished. Moreover, we have to remember that in a time of high mortality it was not so unusual to be brought up by one parent; in mid-Victorian Lancashire and in East London, for example, at the turn of the nineteenth century, ‘29 per cent of all children could expect to lose one parent, and 8 per cent both, before they reached the age of fifteen.’²¹ Many, both legitimate and illegitimate, lived as part of an extended and perhaps rather complicated family group, and stepfathers were common.

Did Sarah Wilson, left behind with her grandparents in Gamblesby while her parents and siblings moved first to London and then to Canada wonder, like Maya Angelou (on discovering that her parents were both alive) ‘why did they send us away? and What did we do so wrong?’ [punctuation sic]²² We cannot know with any degree of certainty; we can get only so far with the official records. We can see the children moving around, the strategies employed to bring them up, we can get an idea of who cared for them, we can see them marrying and establishing their own families, and we can make assumptions from all this about their lives, but we cannot get near how it felt to be one of these children in Addingham. On this the records I have found are silent. Laura Cumming, in her account of her mother’s complicated childhood, accuses historians of arrogance, for they ‘do not give much consideration to the feelings of people in the past: emotions are to be avoided as unstable, irrelevant or simply unverifiable in the absence

¹⁸ See after, 147-8 for Stephenson and before, 72-3 for StubbsSanderson.

¹⁹ Sixth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, 1842, BBP, 1844, quoting D. Chr. Bernoulli.

²⁰ Bernard Capp, *The Ties that Bind: Siblings, Family and Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford UP, 2018) 198.

²¹ George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: the English Home and Its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford UP, 1998) 299.

²² Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Folio Society, 2000) 52.

of documentary evidence.²³ She sees this as indicative of a lack of feeling, but it is rather, in the case of this research at least, usually an absence of any evidence at all, documentary, visual, oral, verifiable or not. I can guess, suggest, murmur ‘perhaps’ – but to attribute emotion without knowledge would indeed be arrogant. In the end, as Alison Light has written in her own account of her search for her mother ‘Empathy can take the historian only so far. Our forebears are also strangers whose deepest concerns are often alien to us.’²⁴

We can guess, but no more, for example, at how Marjorie Macgregor Glaister may have felt when her mother married and emigrated to the United States, leaving her behind with a great aunt and uncle. Did Marjorie, whose death was registered under both names, know that the Glaister surname came not from her mother or father but from a great-aunt, or that she had a stepfather (or, indeed, that he was possibly her biological father)? And what of the emotions of William Graham Thompson, left to spend possibly his entire childhood in the workhouse?²⁵ His mother had deserted him but his grandparents and aunt had brought up his older sister. Why not their younger grandchild? Was there a reason why the Guardians made no attempt to place William Graham?

How did Albert Edward Potts feel, given a new surname and apparently living with adoptive parents and an unrelated older sister, in one of the most complete and obvious attempts to deceive, when he found out that his ‘sister’ was his mother? Did he then struggle, as Catherine Cookson did, to love the mother who had lied?²⁶ Did he always feel, like Sir Paul Nurse, in some way different, even if happy within his secretive family?²⁷

Ginger Frost sees two possible scenarios for the illegitimate child: either it faced discrimination because the fact was widely known, or it was burdened with the need to keep the secret and protect the family honour ‘often only dimly aware of what had caused the shame.’²⁸ Both her scenarios assume a degree of shame and difficulty. Carl Chinn acknowledges that such secrecy could only be maintained with the ‘tacit support of the local community.’²⁹ The account by Laura Cumming of her mother’s childhood demonstrates how this secrecy could be almost (but not quite) watertight.³⁰ As Robert Roberts wrote of Salford in the early twentieth century ‘naturally everybody knew who was or who was not legitimate.’³¹ Some families kept the secret for years without it losing any of its power to upset when eventually revealed. One relative had first-hand evidence of this at the funeral for Kate JacksonRobson, born illegitimate in the parish in 1890. ‘Kate, known to us as “Auntie Kate” was thought (by the family) to be the sister of my grandmother, Martha Blades [Jackson]. It was not until Kate died and I took my mother up to Cumberland for the funeral. Mum (Edna) was shedding a tear at the graveside

²³ Laura Cumming, *On Chapel Sands: My Mother and Other Missing Persons* (Chatto and Windus, 2019) 274.

²⁴ Alison Light, *Common People: The History of an English Family* (Penguin, 2014) 72.

²⁵ His relationship to Addingham is very uncertain; see www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk for his biography.

²⁶ Kathleen Jones, *Seeking Catherine Cookson's 'Da': The Real Story of Finding Her Father*, (Constable, 2004) 38.

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhMFxqC89Ac>, accessed 29.5.2020.

²⁸ Frost, ‘Black Lamb’, 295.

²⁹ Carl Chinn, quoted in Jenny Keating, *A Child for Keeps: The History of Adoption in England, 1918-45* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) 32.

³⁰ Laura Cumming, *On Chapel Sands: My Mother and Other Missing Persons* (Chatto and Windus, 2019) 55. The book is an account of a total concealment, a child who always felt different, a threat of the secret leaking out – and the resulting complete estrangement of the child from her natural father, who had pretended to be her adoptive father.

³¹ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Manchester UP, 1971) 47.

and said “poor Auntie Kate”. Someone (a relative that I do not know who she was) elbowed my mother declaring (in a wonderful Cumberland twang) “she wern’t yer auntie, she were yer cousin”. Mum was devastated!!!!’ [All sic]³² However, I interpret this devastation to be caused by the knowledge of secrets kept, and suddenly revealed, along with the deceit and undermining of what constituted the family reality, rather than a shame felt about the actual illegitimacy. Hilary Mantel, not an illegitimate child but brought up in an irregular family in the 1950s, was indeed ‘acutely aware’ of the ‘great sense of shame’ but it was the secrecy that perhaps created the real burden: ‘within my family there were layers of secrecy. There is an age gap between me and my younger brothers, so I knew a lot of things that they didn’t know. It was a family divided within itself.’³³

Another illuminating comment was made by a relative of Florence BensonHarrison: ‘I’m afraid I can’t shed any more light on the story of Florence. I don’t think she was ever mentioned by my mother’ (her niece, daughter of her half-sister). Was she intentionally kept secret, written out of her family history, or merely forgotten? Or perhaps her niece was just not interested in genealogy? Her son’s widow (who never knew Florence) believes she was ashamed of her illegitimacy, while a historian who has researched the son’s life feels that this may have been a factor in his own ‘exceptional compassion for those separated from their family by internment, and on his later work on social issues within the C of E.’³⁴ The shame may well, in this particular case, from a better-off family, have been real – or it may have been the result of later moral attitudes being read back and imposed upon history by Florence or her son.³⁵

However, the crucial, but elusive, question is what the children themselves actually understood of the circumstances of their birth. Or more precisely, what did they *know* and what did they *believe*? And what did they choose to divulge to later generations? And what does this tell us about their possible feeling of shame? It seems to me that there were several possibilities, one being where the child was genuinely ignorant of the situation, believing itself to be the youngest child of its grandparents, or perhaps misled as to the exact date of the parent’s marriage. Did Joshua Wilson, seemingly brought up by his grandparents and correctly enumerated on the census as grandchild, know the truth of the matter when he named his grandfather as father, and his uncles as brothers on joining the army in 1888? He may have lived in complete ignorance of the truth and not found himself subjected to discrimination. Catherine Cookson, although she knew and was ashamed of her illegitimacy, found out her father’s name only when her birth certificate was needed by her employer;³⁶ I suspect that few Addingham illegitimate children ever needed to produce a birth certificate for a job application, and ignorance of the biological reality, rather than intent by the bride or groom to deceive, could well be the explanation for naming a stepfather on the marriage certificate. Ignorance may well have been a protection from discrimination. Another possibility was that neighbours

³² Private email correspondence, quoted with permission.

³³ *Sunday Times Magazine*, 22 Feb. 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hilary-mantel-interview-new-book-klqhq5tnl>, accessed 5 June 2020.

³⁴ Private email correspondence, 2016, quoted with permission; see also Tim Grass, ‘Methodist Ministry to Wartime Internees on the Isle of Man’, *Proceedings of the Wesley History Society*, vol. 60, pt. 4 (Feb. 2016) 166–188. See also Charmian Brinson, ‘The Anglican Bishop, the Methodist Minister and the Women of Rushen: George Bell, J. Benson Harrison and their work for women internees’, *Humanitas*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Apr. 2006) 111–128.

³⁵ See Jane Robinson, *In the Family Way: Illegitimacy Between the Great War and the Swinging Sixties* (Viking, 2015) for an examination of twentieth century attitudes.

³⁶ Jones, *Seeking*, 38.

knew, and perhaps the child did also, but it was just not considered a matter for great shame by anyone until later moral attitudes caused people to look back and perhaps reassess their own lives, to feel something as an adult that was not felt by the child.

I do wonder, however, whether anybody ever looked at a friend or neighbour in this small, remote, rural community and noticed a likeness – and wondered ‘are we related?’ Or noticed that ‘there, just behind a little, obscured a little by that alien blood whose admixing was necessary in order that he exist is the face of the man who shaped us both out of that blind chancy darkness which we call the future.’³⁷

³⁷ William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom* (Penguin, 1971) 261.

The outsiders

We have already examined the workhouse as an option for a minority of local mothers but another type of workhouse provision should also be considered. There was a discrete group of illegitimate children recorded living in the parish and described as ‘nurse child’, ‘boarder’ or ‘adopted’. They form part of this total examination of illegitimacy in the parish even though neither they nor their mothers necessarily had links to Addingham. They had been placed there, ‘boarded-out’, by the Guardians.

The 1834 Poor Law put all the responsibility to maintain the child upon the mother, and although the law was later adapted to make affiliation easier, then, as now, it was indeed substantially up to the mother to care for the child. Nevertheless, as Mr. Lewis, one of the Guardians, told Jessie Phillips, ‘If you can’t maintain yourself, it will be born in the workhouse; and if you can’t maintain your child, why then it will be bred in the workhouse’.¹ The workhouse may have had its advantages for children born into poverty, in terms of a healthier diet, a possibly better education, and some access to medical care.² It could also, in some ways, be a physically safer environment in which to grow up; children outside were faced by the many hazards occasioned by a lack of supervision over their daily lives, with freedom to roam, a freedom unavailable in the workhouse.³ However, these advantages could not compensate for the many limitations of workhouse life. It must have been, in the words of Thompson, ‘austere and comfortless’.⁴ There were probably no toys; perhaps ‘the children, like their elders, fought, teased each other, threw stones or, most commonly, sat listlessly about, stupefied with boredom and apathy’.⁵ In the mid-nineteenth century the census for the Penrith workhouse shows a large number of resident children, none of whom were born in Addingham. However, this would have been a group much subject to fluctuation, as families came and went, and as the century wore on children formed a diminishing proportion of the workhouse population; by 1901 children constituted only 12 percent of the workhouse population, just nine children, of whom five were illegitimate. It is unlikely that a child who had to spend its entire childhood there would have been able to form lasting friendships with many or any young people. For older girls, although they helped with the domestic tasks of the workhouse, any understanding of the functioning of an ordinary family household, necessary if they were to find work as a domestic servant, must have been limited. For older boys, although they might have learnt something practical from helping with the workhouse garden and pigs, this could not compensate for not being part of, and helping with, the life of an agricultural community in which they could expect to find work.

As the century progressed, official opinion regarding the suitability of the workhouse as a place to raise a child changed. In an attempt to compensate for some of the limitations, the

¹ Fanny Trollope, *Jessie Phillips* (Nonsuch Publishing, 2006) 397.

² R. N. Thompson, *The New Poor Law in Cumberland and Westmorland, 1834-1871*, Ph. D (Newcastle, 1976), 365, 412; M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929: the history of an English social institution* (Batsford Academic, 1981), 215, 217, 158; Kathryn Morrison, *The Workhouse: a study of poor-law buildings in England* (English Heritage, 1999) 133.

³ Frank Crompton, *Workhouse Children* (Sutton, 1997, 102; Jonathan Reinartz and Alistair Ritch, ‘Exploring Medical Care in the Nineteenth-Century Provincial Workhouse: A View from Birmingham’, ch.7 in Reinartz, Jonathan and Schwarz, Leonard (eds) *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Univ. of Rochester Press, 2013), 152-3.

⁴ Thompson, *New Poor Law*, 407.

⁵ Norman Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (Pimlico, 2003) 92.

Penrith Guardians were keen to provide 'industrial training' – that is, vocational training with a job in view. The term 'Industrial School' was primarily used for establishments intended to house 'vagrant, destitute and disorderly children who were considered in danger of becoming criminals or who were in contact with prostitutes.'⁶ It would hardly be surprising, considering her erratic life, and that of her mother, Ruth, if worries such as these had not arisen in relation to Mary Jane Fawcett. As we have seen, she spent a large part of her childhood in the workhouse but in January 1885, with the Guardians having taken over her care, the decision was made to send the nine-year-old Mary Jane to the Glasgow Industrial School at Maryhill.⁷

Another possible solution, and the one that brought children unconnected by birth with Addingham within the remit of this research, was the 'boarding-out' of children with local foster mothers. Thompson says that, led by the unions in Carlisle, Cockermouth and Whitehaven, 'Cumberland and Westmorland were amongst the first areas in England to adopt the system of boarding-out poor orphan children in the late 1860s', and 'in Cumbria it is possible to sense that the initiative for a major reform – the boarding-out of pauper children – originated not with the central authority, but with the more progressive boards of guardians.'⁸ We have seen that as early as July 1837 the Penrith Guardians had arranged for Margaret Holmes, in need of country air, to be discharged without her mother and sent to live with a rural foster mother, while her siblings John and Mary were possibly boarded-out with a foster mother in Dacre in 1841.⁹ There is a long gap in the extant minutes from 1839 until 1861, but thereafter I found no mention of boarding-out of Penrith children until 1898.

Penrith, therefore, can hardly be counted as one of the more progressive Cumbrian boards. After 1870 it was possible for a child to be fostered outside its own union, leading to a long-running dispute with the Carlisle union. In May 1886, the Guardians were not at all happy about this audacious new idea; in their view it was 'still only on trial'. They felt that, as it was cheaper to keep a child in the workhouse, it was 'clear that...the advantage of getting the children a permanent settlement elsewhere' was the real purpose, and believed it was self-evident that a 'certain percentage of these girls will probably have illegitimate children, who with their mothers will have a settlement in this Union' at a cost to the ratepayers. They feared that 'this Union may hereafter be inundated with objectionable children of a diseased and illegitimate type', they spoke of the 'hereditary moral taint' and wished to 'very much question whether the surroundings of these Children are such as will do more for them in this respect than would have been done had they remained in a well conducted establishment such as the Carlisle Workhouse.' The workhouse doctor strongly reproved the Guardians, writing that they had misunderstood the boarding-out system and the 'philanthropic intentions of this great movement which has existed in England for the past fifteen years.' His view was that 'fresh country air and Motherly care' might enable children to avoid the 'depraving atmosphere of a Union workhouse' with the intention that 'the tendency to revert to pauperism and crime may be modified if not wholly outrooted.'¹⁰

The Guardians could be flexible. In arranging for the children of Elizabeth Atkinson to live with their grandmother in 1892, it was acknowledged that 'it would have been a calamity

⁶ <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/education/workhouse.shtml#Industrial>, accessed 3 Aug. 2021.

⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 187, 23 Mar. 1882; CAS(C) SPU/P 74, 7 Jan. 1885.

⁸ Thompson, *New Poor Law*, 416, 575.

⁹ CAS(C) SPU/P 1, 25 Jul. 1837.

¹⁰ CAS(C) SPU/P 7, 25 May 1886.

to these children...if the cast iron rules of the Local Government Board made it necessary for [them] to be taken from the grandmother, and brought to the workhouse.¹¹ However, they continued to be reluctant to countenance the idea of boarding-out with any other than family and when, in May 1898, notice was given by one Guardian of his intention to propose that children should be boarded-out and that a small committee should be appointed to consider this, the proposal was lost by nine votes to twenty.¹² They then, somewhat tardily and perversely, changed their minds in August 1899, when the Local Government Board inspector suggested that they should buy two small cottages convenient for church, school and chapel, and put children there with a foster mother. They did not consider scattered cottage homes a practical option and instead suggested the extension of the 1889 'Boarding of Children in Unions Order' to allow them to board-out any child.¹³ It was reported later that year that there were thirteen children living in the house, of whom seven were illegitimate, and a further seven children were boarded-out, none of them illegitimate but all either orphans or deserted.¹⁴ A likely explanation is that, if the child's mother was still living and considered fit to care for her child, the Guardians had no authority to act *in loco parentis* and to remove the child from her care. The children's committee appointed by the Guardians was clear that the workhouse was not the place to bring up children and supported the idea that a cottage home should be provided but this failed to get majority agreement. Instead, the Guardians still wished for an extension of boarding-out for 'any suitable Children in the Workhouse.'¹⁵

Subsequently, the minutes record the care taken to vet prospective foster parents and the system of regular inspection of each home by local ladies, the medical care they arranged and their reluctance to separate siblings or to remove children from their foster homes without good cause.¹⁶ In 1900 the Local Government Board issued a circular urging the removal of all children from the workhouse.¹⁷

James Slater, born in Hesket, was a beneficiary of this new approach. As we have seen, he spent much of his childhood coming and going from the workhouse with his mother Margaret Ann. She was declared a pauper lunatic in 1903 and could thus be detained, so he too, presumably, had to stay inside with her.¹⁸ However, Margaret Ann absconded from the workhouse in 1908, and by 1911 he was living with a foster mother in Greystoke.¹⁹ He was still there in 1911 and in January 1912, the Guardians decided that he should continue in Greystoke for the time being, 'it being considered desirable that he should not leave School until the Spring of 1913' by which time he would be well over fifteen, unusually old to be leaving school in Cumberland at the time. It seems as if he was doing well with his foster mother. When he finally left in early 1913 to be employed by Mr H. C. Howard (presumably Henry Howard of Greystoke Castle) he was provided by the Guardians with a 'proper outfit.'²⁰

¹¹ *Herald*, 18 Mar. 1899, 2.

¹² CAS(C) SPU/P 12, 24 May, 7 Jun. 1898; *Herald*, 11 June 1898, 6, has a long account of the heated debate, unlike the Minutes. This clarifies that the proposal would apply only to the orphaned and deserted, not the illegitimate.

¹³ CAS(C) SPU/P 13, 1 Aug. 1899 – 15 Aug. 1899.

¹⁴ CAS(C) SPU/P 13, 24 Oct. 1899.

¹⁵ CAS(C) SPU/P 13, 24 Oct. 1899.

¹⁶ CAS(C) SPU/P 13, 27 Feb. 1900, 13 Mar. 1900, 6 Nov. 1900, 20 Nov. 1900.

¹⁷ Morrison, *Workhouse*, 137.

¹⁸ CAS(C) SPU/P 188, 5 Jan. 1903.

¹⁹ CAS(C) SPU/P 79, 5 Oct. 1908.

²⁰ CAS(C) SPU/P 22, 30 Jan. 1912, 6 May 1913.

By the time he signed up in 1915 for military service with the Royal Marine Light Infantry, Portsmouth Division, in Manchester, his occupation was stated as 'warehouseman' [sic]. After serving throughout the war, his conduct being considered very good and his ability satisfactory, he was invalided out in 1920,²¹ after which he became a postman, married and had a family; his life could be accounted a success made possible by the Guardians' care and concern, aided by the new opportunities for employment offered by organisations such as the Post Office.²² The Guardians had come round to the idea of removing children from the workhouse rather late, but James' case does provide a local example of the 'surprising flexibility in the face of children's needs' found by Ginger Frost in her work on Cambridge and Cardiff.²³

James could be helped by the Guardians because his mother was detained in the workhouse as a pauper lunatic. Others had to wait until the 1908 Children Act, which again extended the powers of the Guardians, enabling them formally to adopt children whose parents exhibited an unsatisfactory lifestyle or who had been deserted. It has been said that 'economy-minded guardians rarely adopted this strategy unless children were physically abused or neglected'; it seems likely that this was the background to several cases recorded in the minutes for Penrith.²⁴ By 1909 they were resolving to advertise for suitable foster mothers, whose homes they inspected and to whom they paid a fee covering the cost of the child's care.²⁵ Private fostering could provide worthwhile extra income for poorer women, but single mothers were very liable to default (as happened with Mary Wilson in 1886) and the children were likely therefore to be moved frequently.²⁶ The Guardians would not default and the formal system was likely to encourage a more stable life for the child.

