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**Did “King Dirt” and “bumbledom” defeat the objects of the
Public Health Act, 1848?**

A case study of the political, social and cultural attitudes to public
health reform in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead and Sunderland,
1835-1858

2 vols

Vol II

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7: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH 1835-1858

There is no doubt that the development of central government and public administration has been a fruitful topic for debate amongst historians, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s.¹ In the Introduction, it was suggested that the debate has stressed those innovations which arose from the centre whilst largely ignoring the contributions made by individual localities. In the discussion on *laissez-faire* and state intervention in Chapter 5, it was argued that state intervention was not only confined to national government activity but also included community action undertaken by local bodies for the social good, and sometimes in opposition to private interest. This chapter and the next seek to explore some aspects of this tension between these two opposing trends at the local level by concentrating on the initiatives taken by Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland local authorities and their officers in combating public health problems, and by considering how they saw their relationship with central government on the one hand and their local constituents on the other.

The main theme of this chapter concerns the local authorities' attitudes towards public health reform. Chapter 3 highlighted the sanitary problems that existed and touched on some of the responses they elicited in the three towns and Chapter 4 briefly described the variety of bodies responsible for public health matters prior to the adoption of the 1848 Public Health Act or its equivalent. Here we look at the three Corporations individually and particularly consider their responses

¹ For example Oliver MacDonagh, "The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal", *Historical Journal*, I, 1958, 52-67; Henry Parris, "The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: a Reappraisal Reappraised", *The Historical Journal*, III, I (1960), 17-37; Royston Lambert, "Central and Local Relations in Mid-Victorian England: The Local Government Act Office, 1858-71", *Victorian Studies*, VI, 2, (December 1962), 121-150; Jenifer Hart, "Nineteenth Century Social Reform: A Tory Interpretation of History", *Past and Present*, 31, 1965, 39-61; Ursula Henriques, "Jeremy Bentham and the Machinery of Social Reform", pp.169-186, H Hearder and H R Loyn, *British Government and Administration, Studies Presented to S B Chrimes*, (Cardiff, 1974); L J Hume, "Jeremy Bentham and the Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government", *The Historical Journal*, X, 4 (1967), 361-375. See also J B Brebner, "Laissez Faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth Century Britain", *Journal of Economic History*, VIII (1948), 59-73; Jose Harris, "Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy", *Past and Present*, 135, (May 1992), 116-141.

towards ongoing problems in the 1840s and 1850s and their attitude towards the Public Health Act, 1848 and its aims.

Edwin Chadwick was critical of the reformed town councils in matters of town improvement and public health, implying that there was not much to choose between them and the old corporations and improvement commissioners. One of his main concerns was with the inefficiencies arising out of the superabundance of separate bodies responsible for public works, as was the case in Sunderland before 1851.² Perhaps Chadwick was somewhat severe, given that in the years immediately following municipal reform, local authorities, responsible for sanitary measures, were undergoing the disruption and dissension involved in the handover of powers from local commissioners to town councils. There was also intense debate from the early 1840s as to the role of the state in public health as sanitary reformers increasingly highlighted the extent to which conditions could and should be improved. This gave rise to a clash between interventionists and individualists both at national and local level as the reformed councils struggled to find a way through the mire without antagonizing their electorates. Even if a degree of state intervention was accepted, there was considerable dispute as to whether it should come from local or central government.

Yet, despite all these extenuating circumstances, the evidence of insanitary conditions and high mortality rates in the 1840s demonstrate the evident failure of local authorities to deal with public health problems effectively, even within the limitations of existing medical, scientific and engineering knowledge and skills. In 1844 the Health of Towns Commissioners reported that despite numerous complaints by the inhabitants of various towns concerning nuisances, corporations had failed to take advantage of a clause under the Municipal Reform Act to frame bye-laws that would suppress nuisances not already made an offence by any existing local act. Six years later, Dr Robinson, Secretary of the NGSA,

²Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, (1842), edited with an Introduction by M W Flinn, (Edinburgh, 1965), pp.379-380, 383-384; R A Lewis, *Edwin Chadwick and the Public Health Movement, 1832-1854*, (London, 1952), p.100 and S E Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*, (London, 1952), pp.215, 241

complained that the “popularly chosen representative bodies” had not fulfilled the expectation of the architects of the Municipal Reform Act, nor had they kept pace with “the reforming spirit of the age”. This he believed was due to “misapplied party zeal” which had too often influenced Council elections yet, when writing in 1851, he was optimistic that things were changing.³

However, these rather sweeping generalizations of Chadwick’s and Robinson’s hide a wide variety of reactions at local level, for not all towns responded in the same way to the problems nor did they face identical struggles over powers and responsibilities. Something of this diversity is reflected in the measures that Sunderland, Newcastle and Gateshead promoted between 1837 and 1851 before the adoption of the Public Health Act, 1848 or its alternative local act. These measures, or the lack of them, demonstrate the extent to which the local authorities, and their critics, perceived their powers to be adequate. They also give insight into the differing attitudes towards individualism and state intervention at a local level.

Prior to 1836 the Gateshead local improvement commissioners had been empowered, under the Gateshead Street Act (54 Geo III, c.109),⁴ to levy a rate upon the tenants or occupiers of houses, gardens and lands within the borough but this rate could not exceed 1s in the pound, “upon the full improved yearly value”.⁵ By 1843-4 the rates were felt to be quite “inadequate” for lighting and paving and there was no provision made for drainage or sewerage expenses.⁶

³ 5 & 6 Will IV, c.76, s.90; Reports from Commissioners: vol 5: *State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, Session 4 February - 9 August, 1845*, “Second Report of Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts”, PP XVIII (1845), 1, p.41; George Robinson, “Condition of the Poor”, Letter I, NC, 31 May, 1851, p.4A-C

⁴ *An Act for cleansing, lighting, and otherwise improving certain Streets and Places within and near the Town and Borough of Gateshead, in the county of Durham*, [17 June, 1814]

⁵ With the exception of tithes, colliers and farms of land and gardens over two acres, not attached to dwelling-houses, Commissioners: *Municipal Boundaries, Report upon the Proposed Municipal Boundary and Division into Wards of the Borough of Gateshead*, signed by Harry D Jones and D Maude, (undated), s.5. It is not clear how much of this rate was spent on cleansing. Jones and Maude noted that in 1834 the rate of 1s produced a total sum of £650.6s.1½d, of which £220.18s.4d was spent on lighting and £143.15s.9½d was spent on watching. This left an available balance of just under £286 for other expenses.

⁶ D B Reid, *Report on the Sanatory Condition of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Shields, Sunderland, Durham and Carlisle, with Remarks on some Points connected with the Health of the Inhabitants in the adjacent Mining Districts*, Part III - “Local Reports, with Explanatory

Yet once Gateshead Corporation, in 1836, had assumed powers and responsibilities under the local act, they did not promote any additional legislation before 1848 that had a bearing on public health, despite the fact that the powers and provisions of the Gateshead Street Act were acknowledged to be insufficient to deal with the insanitary conditions that abounded.⁷ This was partly due to a lack of funds, particularly given the legal expenses incurred over the Borough property dispute. However the Corporation showed something of their concern for public health by using their powers under the Municipal Reform Act to make a number of bye-laws in 1841 which dealt with various aspects of nuisance control, public decency and personal liability for the repair and cleansing of private drains and sewers.⁸ Moreover, the Council did not allow these bye-laws to become dead letters for they prosecuted those who infringed them,⁹ even though not everyone believed they were doing enough.¹⁰