It probably improved life for Margaret Ritson. Her mother, Mary Jane, was enumerated visiting her half-brother, Joseph Thompson, at Little Salkeld Railway Cottages in 1891, so clearly had Addingham connections, although when she gave birth to a daughter, Mary Elizabeth, in the workhouse in 1897, she was admitted from the parish of Great Salkeld. She later had two more illegitimate children in the workhouse, in 1898 (the child died at seven months) and 1904; her two surviving daughters spent a considerable part of their childhood going in and out of the workhouse with their mother before the authorities acted, adopting both Mary Elizabeth and her younger sister Margaret in 1909, although their mother was still living and sane. The previous month the Guardians had adopted four children whose mother was also alive, and living in the workhouse, 'by reason of the Mother's mode of life'; Mary Jane Ritson probably fell into the same category.²⁷

Mary Elizabeth was still in the workhouse in 1911, perhaps considered too old at thirteen

²¹ TNA, Adm/159/195, image 1165.

²² <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/63761014/person/38108144600/facts>, accessed 7.4.2020 (a family tree that I believe to be accurate); David Thomas Taylor, 'Occupational and social mobility during industrialisation: the experience of a Black County parish in the nineteenth century', *Local Historian*, vol.48, no.2 (Apr. 2018) 137.

²³ Ginger Frost, 'Under the Guardians' Supervision: Illegitimacy, Family and the English Poor Law, 1870-1930', *Journal of Family History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013), 136.

²⁴ Crowther, *Workhouse*, 209; see, for example, CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 6 Jul. 1909, 31 Aug. 1909, 6 Dec. 1910; SPU/P/17, 22 May 1923.

²⁵ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 9 Nov. 1909.

²⁶ See before, 83-4; Ginger Frost, 'The kindness of strangers revisited: Fostering, adoption and illegitimacy in England, 1860-1930', ch.7, in Probert, Rebecca, *Cohabitation and Non-Marital births in England and Wales, 1600-2012* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 126-7.

²⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 6 Jul. 1909, 31 Aug. 1909.

to benefit from the new policies. She left that summer to work in service.²⁸ The Guardians arranged for the five-year-old Margaret to have an eye operation at the Penrith Cottage Hospital in February 1910 and supplied the necessary spectacles; in some ways she was probably much better off adopted by the authorities than she would have been living an erratic life with her mother.²⁹ A Boarding-Out Committee was finally established in 1910, with members visiting the children monthly and their schoolmasters expected to submit quarterly reports; Mrs Teasdale of Hunsonby was one such visitor. By 1911 Margaret was boarded-out with Mrs Rowe of Greystoke, along with James Slater, whom she probably knew from the workhouse. Somewhat optimistically, the Guardians asked Mary Jane to contribute £0. 2s. 0d weekly towards the cost of boarding-out her daughter.³⁰

In July 1913 Margaret was returned to the workhouse 'to be handed over to mother' and she was then taken out again at her mother's request by her aunt, Mrs Ellen Thompson of Little Salkeld station; she thus became part of the Addingham story.³¹ This was presumably the official way the transfer had to be done, as it is clear the Guardians had made and approved all the arrangements, after hearing 'an excellent Report as to Mr Thompson's character and home.' They were evidently satisfied that Joseph Thompson was unlike his sister.³² We have no way of knowing why the extended family were able and willing to help at this point, but had not stepped in to help before, when the two children were both in the workhouse. Was this a case of the Guardians, knowing their communities well, being creative and persuading the family to take responsibility – local corroboration for Ginger Frost's comment that 'Surprisingly... an illegitimate child sometimes had a better chance of gaining support from family, nuclear or extended, while under the guardian's supervision'?³³ The allowance paid by the Guardians may have been welcomed, but by 1913 it would already have been available for several years; perhaps the fact that Margaret was older, and potentially useful, helped or perhaps her mother had finally agreed. Or was this Mary Jane attempting, as was her legal right, to take back control of her child? Frost describes a case where a mother, keen to have her child back but denied her wish, sued to have the child given up to the care of her sister and brother-in-law. It is possible that we are seeing something similar going on here.³⁴ We just cannot tell from the official record.

Margaret attended Langwathby School until 1915, when she apparently left the district, returning the following year to be admitted to Maughanby School, near Glassonby, but still giving her last school as Langwathby. She left school in March 1918 when she reached leaving age, intending to 'work at home.'³⁵ 'Home', by then, was The Druids public house in Little

²⁸ CAS(C) SPU/P 81, 15 May 1911.

²⁹ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 10 Feb. 1910; SPU/P 22, Boarding-Out of Children Committee, Minutes, 12 May 1910.

³⁰ CAS(C) SPU/P 16, 5 Dec. 1911.

³¹ CAS(C) SPU/P 81, 22 Jul. 1913; CAS(C) SPU/P 16, 29 Jul. 1913.

³² CAS(C) SPU/P 22, 15 Jul. 1913.

³³ Frost, 'Under the Guardians', 126, 136; she found creative Guardians in Cardiff and Cambridge.

³⁴ Ginger Frost, "'The Black Lamb of the Black Sheep': illegitimacy in the English working class, 1850-1939", *Journal of Social History* vol.37, no.2 (Winter 2003) 301, also found determined mothers; see also Ginger Frost, "'When is a Parent not a Parent?': Custody and Illegitimacy in England, 1860-1930", *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol.6, no.2 (Spring 2013) 236-262; Alison Light, *Common People: The History of an English Family* (Penguin, 2014) 156, describes how her great-grandmother, Sarah Hill, was born and raised in the Cheltenham workhouse – but was reclaimed aged nine by her grandmother and taken to live in Wales.

³⁵ CAS(C) DS 113, 18 Aug. 1913; CAS(C) DS 173/1/1-2, Register, 2 Oct. 1917.

Salkeld, where Joseph was the licensee and where he died in 1924, leaving some furniture and £50 to Margaret. It seems evident from the war record of her older sister, Mary Elizabeth, which shows she returned to the Thompsons after war service at the munitions works at Gretna and in France, that they helped both sisters.³⁶ Mary Elizabeth emigrated to Canada in 1920, while Margaret married a childless widower twice her age in 1928. She was left a widow in 1944, living in Middlesbrough with their four young children.

The information from Mary Elizabeth's war records allowed me to trace her mother. Mary Jane Ritson, aged 47, domestic servant of 63 Hostel, Eastriggs, Dornock, married Thomas Corrie, aged 48, an explosives factory worker of the same address, at Annan, 8 February 1918. Mary Jane, like her elder daughter, had found war-time employment (and a husband) at the munitions factory near Gretna; surely mother and daughter must have been in touch? Mary Jane was not married for long and it would seem that marriage had not improved her circumstances: Mary Corrie died in the poorhouse in Dumfries in January 1926 and her husband Thomas died there in December 1927.

John George Stephenson, unlike James Slater or the Ritson sisters, had no family connection to Addingham at all, and he gained rather less benefit from the efforts of the Guardians than any of them. He was born in 1902 and when he was admitted to the workhouse, on his own, in May 1906, the authorities wrote both to his mother, Isabella, to remind her of her responsibilities and to his unnamed 'putative' father to ask him to contribute to his support. The latter offered £0. 2s. 0d. weekly but it seems the mother failed to respond, so that by August the Guardians had decided they should adopt the boy.³⁷ It was not until 1909, however, that he was boarded-out in Hunsonby with Mrs Jane Ann HopeSlee and thus became part of the story of illegitimacy in Addingham.³⁸ Although, as we saw earlier when considering adoption, a number of other local people undertook private fostering, Mrs Slee was the only official foster mother in the parish, taking in several children over the years. She was herself the mother of an illegitimate child; is it possible that she was persuaded by the Guardians to take in a child as a way of receiving support, since she may have forfeited her right to relief as a result of an adulterous relationship?³⁹ John George was with her for the 1911 census and attended the Methodist Sunday School regularly from 1911-1913, but in October 1913 he was returned to the workhouse and was then, like James Slater and Margaret Ritson a few years before, sent to Mrs Rowe in Greystoke instead.⁴⁰ He didn't stay there long, and by October 1914 had again been returned to the workhouse. It would seem that neither woman, despite previous experience, could foster John George successfully.⁴¹

Meanwhile, since his last stay in the workhouse, ideas about the care of children had moved on again. In 1912, 22 children were in the care of the Guardians and they were beginning to reconsider the cottage home idea for children who could not be boarded-out. In 1913 the Local Government Board issued an order prohibiting the care of children over the age of three in a workhouse containing adults for more than six weeks, although war and the resistance

³⁶ TNA, WO/398/188.

³⁷ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 15 May, 29 May, 21 Aug. 1906.

³⁸ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 9 Nov. 1909.

³⁹ Rebecca Probert, *Divorced, Bigamist, Bereaved? the family historian's guide to marital breakdown, separation, widowhood, and remarriage: from 1600 to the 1970s* (Takeaway, 2015) 84.

⁴⁰ CAS(C) DFCM 4/5/33; CAS(C) SPU/P 16, 7 Oct. 1913.

⁴¹ CAS(C) SPU/P 82, 26 Oct. 1914.

of rural Guardians prevented complete national implementation of this policy.⁴² However, in 1914 the Penrith Guardians bought a property (Lark Hall in Penrith) to house a maximum of fifteen children; no child over three was now to be kept in the house unless they were sick. The preference felt by some Guardians for a rural foster home was still made clear however.⁴³

John George, therefore, found himself transferred to Lark Hall children's home when it opened in July 1915 but was back in the workhouse from the following December until June 1916, when he was sent out to service. He lasted but a week, before being returned to the workhouse. Thereafter, he repeatedly absconded; when he was sent to the Liscard Sea Training Home, near Wallasey, a home set up for poor, deserving boys with the intention of training them to join the navy, he absconded from there too. By 7 September 1916 he was back in Penrith workhouse, only to abscond again on the 8th, being then brought back from the Wigton workhouse on the 11th. Finally, in November 1916, he was sent to the 'C of E Homes, Hedgerley Court Farm Home, W. Farnham Royal, Bucks', a Waifs and Strays Society home for 25 boys which aimed to teach them farming skills.⁴⁴ Perhaps the Guardians were glad to see the last of this troublesome youth. The full sad details of his subsequent life of petty criminality are in his biography on my website, but by 1939 he had returned to Penrith, where he was listed as a single farm labourer at the workhouse (by then renamed the Public Assistance Institution); he was living there as an inmate (rather than a patient).⁴⁵ He had spent all those years just trying to escape but then could not manage to live successfully outside an institution. In 1941 he was back in court, charged with breaking a shop window in Penrith; he expressed disappointment with the 'light' sentence of six months in prison.⁴⁶ He died in 1968 while in the Garlands Mental Hospital in Carlisle.⁴⁷

In 1911 there were at least 61 individuals living in Addingham who were either themselves illegitimate or the parent of an illegitimate child; they constituted nine per cent of the population. Of these, 20 were children living with an assortment of relatives in a family grouping. Two were privately fostered (one with her mother nearby), leaving only John George Stephenson boarded out by the authorities. His illegitimacy, therefore, would not have particularly marked him out but his lack of biological relatives certainly would, while his workhouse connection would have been obvious. A sociable childhood surrounded by grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, or a stepfamily, the illegitimate status perhaps not obvious or much remarked upon, would have been very different from that of the boarded-out child, adapting on his own to a strange family environment, to an ordinary rural school, and to a village culture of childhood freedom. It must have been all so strange after the institutional life to which he was accustomed. Some, like James Slater, apparently thrived; some, like John George Stephenson, patently did not.

⁴² Morrison, *Workhouse*, 137-8.

⁴³ CAS(C) SPU/P 16, 5 Nov. 1912, 7 Apr., 21 Apr. 1914.

⁴⁴ CAS(C) SPU/P 82, 1 Jul., 27 Dec. 1915, 1916 various.

⁴⁵ See www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk; 1939 Register, HBK, Penrith, 571/1, sch. 8/40.

⁴⁶ *Observer*, 2 Sept. 1941, 3; 14 Oct. 1941, 2.

⁴⁷ Death certificate. With thanks to The Children's Society Archive, at the Church of England Record Centre, for their help in allowing me to access and publish information from their files.

The Fathers

'I did beget her, all the parish knows.
Her mother liveth yet, can testify
She was the first fruit of my bachelorship.'¹

Did all the parish of Addingham indeed know who was the father? I rather suspect many parishioners did – or at least they knew what the mother claimed, and whatever had been surmised from what had been observed. As Jane Austen asked, in the early nineteenth century, could matters be kept secret 'where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies...?', a state of affairs still true of Laurie Lee's Gloucestershire Slad in the 1920s when 'very little in the village was either secret or shocking' and in Chapel Sands in Lincolnshire the 1930s.² As we have seen in the affiliation applications, couples were observed as they went about their daily lives, in villages where many more people were out and about conducting their daily business than is now the case, where most lived in houses that were home to large numbers of residents, both family and farm or domestic servants, and many slept in beds that were shared, where an absence would be noted.

A further absence has also been remarked: 'Fathers are noteworthy for their absence from the historiography of illegitimacy...[which] serves to compound the received wisdom that fathers of illegitimate children were often absent fathers.'³ Ginger Frost has pointed out that 'what was most peculiar about illegitimate children...was not a lack of relatives per se, but the lack of paternal ones.'⁴ They had them, of course, and the village may have known who they were but in many cases they played no part in the life of their child. Investigations, therefore, have usually concentrated upon the more readily identified unmarried mothers than the harder to detect unmarried fathers.

When this research started with a trawl through the baptisms, it was indeed an absence, a blank space, that was the first indication of an illegitimacy, even though in Addingham the child was almost never named as 'illegitimate'. Instead the mother was described as single or a spinster, and the father's space was left blank. This is in complete contrast to the situation found by Gandy in Lancashire, where in the first half of the nineteenth century, two-thirds of putative fathers were named in one set of parish baptism registers.⁵ Around 50% of the fathers of children in the Addingham study are completely unknown, since they appear in none of the sources publicly available. If the mother kept her own counsel and elected not to go to court for maintenance, she had a good chance of taking the name of the father to the grave with her,

¹ *Henry VI, pt. 1, scene iv.*

² Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey, ch.24, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/121/121-h/121-h.htm#link2HCH0024>, accessed 6 Aug. 2021; Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie* (Penguin, 1998) 205; Laura Cumming, *On Chapel Sands: My Mother and Other Missing Persons* (Chatto and Windus, 2019) 55.

³ Alysa Levene, Thomas Nutt and Samantha Williams, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 15.

⁴ Ginger Frost, "'When is a Parent not a Parent?': Custody and Illegitimacy in England, 1860-1930', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, vol.6, no.2 (Spring 2013) 254.

⁵ G. N. Gandy, *Illegitimacy in a Handloom Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culbeth, Lancs., 1781-1860*, D. Phil (Oxford, 1979) 238-9. Gandy seems to accept the accuracy of these names, although the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws believed false swearing to be rife, encouraged by corrupt parish officials: Thomas Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility, and the 1834 Poor Law Commission Report: the myth of the old poor law and the making of the new', *Economic History Review*, vol.63, no.2 (2010) 338-9.

safe from historians. Nevertheless, it is surprising how many fathers *could* be found amongst the Cumbrian records. In 173 detailed investigations, normally starting with one mother and child, but sometimes including more than one mother/child pair as the maternal line was examined, a total of 236 children were studied. No father could be identified for 123 children but the names of 87 putative fathers, accounting for 113 children between them, emerged from the variety of sources detailed below, including six children, in three different families, where the circumstantial evidence seems so strong as to allow an informed guess to be made, even in the absence of a record actually naming the man. We may choose to discount the unlikely-looking stepfather or grandfather named on a marriage certificate, without entirely overlooking the possibility that the statement was true, and several names are almost certainly a convenient fiction, but even so in about 40% of these cases an accurate identification of the father has proved feasible. It is a higher figure than might have been anticipated at the start of the research, faced with all the blanks on the baptism registers, but still, I suspect, less than might have been obtained from the well-informed and observant neighbours of the couples concerned.⁶ However, we should still exercise a degree of caution as to the true biological father; we can never know whether the mother was telling the truth, at the registration of the birth, in court or to her child. Indeed, if she had had more than one lover, as some affiliation cases suggest, she may herself have been uncertain.⁷

However, let us start first with the different sources of names and consider how reliable they may be. Gandy found a culture in industrial Lancashire that accepted a large degree of cohabitation and viewed the children as legitimate, which he took to be the reason for so many fathers being named in the baptism records, rather than deliberate false swearing by the mothers.⁸ Baptism records in Addingham, however, provide thin pickings when looking for the father of an illegitimate child. Whether information about the father was furnished by the clergyman must have depended very much on his individual decision about what and whom to believe, and how much to divulge. It may also be indicative of a different culture that rejected cohabitation. The vicars and curates of Addingham, who conducted the vast majority of the baptisms examined, must often have had their suspicions as to the father, but preferred to keep their own counsel, and only once named a father for an illegitimate child. In all the research, only five fathers of illegitimate children were found clearly identified on baptismal entries. Frances Furness (of Gamblesby) and Richard Parmley were both named in the register at Park Head Independent Chapel, in an unusually worded entry for the time and place. They had married three months after the birth of the child but before the baptism, and the Minister seemed to be trying to indicate an awareness of an irregularity with his unusual form of entry. When his daughter was baptised, John W. Swainson was named by the Methodist minister, who even helpfully gave details of where John was working at the time and also his

⁶ Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical Mobility, Cousin Marriage and Illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 191, identified fathers in 36.1% of her cases.

⁷ DNA evidence can now provide conclusive evidence and has led to some interesting legal cases recently. In an item about whether a man should take a DNA test to settle doubt over his paternity, the *Sunday Times* noted that in 2008, 'nearly one in five paternity claims handled by the Child Support Agency revealed that the mother had deliberately or inadvertently misidentified the father: see *Sunday Times Magazine*, 3 Mar. 2019, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tough-love-i-dont-think-im-my-childs-biological-father-what-should-i-do-hsq9r075s>, accessed 24.4.2019.

⁸ Gandy, *Illegitimacy*, 238-239, 391.

home address. There was thus little doubt there about the minister's conviction of where the responsibility rested, and neither was there in the case of the daughter taken for Methodist baptism by Caroline Armstrong in 1905, when George Nanson was named as the father.

When Thomas Nevison, born in the Eamont Bridge workhouse, was baptised by the vicar of Barton his father was given as William Atkinson, a sailor of Hartlepool. This particular vicar usually named the father and gave his place of residence, presumably relying on the word of the mother; he would have been responsible for the baptisms of many of the illegitimate babies born in the Eamont Bridge workhouse, which lay in his parish, and seeing the issue on a larger scale may have made him more inclined to name the alleged father, and to apportion responsibility. He was happy to write 'bastard son [or daughter] of' at a period when the term never appeared in the Addingham registers. Elizabeth Brown took her daughter for baptism by the vicar of the neighbouring parish of Langwathby, who made it perfectly plain that she was unmarried but also named the father as Robert Hind, a local farmer.

The marriage registers were much more productive of paternal names (forty-five) but with no more certainty that they are accurate than those named at baptism; indeed, it seems likely that many of the registers are misleading in this respect, but also that there is often a grain of truth in the name, discernible when the life of the individual mother and her child is known. Several stepfathers were named as the father at marriage but in only one instance was the exact relationship specified. Naming a stepfather as father may perhaps be more a recognition of the role he had played in the life of the child, coupled with a misunderstanding of the registration requirements, than an intentional misrepresentation of the biological truth. Occasionally, a marriage took place so soon after the birth of a child that it would seem to confirm the paternity claimed at the subsequent marriage of that child or the name offered may be the one given to, and believed by, the child. In such cases neither the bride nor groom would necessarily be intending to deceive. Grandfathers were also sometimes named as the father; this would accord with the common belief that illegitimate children in Victorian times were brought up believing their mother to be their sister, and therefore their grandparents to be their parents, but would not fit with the generally accurate designation of the child as grandchild on the census. The child, of course, probably did not know what was written on the census; relatives perhaps felt they should be honest with the census officials (who were usually local people) but could bend the truth with the child. Kate Jackson, as we saw earlier, was designated 'illegitimate' at her baptism and raised by her grandparents, but their precise relationship was obscured. The question, as ever, is what was the truth and what did she believe it to be?

Some names, often conveniently 'dec[eased]', appear fictitious and designed to conceal the truth, either from the child as he grew up, the authorities or the spouse. Could Thomas Lancaster Gedling really have believed that Joseph Gedling, the husband of his mother who died several years before his birth, was his father? He would not have known, perhaps, that his mother had named Thomas Lancaster at affiliation proceedings, but surely someone in the family, one of his four surviving half-siblings perhaps, would have mentioned the death of their father at some stage? One of these siblings was Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater, two of whose own children named their father as John Collinson at their marriages; the family were sometimes enumerated as Collinson (their mother's married name) and sometimes as Slater, after John Slater, with whom Mary Jane was co-habiting and whom she had claimed as the father of her first child in affiliation proceedings. 'John', therefore, at least, was probably biologically correct and perhaps intended to describe the actual father, while also acknowledging

the fact that they were all registered as Collinson. Mark Ellwood Kidd was most probably the son of Thomas Ellwood, who disappeared or died when he was a child, but when he married he named Thomas Kidd as his father, again mixing the correct Christian name with his own surname, resulting in a name that accorded with his own in the register. John Thomas Nevison named James Nevison as his father, rather than the sailor William Atkinson named at his baptism.⁹ Pick a suitable common Christian name, add the illegitimate person's own surname and the entry looks correct to vicar, spouse and in-laws.

The really interesting names are those that seem totally different, so different, indeed, as to be credible, for why would anyone choose a name that stood out, that announced illegitimacy almost as much as the blank space on the certificate? Elizabeth Workman Lancaster named John Workman, but that came as no great surprise considering her middle name, and additional confirmation was provided by his order to pay for her support in 1823.¹⁰ Mary Ann Potts named Edward Mandale in 1912, the name of the young son of the house where her mother was employed at about the time of conception. Albert Robinson Davidson named John Furnass, joiner; there was a carpenter of that name living in Melmerby at the time of his birth. These all seem plausible and to some extent checkable. Angus Kindley, named by Nanny Milbourn at her marriage, provided a fascinating back story of fortunes gained and lost in Chile. Angus had relatives in the area around Addingham, but soon after Nanny's birth took off for London, New South Wales and Chile, although in both 1861 and 1871 he was back in Carlisle. It could be fantasy, choosing a man of adventure and fortune rather than the usual local farm labourer – or it could be true. As we saw earlier, this family also applied to affiliate another illegitimate child upon a local man of more than average means.¹¹

A few entries seem inexplicable. The deceased father of Margaret Nanson Kidd was not named at her marriage in 1874, indeed the space is firmly crossed through for the avoidance of doubt, although her parents were married when she was born, they were both named in the baptism register, they brought her up and she was a beneficiary of her father's will. The marriage was one of only two conducted by 'John Wilson, officiating minister' and the entry for the other marriage does not name the father of either party, although neither were illegitimate. It seems like a clerical error – but one that could prove very misleading for the family historian. Even odder is the marriage certificate for Hannah Lancaster, who was certainly born illegitimate to Margaret Lancaster but brought up by her father, Henry Oliphant, in Great Salkeld after the death of her mother; she was enumerated as his daughter, took his name on the census, and was named as his illegitimate daughter and beneficiary in his will, but chose not to name him at her marriage.¹² She must surely have known the truth. Why then, did she not name her father when she married after his death? Was it somehow less shaming to admit to having no father than to admit to the real one, who had apparently willingly fulfilled that role and responsibility? Or was it some sense of legal correctness that led her to use the name of Lancaster when she married and to own her illegitimate status? Or had the discovery, on reading his will, of their real relationship actually come as an awful shock? Had this been some kind of *ménage-a-trois*, with Henry, married to a woman ten years older than himself, taking up with the younger

⁹ See before, 49. He also gave himself an additional Christian name.

¹⁰ CAS(C) Q 5/8, Christmas, 1823-4.

¹¹ See before, 60-1, for Nanny's half-sister, Hannah Nixon.

¹² CAS(C) PROB/1893/W610A392; DFCM 3/3/1, 3 Oct. 1896.

servant woman as his wife grew old, perhaps when it became clear there would be no children? Or had he taken advantage of his employee? Or indeed, as Margaret Lancaster was herself no longer young, with her own biological time-clock ticking, perhaps she took advantage of Henry? Cissie Fairchild describes just such a case in France: 'One can have little sympathy for women like Marguerite Gueirand, a laundress who had an affair with M. Caillol, a master tool-maker who owned his own shop and had a sick wife. Marguerite not only got Caillol to promise to marry her when his wife finally died, but also persuaded him to give her his wife's clothes and other possessions in the mean-time.'¹³ Gold-diggers were not limited to the France of the eighteenth century that Fairchild examined. We shall never know; so often it seems that DNA could answer the questions in this research, but here, with Hannah Lancaster, we have the unfamiliar situation of a known father, taking on the care of his child but then apparently being rejected by her.

The affiliation proceedings at the Leath Ward Petty Sessions in Penrith were a fruitful source of names, naming men who were resident in the parish but alleged to be the fathers of children born elsewhere, and also those working as farm servants who happened to be in Addingham only temporarily at the time of the birth or allegation. However, it is not always possible to see exactly what transpired. Sometimes there is a note on the original 'Bastardy Information' form to indicate that an order for support was made, and sometimes evidence from court proceedings is given alongside. Rather less often, there is an almost verbatim report of the court proceedings and subsequent verdict in the Petty Sessions records. Some fathers admitted paternity in court, or the mother was able to produce evidence that money had been paid in support of the child within a year of its birth, which was seen as confirmation of her allegation; in some cases the court had to decide on the basis of the witness evidence. The allegation might be vigorously defended, with the names of other possible fathers mentioned in evidence; the man accused by Margaret LancasterForsyth in 1865 brought along three witnesses in his defence but the outcome is unclear,¹⁴ while Robert Hind, despite being named in the baptism register, strongly rebutted Elizabeth Brown's allegation in 1858; he was nonetheless adjudged to be the father. Elizabeth came back in 1864 with another baby (her third), also supposedly fathered by Robert Hind, but this time the allegation appears to have been withdrawn.¹⁵ Sometimes neither party turned up at court and the case could not go ahead; we might conclude that the parents had reached a private agreement or that the mother decided her case was too weak and withdrew it. In only one case, out of 56, is it crystal clear that the man accused was found not to be the father and the case is marked 'dismissed'; the allegation was still dismissed when the determined mother tried again very shortly after.¹⁶ Out of 48 named men, I have found 33 who were ordered to support their child, including six who admitted to paternity or were shown to have already supported the child. William Westgarth, as we have seen, was brought back to court by the mother when he ceased paying support of £0. 1s 6d weekly as ordered by the court. However, in a third of the cases the resolution is unclear, the allegation left hanging in the air, paternity uncertain for posterity.

¹³ Cissie Fairchild, 'Female Sexual Attitudes and the Rise of Illegitimacy: A Case Study', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol.8, no.4 (Spring 1978) 639.

¹⁴ CAS(C) QPL 15, 15 July 1865.

¹⁵ Baptism, Langwathby, 1 Apr. 1858; CAS(C) QPL 5, 15 Apr. 1858; CAS(C) QPL 14, 26 Jan. 1864; CAS(C) QPL 7, 2 Feb. 1864.

¹⁶ CAS(C) QPL 2, 15 Jan. 1850, 29 Jan. 1850.

Only one person, James Lancaster Forsyth, named the same father at his wedding as had been named by his mother in affiliation proceedings years earlier. Henry Graham did not name Joseph Blenkinship at his marriage in 1903, although his mother had done so at the Petty Sessions many years before, when she successfully obtained support from Joseph until their son was thirteen. Henry had been brought up in Great Salkeld, while Joseph remained in Addingham. Was Henry not aware of this relationship? Was he ashamed of it? Was it more politic not to name this man who lived in the same locality? Four other people also failed to acknowledge the man named in affiliation proceedings as their father.

Other sources provided the odd name, or at least the confirmation of a suspicion. George Nicholson named his illegitimate son in his will, to ensure that he inherited, as did Samuel Lacy and Henry Oliphant with their daughters. School records were normally accurate as far as they went, giving the mother's name or specifying the step-relationship; John Slater was named as the father of three of his illegitimate children, who were all, at this point, taking his name. A surname given as the middle name helped to cast a suspicion that other records then confirmed; in the case of Mark Ellwood Kidd, his name and the census evidence seem to corroborate one another in determining his father. Even a family memory, uncovered by chance in one case, was checkable and its accuracy provable. One of the most interesting case studies is that of Barbara Sewell and her six illegitimate children; in giving her evidence into her allegation of paternity for the youngest child, she was forced to admit that 'I have had 4 children to a man I was housekeeper for – he is dead.'¹⁷ The 1841 census when combined with the burial records point to one very likely candidate. The census records, however, were generally not very helpful in identifying fathers, although they do illustrate quite how free and easy some families could be about surnames, appearing on one census under one name and in the next in a different guise, or even in the case of Mary Grace WellsTrotter under one name in one place and the other in a different place, both in the same census. Gandy has written of Culcheth that if,

an illegitimate child whose mother later married should appear in a census bearing the same surname as his mother's husband [it] might not seem good evidence that the latter was indeed the bastard's P[utative] F[ather]. Enumerators had little reason to care about the precise blood connection existing between people who stood in practical terms in the relationship of parent and child. Nonetheless, the terms 'stepson' or wife's daughter' do occur in the Culcheth censuses and very seldom does it appear that a husband would lend his name to a child who was not his own.¹⁸

In Addingham, I would conclude that while some people were careful to be precise, others were not; probably fourteen men (16%) gave their names to children who were not apparently their own, including a step-grandfather. A very long interval to marriage for the mother of the illegitimate child or even a totally different man named at affiliation proceedings renders it unlikely that these stepfathers were the biological fathers. It may have just seemed easier, or kinder, for all the family to bear the same name.

In the following discussion it must always be remembered that the 87 putative fathers, some more convincingly certain than others, account for less than half of the children. The unknown half may be unknown precisely because they formed a group of a very different

¹⁷ CAS(C) QPL 13, 12 Oct. 1853.

¹⁸ Gandy, *Illegitimacy*, 240.

character; they may, for example, have been those who were more mobile and more easily able to hide themselves away from the mother and from the authorities. It has been said of Cumbria that 'the man most at risk [from the authorities] was the farmer or craftsman with a fixed and known address, or a town tradesman in a like situation', with mobile farm servants finding it easier to escape being brought to book for maintenance.¹⁹ They may also have been the better-off, who could perhaps take preventive action to avoid an affiliation hearing by offering maintenance voluntarily to the mother. Out of the 47 men identified through affiliation applications, most (32, or 68 per cent), as would be expected in this area, were farm workers of some kind, but with only six (13 per cent) identified as farm servants or agricultural labourers and the largest group being the fifteen husbandmen (32 per cent) (Table 15).

The balance in the larger and less certain group of 87 men identified in the Biographies (which includes the affiliations) is different: agriculture again accounts for two-thirds, but the relative positions of the husbandmen (17 per cent) and the labourers (28 per cent) is reversed. The trades – the masons, the tailors, a miller, an innkeeper – in both cases account for about 17 per cent. It seems that the husbandmen may have been the group most at risk of being chased through the courts for maintenance, while the farm servants did indeed find it easier to escape. In both groups, farmers and their sons together accounted for about 20 per cent (Table 16).

The overwhelming majority of fathers were single men, legally free to marry if they wished. As far as can be established from the fathers who were identified, an illegitimate birth resulting from adultery was very rare: Thomas Blenkarn was married, and so was Joseph Nicholson when

Occupations from affiliations	No.	%
Agriculture	32	68
Farmers and sons	10	21
Husbandman	15	32
Ag lab	6	13
Gamekeeper	1	2
Trade	8	17
Other labouring	3	6
Gentry	1	2
Unknown	3	6
Total	47	100

Table 15. Fathers' occupations, affiliation applications, 1810-1879.

Occupations from biographies	No.	% of 87
Agriculture	57	66
Farmers and sons	17	20
Husbandman	15	17
Ag Lab	24	28
Gamekeeper	1	1
Trade	14	16
Miner	5	6
Other labouring	3	3
Gentry	1	1
Other	3	3
Unknown	4	5
Total	87	100

Table 16. Fathers' occupations, Biographical Group.

¹⁹ J. D. Marshall, 'Out of wedlock: perceptions of a Cumbrian social problem in the Victorian context', *Northern History*, vol.31, no.1 (1995) 206.

they were named at the Petty Sessions, while Isaac Taylor married another woman at about the time of the illegitimate conception; Henry Bleamires Metcalf was married also but vehemently denied fatherhood at the Petty Sessions; William Greenhow committed both adultery and bigamy, as did Thomas Atkinson. Only Henry Oliphant committed adultery but also fully acknowledged his daughter. Many of the names would perhaps not come as a surprise to their descendants, as rightly or wrongly, they are very likely the man they always thought of as their father or grandfather, although the fact of illegitimate birth may be more unexpected to those brought up with slightly fudged dates. In terms of occupation and lifestyle, Lt. Col. Samuel Lacy of Salkeld Hall and Angus Kindley stand out from the expected farmers and tradesmen, the former for his social position and inherited wealth, the latter for his entrepreneurial skills and acquired wealth.

As we move on to consider what role fathers played in the lives of their illegitimate children, it has to be remembered that at the beginning of our period, at least, 'the high incidence of bridal pregnancy suggests that local folk attitudes to marriage remained unchanging, and that most fathers of children behaved honourably in the general culture of deep-rooted courtship customs.'²⁰ If the woman became pregnant, the couple generally married and, until 1834, in cases where they did not marry, the woman's sworn oath was not questioned when determining paternity; magistrates were prepared to go to great lengths to ensure that the man fulfilled his apparent responsibility, as Nutt has illustrated in Essex.²¹ However, as we saw earlier, the new Poor Law of 1834 fundamentally changed the legal attitude to the responsibility of the father, placing the whole burden upon the mother. When Ruth, the eponymous heroine of the novel published in 1853, dies, leaving an illegitimate son, the father's offer of help is spurned with the words 'I thank God, you have no right, legal or otherwise, over the child.'²² Nevertheless, after the legal reforms of 1872, the Poor Law Union Guardians could and did take a much more pro-active role in finding fathers, as Ginger Frost has demonstrated for the Cambridge and Cardiff Poor Law Unions.²³ Responsibility was still expected even where no legal connection or rights existed. The Penrith Guardians, apparently taking the mother at her word, wrote to the putative father of John George Stephenson in 1906, reminding him of his responsibility, in response to which he offered to pay £0. 2. 0d weekly towards his child's support; there is, though, no evidence to show if he actually delivered on his promise.²⁴

It was a rare man who went with the mother to register his illegitimate child and see his name on the certificate; at the end of the nineteenth century Elizabeth BirdNicholson did not name a father for her first child baptised at Gamblesby St. John in 1893, but she must have been very persuasive to get both the father of her second child, born in 1897, and the (different) father of a later illegitimate child to go with her to register the child. Having his name on the certificate gave no rights to the unmarried father or his child at this time. The father of her second child went on to marry Elizabeth and thus, by the time his child was baptised (at Kirkoswald) both parents were named and there is nothing to alert the researcher to anything irregular.

²⁰ Marshall, 'Out of wedlock', 203.

²¹ Thomas Nutt, 'The paradox and problems of illegitimate paternity in old poor law Essex', ch.7 in Levene, Alysia, Nutt, Thomas and Williams, Samantha, *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700-1920* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 102-121.

²² Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth* (Penguin, 1997) 371.

²³ See Ginger Frost, 'Under the Guardians' Supervision: Illegitimacy, Family and the English Poor Law, 1870-1930', *Journal of Family History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013) 122-139.

²⁴ CAS(C) SPU/P 15, 15 May 1906.

As far as can be ascertained, only 23 of the identified fathers played a further role in the upbringing of their child. Probably eighteen married the child's mother and set up home together, although we can only surmise whether, since they did not quite make it to the altar before the baby arrived, this was what they always intended or whether it was the result of pressure exerted by friends or family. Some, like George Hetherington, seemed to need persuasion; Esther Jackson took him to court twice for different children before they finally married. Some children were clearly the result of a long-term cohabitation or at least a continuing relationship. John Slater and Mary Jane GedlingCollinsonSlater, whom we have already met several times, could not have married at the time, even if they had wanted to, as he was her stepfather and she was a deserted, but not divorced, wife; however, undeterred, they had six children together, and he was acknowledged as the father in several different records. Thomas Atkinson married Ann Reay, who was herself illegitimate and provided the initial prompt for research into this couple, and they went on to have four children together; all, however, were probably technically illegitimate since the marriage was bigamous, a crime for which he served time in prison. All these men seem to have taken a genuinely paternal role in the bringing up of their child.

Samuel Lacy, early in the nineteenth century, and Henry Oliphant towards the end, brought up their illegitimate daughters alone after the deaths of the mother. Lacy, as with Gloucester in 'King Lear' – 'Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund as to the legitimate. – Fine word, "legitimate"!' – seems even to have favoured his illegitimate child over his legitimate sons, perhaps indicating that she was the result of a genuine relationship, rather than a casual fling with a servant.²⁵ Kate Gibson suggests, of a slightly earlier period, that 'unmarried fatherhood among the wealthy could be a positive source of identity and much more closely echo the legitimate ideal.'²⁶

Many fathers were ordered to provide maintenance and may well have done so – we have no way of knowing for sure. However, the overseers of Bewcastle were concerned in 1834 that the full penalty could be avoided, or that gaol might even seem a price worth paying:

A young man absconded, in order to avoid the payment for his bastard, and when found eight years after in a distant part of the county, where he had accumulated a considerable sum, he coolly remarked he could only be confined three months, and so I was induced to compound for 4l [£4] rather than lose all, by putting him in gaol. Had the imprisonment been for one or two years, he would have paid all.²⁷

Perhaps this was the case with Thomas Morton, ordered to pay maintenance to Ann WatsonKindred in 1850 but by 1851 living in Devon, where he spent the rest of his life.²⁸ Such a long-distance move was very unusual in the records I have looked at. The court records detail only those few cases where the father failed to pay up and the mother chose to pursue them: Richard Spedding, as we saw above, was brought back from London to Penrith in 1851 when he ceased payment to Margaret Robinson.²⁹ This would seem to have been an expensive

²⁵ See before, 72-3; Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act 1 Scene 2, Edmund.

²⁶ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018) 98-9, discusses the differing nature of unmarried fatherhood according to social and economic circumstances.

²⁷ Royal Com. of Inquiry into Administration and Practical Operation of Poor Laws, Reports of Assistant Comms, House of Commons Papers, 1834, Appendix A, 310A.

²⁸ CAS(C) QPL 2, 7 May 1850.

²⁹ CAS(C) QPL 3, 25 Aug. 1851.

act of disobedience, since he then had to pay the court costs for his warrant, apprehension and travel, as well as the outstanding maintenance, on pain of three months in Carlisle Gaol with hard labour if he defaulted. I don't know whether Richard paid up or served his sentence, but he died in March 1853, so Margaret would not have benefited for very long. Even if a 'bastardy order' was granted, the putative father could appeal against it, although I have found no evidence of this happening to Addingham mothers.³⁰ Others may have provided financial support in a less formal way than through a court order. Again, the Petty Sessions records indicate that some did so, and the court only became involved when the payments stopped. As we have seen, Mary Clark brought William Westgarth back to court, even though their child was now seven.

There may even have been some kind of a continuing relationship where father and child lived in the same area. John James Hope of Hunsonby, a member of a strong Methodist family, was named as her father by Clara Sewell when she married at Addingham; the evidence points to her continuing links with the township and it seems highly likely that she knew him well.³¹ It would certainly seem an odd name to alight upon by chance, given that he was both alive and well known in the parish. Sarah Armstrong took her daughter, Caroline, with her when she married, bringing her up as the eldest child in her family, although her step-relationship was acknowledged on the census returns. However, when Caroline herself took an illegitimate child for baptism in 1905 she was living with her uncle and aunt, Abraham and Sybil Butterworth in Winskill, and she named her daughter after her aunt. When she married in 1912 she named Abraham Butterworth as her father. He was her maternal uncle, married to her mother's sister just over a year before Caroline was born, and only a few weeks before the birth of his own first child. Had there been a family dispute, did her aunt and uncle just have more room to accommodate mother and baby – or was Abraham actually her father? She had lived with her mother and stepfather until at least the age of fourteen and was treated equally with his other daughters in his will, which seems to challenge the first suggestion and even if her uncle *had* taken her in, it seems odd to name him as her father.