In Sunderland, attempts were made to introduce two rival local improvement bills in 1847: one promoted by the Paving and Lighting Commissioners and one by the Town Council. The key point of contention was who should exercise the existing powers under the local acts for, as was seen in Chapter 4, the local commissioners had refused to hand over their powers to the Corporation in 1836. Both bodies also hoped to extend these powers, with the Council's Bill including measures that would promote drainage, sewerage and pavement repairs.¹¹ The Council

Remarks", *PP* (1845) XVIII, 461, [hereafter Reid III] pp.176-177

⁷ Report on Local Acts provided by the Town Clerk, Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Gateshead*, (London, 1850), pp.9-10. One exception to this was the Whittle Dean Water Company's Act, 1845, (8 & 9 Vict. c.71)

⁸ *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Causes which have led to, or have aggravated the Late Outbreak of Cholera in the Towns of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead, and Tynemouth*, (London, 1854), signed by Joseph Burnely Hume, John Simon and John Frederick Bateman, 15 July, 1854, *PP* XXXV (1854), 92, [hereafter Hume *et al*], p.xxxii; Council Meeting, 5 May, 1841, Gateshead Council Minute Book [hereafter GCM] 2, pp.468-487

⁹ For example they took action against nuisances in Longstaffe's yard, Bottle Bank and those responsible were convicted. Report of the Gateshead Council Meeting - 3 June, 1847, *Local Collections, or Records of Remarkable Events Connected with the Borough of Gateshead, 1847*, (Gateshead, 1847), p.37

¹⁰ For example the member of the NGSA who complained about the failure of the Corporation to deal with an open drain, mentioned in Chapter 6, p.193.

¹¹ Council Meetings of 30 Sept, 9 Dec, 1846, 3 Feb, 1847, Sunderland Council Minute Book

were supported in their efforts by two Government Surveying Officers, John Job Rawlinson and William Hoskins, acting on behalf of the Health of Towns Commissioners in January 1847.¹² In reporting on the results of their inquiry the *Sunderland Herald* claimed that the surveyors had expressed strong opinions about the “scandalous misappropriation of the rates by the Paving and Lighting commissioners and their shameful neglect in the discharge of their duties.” Rawlinson and Hoskin had criticized the local commissioners for their “niggardly” management of lighting and street cleansing and their extravagance with ratepayers money in attempting to frustrate efforts to obtain cheaper and better gas and water supplies.¹³ In contrast they had found that “no neglect of duty, and no act of waste or folly was alleged to have been committed by the Town Council.”¹⁴ After much discord, manoeuvrings and delays in Parliament, the bills were abandoned until after the passing of the Public Health Act, 1848.¹⁵ By the time that Robert Rawlinson carried out his preliminary inquiry prior to the application of the Public Health Act to Sunderland the differences between the Council and the local commissioners had been resolved, the latter having formally declared that it was expedient to transfer their powers to the former.¹⁶

In Newcastle the newly reformed corporation attempted to enforce the existing Improvement Act (26 Geo III, c.39)¹⁷ and gave public notice that from

[hereafter SCM] I, pp.448-9, 486-7, 521; Editorial, *SH*, 19 March, 1847, p.4E

¹² Report of the Local Trusts Committee, Council Meeting, 3 Feb, 1847, SCM I, p.522

¹³ Editorial, *SH*, 19 March, 1847, p.4E; James Williams, “Observations upon the Report of the “United Commissioners” of Sunderland and Bishopwearmouth”, December 1849 (pp.42-45) in Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health as a Preliminary Inquiry to the Sewerage, Drainage, Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Borough of Sunderland*, (London, 1851), p.43

¹⁴ Report of the Surveying Officers, 27 Feb 1847, in Rawlinson, p.85

¹⁵ See for example Council Meetings, 15 June, 2 and 30 Sept, 9 Dec, 1846, 6 Jan, 3 Feb, 31 May, 18 June, 19 July, 1847, SCM I, pp.420-422, 445-446, 448-450, 486-495, 509, 521-524, 541-548, 552-554, 557-558