However, as far as can be ascertained from the records available, it is evident that the majority of the men identified played no further part in the lives of their children. William Greenhow committed bigamy to marry Jane Ann Lancaster and seems to have vanished from his Addingham family not long after the birth of the second son (as indeed he also disappeared from his other, legitimate, family in Lancashire, although he lived into old age). Did these men ever wonder about their illegitimate children? Did Thomas Gibson, living in Orton in 1901 with his wife and two young daughters, ever remember his illegitimate son and daughter, born to two different women? Or did Robert Hind, living in Langwathby and Addingham, ever consider, or come across, the two daughters he was alleged to have fathered upon Elizabeth Brown, who were both brought up by their stepfather Isaac Bowman in Langwathby? Did John George Millican, living with his wife and children in the United States, wonder about the child, indeed possibly two children, left behind in Cumbria? What meaning do we read into the wording on his daughter Fanny's gravestone: 'beloved daughter of J.G. Millican, U.S.A'?³²

The court, when considering the case of Frances Dent, accused in 1889 of concealment of

³⁰ See *CJ*, 7 Apr. 1865, 6, for an example of a successful application in Longtown.

³¹ She was named Godmother to two children from different local families in the 1920s.

³² See before, 126-7.

birth, was told that 'her sweetheart was ready and willing to marry her and make her what is called an honest woman'³³ – but what about making an 'honest man' of the father? It would have been an alien idea to the many who accepted the sexual double standard propounded by Lord Brougham in 1834 in a speech to the House of Lords:

Would any man hesitate to say, that if he saw his daughter in a house of ill-fame he would not hold her in very different light from that in which he would regard his son if he discovered him in the same situation?...Everybody knew that the unmarried men did not lead a life of continency...³⁴

The Times, however, took a different view, urging the Lords to defeat the 1834 bastardy clauses, asking:

But with respect to that clause which exempts the father of what is termed an illegitimate child from all anxiety, or care or duty of providing for his own offspring, in what bosom could the concept of such a clause be engendered? The woman is to be the only sufferer! Is she the only sinner?³⁵

Nutt has also pointed out that northern parishes:

could enforce paternal financial responsibility highly effectively. More importantly, the responses [to the commissioners] reveal the depth of parochial adherence to the principle of paternal financial responsibility. There was little appetite for shifting the responsibility exclusively onto the mothers of illegitimate children; the general preference was to encourage *both* [italics sic] maternal and paternal responsibility.³⁶

The new Poor Law and changing cultural attitudes may have relieved the fathers of responsibility for a while, but some men still felt the shame of fathering an illegitimate child and in some areas local society may have frowned upon him too.³⁷

Moreover, it is worth noting how many men, like Isaac Bowman, were bringing up the children of other men, as stepfathers or grandfathers. Many of the mothers, having had an illegitimate child, went on to marry somebody else; some left the child behind with relatives, who thus took on the parental role, but many took the child into the new family, where it was brought up as simply the eldest in the family, sometimes re-named to accord with the stepfather and sometimes not. In 38 of the cases I have examined in detail a stepfather was involved in bringing up his wife's child – sometimes, indeed, while his own child was being raised locally by another man. William Nixon was named as his father by John Wilson when he married; if (and it is a big if) I have identified the correct William, based upon age and place of residence, then he was living in the same township as his son, along with the woman he married and her own illegitimate daughter, while John was brought up in a nearby household by his stepfather. It is almost a reciprocal arrangement, albeit not planned, acknowledged or even necessarily known about by all concerned. Men may not have suffered the reputational loss as women did (although, as this study has made clear, even that damage was perhaps more limited than commonly imagined) and such harm as they did suffer may have been linked not

³³ *Herald*, 9 Nov. 1889.

³⁴ U. R. Q. Henriques, 'Bastardy and the New Poor Law', *Past and Present*, no.37 (Jul. 1967) 111.

³⁵ *The Times*, 7 Aug. 1834, 2.

³⁶ Nutt, 'Illegitimacy, paternal financial responsibility', 359.

³⁷ Emma Griffin, 'Sex, illegitimacy and social change in industrializing Britain', *Social History*, vol.38, no.2 (2013) 144-7.

so much to morality as a failure to fulfil the expected role of providing for a child.³⁸ However, it seems that many a man could not avoid the responsibility for an illegitimate child completely, even if the child was totally unrelated to him. Gibson refers to men's fear of 'being duped into taking financial and social responsibility for a child that was not theirs', but, ironically, that responsibility, albeit with no deception involved, was not so easily avoided when they married a woman who already had an illegitimate child.³⁹

³⁸ See Ginger Frost, "I am master here": Illegitimacy, Masculinity and Violence in Victorian England', ch.1, 27-42, in Delap, L., Griffin, B., and Wills, A., (eds) *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain Since 1800* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³⁹ Gibson, *Experiences*, 60.

Conclusion

Richard Adair in his study of courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England described two dominant approaches to the study of illegitimacy: the ‘overarching theories relying on secular fluctuations in aggregated national statistics’ and ‘intensive parochial case studies...which, although often extremely valuable, are rarely related to their regional context, and often produce findings which may well be applicable only in a very restricted geographical area.’¹ But what is regional and national history if not the agglomeration of the parochial?

This research is unashamedly parochial, in the sense that it is a detailed examination of a group of people connected to a relatively small and specific geographic area. It is, however, not parochial in the pejorative sense of that word, meaning limited or narrow in reach. The findings may relate initially to a very limited geographical area and indeed some of the people in this research spent their whole lives, as far as can be ascertained, in the parish and were certainly there at the time of all their major life events – for baptism, every ten years for the census, for marriage, the baptism and education of their own children, and were still here at the time of their death. Equally many were incomers, and many went on to live elsewhere, the majority in the north of England but some links reach out over the world. The study is based upon research in a whole variety of resources, rather than one type of material, or a small group of records. Thousands of individuals were caught in the net by this wide trawl, interacting at some time with a parish that never contained more than 900 souls at any one census. Several hundred were examined in great detail, very ordinary people who rarely left any intentional evidence of their lives in journals, and for whom no letters survive; the information has been garnered almost entirely from official records. It has been said that it is ‘difficult...to learn about the experiences of unmarried mothers because of their invisibility in the sources. Most statistical sources, especially the census, fail to detect the presence of unmarried mothers.’² The first claim, about the experiences of unmarried mothers, is certainly correct, the second less so, since many unmarried Addingham mothers were fairly readily discovered in the census, although marriage and a change of name made the search more difficult. The unmarried woman living in a household with a child of the same name is obvious and the relationship usually readily checked.

In a detailed review of Jenny Keating’s history of adoption in 2008, Daniel Grey wrote that: given the shame associated with illegitimacy, it is impossible to tell how many children secretly born out of wedlock were adopted within the family unit, or by sympathetic friends and neighbours.³

The reviewer thus made the assumptions that both shame and secrecy were universal and formed a barrier to investigation. In the case of informal adoption, which certainly happened in Addingham, I have not found secrecy universal, nor such a barrier to investigation. At the end of my period, it is indeed harder to investigate, hindered by the lack of detailed census information and the operation of the 100-year closure rule in archive offices. However, the 1939 Register and school records help to some extent to overcome this, as, of course, do the

¹ Richard Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester UP, 1996) 3.

² Tanya Evans & Pat Thane, ‘Lone Mothers’, *Women’s History Review*, vol.20, no.1 (2011) 6.

³ Review by Daniel Grey of Jenny Keating, *A Child for Keeps: The History of Adoption in England, 1918–45* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) accessed via <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/806>, 15.1.2014.

memories of people still alive. In Addingham many children were brought up by the maternal family, rather than friends or neighbours; often, in such a small and settled community, they were one and the same. The majority were not 'secretly born out of wedlock' – the civil registration showed it, the baptism showed it, the neighbours knew it. I believe that the complicated situation described by Laura Cumming, the fiction of the adoption of an apparently unrelated child was very, very unusual in Addingham.⁴ This is not to say, however, that the child, as opposed to the adults, always knew the truth.

There are problems, of course, with the records: some mothers and children still escape me, as do rather more fathers; it is possible to disappear, both at the time and in the historical record, to evade posterity and confound the nosy researcher; 'these people of the past...elude us, no matter how hard we try to drag them back out of time's tide.'⁵ The researcher's frustrations are real and edges remain frayed, but there is more to be found than I would ever have thought at the start; there have been many joyful eureka moments when, suddenly two facts emerged, collided and confirmed each other and gave the investigation a new purpose and direction.

There has been much discussion over the years of the idea of a 'bastardy-prone sub-society' and local historians have, unsurprisingly, reached different conclusions. Pat Wheable concluded that such a group did indeed exist in Ringwood in Hampshire, as did Cathy Day in Wiltshire, while Jean Robin concluded that 'there was a distinct group of women in Colyton in the mid-nineteenth century who could be called members of a bastardy prone sub-society, although they formed a majority rather than a minority within the company of bastard bearers.'⁶ Given the breadth of her definition of the sub-society, I suspect that in Addingham they would have formed a majority of the women, let alone the 'bastard-bearers.'⁷ Broadening it from 'bastard-bearers' to 'bastard-begetters', to include the fathers, would have produced even more links. Addingham, like the Kentish area studied by Reay, was an area where 'the illegitimacy-prone intermarried with all but a very small parish elite.' As he suggests, these, the sexually 'pure', formed the sub-society within a culture that was tolerant of illegitimacy, or at least pragmatic about it.⁸

Thirteen per cent of the mothers in the Biographies were themselves illegitimate;⁹ seventeen per cent were probably both the result of, and the cause of, generational illegitimacy; at least nineteen per cent had siblings with illegitimate children. These groups overlapped but only two individuals, neither with strong parish links, fell into all three categories. These are just the links that have been found in the course of this research, where no concerted attempt has been made to examine the lives of all those related to the principal people of interest, still less everybody else in the parish. Many other incomers, who did nothing while in the parish to arouse suspicious interest in the researcher, could, in fact, have been born illegitimate, or had an undetected illegitimate child in their household, while their siblings may have born (or fathered)

⁴ Laura Cumming, *On Chapel Sands: My Mother and Other Missing Persons* (Chatto and Windus, 2019).

⁵ Cumming, *Chapel Sands*, 273.

⁶ Pat Wheable, 'Lone motherhood: the unwed mother in nineteenth century Ringwood', *Local Historian*, vol.33, no.4 (Nov. 2003) 249; Cathy Day, *Wiltshire Marriage Patterns, 1754-1914: Geographical mobility, cousin marriage and illegitimacy* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 216; Jean Robin, 'Illegitimacy in Colyton, 1851-1881', *Continuity and Change*, vol.2, no.2 (1987) 330.

⁷ Robin, 'Colyton', 325.

⁸ Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England, 1800-1930* (Cambridge UP, 1996) 197, 212.

⁹ Robin, 'Colyton', 339, found only 3 per cent of her unmarried mothers to be illegitimate themselves.

illegitimate children elsewhere. As revealed in chapter three, Addingham's illegitimacy rate was lower than that prevailing in the Penrith area and considerably lower than the Cumberland average. It was not, in fact, so much higher than the national rate. Cumberland, however, had a small and much intermarried community, and its people, particularly the young, were very mobile – this was generally over a limited geographic region but within that area contacts must have been dense. Clara Whitehead, for example, who bore an illegitimate child in 1904, had multiple links: her stepmother bore an illegitimate child, an unrelated illegitimate child was in the same household in her childhood, while the neighbours also had one. The network of relationships revealed by this research is undoubtedly complex, but the true situation must have been even more intricate.

Seventeen mothers were particularly densely interlinked, and I think it is arguable that a few families were more affected than others. Andrew Blaikie et al. suggest that the real issue is to distinguish between those women, the 'repeaters', who bore several illegitimate children, which would suggest a bastardy-prone sub-society, and those who had just one, with large numbers of the latter suggesting that this was a common local situation.¹⁰ 75 per cent of the mothers in the Biographies had just one illegitimate child, rising to 79 per cent for those who spent their childhood in Addingham.

As we saw earlier, the belief that shame was the universal experience throughout the Victorian period and into quite recent times is both persistent and widely held, including amongst historians. Some have concluded that the stigma was real: Robin found it in Colyton; Levene et al. feel that 'the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries arguably marked something of a high tide in terms of the stigmatisation of bastardy'; Williams contends that in London 'the shame associated with unmarried parents, and mothers in particular, was present in the whole of the period considered here, but that its extent and the processes by which shame was transmitted changed.'¹¹ However, as Hair pointed out in 1966, 'in view of the high proportion of [rural] brides who were pregnant, including many who were obviously so at marriage, it is difficult to believe that this assumed shame was widespread, or indeed markedly existent.'¹²

Blaikie et al. suggest, in the Scottish context in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, that where illegitimacy was common it gave rise to no particular shame, while Lionel Rose makes a similar point:

In reality working-class girls were not at all irrevocably blighted by sexual lapses. The *Saturday Review*, a journal very hard-headed about the morals of working-class girls, poured scorn on sentimental middle-class illusions, and in 1866 reminded its readers that among the working classes sexual intercourse "is regarded as an incident of honourable courtship and is – or at least used to be – followed by the solemnization of marriage."¹³

Elizabeth Roberts, enquiring of one man if girls had to get married around the turn of the twentieth century because they were pregnant, was told:

¹⁰ Andrew Blaikie, Eilidh Garrett, and Ros Davies, 'Migration, Living Strategies and Illegitimate Childbearing: A Comparison of Two Scottish Settings, 1871-1881', ch.9 in Levene et al., *Illegitimacy*, 144.

¹¹ Robin, 'Colyton', 339; Levene et al., *Illegitimacy*, 10; Samantha Williams, *Unmarried Motherhood in the Metropolis, 1700-1850: Pregnancy, the Poor Law and Provision* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 66.

¹² P. E. H. Hair, 'Bridal Pregnancy in Rural England in Earlier Centuries', *Population Studies*, vol.20, no.2 (Nov. 1966), 239.

¹³ Blaikie et al., 'Migration', 144; Lionel Rose, *The massacre of the innocents: infanticide in Great Britain 1800-1939* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 20.

That was a regular thing in those days. When they did talk about it they didn't talk about her with any disrespect....They hadn't any disrespect for them because there were too many of them to have disrespect for....The main thing was always, well, as long as he has married her what's the difference?¹⁴

Marriage, therefore, was seen as making a significant difference, but perhaps it was the economic problem that this solved, rather than any moral outrage it cancelled, that was important. The young woman who found herself deserted had clearly neither solved the one nor cancelled the other and might perhaps attract more criticism. A family without a male head would be more likely to need financial assistance. Fanny Trollope described her heroine, Jessie Phillips, being driven to the workhouse certainly by her own innate sense of shame but also by destitution. She wrote that 'the weak woman (that is to say a weak *poor* woman) who has committed this sin shall atone for it by being trampled in the dust', she will be refused work by 'the most respectable part of her own sex...upon principle' and must hide herself 'among a class who know not shame.' [italics original]¹⁵ In 1970, the authors of a study of the law relating to divorce, emphasised the link with the poor law: 'it is likely that much of the stigma which attached to illegitimacy in the nineteenth century resulted from the inevitable involvement of poor mothers and their children with the poor law which put its thumb-print of degradation on all who fell within its care.'¹⁶ It has to be recognised that some of those who have not been traced may have disappeared into precisely this world of destitution and prostitution, and we do have evidence of outdoor relief and charitable support being paid, but few Addingham mothers had to resort to the local workhouse. The majority bore only a single child and went on to marry.

The local press suggested in 1864 that the apparently high number of illegitimate births to Cumbrian women was a consequence of lower infant mortality, itself the result of better maternal health and lower levels of infant abandonment and infanticide.¹⁷ As Laslett et al. point out, this suggests the 'paradoxical possibility that the more baptisms of bastards set down in the parish register to unmarried girls, the more socially and morally conforming can the parish be said to have been.'¹⁸ Thus the local women could be seen as conforming both to the local cultural mores (where having an illegitimate child was a likely consequence of courtship practices) and also to broader values (which condemned infanticide and infant abandonment). Kilday, in her study of infanticide, writes that 'shame or opprobrium has long been held as one of the key factors involved in newborn child murder, owing to the historical relationship between infanticide and illegitimacy.'¹⁹ I cannot be sure of the level of effectively concealed infanticide, but very few possible cases came to light and their absence may well point to limited public stigma relating to illegitimacy.²⁰

¹⁴ Mr T3P, Social and family life in Preston, 1890-1940, Elizabeth Roberts Archive, Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Lancaster University (ERA), quoted in Keating, *Child for Keeps*, 17.

¹⁵ Fanny Trollope, *Jessie Phillips* (Nonsuch, 2006) 315.

¹⁶ O. R. McGregor, Louis Blom-Cooper and Colin Gibson, *Separated Spouses: a study of the matrimonial jurisdiction of magistrates' courts* (Duckworth, 1970) 168.

¹⁷ *Advertiser*, 25 Oct. 1864, 2.

¹⁸ Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen and Richard M. Smith (eds) *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Edward Arnold, 1980) 53.

¹⁹ Anne-Marie Kilday, 'Desperate Measures or Cruel Intentions; Infanticide in Britain since 1600', ch.3 in Kilday, Anne-Marie and Nash, David, *Histories of Crime: Britain 1600-2000* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 67.

²⁰ Levene et al., *Illegitimacy in Britain*, 14, suggest that high infant mortality rates may be evidence of shame.

The evidence supports a broad degree of acceptance, and a consequent limited degree of shame. When Benjamin Armstrong, a vicar in Victorian Norfolk, baptised children in the rainwater tub outside their cottages, he may have been expressing his own views, rather than seeking 'to avoid the embarrassment' for the mothers of coming to church; embarrassment before the neighbours, in an area where, apparently, 'the girls see nothing sinful and mothers apparently conniving' seems unlikely.²¹ I have only slight direct evidence of the attitude of the Addingham parish clergy, but the overwhelming absence of direct reference to illegitimacy in the registers seems indicative of an unwillingness to overtly stigmatise; it appears likely that the young women of Addingham and their mothers saw little sinful about pre-marital sex. Perhaps there was a spectrum of acceptance, travelling from 'pregnant but married before the birth' (normal and expected), via 'married after the birth' (a minor and easily overlooked transgression), past 'cohabiting' (nobody worried as long as the couple behaved well and people may not have known anyway, although this situation rarely arose in Addingham), and on to 'married somebody else' (when the mother could recover her reputation and local good will)? Marriage did matter in this society; as we have seen cohabitation was almost unknown, unlike in industrial Culcheth, where Gandy found a distinct preference for unmarried motherhood, where common law marriages were accepted and the children of such unions registered as legitimate.²² Gillis concluded that 'where rural industrialization had made headway, it seems that the ability and willingness of women to have children outside of wedlock was a product of familial and communal cohesion rather than breakdown.'²³ Such cohesion existed also in the very different circumstances of Addingham but it seems from the evidence available that not many women, faced with the very restricted employment options of an agricultural parish, made a positive choice to raise children outside marriage.

All the situations on the spectrum described above may have been acceptable to local society; the couple could be seen to live a regular and monogamous life and provide a family upbringing for the child.²⁴ The deserted pregnant woman who failed to marry may indeed have been the subject of stigma or seen as somehow inadequate in failing to secure the financial support of a husband. Equally, she may have been the recipient of understanding and sympathy. Certainly, when Jane Ann LancasterGreenhow died, having born two illegitimate children, married bigamously and then born two more, the local Methodist magazine referred to the 'lovely Christian spirit' of this 'well-known member', an 'inspiration and help.'²⁵ The incestuous couple described earlier and the Gedling family were highly unusual deviants from the local norm.²⁶

²¹ Susanna Wade Martins, *A Vicar in Victorian Norfolk: The Life and Times of Benjamin Armstrong (1817-1890)* (Boydell, 2018) 111, 176.

²² G. N. Gandy, *Illegitimacy in a Handloom Weaving Community: Fertility Patterns in Culcheth, Lancs., 1781-1860*, D. Phil (Oxford, 1979) 170, 187, 280-2.

²³ John R. Gillis, *For Better for Worse: British marriages, 1600 to the present* (Oxford UP, 1985) 128.

²⁴ Ginger S. Frost, "As if she was my own child": cohabitation, community, and the English criminal courts, 1855-1900', *The History of the Family*, vol.20, no. 4 (2015) 547 points out that the cohabiting often came in for little criticism and her examples show how flexible people could be in their judgements.

²⁵ *Penrith and Kirkoswald Monthly Record*, Nov 1915. In Bowerchalke, near Salisbury, the daughter of the parish clerk had an illegitimate child by the son of a prominent local farmer; he was sent away to Blandford but she continued in the village and became the schoolmistress at the Dame School: see Rex L. Sawyer, *The Bowerchalke Parish Papers: Collett's Village Newspaper 1878-1924* (Alan Sutton, 1989) 73.

²⁶ See before, 69-70.

For the majority, an unmarried pregnancy was not a matter of life-changing shame. An illegitimate birth was probably accepted by many as the inevitable occasional result of courtship practices, to be dealt with pragmatically, the child quietly absorbed and cared for as well as the mother's family could manage, its origins, for the most part, obscured. Gibson suggests that shame is a product of the later nineteenth century; perhaps in Addingham it became a reality, if indeed it ever was, even later than that.²⁷ Certainly, the number of pregnant brides and illegitimate births remained steady right into the 1930s, apart from the lower number of both in the war years.

However, at the end of the search, much still remains elusive. The affiliation proceedings give some limited insight, but only in those cases which were contested, where the women's accounts may be biased by the need to give the correct impression to gain support and the men were perhaps driven by the desire to resist. Either may have been telling the truth, or at least the truth as they saw it, of their intentions when they had sex several months before – or they may not. With the high levels of pre-marital sex in Addingham (and elsewhere) some relationships were bound to fail before the birth, and some were probably more casual than others. The Biographies indicate possible explanations for conduct but ultimately any conclusion can be no more than an interpretation of the documents available.

The same is true in seeking to establish the sort of life the women made for themselves and their children. We can see the child apparently growing up within the grandparents' family, or the new family created when the mother married, or, more rarely, with their mother alone but we can only guess at the life they led and whether mother or child felt themselves disadvantaged by the illegitimacy. Did the mother always long for the child she left behind? Did Alfred Ansell and Mary Benson-Ansell feel like the couple depicted by Anthony Trollope in *Dr Thorne*, where a man offers to marry an unmarried mother and then emigrate but refuses to take her child as well, since 'I could never abide it, sir, if I took it...and she – why in [sic] course she would always love it the best'?²⁸ Were they driven away by shame? These mothers were not like those travelling to a maternity home in London for whom 'pregnancy was a life-wrecking disaster', shamed by the 'respectable folk in early twentieth century Britain [for whom] illegitimacy was imagined as a heritable moral weakness'.²⁹ It is hard to believe that the majority of Addingham residents, while no less respectable, took this view. Did any children feel a personal sense of shame or guilt, even if public stigma was minimal? Deborah Cohen believes the 'distinction between legitimate and illegitimate [to be] one of the most fundamental dividing lines of English law' but how far did this distinction matter to these ordinary rural people? The children may have been technically parentless until the law was changed in the 1920s, but in practice most had people in their lives fulfilling the parental role, and for most there was little inheritance to consider.³⁰ Only personal accounts could answer this and probably the answers would be as various as the individuals involved, which is true, of course, for the legitimate as much as the illegitimate. However, I suspect that many children born illegitimate led lives in Addingham that were remarkably similar to the legitimately born, and happy or not in equal measure.

²⁷ Kate Gibson, *Experiences of Illegitimacy in England, 1660-1834*, D. Phil (Sheffield, 2018) 70.

²⁸ Anthony Trollope, *Doctor Thorne* (Penguin, 2004) 27.

²⁹ Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day* (Viking, 2013) 113.

³⁰ Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 116.

The most elusive aspect remains – what the children actually knew. Attitudes to secrecy have changed profoundly in the twentieth century, as Deborah Cohen makes clear. The early and unofficial adoption societies believed it to be in the interests of the child, protecting it from knowledge of its shameful birth. By the later 1930s the official view was that secrecy was not necessarily helpful, as the child was bound to find out, but the introduction of the short birth certificate in 1947 constituted a fundamental change of view: ‘what had once been viewed as a matter of grave public interest – whether a person was of legitimate birth – the state would now help to conceal.’ Children were to be given a totally fresh start, completely unreachable by their birth mother.³¹ In 1995 Margaret Forster published a family memoir, which started with a visit to the family house in Carlisle, after the death of her grandmother in 1936, of a woman claiming to be the dead woman’s daughter. Her legitimate daughters were apparently shocked by the revelation of an older, illegitimate daughter, and Forster, too, could not understand how this baby, registered to her grandmother at birth, and with her grandmother’s husband as witness at her wedding (when she gave her address as the family home) could have remained unknown to her mother and aunts. She searched in the archives, asked questions of her family, employed the empathy and imagination of a novelist but nevertheless was not immune from the frustrations of trying to fill in the blanks – ‘round and round it goes, this circle of questions with no answers.’³²

And yet...in 2016, with two more censuses available, it is clear that the illegitimate child was living with her mother and half-siblings in 1911, when she was described as ‘daughter’, although she was enumerated after her younger half-sisters and did not share their name. Forster repeatedly speculates about why her grandmother ignored this daughter, even though once the daughter married, she lived just around the corner.³³ The reality, perhaps, is that she didn’t ignore her at all. Forster’s mother was nine in 1911 – she must have known and surely remembered this person? Was the daughter actually presented as just the lodger within the family, despite the enumerator’s description? Or perhaps it was not the grandmother who was keeping the secret, but rather Forster’s mother and sisters, living in a different period with different attitudes to illegitimacy and secrecy, who did not want to reveal this ‘shameful’ relative to the young Margaret Forster and refused to enlighten her as an adult? Forster, like so many others, sees ‘secrecy and suppression [as] part of the fabric of life for women who had illegitimate children’ but could it be the case that what we are seeing is, in fact, not ignorance on the part of her mother and aunts, but the shame felt by a later generation retrospectively attributed to those who in life were spared it?³⁴ Perhaps shame at this later time led to the creation and maintenance of secrecy, a secrecy that did not originally exist?

Reay, in his study of sexuality in nineteenth century England wrote that ‘(consciously or not) our perceptions of the present are shaped by our assumptions about the past.’³⁵ I would argue that it also works the other way around, that our perceptions about the past are coloured by our understanding of the present, and in the case of illegitimacy specifically, by the morality of the mid-twentieth century being accepted as having been the Victorian norm. Many people,

³¹ Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 134.

³² Margaret Forster, *Hidden Lives: a family memoir* (Viking, 1995) 108.

³³ Forster, *Hidden Lives*, 50, 91.

³⁴ Forster, *Hidden Lives*, 108.

³⁵ Barry Reay, ‘Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century England: the social context of illegitimacy in rural Kent’, *Rural History*, vol.1, no.2 (1990) 219.

when contacted through Ancestry, have been very grateful, rather than upset, to be given the key to a genealogical mystery, but we are now a few generations removed, no longer directly involved, and living in a different era. As L.P. Hartley famously put it: The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.³⁶ Or indeed as Claire Tomalin said of Nelly Ternan, the mistress of Charles Dickens and possibly the mother of his child, who confessed her remorse to a local clergyman, 'Poor Nelly, she was not to know that fashions in sin change as much as other fashions.'³⁷

Laura Cumming, too, has written about the ignorance in which her mother was kept, which 'depended on the complicity of these villagers, upon their willingness to keep silent for decades, in some cases right up until death.'³⁸ As I pondered the many lives I have examined, I wondered when children born illegitimate learned of their origins. In childhood? As we saw earlier, this was not universal. They were correctly enumerated, more often than not, but enumeration and family explanations might not be one and the same thing. Was it when they married? So many gave apparently incorrect names on their marriage certificates that seemingly they were not privy to the true facts of their conception. Or perhaps they took a broader view of who was their father than did officialdom? Or did they choose to be secretive? Many married with the space for the father's name on their marriage certificate crossed through – but then again, Hannah Lancaster chose not to give it, even though she must have known it. And when did shame enter into the equation? Did it only arise when they had to explain their origins to their own children? It may be the case that for some local children, particularly those born towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth, shame was recognised only when faced with discussing their family origins in the later and different moral climate of the 1930s to 1970s.

And so, finally, have I succeeded in weaving a piece of fabric out of the documentary threads? Well yes, I think so. The illegitimate warp threads are not as numerous as early regional statistics might lead us to believe, but always present, and denser in some parts of the cloth than others. They are also all different shades of the same colour, for illegitimacy itself had many different shades. The cloth has its thin areas, where the original records are lacking, has holes where the moths have damaged records, is shiny in places with the telling of repeated untruths and has its threadbare areas where the tales that have been told have worn thin under subsequent scrutiny. It is raggedy around the edges where the story is frustratingly incomplete, but it is still on the loom, being woven as more records, such as the 1921 census become available, and descendants researching their family trees provide new threads from their private, partial and privileged knowledge. It has become, I think, surprisingly robust and with time may become more so. It is hoped that by putting this research into the public domain, some people will recognise their forebears in it, or be curious about the threads that attach them to the parish of Addingham and will be led to contact me with further information about those featured in it. The fabric would lengthen, there could be a little darning-in of missing details or embellishment with appliqué. The history of all these people would, in fact, become ever more legitimate.

³⁶ L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (Penguin, 1973) 7.

³⁷ Claire Tomalin, *The Invisible Woman: the story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (Penguin, 1991) 231.

³⁸ Cumming, *Chapel Sands*, 55.

These are concise accounts of each individual case study, generally, and perhaps inevitably, given that the majority started with a baptism, taking the mother as the key to the story. Occasionally the child or father provided the initial impetus to the investigation, and thus the focus for the account. Portions of many of the accounts feature in Parts One and Two. The complete biographies for about 150 individuals are available on my website: www.addinghamcumbria.co.uk

A further 25 accounts have not yet been published for reasons of privacy.

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The censuses 1841-1911, and the Register from 1939, were accessed via www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk.

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PR 29/76, Vestry Book, 1908-62 [continuation of Accounts].

PR 29/113, Hunsonby and Winskill, Overseers of the Poor, Account Book, 1837-1931.

Other parishes

Many individual parish registers were consulted in tracing individuals. Most are available on microfilm at Cumbria Archive Service, Carlisle, and many also at Penrith Library.

Methodist

Brough and Penrith Wesleyan Methodist Circuit

Cumbria Archive Service, Kendal, WDFCM 1 H1084, Numbers in Society Book.

Penrith Wesleyan Methodist Circuit

DFCM 3/1/25-27, Register of Baptisms, 1839-79.

DFCM 3/3/1-2, Register of Marriages in Wesleyan Chapels, 1848-90.

There is no local Methodist burial ground; most burials were at Addingham.

DFCM 3/1/1, Quarterly Meeting, Minute Book, 1846-78.

DFCM 3/1/6, Chapel Trustees Meeting, Minute Book, 1862-68.

DFCM 3/1/7, Local Preachers Meeting, Minute Book, 1830-52.

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Kirkoswald Wesleyan Methodist Circuit

DFCM 4/6/1/1-4, Register of Baptisms, 1871-1994.

Baptisms, Hunsonby, 1905-21 (Kept in the circuit safe).

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DFCM 4/1/1-3, Quarterly Meeting, Minute Book, 1871-1938.

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DFCM 4/5/33, Hunsonby Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School, Register, 1889-1921.

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Circuit (aka Monthly) Record [the Circuit Magazine], most years 1901-35, some at CAS (Carlisle), many in private hands.

Circuit Preaching Plans, mostly at CAS (Carlisle) but some held at John Rylands Library, Manchester and some in private hands. These name many individuals.

Penrith Primitive Methodist Circuit

DFCM 3/2/9, Sandgate Chapel, Baptism Register, 1857-1900.

Park Head Independent/Congregational Chapel, part of the Lancashire Congregational Union: Cumberland District

DFCCL 13/11, includes Baptisms, Burials and Marriages, 1847-86 (also available on www.ancestry.co.uk).

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Quaker

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QPL 2-12, Leath Ward Petty Sessions, Court Minute Books, 1848-82.

QPL 13-17, Leath Ward Petty Sessions, Register of Bastardy Informations, 1852-79.

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Most local wills and administrations are available on microfilm or original copy at Cumbria Archive Service, Carlisle. A few were obtained from www.gov.uk.

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DS 173/2/1-3, Maughanby School, Log Book, 1869-[1917].

DS 173/6/1, Maughanby School, miscellaneous documents, 1884-1939.

DS 173/7, Maughanby School, pupils, photographs, c.1930-45.

C/E/7/105, Cumberland Education Committee, Board of Education file, Maughanby School, 1904-1947.

C/E/7/134, Cumberland Education Committee, Board of Education File, Hunsonby School, 1903-47.

DS 93, Hunsonby School, pupils, photographs, c.1910-34.

ED 49/980, Hunsonby and Winskill: free school of Joseph Hutchinson, Elementary Education Endowment Files. (Held at The National Archives).

Others

DS 5754/3, St Catherine's Roman Catholic School, Penrith, Admissions. (Also available on www.findmypast.co.uk.)

DS 113, Langwathby Church of England School, Admissions Registers and Log Book, etc, 1867-2014.

DS 24/1, Kirkbride Board School, Log Book, 1877-[1918].

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Poor Law Union, Penrith

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Pauline Constance Kate Grace	=	Maurice William Wallbridge
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abandonment of illegitimate child 78, 80, 81, 84–85, 87, 92, 105–106, 123, 164
on mother's subsequent marriage 100–101, 114, 123–126, 131, 134, 139

abandonment of mother *see* desertion of mothers by father of illegitimate child

Abbott, Amy Eileen 119

Abbott, Annie Elizabeth 119

abortion 5, 56, 77–79, 80, 82

accommodation *see* housing

Acts of Parliament

Adoption Act (1926) 117

Bastardy Law Amendment Act (1872) 113

Births and Marriages Registration Act (1874) 16

Children's Act (1908) 82–83, 145

Ellenborough Act (1803) 77

Family Law Reform Act (1969) 3

Family Law Reform Act (1987) vi, 3

Legitimacy Act (1926) 3, 16–17

Legitimacy Act (1959) 3

Legitimacy Act (1976) 3

Marriage Act (1753) 2, 68

Midwives' Act (1902) 95

Offences Against the Person Act (1837 and 1861) 77

see also Poor Law (1834)

Adair, Richard 1, 59, 161

Adam Bede (Eliot) 80

Addingham parish vi, xi–xii

population xi, 21, 23–27, 23, 24, 26

see also Gamblesby; Glassonby; Hunsonby with

Winskill; Little Salkeld; St Michael, Addingham

adoption 4n16, 5, 117–118, 121, 139, 142, 145, 147, 161, 167

adultery 2, 3, 15, 67, 70, 74, 107, 147, 155–156, 168

affiliation proceedings 13, 40, 45, 89, 99, 107–116, 151–156, 166

courtship behaviour revealed 45–47, 55, 57, 64

individual cases 46–47, 50, 52, 59–61, 64, 66, 69, 71, 72, 74–75, 92, 99, 104, 107, 110–116, 124, 134–135, 151–156

law relating to 74, 88, 89, 107, 108, 109–110, 142

married men named 60–61, 75, 155–156

occupations of putative fathers 154–155, **155**

overscers instigate 109, 111, 114

paternity, evidence for 114–116

press reports 1, 52, 107, 116

records 13, 28, 35, 45–47, 71, 107, 150, 153

sexual abuse in 45, 59, 60–61

social status 59, 115

Wigton 71

affinal relationships 70

agricultural labour/labourers xi, 7, 38, 42, 49, 51, 58, 73, 111, 113, 120, 148

hiring fairs 7, 34, 58

housing 7, 19, 49, 52

and illegitimacy 19n9, 23, 27, 49, 52, 155, **155**

marriage 30n21, 34–35

women and girls 51, 58, 85, 91, 101, 104

see also farming families

Ainstable, Cumberland 44, 117n4

Allan, Jane (*née* Hodgson) 50, 61, 99, 120

Alston, Cumberland 18, 106

Angelou, Maya 138

Anglican church (Church of England) 2, 137, 140

on abortion 77

baptisms 10, 20, 20, 32

children from bigamous marriages 74

on contraception 56

illegitimacy, attitude to 9–10, 28, 44

and marriage 2, 11

see also St John, Gamblesby; St Mary's Chapel, Little Salkeld; St Michael, Addingham