¹⁶ Letter from Charles Taylor, Solicitor to the Paving and Lighting Commissioners to the Rt Hon the Earl of Carlisle, 13 Dec, 1848, reproduced in Rawlinson, pp.14-16. Taylor comments that there was a general feeling in Sunderland that it was “proper and expedient that the executive authority should be placed in the hands of one governing body”, Rawlinson, p.15; Reports of the Sunderland and Bishopwearmouth Commissioners, stated that they would support a resolution for a transfer of their powers to the town council, Rawlinson, p.40. See also Editorial, *SH*, 30 Nov, 1849, p.5E

¹⁷ *An Act for widening, enlarging and cleansing the Streets, Lanes and other Publick Places, and for opening New Streets, Markets and Passages, within the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne, and the Liberties thereof, and for removing and preventing Annoyances therein, and for*

thenceforward the provisions for improving and cleansing the streets of the town would be "rigidly enforced".¹⁸ However, it would seem that even if the public had taken heed of this notice, the powers under the existing acts were insufficient to achieve the Council's aims. Thus between 1837 and 1850 Newcastle Corporation promoted four local Improvement Acts,¹⁹ which were piecemeal attempts to increase their powers and extend their responsibilities as well as to impose enforceable obligations upon the inhabitants to take some part in improving their own sanitary conditions.²⁰ "The Newcastle-upon-Tyne Improvement Act, 1846" (9 & 10 Vict, c.121), in particular, gave powers to the Council to construct, repair, alter and cleanse sewers and drains and carry them "through any lands within the...borough". They also obtained authority to empower inhabitants to carry private drains into the common sewers but not to compel them. In addition they were authorized to erect public urinals and to remove or alter them as expedient, and were permitted to use paving or watering rates in aid of the sewer rate, with property owners paying one half of the sewers' rate but tenement occupiers in property, valued at less than £10 per annum, being exempted from paying their share.²¹

There was disagreement in the Council, during the progress of the 1846 Bill, as to who should bear the main costs of construction and repair of sewers: the adjoining property owners or the Corporation. Joseph Crawhall was concerned that given the enormous expense of sewer construction they would never persuade inhabitants to build them themselves and John Burnup believed it would be difficult to levy a rate on those owners for whom the sewer merely ran through their property. William Turner wanted to see the Council not only obtain greater powers but also acquire greater responsibilities under the Act. He proposed that

regulating the publick Markets, and Common Stage Waggon, Drays and Carts, carrying Goods for Hire, [1786]

¹⁸ *First Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Municipal Corporations of England and Wales*, Appendices Part III, Report on the Borough of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *PP* (1835) XXV, 188, p.1657

¹⁹ Namely the 1837 Act (1 Vict. c.72); the 1841 Act, (5 Vict, c.71); the 1846 Act, (9 & 10 Vict. c.121) and the 1850 Act (13 & 14 Vict c.77)

²⁰ For example in cleaning the public footpaths outside their property.

²¹ 9 & 10 Vict, c.121, ss.79, 84-86

the clause whereby the Council should be allowed to construct “common sewers” and alter and repair existing ones, should be “imperative, not permissive”, but he was clearly a minority voice because his proposal was not adopted.²² This reflects the growing tension between those who still wished to place the onus of responsibility onto individuals and those who acknowledged the need for community responsibility and action.