annulment 70

Ansell, Mary (*née* Benson) 51, 99, 100, 125

Appleby, Westmorland 119, 120

apprenticeships 127, 130, 136

Armstrong, Annas (*née* Beckton) 17, 119, 120

Armstrong, Caroline 151, 158

Armstrong, Elizabeth 60

Armstrong, Sarah 158

Armstrong, Sibyl (*married name* Butterworth) 16, 158

Armstrong, William 17

Ashby, M. K. 55

'at risk' women 23, 24, 25–26, 25, 26, 27

Atkinson, Alice and Walter 105–106

Atkinson, Ann (*née* Reay) 73, 74, 157

Atkinson, Elizabeth 63, 105, 106, 143–144

Atkinson, Margaret 105, 106

Atkinson, Thomas 73, 156, 157

Atkinson, William 49–50, 151, 152

Austen, Jane 130, 149

baby farming 82, 119

Banks, Dinah 105

Banks, Mary 105

Banks, William Joseph Watson 105

baptism registers vii, 9–12, 19–20, 30, 32, 68

accuracy 11, 13, 16, 19, 37, 39, 125, 149n5

fathers recorded 15, 16, 39n50, 49, 149, 150–151, 152, 153

fathers unrecorded 11, 15, 61, 65, 72, 73, 110–111, 149, 150

Independents/Congregationalists 10–11

Methodists 9, 10–11, 32, 150–151

vicars' notes and addenda 11, 33, 44, 65, 69, 72, 124, 150–151

baptisms 8, 9–12, 19–25, 20, 21, 22, 24, 30, **37**, 120, 165

Anglican 8, 10, 20, 20, 93

delayed 14, 33n30, 99

Gamblesby township 10, 27, 62, 109, 134, 156

Glassonby township 17, 27, 102, 109

- Hunsonby with Winskill (H&W) township 27, 109
Independents/Congregationalists 20, 20, 22
Little Salkeld (LS) township 10, 27, 65, 66, 109, 121
Methodists 19, 20, 20, 93, 126
in neighbouring parishes 32, 33n30
private 19, 37–38, 102
return to birth parish for 12, 14, 19, 53, 133
unbaptised infants 11, 14, 16, 19, 22–23
workhouse babies 11, 44, 49, 151
- Barratt (*or* Birrett *or* Burrett/Burritt), Florence (*née* Wilson) 117–118, 121
- Barrow, Lancashire-over-the-sands 17, 44
- Barton, Westmorland 59, 120, 151
- 'base-born' babies 11, 44, 49, 109
- bastardy clauses of Poor Law (1834) 88, 90, 159
- 'Bastardy Information' allegations (affiliation proceedings) 45–47, 153
- Bastardy Law Amendment Act (1872) 113
- bastardy-prone sub-society theory 1, 22, 31, 36, 162, 163
- Beatham, Mary Ann 119
- Beckton, Annas (*married name* Armstrong) 17, 119, 120
- Beckton, Mary Elizabeth 51, 119–120
- Beckton, William (Mary Elizabeth's father) 51
- Beckton, William (Mary Elizabeth's son) 119–120
- Behlmer, George K. 82
- Beier, Lucinda McCray 5
- Bell, Ann 46, 114
- Bell, Hannah (*married name* Latimer) 99
- Bell, Robert 46
- Benson, Florence (*married name* Harrison) 100, 125, 134, 140
- Benson, Mary (*married name* Ansell) 51, 99, 100, 125
- Besant, Annie 55–56
- Bewcastle, Cumberland 98, 122, 157
- bigamy 67, 73–74, 98, 101, 132, 133, 156, 157, 158, 165
- Biographical Group 3, 12–14, 33
- Bird, Elizabeth (*married name* Nicholson) 62, 124, 156
- Bird, Ethel 124
- Bird, Ruth 11
- Bird, Thomas 11
- Birmingham 19
- Birrett (*or* Barratt *or* Burrett/Burritt) Florence (*née* Wilson) 117–118, 121
- birth certificates 3, 13, 16n20, 30, 117, 126, 137
fathers named 62, 69, 140, 156
short 167
- birth control 22, 33, 48, 55–57
- birth rates 25n14
baptisms proxy for 19
falling 22, 39, 56–57
Hunsonby with Winskill (H&W) 27
- birth registrations vii, 11, 16, 19–20, 32, 70, 81, 89, 125, 126
- births
concealed 11, 13, 14–15, 19, 22–23, 50, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85–86
'repeaters' 35–36, 35, 68–69
stillbirth 14, 81, 92, 95, 101
see also childbirth
- Blaikie, Andrew 38, 128, 163
- Bleak House (Dickens) 6, 127–128, 130
- Blean, Kent 29, 113
- Blencow, Cumberland 104
- Blenkarn, Thomas 74, 155
- Blenkinship (*also* Blenkinsop *or* Blenkinsopp)
Alfred Nevison (*also* Alfred Nevison Nevison) 33
Elizabeth 33
Elsie Millican 126
Fanny 126–127, 158
Frances Mary 33
George 47
Joseph 70, 115, 154
Joseph Robert (*later* Davidson) 119
Mary (*née* Thompson) 134
- boarders
adults 19, 52, 68, 97, 119, 120, 135, 136, 137
children 12, 50, 65, 83, 91, 106, 118, 119–121, 123, 128, 131, 136, 142, 143–144, 146, 147, 148
see also fostering
- Booth, Charles 42
- Bootle, Cumberland 18
- Bowerchalke, near Salisbury 165n25
- Bowman, Ann 91
- Bowman, Elizabeth (*née* Brown) 46–47, 137, 151, 153, 158
- Bowman, Isaac 158, 159
- Bowness (*or* Bownas), Annie 65, 121
- Bowness (*or* Bownas), Mary 65–66
- Bradford, Sally 105
- Bradlaugh, Charles 55–56
- Brampton, Cumbria 18
- British Medical Association 78
- Brougham, Lord 130, 159
- Brown, Charlotte (*married name* Marshall) 101
- Brown, Elizabeth (*married name* Bowman) 46–47, 137, 151, 153, 158
- Brown, George (fictitious) 137
- Brown, Hannah 99, 112–113
- Brown, Harriet (*married name* Plews) 137
- Brown, Margaret (*married name* Potter) 137
- Brown, Sarah Isobel (*later* Marshall) 101
- Brownrigg, Mary Ann (*later* Tebay) 125
- Brownrigg, Richard 125
- Bugbee, George 118
- Bugbee, Nancy 118
- Bugbee, Sarah (*married name* Little) 118, 124
- burial records 9, 11, 77, 154
- burials 9, 11, 134, 154
of children 33, 37–39, 61, 79, 81, 83, 85–86
St Michael, Addingham 9, 73, 79
unconsecrated ground 38, 81, 85–86
- Burrell, Barbara (*née* Sewell) 46, 72, 106, 125, 154
- Burrett/Burritt (*or* Barratt *or* Birrett), Florence (*née* Wilson) 117–118, 121
- Butler, Josephine 55
- Butterworth, Abraham 158
- Butterworth, Sybil (*née* Armstrong) 16, 158

- Calthwaite, Cumberland 104
 Calvert, George Allison 124, 134
 Calvert, Sarah Jane 124
 Cambridge Poor Law Union 156
 Cambridgeshire 43n10
 Cannon, Elsie (*née* Watson, *later* Simpson, *married name* Sayer) vii, 101
 Cardiff Poor Law Union 156
 Cardus, Neville 65
 Carlisle 56, 61, 66, 97, 99, 125, 126, 134, 136, 143, 152, 167
 assizes 85
 gaol 62, 73, 92, 158
 Garlands Mental Hospital 17, 59, 62, 93–94, 148
 Poor Law Union 143
 Quarter Sessions 107, 109, 110, 116
 workhouse 143
 see also Settle–Carlisle railway
 census records vii, 9, 12, 15, 17, 32, 35, 61, 68, 71–72, 73, 81, 89, 119, 120, 123, 161, 167
 1841 15, 72, 91, 154
 1851 51, 59, 68n5, 71, 91, 102
 1861 1, 49, 59, 64, **68**, 72, 89, 120
 1871 50, 64, 93
 1881 59, 66, 70, 73
 1891 52, 59, 66, 68, 70, 96, 99, 102–103, 120, 145
 1901 52, 59, 65, 66, 68, 70, 94, 101, 103, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 125, 135, 142, 158
 1911 **52**, 59, 65, **68**, 70, 74, 89, 97, 101, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 124, 126, 132, 134, 136, 137, 138, 144, 147, 167
 1921 17, 132n9, 168
 1939 Register 17, 132, 161
 accommodation 52, **52**
 accuracy viii, 123, 124, 131, 140, 151, 154, 158, 168
 adoptions 117–118, 121, 124
 Culcheth 154
 fathers named 126, 154
 names vii, 12, 69, 101, 117, 118, 131, 132, 151, 152, 154
 occupations 49, 50, 64, 71, 137
 population 23, 24, 30, 161
 United States 65
 Chapel Sands, Lincolnshire 149
 Chapman, Alice 119
 charity 51, 104, 106
 ‘Addingham Poor’s Land’ 51
 Hutchinson Trust 51, 92, 106, 111
 parochial support 51, 91, 106, 107, 108, 110, 120, 136
 Poor’s Land charity 51
 Cheltenham workhouse 146n34
 child maintenance 109–110, 119
 amount 107, 108, 111, 113, 153, 156
 charity 51, 91, 92, 106, 111
 fathers, costs recovered from 27, 108–109
 fathers evade 47, 80, 109, 122, 156, 159
 fathers imprisoned for non-payment 73, 108, 111, 113, 157
 fathers ordered to pay 11, 47, 60, 66, 92, 107–113, 147, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157–158, 159–160
 fathers’ voluntary support 59, 61, 75, 104, 107, 109, 115, 153, 158
 infanticide as alternative 62, 80
 maternal grandparents 122, 123
 mothers, costs recovered from 27, 108–109
 mothers ordered to pay 146, 147
 mothers’ responsibility 80, 88, 109, 122, 142, 156, 159
 mothers work to support 50, 101, 118, 119–120, 121, 128, 137
 out-relief 51, 63, 65, 87, 88, 95, 105–106, 164
 parochial support 51, 80, 91, 98, 106, 107, 108–109, 110, 120, 136
 stepfathers 100, 110, 113
 see also grandparents: raise illegitimate children
 childbirth 123
 ages of mother at 30–31
 costs 107, 111
 maternal mortality 5, 36–37
 return to birth parish for 12, 14, 102
 workhouse relief for 95
 see also births
 childhood 30, 36, 49–51, 62, 128, 130, 131n8, 132, 142, 148, 163
 Chinn, Carl 139
 Chorley, Lancashire 18
 Church of England *see* Anglican church (Church of England)
 churchwardens’ accounts 9, 51, 106n8
 Cinnirella, Francesco 55
 citizenship 16n20
 civil registration records 16, 17, 19, 30, 32, 33n32, 39n50, 102, 162
 Clark, Mary 107, 114, 158
 Clementson, Isabella (*married name* Johnstone) 134–135
 Clementson, Mary Jane (*later* Johnstone, *married name* Froessner) 134–136
 Cleminson, Jane 47
 Cleminson, William 47
 Clitheroe, Lancashire 125
 Coady, Rhoda Selina 99
 Cockermouth, Cumbria 59, 121
 Poor Law Union 91, 143
 cohabitation 6, 35, 57, 65, 67–75, **68**, 103, 150, 151, 157, 165
 Cohen, Deborah 166, 167
 Collinson, Gibson 64–65
 Collinson, John 151
 Collinson, Margaret Jane Maria (*later* Slater) 95
 Collinson, Mary Jane (*née* Gedling, *later* Slater) 15n15, 34, 64–65, 69, 74, 93–94, 95, 96, 151–152, 157
 Colyton, Devon 28, 30n20, 30n22, 35n38, 43, 99n5, 100, 122, 162, 163
 common law unions 67, 71, 98, 165
 concealed births 11, 13, 14–15, 19, 22–23, 50, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85–86
 Congregationalists *see* Independents/Congregationalists

- consanguineous relationships 69–70, 127
 contraception 22, 33, 48, 55–57, 78
 Cook, Hera 45, 54, 56–57, 78, 101–102
 Cookson, Catherine vii, 6, 62, 66, 71, 117, 124, 130n3, 139, 140
 Core Addingham Group 3, 10–12, 13, 18
 Cornwall 18
 coroners' courts 48, 79, 81–85, 86n25
 Corrie (*or* Currie), Mary Jane (*née* Ritson) 62, 145–147
 Corrie (*or* Currie), Thomas 147
 cottage homes for workhouse children 144, 148–149
 County Durham 18, 122
 courtship 1, 57, 58, 161
 courtship customs 42–48, 156, 163, 164, 166
 failed courtship theory of illegitimacy 1, 21–22, 31, 36, 64
 Crackenthorpe, Westmorland 74
 Cross Keys Inn, Hunsonby 110
 Crowther, M. A. 95
 Culcheth, Lancashire 69, 122, 154, 165
 Culgaith, Cumberland 59
 Cumberland/Cumbria vi
 see also individual townships
 Cumming, Laura 118n9, 138–139, 162, 168
- Dacre, Cumberland 91, 93, 126, 143
 Davidoff, Leonore 71, 127
 Davidson, Albert Robinson 152
 Davidson, Ann Elizabeth (of Skirwith) 79n17
 Davidson, Ann (of Skirwith, b.1842) 46
 Davidson, Jane 51
 Davidson, Joseph Robert (*né* Blenkinship) 119
 Davidson, Margaret (*née* Robinson) 111, 157, 158
 Davidson, Mary (*married name* Wilson) 36n40
 Day, Cathy 36, 98, 99, 101, 162
 Dayson, Jane (*née* Strong) 16
 Dayson, Thomas 16
 de Tocqueville, Alexis 5–6
 death
 unnatural cause of 77, 83–85
 see also wills
 death penalty 19, 80, 81
 death rates 38, 82, **82**
 see also infant mortality; maternal mortality
 Denman, Derek 11, 18, 27, 44–45, 46, 50, 64, 87, 104
 Dent, Frances 78–79, 84–85, 87, 158–159
 Dent, Margaret 79
 desertion of mothers by father of illegitimate child 25, 32, 33, 34, 62, 64–66, 69, 72–74, 92, 96, 101, 105, 108
 Devon, illegitimacy in 28, 30n20, 30n21, 30n22, 35n38, 43, 162, 163
 Dickens, Charles 4, 6, 63, 86n25, 97, 127–128, 130, 168
 Dickinson, Emily xi
 Digby, Anne 63
 Disraeli, Benjamin 80
 Distington, Cumberland 94
 divorce 65, 67, 69, 101, 164
- Dodd, Elizabeth 114
 Dodd, Elizabeth (*née* Hodgson) 50
 Dodd, James (*né* Hodgson) 17, 99
 Dodd, John 50
 Dodgson, John 98, 122
 domestic service xi, 23, 29, 30, 46, 50, 51, 74–75, 93, 103, 105, 114, 119, 120, 121, 126, 142, 146, 147
 accommodation 46, 51, 52, 58, 114
 age at entering 51, 58
 sexual activity between servants 46, 59, 114
 sexual activity between servants and masters 45, 52, 58–60, 68, 69, 71–73, 105, 115, 152–153, 154
 see also housekeepers
 Dowson, Elizabeth (*married name* Irving) 100, 125
 Dowson, John 100, 125
Dr Thorne (Trollope) 166
 Druids public house, Little Salkeld 146–147
 Dryden, Mary (*née* Hetherington, *married name* Sharpe) 137
- Eamont Bridge 93
 Eamont Bridge workhouse 49–50, 120, 151
 ecclesiastical law 2, 39
 Eden Lacy, Cumberland 73
 Edenhall, Cumberland 90, 99
 education 69, 70–71, 90, 96, 97
 industrial schools 96, 97, 143
 school records vii, 13, 42, 61, 69, 93, 118, 124, 126, 154
 teachers 70–71, 126, 137, 165n25
 Eliot, George 80
 Ellercow, Hunsonby 75
 Elliott, James 119
 Ellison, Mary 115
 Ellwood, Thomas 71–72, 152
 emigration 118, 125, 134, 152, 166
 Australia 14, 36, 92, 101, 134, 135–136, 152
 Canada 65, 126, 134, 136, 147
 United States (US) 64–65, 72–73, 99, 126, 134, 139
 women 36, 65, 88, 99, 125, 126, 134, 135, 139, 147
 employment *see* occupations
 Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture tribunal (1867–8) 42
 Errington, John 46, 114
 Essex, illegitimacy in 62, 115, 156
 extended families, role of 61, 70, 104, 118, 121, 122–128, **123**, 131, 134, 138, 146, 148, 159
 see also grandparents
- Fairchilds, Cissie 153
 Fairhill Hospital 94
 Falder, Edwin (*later* Jackson) 118
 Falder, Fred Cecil 118
 Falder, Sarah 118
 'Fallen Woman' stereotype 4, 5, 6
 farming families 59, 60, 75, 111
 and illegitimacy 7, 19n9, 27, 45, 50, 51, 72, 84, 107, 111, 113, 122, 155, **155**, 165n25
 see also agricultural labour/labourers

- Farrar, Hannah 46
 Farrar, William 46
 fathers 1, 13, 149–160
 age at paternity 99
 baptism registers, recorded on 15, 16, 39n50, 49, 149, 150–151, 152, 153
 baptism registers, unrecorded on 11, 15, 61, 65, 72, 73, 110–111, 149, 150
 on birth records vii, 16, 62, 69, 140, 156
 on marriage records 11, 13, 16, 17
 proof of paternity 115–116, 150n7
 shame of illegitimacy 7, 159–160
 see also affiliation proceedings; child maintenance:
 fathers; marriage records: fathers
 Fawcett, Mary Jane 96, 143
 Fawcett, Ruth (*née* Gedling) 62, 96, 125, 143
 fertility 32, 38, 42, 55
 ‘filius nullius’ (child of nobody) 4, 108
 Finn, Margot 7, 127
 Forster, Margaret (author) 167
 Forster, Margaret (*née* Ritson) 145–147
 Forster, Sarah 58, 60
 Forsyth, James Lancaster 102, 154
 Forsyth, Joseph 110
 Forsyth, Margaret (*née* Lancaster) 110, 111, 153
 Forsyth, Mary (*née* Lancaster) 110, 111, 124
 fostering 82–83, 86, 106, 118–121, 134, 143, 145, 147, 148
 see also boarders: children; Penrith Poor Law Union:
 boarding-out children
 Fothergill, Sarah Ann (*née* Graham) 101, 120
 Foundling hospital, London 44, 81
 Froessner, Charles Ferdinand (*né* Karl) 134
 Froessner, Doris (*later* Fraser) 135, 136
 Froessner, Edith 135, 136
 Froessner, Mary Jane (*née* Clementson, *later* Johnstone) 134–136
 Frost, Ginger vii, viii, 1, 5, 6, 46, 67, 68, 97, 107, 114, 116, 127, 128, 130, 131, 137, 139, 145, 146, 149, 156
 Furnass, John 152
 Furness, Frances (*married name* Parmley) 99, 150
 Furness, Margaret 60, 104

 Gale Hall, Melmerby 111
 Gamblesby township xi, 30
 baptisms 10, 27, 62, 109, 134, 156
 cohabitation 68, **68**
 housing 52, **52**
 illegitimacy 22, 27, 28–29, **28, 29**, 51, 62, 71, 108, 109, 111, 124, 134, 156
 Independents/Congregationalists 11
 individual residents 22, 51, 59, 68, 71, 72, 73, 90, 100, 104, 111, 118, 119, 124, 125, 134, 150, 156
 marriages 68, **68**
 Methodists 10, 11, 28, 51
 population 23, 24, 25, 26
 public houses 62
 women 25, 26, 27
 see also St John, Gamblesby

 Gandy, G. N. 6, 48, 69, 149, 150, 154, 165
 Garlands Mental Hospital, Carlisle 17, 59, 62, 93–94, 148
 Gaskell, Elizabeth 58–59, 130, 156
 Gedling family 165
 Gedling, Joseph 151
 Gedling, Mary (*née* Grisdale, *married name* Slater) 64, 102
 Gedling, Mary Jane (*married name* Collinson, *later* Slater) viii, 15n15, 34, 64–65, 69, 74, 93–94, 95, 96, 151–152, 157
 Gedling, Ruth (*married name* Fawcett) 62, 96, 125, 143
 Gedling, Thomas Lancaster 64, 134, 151
 general labourers 72, 104
 General Register Office 13, 17, 33n33
 generational illegitimacy 134, 143, 162–163, 165, 166
 gentry 72, 73, 104, 111, **155**
 Gibson, Kate viii, 1, 7, 81, 100, 115, 157, 160, 166
 Gibson, Thomas 47, 70, 134, 158
 Gillis, John R. 67, 112, 113, 115, 165
 Glaister, Elizabeth 101
 Glaister, Jane 126
 Glaister, John 115, 116
 Glaister, Marjorie (*née* Macgregor) 126, 137, 139
 Glaister, William 126
 Glasgow Industrial School, Maryhill 96
 Glasson, Barbara 16n20
 Glassonby Beck xi, 50, 93
 Glassonby township xi, 30, 39, 51, 58
 baptisms 17, 27, 102, 109
 cohabitation **68**
 housing 52, **52**
 illegitimacy 27, **28, 29**, 50, 51, 60, 72, 83, 91, 104–105, 108, 109, 119, 120, 126
 individual residents 28, 50, 60, 61, 72, 83, 91, 93, 97, 102, 104–105, 114, 115, 118–119, 120, 126
 Maughanby School 13, 61, 121, 126, 146
 Methodists 10, 17, 51
 population 23, 24, 25, 26
 public houses 62
 women 25, 26, 27
 Glenridding, Westmorland 92
 Goodfellow, Robert 72
 Goulding, Isabella 104
 Goulding, Maria 121
 Goulding, Robert 121
 Goulding, Sarah (*married name* Hanson) 137
 Goulding, Thomas 121
 Graham, Florence (*married name* Vickers) 101
 Graham, Henry 154
 Graham, Isaac 120
 Graham, Jemima 50
 Graham, John 33
 Graham, Martha 101
 Graham, Mary Jane 50, 137
 Graham, Sarah Ann (*married name* Fothergill) 101, 120
 grandparents
 believed to be parents 123, 124–125, 126, 140, 151
 raise illegitimate children 74, 91–92, 100–101, 114,