One development that occurred as a result of the 1850 Improvement Act (13 & 14 Vict c.77),²³ and which embraced something of the spirit of Turner’s proposals four years earlier, was that the Council obtained powers to *compel* property owners to construct private drains to connect with the main sewers. The 1850 Act also enabled the Council to *order* the cleansing, paving, repairing and channelling of private courts, lanes and passages by owners. In addition, whereas the 1846 Act had given the Council powers over occupiers to remove refuse and cleanse privies and ashpits, the 1850 Act extended this obligation to owners and landlords of such property as well. Yet overall the 1850 Act was of limited value and some of the amendments to the 1846 Act were so minor that one wonders if any apparent strengthening of the Council’s powers was simply a way of disguising their inertia.²⁴ Although the 1850 Improvement Act was not Newcastle’s equivalent to the Public Health Act, 1848, there were some financial measures that were included which perhaps owe something to clauses within the 1848 Health Act. For example, in addition to increasing the paving, watering, watching and lighting rates, and allowing the Council to use money from the borough fund for local improvements, it also gave the Council power to raise money up to £20,000 at interest.²⁵ Yet despite obtaining complete powers of supervision and extensive, though perhaps not complete, powers of control over street formation and building construction, including the provision of “proper domestic conveniences and other important points”, some local inhabitants and

²² Council Meeting, 15 April 1846, *Proceedings of the Council of the Borough of Newcastle upon Tyne* [hereafter *NCP*] for 1846, p.223

²³ *An Act for extending and amending the Acts for regulating and improving the Borough of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, [29 July, 1850]

²⁴ See for example 13 & 14 Vict c.77, ss. 18-20 related to paving and street levelling.

²⁵ My italics. 13 & 14 Vict c.77, ss.16, 18-20, 24; 9 & 10 Vict c.121, ss.58-68; 11 & 12 Vict, c.63, s.107

government officials were critical of the way that the Town Council neglected to use their powers.²⁶

This brief survey of the local legislation undertaken by the three towns between 1835 and 1850 illustrates the variety of individual situations that could prevail and highlights the diversity of powers and responsibilities that existed. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that Chadwick was anxious to eliminate the inefficiencies and confusion arising in towns like Sunderland by imposing a degree of uniformity on local government. A public act would also enable towns like Gateshead to introduce improvements without incurring crippling expense. In addition, it was hoped, by reformers, that the Public Health Act, through the establishment of a Central Board of Health, would ensure that towns like Newcastle would no longer be able to neglect their duties and powers under existing legislation.

As well as the variety of local acts in operation, there were a series of public acts which applied to the three towns. Under "The Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Act, 1848" and "The Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Amendment Act, 1849", which extended the powers of the General Board of Health, Parliament could devolve powers upon town councils, local improvement commissioners or Poor Law guardians to deal with nuisances in their towns and recover costs incurred from either the individuals concerned or from the poor rates.²⁷ However the Acts gave no powers to compel house owners to pave and drain their property. Thus speculators could flagrantly disregard the public health by creating nuisances which did not directly affect them as they lived elsewhere.²⁸

In 1855, attempts were made to clarify which authority was to execute the provisions of the Nuisances Removal Acts, to help reduce the sort of muddle that

²⁶ Hume *et al*, pp.x-xi, xviii-xxii; George Robinson, Letter I, "Condition of the Poor", *NC*, 31 May, 1850, p.4A-C

²⁷ 11 & 12 Vict c.123, *An Act to renew and amend an Act of the Tenth Year of Her present Majesty, for the more speedy Removal of certain Nuisances, and the Prevention of Contagious and epidemic Diseases*, [4 September, 1848], ss.1, 4-5, 23; 12 & 13 Vict c.111, *An Act to amend the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Act, 1848*, [1 August, 1849], ss2-3, 13

²⁸ Editorial on the Public Health Act, *GO*, 11 Aug, 1849, p.2F

arose between local bodies with overlapping powers, as was the case in Newcastle. The provisions of the Nuisances Removal Act for England, 1855 (18 & 19 Vict c.121) were to be executed by local boards of health in places, such as Sunderland and Gateshead, which came under the Public Health Act. In incorporated towns, such as Newcastle, where there was no local board of health, the town council was to take responsibility. This Act empowered local authorities to delegate powers to officers and to institute proceedings against offenders. Expenses were no longer to be paid for out of the poor rates, unless no other local authority existed. Instead they were to be recovered from the General District Rates, where there was a local board of health, or out of the borough fund or borough rates, where the responsible authority was the Corporation. This Act extended the powers of entry, including where it was necessary, to ascertain the course of drains and to execute and inspect works required under this Act. Wherever a drain or ditch constituted a nuisance and could not be “rendered innocuous” without the laying of a sewer along all or part of it, the local authority was “required” to build a sewer and keep it in good repair.²⁹

The Common Lodging Houses Acts, 1851 and 1853 required that all lodging houses were to be registered and inspected by the police and to conform to minimum standards with regards to space, cleanliness, ventilation and moral decency.³⁰ Although the 1851 Act made registration compulsory, there was considerable scope for local authorities to use their discretion over the extent to which they inspected lodging houses and the stringency with which they imposed maximum numbers of inmates. There was also a degree of overlap between these two public acts, the clauses related to lodging houses contained in the Public Health Act, 1848³¹ and the powers contained in local acts, such as Newcastle’s Improvement Act, 1846, to frame bye-laws respecting lodging houses.³²

²⁹ 18 & 19 Vict c.121, *An Act to Consolidate and amend the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Acts, 1848 and 1849*, [14 August, 1855], ss.3, 5, 7, 11, 22, 47

³⁰ 14 & 15 Vict, c.28, *An Act for the well-ordering of Common Lodging Houses*, 24 July, 1851, ss.5-7; 16 & 17 Vict. c.41, *An Act for making further Provisions with respect to Common Lodging Houses*, [4 August, 1853], ss.3, 6-12

³¹ 11 & 12 Vict. c.63, s.66

³² 9 & 10 Vict. c.21

We turn now to the key theme of this chapter: the attitudes of the three local authorities to the aims and objectives of the Public Health Act and their different responses to the challenges posed. Part of the discussion will include some evaluation of the progress made in the three towns by 1858, though this will be developed further in Chapter 8. Lasting results were unlikely to have been achieved so quickly, but it is long enough to gain a general impression of the degree of commitment there was in each town to sanitary reform. In addition, aspects of the *laissez-faire*/state intervention dichotomy will be explored.

Gateshead

It would seem that Gateshead Council were certainly not unaware of, or indifferent to, the insanitary conditions of their town. For example when, in 1845, the Health of Towns' Commission were considering extending the provisions of the Metropolis Buildings Act (7 & 8 Vict, c.84)³³ to other towns, the Council were supportive. They considered their house drainage imperfect, their narrow streets ill-ventilated and their housing poorly constructed.³⁴ They also strongly supported Lord Lincoln's Sewerage and Drainage of Towns Bill in 1846.³⁵ It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that Gateshead Council supported the Public Health Act, 1848. That is not to say that everyone was completely happy with the Act as it stood and some, like Alderman William Henry Brockett, felt that it did not go far enough. Brockett observed that because of the "restrictive clauses with which the act had been clogged" little could be done under its provisions for some time to come. This may well have referred to the necessary procedures required before the Act could be adopted by a borough and the degree of consultation and sanction that was expected before capital schemes could progress. However, he and his Council colleagues were satisfied with the power given under the Act to compel sewers to be built and for property owners and occupiers who were "contiguous" to main sewers to take advantage of them.³⁶

³³ *An Act for regulating the Construction and the Use of Buildings in the Metropolis and its Neighbourhood*, [9 August, 1844]

³⁴ Kell to Hobhouse, Health of Towns Commission, [HTC], 29 Sept, 1845, PRO MH13/77