- 117–118, 120, 123–126, 127n18, 138–140, 143–144, 151
- Great Salkeld, Cumberland 62, 100, 120, 145, 152, 154
- Greenblatt, Stephen 5
- Greenhow, Arthur 73
- Greenhow, Dinah 83, 84
- Greenhow, Elsie 73
- Greenhow, Fred 74
- Greenhow, Jane Ann (*née* Lancaster) 73–74, 158, 165
- Greenhow, Mabel 73
- Greenhow, Mary Emma (*née* Wilson) 68, 73–74
- Greenhow, William 68, 73, 156, 158
- Greer, Germaine 5
- Gretna, Scotland 68, 73
- Grey, Daniel 161
- Greystoke, Cumbria 59, 136, 144, 146, 147
- Grisdale, Mary (*married name* Gedling, *married name* Slater) 64, 102
- Guardians, workhouse *see* Penrith Poor Law Union: guardians; Penrith Workhouse
- Hair, P. E. H. 33, 163
- Hampshire, illegitimacy in 162
- Hanson, Sarah (*née* Goulding) 137
- Hardy, Thomas 4, 37–38, 42, 45, 54, 58–59, 60, 98, 130
- Harrison, Florence (*née* Benson) 100, 125, 134, 140
- Harrison, Matthew 72
- Hartley, L.P. 168
- Harvey, Ben viii, 1
- Hatfield workhouse 89n17
- Hazelhurst, R. 10
- Hazlitt, William 57n23
- Hedgerley Court Farm Home, Bucks 148
- Helton, Westmorland 50
- Henriques, U. R. Q. 19, 113
- Hereford 19
- Hernhill, Kent 29, 99n5
- Hertfordshire, illegitimacy in 89
- Hesket, Cumberland 45, 62, 94, 104, 144
- Hetherington, Esther (*née* Jackson) 57, 101, 114, 124, 157
- Hetherington, George 101, 114, 157
- Hetherington, John 60
- Hetherington, Mary (*later* Dryden, *married name* Sharpe) 137
- Hetherington, William 47
- Higginbotham, Peter 93
- Hill, Sarah 146n34
- Hind, Robert 46–47, 151, 153, 158
- 'Hire or reward' 119
- hiring fairs 7, 34, 58
- Hodgson, Ann 78–79
- Hodgson, Elizabeth (*married name* Dodd) 50, 120
- Hodgson, James (*later* Dodd) 17, 99
- Hodgson, Jane (*married name* Allan) 50, 61, 99, 120
- Hodgson, John 46–47
- Hoggarth, John and Jane 117n4
- Holmes, John 91, 143
- Holmes, Margaret 91, 143
- Holmes, Mary (the elder, b. c.1798) 90, 91, 94, 95
- Holmes, Mary (the younger, b. c.1839) 90–91
- Holmes, Sarah 91
- Hope, Adam 136
- Hope, Jane Ann (*married name* Slee) 15n15, 34, 65–66, 74, 105, 106, 147
- Hope, John James 158
- housekeepers 68, 69, 71, 72, 105, 121, 124
- relationships with heads of households 68, 69, 71–72, 105, 154
- housing 51–53, **52**, 54
- agricultural labourers 7, 19, 49, 52
- domestic servants 46, 51, 52, 58, 114
- Gamblesby township 52, **52**
- Glassonby township 52, **52**
- Hunsonby with Winskill (H&W) township 52, **52**
- illegitimacy, cause of 28, 51–53, 55
- incest, cause of 71
- Little Salkeld (LS) township 52, **52**
- rooms, number of 51, 52, **52**, 125, 136
- separation of the sexes 52–53, 71
- Howard, Henry 144
- Hunsonby with Winskill (H&W) township xi, 39, 51
- Anglican church institute 28
- birth rates 27
- cohabitation **68**
- Cross Keys Inn 119
- housing 52, **52**
- Hunters' Cottage Inn 64, 105
- Hutchinson Trust 51, 92, 106, 111
- illegitimacy 27, 28–29, **28**, **29**, 52, 60, 66, 74–75, 85, 90–91, 93, 94, 108–109, 110, 111, 119
- individual residents 16, 22, 60, 64, 66, 73, 74–75, 85, 91, 93, 94, 104, 110, 111, 119, 124, 136, 146, 147, 158
- Methodists 10, 28, 158
- Overseers' book 106n8
- population 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 51
- public houses 62, 64, 105, 110, 124
- and the railway 23, 25, 28
- school 13
- women 25, 26, 27
- Hunters' Cottage Inn, Hunsonby 64, 105
- Hurren, Elizabeth 48
- husbandmen 50, 64, 113, 155, **155**
- Hutchinson, John 104
- Hutchinson Trust 51, 92, 106, 111
- illegitimacy
- and agricultural labourers 19n9, 23, 27, 49, 52, 155, **155**
- causes 1–2, 4–5, 7–8, 28, 50, 51–53, 55, 81, 130, 164
- children's awareness 114, 117, 118, 123, 124–125, 139–141, 151, 167–168
- cultural attitudes to 42–45
- and farming families 7, 19n9, 27, 45, 50, 51, 72, 84, 107, 111, 113, 122, 155, **155**, 165n25
- generational 134, 143, 162–163, 165, 166

- mother held responsible 109–110, 122, 159
 urban areas 16, 48n30, 67, 89, 116n48
 Victorian period 1, 4, 6, 10, 151
 wartime 23n12
see also morality and illegitimacy; shame of
 illegitimacy; *individual townships*
 illegitimacy statistics, general 1, 3, 18–39, 45, 57
 Addingham parish 1, 20–23, 21, 22, 39, 52, 148, 163
 Cornwall 18
 Cumberland/Westmorland/Cumbria 1, 10, 18, 23, 39, 43, 51–52, 112, 163, 164
 Durham 18, 112
 Lancashire 78
 national 1, 18, 57
 Norfolk 112
 Northumberland 18
 Penrith 18, 39, 44, 56, 89, 163
 rural/urban 48n30
 Scotland 10
 Shropshire 112
 incest 35, 69–71, 80, 158
 incomers/outsideers 28, 53, 68, 83, 115–116, 118, 131, 134, 142–148, 161, 162
 Independents/Congregationalists
 baptisms 10–11, 20, 20, 22, 150
 burials 9
 Gamblesby chapel 11
 illegitimacy 22, 32, 150
 marriages 32
 Park Head Chapel xi, 9, 10–11, 20, 20, 22, 32, 150
 records 9, 10–11
Indoor Paupers (1885) 93
 industrial schools 96, 97, 143
 Infant Life Protection, Select Committee on (1871) 38
 infant mortality 4, 5, 14, 32, 37–39, 37, 78, 81–82, 82, 83, 119, 164
 see also stillbirth
 infanticide 6, 14–15, 19, 22, 37, 52, 62, 70, 80–86, 164
 inheritance 1, 3, 131, 154, 156, 166
 Inland Revenue Survey 51
 Inns *see* public houses
 inquests 77, 82, 82, 83–84, 86n25, 116, 135
 Ireland 88
 Irving, Elizabeth (*née* Dowson) 100, 125
 Irving, John 100

 Jackson, Ann (baby born 1823) 11
 Jackson, Ann (baby born 1863) 91, 92
 Jackson, Catherine (or Kate; *married name* Robson) 124, 139–140, 151
 Jackson, Edwin Falder (*né* Falder) 118
 Jackson, Elizabeth 124
 Jackson, Esther (*married name* Hetherington) 57, 101, 114, 124, 157
 Jackson, George 124–125
 Jackson, George Hetherington 114
 Jackson, Hannah (*married name* Watson) 99, 120
 Jackson, John 115
 Jackson, John William 92
 Jackson, Joseph Thompson 11
 Jackson, Kate (or Catherine; *married name* Robson) 124, 139–140, 151
 Jackson, Margaret 66
 Jackson, Mary Elizabeth 92, 120
 Jackson, Mary Jane 117–118
 Jackson, Sarah 71
 Jackson, Thomas 11
 Jackson, Thomas George 120
 Jackson, Thomas Lancelot 117–118
 Jackson, William 114
Jessie Phillips (Trollope) 6, 7, 58–59, 88, 89–90, 109, 110, 164
 Jews, Marriage Act (1753) 2
 Johnstone, Isabella (*née* Clementson) 134–135
 Johnstone, Mary Ann (*née* Kennedy, *married name* Watt) 36n40, 68
 Johnstone, Mary Jane (*née* Clementson, *married name* Froessner) 134–136
 Johnstone, Thomas 134, 135
 Jones, Kathleen 6
Jude the Obscure (Hardy) 130
 juries 80, 85, 86

 Keating, Jenny 161
 Keasley, Westmorland 74, 75
 Kendal, Westmorland 74, 97, 119, 120
 Kennedy, Mary Ann (*later* Johnstone, *married name* Watt) 36n40, 68
 Kent 6, 25n14, 33, 34–35, 43, 67, 71, 99n5, 104n2, 113, 127n18, 162
 Kidd, Ann (*married name* Welford) 124, 134
 Kidd, Elizabeth 101, 124
 Kidd, Hannah 108
 Kidd, Margaret Nanson 17, 152
 Kidd, Mark Ellwood 71–72, 136, 152, 154
 Kidd, Mary 71–72
 Kidd, Thomas 72, 152
 Kilday, Anne-Marie 164
 Kindley, Angus 61, 152, 156
 Kindred, Ann (*née* Watson) 51, 90, 91–92, 101, 106, 111, 157
 Kindred, Joseph 92
 Kindred, William (*né* Watson) 92, 136
 King, Steven 48, 107, 112
 Kingsley, Charles 49, 53
 kinship networks 70, 106, 122, 125, 127, 128
 Kipling, Augustus 102
 Kipling, Jane 103
 Kipling, Jane Ann 103
 Kipling, Mary Ann (*née* Wells, *married name* Trotter) 51, 102, 103
 Kirkby Thore, Westmorland 126
 Kirkland, Cumberland 72, 106
 Kirkoswald, Cumberland xi, 9, 10, 30, 50, 83, 104, 156
 Kitching, Margaret 74, 107
 Knight, Patricia 77
 Knowlton, Charles 56

- Lacy, Samuel 28, 72–73, 111, 154, 156, 157
- Lancashire 138
- illegitimacy in 6, 44, 48, 69, 78, 107, 112, 122, 149, 150, 154, 165
 - Lancaster 44
- Lancashire-over-the-sands vi
- Lancaster, Elizabeth Workman (*married name* Varty) viii, 110–111, 152
- Lancaster, Hannah 152–153, 168
- Lancaster, Jane Ann (*married name* Greenhow) 73–74, 158, 165
- Lancaster, John 110
- Lancaster, Joseph 110
- Lancaster, Margaret (*later* Forsyth) 110–111, 124, 153
- Lancaster, Mary (*married name* Forsyth) 110, 111, 124
- Lancaster, Ruth (*née* Wilson) 126
- Lancaster, Thomas 64, 151
- landowning families 28, 50, 51, 104, 115, 122
- Langwathby, Cumberland 17, 44, 59, 69, 72, 116, 151, 158
- school 13, 59, 75, 93, 124, 146
- Lark Hall, Penrith 148
- Laslett, Peter 1, 2, 6, 36, 164
- Latimer, Hannah (*née* Bell) 99
- Leath Ward ix
- see also* Petty Sessions, Leath Ward, Penrith
- Lee, Laurie 70, 84n17, 149
- Leffingwell, Alfred 4–5
- legal names vii, 66, 101
- Leggett, Elizabeth (*née* Stamper, *married name* Whitehead) 52, 97, 99, 102, 120
- Levene, Alys 15, 163
- Light, Alison 139
- Liscard Sea Training Home, near Wallasey, Merseyside 148
- literacy 61, 70–71
- Little, Bridget 111
- Little, Sarah (*née* Bugbee) 118, 124
- Little Salkeld (LS) township xi, 23, 28
- baptisms 10, 65, 66, 109, 121
 - burials 9
 - child maintenance 108
 - cohabitation **68**
 - Druids public house 62, 146–147
 - housing 52, **52**
 - illegitimacy 27, **28**, **29**, 90–91, 97, 102, 108, 109, 126
 - individual residents 50, 90–91, 97, 102, 118, 120, 121, 125, 126, 136, 145, 146–147
 - marriage **68**
 - population 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
 - Quakers 9
 - women 25, 26, 27
 - see also* Salkeld Hall; St Mary's Chapel, Little Salkeld
- Liverpool, School for the Blind 97
- Livick, Hannah 46
- Livock, Sarah 104–105, 106, 108
- Loane, Margaret 70
- Local Government Board (LGB) 94–95, 105–106, 144, 147
- lodging houses 63, 72, 105, 135
- London 19, 42, 44, 131, 163
- Long Meg, Addingham xi
- Longrigg, Thomas vii, 101
- Longtown, Cumberland 11, 18, 59, 66, 87
- Lorton, Cumberland 31n23, 99n6
- Lough, John 60, 104
- Lowther, Catherine 119
- Lowther, James 119
- Lowthian, Isaac 47
- Ludlow, Shropshire 18
- 'lunatics' 59, 92, 94, 96, 136, 138, 144, 145
- Macgregor, Isabella (*married name* Millican) 126, 127
- Macgregor, Marjorie (*also* Glaister) 126, 137, 139
- magistrates 52, 73, 83–85, 96, 112, 156
- Mallinson, Arthur William 102
- Mallinson, Hannah (*née* Nelson) 100–101, 102
- Mallinson, Robert 102
- Malthus, Thomas 109, 130
- Mandale/Mandle, Edward 59, 152
- Mantel, Hilary 10, 15–16, 140
- marriage 2, 17, **68**, 98–103, **98**, 128, **133**, 163–165
- age at (men) 30, 99, 102, 132
 - age at (women) 30–31, 31, 99, 132
 - children legitimated by 3, 7, 16–17, 98
 - civil 17
 - common law 67, 71, 98, 165
 - cultural attitudes to 2, 42–48, 156
 - of illegitimate children 132–133, **132**
 - Independents/Congregationalists 32
 - informal 2
 - legislation 2, 3, 16–17
 - Methodists 17, 32, 124–125
 - name changes vii–viii, 29–30, 161
 - pregnant brides 31–35, 39, 42, 43, 54, 64, 163
 - prohibited degrees 69, 70
 - seasonality 34–35, 34
 - of single mothers 34, 98–99, **98**, 100, 102, 123, 133–134, **133**, 137, 154, 164
 - and social status 58–59
- marriage records 9, 11, 12, 13, 34, 67, 74, 117, 132
- accuracy 13, 16–17, 131, 137, 150, 151–152
 - addresses 68
 - civil 102
 - fathers named 11, 16, 61, 72, 110–111, 118, 135, 152, 154, 158, 159
 - fathers named (but questionable) 13, 16, 119, 124–125, 131, 137, 140, 150, 151
 - fathers omitted 11, 13, 16, 17, 72, 114, 132, 152, 154, 168
 - General Register Office 13, 17
 - grandfathers named as fathers 151
 - Methodists 9, 11, 32
 - mothers recorded 11, 132
 - stepfathers named as fathers 16, 131, 140, 150, 151, 154, 158
- Marshall, Charlotte (*née* Brown) 101
- Marshall, J. D. 19, 23, 43

- Marshall, Mary (*née* Robinson) 91, 93
 Marshall, Sarah Isobel (*née* Brown) 101
 Maryhill Industrial School, Glasgow 96
 Maryport, Cumberland 56, 121
 Mason, Michael 52, 54
 maternal mortality 5, 36–37, 77
 Maughanby School, Glassonby 13, 61, 121, 126, 146
 Maulds Meaburn, Cumberland 85
 McDonagh, Josephine 81
 McLaren, Angus 77, 78
 McLaughlin, Eve 70
 measles 61
 Medical Officer of Health (MOH) 38, 44, 81, 89, 131
 Melmerby parish 30, 50, 72, 74, 111, 152
 menstruation 55, 79
 mental health 49–50, 59, 60, 61, 92, 93, 96, 136, 138
 Garlands Mental Hospital, Carlisle 17, 59, 62, 93–94, 148
 ‘lunatics’ 59, 92, 94, 96, 136, 138, 144, 145
 Metcalf, Henry Bleamires 60–61, 75, 115, 156
 Methodists/Methodism vi, xi, 9, 14, 28, 51, 136, 137, 158, 165
 baptism registers 9, 10–11, 32, 150–151
 baptisms 19, 20, 20, 93, 126
 illegitimacy, attitude to 9–10, 28, 165
 marriages 9, 11, 17, 32, 124–125
 Sunday School 147
 see also Primitive Methodists; Wesleyan Methodists
 middle class 71, 112, 127, 137, 163
 Midland Railway 134, 136
 see also Settle–Carlisle railway
 migration/mobility 14, 29, 36, 48, 111, 125, 133, 134–136, 137, 154–155, 157
 see also emigration
 Milbourn (*also* Milburn or Milburne), Nanny 61, 152
 military records 12, 118, 120, 126, 140, 145, 147
 Millican, Isabella (*née* Macgregor) 126, 127
 Millican, John George 126, 127, 158
 miscarriages 15, 77, 79n17
 Mitchell, Robinson 121
Monthly Record (Methodist magazine) 11
 Moore, Elizabeth 113, 115, 124
 Moore, George 58
 morality and illegitimacy 1–8, 23n12, 43–45, 47–48, 50, 55, 88, 107, 108, 110, 116, 117, 130, 163–164
 ‘hereditary taint’ of illegitimacy 131, 143, 166
 later attitudes to 4, 140–141, 166, 167–168
 see also shame of illegitimacy
 Morton, Thomas 111, 157
 Moses, Ann (*married name* Wilson) 125
 mothers, unmarried vii, 29–37, 41–75
 age at birth of illegitimate child 30–31
 citizenship through 16n20
 maternal mortality 5, 36–37
 passed off as sister to illegitimate child 4, 123, 139, 151, 167
 remain unmarried 104–106, **104**
 ‘repeaters’ 35–36, **35**, 68–69, 163
 see also child maintenance: mothers
 Mungrisdale, Cumberland 59
 Musgrave, Sir George 90
 Nanson, George 151
 Nelson, Hannah (*married name* Mallinson) 100–101, 102
 Nelson, Thomas William 119
 Nevison, Alfred Nevison (*also* Alfred Nevison Blenkinship) 33
 Nevison, Frances 50, 120–121
 Nevison, James (fictitious) 152
 Nevison, (John) Thomas 33, 49–50, 151, 152
 Nevison, Margaret 49–50
 Nevison, Sarah Elizabeth 49–50, 120–121
 Newbiggin, near Dacre, Cumberland 91
 Newman, Anthea 71
 newspaper reports 1, 7, 13, 14–15, 18–19, 21, 38, 52, 56, 58, 62, 74, 77–78, 81, 84, 92, 107, 115, 116, 135, 164
 Newton, near Penrith, Cumberland 43, 64, 107
 Nicholson, Alice 46
 Nicholson, Bessie 91, 94
 Nicholson, Elizabeth (*née* Bird) 62, 124, 156
 Nicholson, George 62, 154
 Nicholson, Harry 94
 Nicholson, Jane 106
 Nicholson, Joseph 47, 155
 Nicholson, Luke 8
 Nixon, Annie Mary 60, 61
 Nixon, Hannah 60–61
 Nixon, Henry 47
 Nixon, Mary (*married name* Taylor) 61
 Nixon, William 159
 Norfolk, illegitimacy in 19, 112, 127, 165
 Northumberland, illegitimacy in 18
 Nottingham Poor Law Union, Nottinghamshire 89
 ‘nurse’ children 12, 104, 118–119, 142
 Nurse, Sir Paul 124n10, 139
 Nutt, Thomas 156, 159
 occupations xi, 46, 136–138
 affiliation proceedings 155, **155**
 blacksmiths 27
 butchers 27, 137
 carpenters/joiners xi, 152
 charwomen 50, 83, 104
 dressmakers xi, 104, 137
 gamekeepers 74, **155**
 general labourers 72
 masons 27, 50, 115, 136, 137, 155
 millers 27, 155
 milliners 124, 134, 137
 miners xi, 97, 136, **155**
 nurses 23, 70, 91, 93, 94, 95, 134, 135, 137
 paper manufacturer xi, 50, 83
 Post Office 72, 145
 railway workers and navvies 23, 25, 28, 101, 104, 113, 125, 126, 134, 136
 tailors xi, 120, 155