³⁵ Council Meeting, 4 March, 1846, GCM 4, p.500

³⁶ Report of the Gateshead Council Meeting of 9 Nov, NC, 10 Nov, 1848, p.8B

A fortnight after its enactment Gateshead Corporation appointed a Committee of Health to adopt measures deemed necessary to promote and protect the public health within the borough.³⁷ This included making new arrangements concerning the collection of ashes and filth to limit the time they were left lying about. Although these steps were taken in the face of a threatened cholera epidemic they illustrate the willingness of the Council to tackle environmental problems.³⁸ More indicative, perhaps, of the Corporation's general attitude to the Public Health Act was the fact that they instructed their Town Clerk, William Kell, to get in touch with neighbouring town clerks, and clerks to improvement commissioners, to arrange a conference on the subject of the Public Health Act with the aim of procuring its uniform adoption in the North of England. This was chaired by the mayor, John Potts, a staunch supporter of Brockett, and attracted some interest from Durham and South Shields. Neither Sunderland nor Newcastle were represented, although Sunderland's Town Clerk had intended to be present but was prevented from doing so by a fatal illness. The meeting unanimously resolved that it was inappropriate to take steps to have the Act adopted until the Government had publicized their intention as to the manner in which the Act should be enforced. Nevertheless, there was a general acceptance that the Act was needed. Over the next year there was growing impatience with the Board for delays in the necessary public inquiry. This was caused by the cholera epidemic of 1848-9 which preoccupied the Board in its first year. Once Inspector Rawlinson arrived at the end of 1849 it appears the Council hid nothing from him and were anxious to have the investigation conducted as thoroughly as possible.³⁹

³⁷ Council Meeting, 14 Sept, 1848, GCM 5, pp.488-489; Kell to Austin, 16 Oct, 1848, PRO MH 13/77

³⁸ Report of the Committee of the Guardians of the Gateshead Union, for the removal of nuisances, and prevention of diseases, 24 Oct, 1848, recorded in the Minutes of Gateshead Council Meeting, 9 Nov, 1848, GCM 5, p.513; Council Meeting, 9 Nov, 1848, pp.515-516; Report of the Gateshead Council Meeting - 9 Nov, 1848, NC, 10 Nov, 1848, p.8B

³⁹ Kell to Hobhouse, 16 Oct, 1848; Minutes of the Conference of Town Clerks etc held 16 Oct, 1848 attached to letter from Kell to Rt Hon the Earl of Carlisle, 18 Oct, 1848; Kell to Austin, 1 Feb, 1849; Kell to Austin, 8 Nov, 1849; Kell to GBH, 4 Aug, 1849 [this is out of date order in the file, coming after Austin to Kell, 8 Nov, 1849], PRO MH 13/77; Council Meetings, 14 Sept, 9 Nov, 1848, GCM 5, pp.489, 516-518; Editorial, GO, 11 Aug, 1849, p.2F; "Disease or Drainage:- Choose for Yourselves", GO, 28 Oct, 1848, p.2G; Editorial, GO, 8 Dec, 1849, p.3F;

Despite this promising beginning, there were those who were critical of the Council's record in health matters. At a public meeting to consider the Health of Towns Bill in February 1848 Mr M'Kelvin, clerk of the Gateshead Park Works (Abbot & Co's), criticized all the local authorities for their failure to deal with the town's problems. He suggested that Gateshead was the filthiest town in the kingdom and instead of improving was growing steadily worse. Thomas Pringle, clerk of the Gateshead Ironworks (Hawks & Crawshay), disagreed, arguing that the local authorities had in fact improved conditions and were anxious to go on doing so. He particularly applauded their efforts to build a main sewer along the High Street, describing it as a "bold resolution" and that there were few corporations that would spontaneously have undertaken such a measure. Councillor William Cook claimed that every improvement that had been suggested to the Town Council had been accepted. For example they had unanimously adopted the sewer scheme from the top of Bottle Bank to the end of Sunderland Road, although this was later abandoned, as will be seen shortly, for legitimate reasons. Cook argued that not all the blame, if any existed, should be put on the local authorities, for hindrances met them at every turn. Rather, he blamed ratepayers who grumbled at the costs involved and the obstructions mounted by interested parties, such as those who had thwarted the establishment of public conveniences in Hillgate and Oakwellage.⁴⁰