- teachers 70–71, 126, 137, 165n25
 tradesmen 25, 27, 50, 113, 136, 155, **155**
see also agricultural labour/labourers; domestic service
 Oliphant, Henry 152–153, 154, 156, 157
Oliver Twist (Dickens) 97
 Oosterveen, Karla 2, 36
 oral history 5
Orly Farm (Trollope) 112
 Orton, Cumbria 158
 out-relief 51, 63, 65, 87, 88, 95, 105–106, 109, 164
 outsiders/incomers 28, 53, 68, 83, 115–116, 118, 131, 134, 142–148, 161, 162
 overseers 2, 27, 73, 106n8, 108, 109, 111, 157
 affiliation proceedings, instigate 109, 111, 114
 Oxfordshire, illegitimacy in 42, 43
- paper mills xi, 50, 83
 Park Head Independent/Congregational chapel, parish
 of Kirkoswald xi
 baptisms 10–11, 20, 20, 22, 150
 burials 9
 illegitimacy 22, 32, 150
 marriages 32
 Parkes, Dr Louis 131
 Parmley, Frances (*née* Furness) 99, 150
 Parmley, Richard 99, 150
 parochial support 51, 80, 91, 98, 106, 107, 108–109, 110, 120, 136
 paternity, proof of 15, 114–116, 150n7
 pauper letters 100
 Peel, Jane (*married name* Skelton) 66, 99, 114
 Peel, John Skelton 66, 99
 Penrith, Cumberland 58, 89, 96, 148
 Cottage Hospital 146
 domestic service in 50, 93, 124
 Fanny Trollope in 89–90, 109
 illegitimacy 18, 39, 44, 56, 89, 163
 individual residents 51, 69, 83, 85–86, 90, 95, 97, 111, 120, 121, 124, 134
 infant mortality 38, 85
 Lark Hall 148
 lodging houses 63, 105
 marriages 74, 133
 Medical Officer of Health (MOH) 38, 44, 89
 Methodists 9, 10, 20, 126
 public houses 46, 105
 Sandgate Primitive Methodist Chapel 126
 St Andrew's 11, 44
see also Penrith Poor Law Union; Penrith Workhouse;
 Petty Sessions, Leath Ward, Penrith
 Penrith Poor Law Union x, 87, 89, 143, 144
 adoption 117, 145–146, 147
 affiliation proceedings 110, 113
 'Bastardy Clauses,' opposition to 88
 boarding-out children 91, 131, 134, 136, 142, 143–148
 chairman 90
 cottage homes 144, 148–149
 fostering, regulation of 117
 Guardians 87–88, 91, 93, 95, 97, 105–106, 122, 125, 131, 134, 142–148, 156
 industrial training for children 97, 142–143
 out-relief 51, 63, 65, 87, 95
see also Penrith Workhouse
 Penrith Workhouse 17, 59, 86, 87–97, 106, 123, 136, 139, 142–148
 babies born in 11, 44, 62, 81n7, 87, 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 145
 detention in 92, 94–95, 96
 Greystoke Road 91
 healthcare 88, 91, 93, 94, 95
 outboarding 136, 142, 143–148
 Public Assistance Institution 94, 148
 records 11, 17, 81n7, 89
 perjury 16, 116, 149n5, 150
 Petty Sessions, Leath Ward, Penrith 47, 60–61, 62, 74, 101, 111, 116, 153
 child maintenance 104, 109, 111, 114, 154, 155–156, 158
 infanticide 84–85
 records 13, 28, 45, 71, 107, 153, 158
see also affiliation proceedings
 Petty Sessions, Wigton 71
 Phillips, Jessie 142
 Pinchbeck, I. 2–3
 Plews, Harriet (*née* Brown) 137
 Plews, Jessie 137
 Plumpton, Cumberland 44, 65, 121
 Poor Law (pre-1834) 42, 45, 108
 Poor Law (1834) 80, 88, 89, 91, 100, 108, 109–110, 122, 142, 156
 amendments 90, 110, 142
 bastardy clauses 88, 90, 159
 fathers evade responsibility 47, 80, 109, 122, 156, 159
 mother responsible for child maintenance 80, 88, 109, 122, 142, 156, 159
 out-relief denied 88, 109
 stepfather responsible for wife's illegitimate children 100, 110, 113
 workhouse, unmarried mothers expected to enter 88, 109
 Poor Law Commissions 27, 88, 95, 96, 98, 108, 109, 122, 149n5
 Poor Law Unions (PLUs) x, 127, 144, 156
see also Penrith Poor Law Union; workhouses
 population
 Addingham parish xi, 21, 23–27, 23, 24, 25, 26
 Gamblesby township 23, 24, 25, 26
 Glassonby township 23, 24, 25, 26
 Hunsonby with Winskill (H&W) township 23, 24, 25, 26
 Little Salkeld (LS) township 23, 24, 25, 26
 Post Office 72, 145
 Potter, James 137
 Potter, Margaret (*née* Brown) 137
 Potts, Albert Edward 139
 Potts, Albert Edward (*né* Bugbee) 118

- Potts, Ann 59
Potts, Elizabeth 59–60
Potts, Jane 59
Potts, John 118
Potts, Mary Ann 59–60, 152
pre-marital sex 31–35, 42–48, 60, 67, 165, 166
pregnant brides 31–35, 39, 42, 43, 54, 64, 156, 163, 166
Preston, Lancashire 44, 164
Primitive Methodists 9, 10, 11, 20, 126
Probert, Rebecca 32, 67, 71
prohibited degrees for marriage 69, 70
prostitution 35, 42, 55, 58–63, 93, 95, 143, 164
Public Assistance Institution *see* Penrith Workhouse
public houses 62, 64, 105, 124, 146–147, 155
public opinion 2, 47, 81, 110
- Quakers
 in Little Salkeld 9
 Marriage Act (1753) 2
Quarter Sessions, Carlisle 107, 109, 110, 116
Queen's College Inn, Renwick 105
- railway workers 23, 25, 28, 101, 104, 113, 125, 126, 134, 136
 see also Settle-Carlisle railway
rape 58, 60, 61n14
Reay (*also* Wray, Ray, Rea), Ann (b. c.1850) 125
Reay (*also* Wray, Ray, Rea), William 125, 136
Reay, Ann (b. 1822; *married name* Atkinson) 73, 74, 102, 157
Reay, Barry 6, 29, 33, 43, 67, 113, 162, 167
Rebecca Riots, South Wales 42
Reeves, David 47
Registrar-General's reports 4, 16, 18, 33n32, 38, 67–68, 81, 89, 112
Renwick, Isabella 47
Renwick parish 50, 93, 102, 105
 Queen's College Inn 105
'repeaters' 35–36, 35, 163
Ringwood, Hampshire 162
Ritson, Margaret (*married name* Forster) 145–147
Ritson, Mary Elizabeth 145–146, 147
Ritson, Mary Jane (*married name* Corrie *or* Currie) 62, 145–147
Roberts, Elizabeth 5, 44, 77, 127, 163–164
Roberts, Robert 6, 56, 139
Robin, Jean 28, 43, 162, 163
Robinson, Frances 93
Robinson, Jane 5, 140n35
Robinson, Joseph 93
Robinson, Margaret (*married name* Davidson) 111, 157, 158
Robinson, Mary (*married name* Marshall) 91, 93
Robson, Catherine (or Kate; *née* Jackson) 124, 139–140, 151
Robson, Mary 60, 115
Rose, Lionel 55, 78, 163
Rowe, Mrs Catherine (of Greystoke) 146, 147
- Rowley family 28
Rowley, William 115, 116
Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes 131
Royal Commission on the Poor Law (1905-1909) *see* Poor Law Commissions
Ruddock, Isabella 106
Ruddock, Thomas 106
Ruth (Gaskell) 58–59, 130, 156
- Salford 6, 56, 139
Salkeld Hall 25, 52, 72, 111, 156
Salkeld, Mary Ann 90, 91
Sanderson, Caroline (*née* Stubbs) 72–73, 111, 126, 137–138
Sanderson, Samuel Lacy William 72, 73
Sandgate Primitive Methodist Chapel, Penrith 126
Sayer, Elsie (*née* Watson, *then* Cannon, *then* Simpson) vii, 101
school records vii, 13, 42, 61, 69, 93, 118, 124, 126, 154
Scotland 5, 10, 14, 36, 38, 67–68, 73, 96, 128, 163
seasonality of marriage 34–35, 34
secrecy 5, 43, 47, 54, 83, 102, 139–140, 161, 167
seduction 7, 58–63, 67, 84, 110
Sense and Sensibility (Austen) 130
Settle-Carlisle railway 23, 25, 28, 72, 104, 136
 see also occupations: railway workers and navvies
Sewell, Agnes 121
Sewell, Barbara (*married name* Burrell) 46, 72, 106, 125, 154
Sewell, Clara 121, 158
sex education 54–57
sexual abuse 49–50, 69, 70, 71
 incest 35, 69–71, 80, 158
 master/servant 45–46, 52, 58–60, 72, 153
 rape 58, 60, 61n14
sexual activity, age at commencement 31, 34
sexual health 56, 63
shame of illegitimacy 3–7, 33, 49, 53, 73, 127, 131, 137, 138–141, 161, 163–168
 fathers 7, 111, 159–160
 Registrar-General on 18, 138
 Victorian period 1, 4, 5, 117, 130, 163, 166, 167
 working-class 4, 5, 48n30, 163
 see also morality and illegitimacy
Sharpe, Mary (*née* Hetherington, *then* Dryden) 137
Sharpe, Rev. William 14
Short, Edward 43, 54–55
Shropshire, illegitimacy in 18, 112
siblings 54, 138, 162–163
 care by 124
 half-siblings 69–70, 103, 125, 128, 151, 167
 separations 131, 143, 144
Simpson, Elsie (*née* Watson, *then* Cannon, *married name* Sayer) vii, 101
Simpson, Joseph vii, 101
Skelton, Jane (*née* Peel) 66, 99, 114
Skelton, John Wood 66, 99

- Skirwith parish, Cumberland 79n17, 85
 Skye 14
 Slad, Gloucestershire 70, 84n17, 149
 Slater, James 94, 136, 144–145, 146
 Slater, John 64–65, 69, 74, 93, 151–152, 154, 157
 Slater, Margaret Ann 62, 91, 93–94, 96, 144
 Slater, Margaret Jane Maria (*née* Collinson) 95
 Slater, Mary Jane (*née* Gedling, *married name* Collinson) 15n15, 34, 64–65, 69, 74, 93–94, 95, 96, 151–152, 157
 Slater, Mary (*née* Grisdale, *married name* Gedling) 64, 102
 Slater, Thomas 93
 Slater's directory of 1855 104
 Slee, Herbert 65
 Slee, Jane Ann (*née* Hope) 15n15, 34, 65–66, 74, 105, 106, 147
 Slee, Robert Robinson 65, 74, 105
 Snell, K. D. M. 43, 67
 social mobility 136
 social norms 42, 44, 64
 see also courtship
 Soulby, Cumbria 119
 Sowerby, Annie 137
 Spedding, Richard 111, 157–158
 spinsters xii, 11, 24, 25, 26, 149
 St Andrew's, Penrith 11, 44
 St John, Gamblesby xi, 28
 baptisms 10, 62, 156
 St Mary's Chapel, Little Salkeld, baptisms 10, 65, 66
 St Michael, Addingham vi, xi, 28
 baptisms 10, 93
 burials 9, 73, 79
 Lacy's memorial 73
 marriages 31
 records 9, 10
 Staffeld, Cumberland 51
 Stamper, Elizabeth (*married names* Leggett *then* Whitehead) 52, 97, 99, 102, 120
 Stapleton, Cumberland 68
 stepfathers vii, 100, 101, 103, 138, 139, 158, 159
 abuse by 71
 child maintenance, responsibility for 100, 110, 113
 illegitimate child takes name on census 101, 154
 named as fathers on marriage records 16, 131, 140, 150, 151, 154, 158
 relationships with 65, 69, 74, 157
 Stephenson, Isabella 86, 147
 Stephenson, John George 86, 137, 147, 148, 156
 Stephenson, Rev. T. W. 17
 stereotypes 75
 Fallen Woman 4, 5, 6
 stigma of illegitimacy 3–4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 43, 131, 137, 163, 164, 165, 166
 stillbirth 14, 81, 92, 95, 101
 Stone, Laurence 47
 Story, Jane 22, 50, 84, 85, 87
 Strong, Jane (*married name* Dayson) 16
 Stubbs, Caroline (*married name* Sanderson) 72–73, 111, 126, 137–138
 Stubbs, Mary 72–73, 111
 surnames vii, 42, 59, 60, 72, 101, 103, 117, 125, 126, 154, 159
 at adoption 118
 baptism registers vii, 33, 65
 birth records vii, 39n50, 125, 126, 131
 on the census 99, 103, 118, 124, 131, 132, 154
 changes vii, 101, 132, 136, 154
 death registers 126
 fathers, given as middle name viii, 72, 152, 154
 flexibility around 154
 at marriage vii, 59, 60, 72, 131, 132, 152
 school registers 42, 154
 Swainson, John W. 150–151
 Tadmor, Naomi 127
 Tapley, Edith 85, 115, 116
 Taylor, Isaac 61, 156
 Taylor, Mary (*née* Nixon) 61
 Taylor, William 61
 teachers 70–71, 126, 137, 165n25
 Teasdale, Mrs Elizabeth 146
 Tebay, Mary Ann (*née* Brownrigg) 125
 Temple Sowerby, Cumbria 120
 Terling, Essex 62
 Ternan, Nelly 168
Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Hardy) 4, 37–38, 42, 45, 54, 58–59, 60, 98
 Thane, Pat 67
 Thomlinson, John 50
 Thompson, Ellen 146
 Thompson, F. M. L. 71
 Thompson, Flora 42
 Thompson, Jane 118
 Thompson, John 119
 Thompson, Joseph 145, 146–147
 Thompson, Kate 91, 94, 95
 Thompson, Mary 118–119
 Thompson, Mary (*later* Blenkinsopp) 134
 Thompson, R. N. 88–89, 142
 Thompson, William Graham 94, 95, 123n7, 139
The Times 159
 Tinion, Jane 118–119
 Tinkler, Eliza 103n17
 Tinkler, Thomas 60, 115
 Tomalin, Claire 168
 Toppin, Amy 118
 townships, Addingham parish *see* Gamblesby; Glassonby; Hunsonby with Winskill; Little Salkeld
 transportation (sentence) 77
 Trodd, Andrea 112
 Trollope, Anthony 112, 166
 Trollope, Fanny 6, 7, 58–59, 88, 89–90, 109, 110, 164
 Trotter, George 102–103
 Trotter, Mary Ann (*née* Wells, *married name* Kipling) 51, 102, 103
 Trotter (*also* Wells), Mary Grace 102, 103, 154
 unbaptised infants 14, 16, 38, 39, 81
 United States (US), emigration to 36, 64–65, 72–73, 99,

- 126, 134, 139, 158
 unmarried mothers *see* mothers, unmarried
 Unthank, near Gamblesby, Cumberland 119
 upper-class 4, 157
 see also landowning families
 urban areas 16, 48n30, 51, 67, 71, 81, 89, 116n48
- Varty, Elizabeth Workman (*née* Lancaster) 110–111, 152
 venereal disease 56, 63
 vicars 17, 19, 21, 28, 44, 73, 74, 90, 150, 165
 notes and addenda on registers 11, 17, 33, 44, 65,
 69, 72, 150–151, 152
 Vickers, Florence (*née* Graham) 101
 Victorian period xi, 42, 54, 63, 165
 adoption 117
 illegitimacy 1, 6, 10, 151
 incest 71
 infanticide 80
 novels 4, 42, 58–59, 63, 130
 parental death 138
 shame of illegitimacy 1, 4, 5, 117, 130, 163, 166,
 167
 stereotypes 75
 Viol Moor, Cumberland 30
 Vipond, Isaac 46
- Waifs and Strays Society 148
 Wakley, Thomas 81–82
 Wales 38, 42, 47, 80, 116, 146n34
 Walker, Sarah 57n23
 Walkowitz, Judith R. 62, 63
 Walney Island, Lancashire-over-the-sands 17
 Walton, John K. 19
 Walvin, James 5, 54
 Warcop, Westmorland 43, 54, 58
 Watermillock, Cumbria 59
 Watson, Ann (*married name* Kindred) 51, 90, 91–92,
 101, 106, 111, 157
 Watson, Elizabeth 99
 Watson, Elsie (*then* Cannon, *then* Simpson, *married*
 name Sayer) vii, 101
 Watson, Hannah (*née* Jackson) 99, 120
 Watson, Margaret Hannah vii, 101
 Watson, Matthew 51
 Watson, Thomas 92, 136
 Watson (*alias* Kindred), William 92, 136
 Watson, William 120
 Watt, Mary Ann (*née* Kennedy, *later* Johnstone) 36n40,
 68
 weavers 48
 see also Gandy, G. N.
 Wedgwood, C.V. 39
 Welby, Justin 15n16
 Welford, Ann (*née* Kidd) 124, 134
 Wells, Mary Ann (*married name* Kipling, *married name*
 Trotter) 51, 102–103
 Wells (*also* Trotter), Mary Grace 102, 103, 154
 Wesleyan Methodists 9, 10, 19, 61
 ‘Wessex’ 43
- West, Rebecca 137
 Westgarth, Catherine 104
 Westgarth, Hannah 99
 Westgarth, Mary 47
 Westgarth, Rev. Thomas (b. 1835) 73, 104
 Westgarth, William 107, 114, 153, 158
 Westminster Police Court, London 115, 117
 Westmorland vi, 43, 49, 56, 59, 110, 126, 134
 boarding out 143
 illegitimacy 1, 18–19, 23, 74–75, 112, 143
 marriage in **133**
 workhouses 91
 wet-nursing 82, 118n10
 Wheable, Pat 162
 Whitehaven Poor Law Union, Cumberland 143
 Whitehead, Clara 163
 Whitehead, Elizabeth (*née* Stamper, *married name*
 Leggett) 52, 97, 99, 102, 120
 Whitehead, William 52, 97, 119
 widows 24, 25, 25, 26
 Wigton, Cumbria 18, 52, 56, 58, 70, 71, 148
 Williams, Samantha 130, 163
 wills 9, 99, 103n17, 104, 120, 124, 125, 132, 134, 152,
 154, 158
 Wilson, Ann (*née* Moses) 125
 Wilson, Annie 94
 Wilson, Daniel 125
 Wilson, Florence Burrett (*or* Barritt *or* Birrett) 117–118,
 121
 Wilson, Irvine 117, 118
 Wilson, Rev. John 17, 152
 Wilson, John (b. 1833) 136, 159
 Wilson, Joshua 126, 134, 136, 140
 Wilson, Mary 83–84, 145
 Wilson, Mary (*née* Davidson) 36n40
 Wilson, Mary Emma (*married name* Greenhow) 68,
 73–74
 Wilson, Mary Jane 83–84, 119
 Wilson, Ruth (*married name* Lancaster) 126
 Wilson, Sarah 125
 Wiltshire, illegitimacy in 36, 98, 99, 101, 150n6, 162,
 165n25
 Winskill, Cumbria 66, 90, 93, 95, 96, 103, 111, 119,
 134, 136, 158
 women in Addingham parish 23–27, 24, 26
 women at risk 23, 24, 25–26, 25, 26, 27
 workhouses 49, 87–97, 109, 142
 Alston, Cumberland 106
 Cambridge, Cambridgeshire 146n33, 156
 Cardiff, Wales 156, 157, 158
 Carlisle, Cumberland 143
 Cheltenham, Gloucestershire 146n34
 Cockermouth, Cumberland 91
 Eamont Bridge, Westmorland 49–50, 120, 151
 Hatfield, Herts 89n17
 healthcare in 88, 91, 95, 142
 Nottingham, Nottinghamshire 89
 records 9
 shame of 88

- unmarried mothers enter 5, 87, 88, 127, 128, 142
- Whitehaven, Cumberland 143
- Wigton, Cumberland 148
- see also* out-relief; Penrith Poor Law Union; Penrith Workhouse
- working-class 14, 45, 52, 131
 - abortion 77, 78
 - affiliation proceedings 112
 - contraception 55, 56
 - courtship 42
 - incest 80
 - infanticide 6, 80, 84
 - pre-marital sex 42
 - sexual knowledge 54
 - shame of illegitimacy 4, 5, 48n30, 163
- Workman, John 110, 152
- World War I 20, 22, 23, 56, 120, 135, 145, 147

- Yanwath, Cumbria 93, 94
- Yeast* (Kingsley) 49
- yeomen farmers 50, 60
- Yorkshire, illegitimacy in 112

The Registrar-General reported in 1864 that the number of illegitimate births registered in Cumberland was almost twice the national average.

Was the population of the county more 'immoral' than other counties – or just healthier, so that more conceptions survived to be born, or were more babies registered because of the 'lamentable absence, amongst both parties to illegitimacy, of that *deep* sense of shame' apparently exhibited in proceedings at Penrith's Petty Sessions?

The *Illegitimate Thread* is a detailed examination, covering about 125 years, of illegitimacy in four Cumbrian townships: Gamblesby, Glassonby, Little Salkeld and Hunsonby with Winskill. Together they make up the parish of Addingham in the Eden Valley, east of Penrith. It is based upon a broad and deep investigation of a multitude of records, the majority in the public domain, with an emphasis upon the personal stories of the women, children and men.

What came before the birth of the illegitimate child, what happened after to the mothers and children? And what can be established about the fathers?

Lydia Gray is an independent researcher who has been investigating Addingham for some fifteen years, initially with an interest in local Methodism but then broadening her interest to the wider social history of this rural parish.



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