However, despite Pringle's and Cook's protestations, and the claims of others at the same meeting, there were those who shared M'Kelvin's opinion, particularly in the light of subsequent events. Soon after the passing of the Public Health Act, Brockett pleaded for direct action to deal with the insanitary conditions in the town, particularly given the threat of another cholera epidemic. Once cholera arrived, he reminded his Council colleagues of their responsibilities and argued that there was no point in persuading owners and occupiers of property to

F W Rogers, "Mayoral Elections and the Status of the Mayoralty in Early Victorian Gateshead (1815-1856)", *BGDLHS*, I, 2, (June, 1969), 16-36, p.19

⁴⁰ *GO*, 19 Feb, 1848, p.1A, p.4D-F; *White's Directory*, (Newcastle, 1847). See also Appendix IX(C)

construct their own drains if there was no main drain into which their filth could be discharged. Brockett had been responsible for the Guardians' visiting sub-committee report for District 16, along with John Potts, John Robson and Christian Borries, which had highlighted the lack of sewers and condemned the Council midden in Oakwellage. The *Gateshead Observer* agreed, commenting that the Council, like their midden, seemed "quite as bad, if not far worse, sanitarily speaking, as that of their neighbours", though it is unclear whether it meant Newcastle or the local inhabitants.⁴¹

This censure against the Council was somewhat unfair and rather disingenuous, given that Brockett, Potts and Robson were all members of the Corporation, even though they produced this report in their role as guardians. In December 1847 the Council had agreed, unanimously, to build a main sewer from the foot of Bottle Bank, along the High Street to the end of Sunderland Road. This had been postponed on Henry Austin's advice until revised plans had been drawn up which incorporated smaller pipes. In addition, it was felt that the question of raising funds for the sewer should be deferred until the Health of Towns' Bill had been introduced and its provisions considered by the Council.⁴² Thus the delays were reasonable, as Brockett, *et al*, should have known. Yet the fact that the Guardians and the *Gateshead Observer* criticized the Council for the delays indicates, perhaps, the willingness among many to see sanitary improvements introduced. In the event the pressure on the Council appears to have worked as it accepted Brockett's proposal, in November 1848, that the planned sewer should be executed.⁴³

⁴¹ Council Meeting, 3 Feb, 1848, GCM 5, pp.400-401; Report of the Parliamentary Railway and Bye Law Committee, chaired by Brockett, Council Meeting, 14 Sept, 1848, GCM 5, pp.484-488; *GO*, 10 Oct, 1848, p.2B, 21 Oct, 1848, p.3B, "Disease or Drainage", *GO*, 28 Oct, 1848

⁴² Council Meeting, 9 Dec, 1847, GCM 5, p.371; Letters from Austin to Kell, 4 and 11 Jan, 1848, Council Meeting, 3 Feb, 1848, GCM 5, pp.381-383, 387; Report of the Public Meeting, *GO*, 19 Feb, 1848, p.1 col A and p.4, cols E-F

⁴³ Report of a Meeting of the Committee of the Guardians of the Gateshead Union for the removal of nuisances and prevention of diseases, 20 Oct, 1848, in Minutes of Council Meeting, 9 Nov, 1848, GCM 5, pp.512-513; Council Meetings, 9 Nov, 1848, GCM 5, p.519, 1 Feb, 15 March, 3 and 24 May, 1849, GCM 6, pp. 8-11, 29-32,44, 58-59; "Disease or Drainage", *GO*, 28 Oct, 1848, p.2G; Report of the Gateshead Council Meeting - 9 Nov, 1848, *NC*, 10 Nov, 1848, p.8B

By the time of Rawlinson's inquiry, there seems to have been support within the Borough for reform. It took a further twenty months before the Public Health Act was applied because of delays caused by procedural problems in framing a provisional order that was acceptable to both the local Council and the General Board.⁴⁴ The Provisional Order of the General Board of Health for the application of the Public Health Act to Gateshead (14 & 15 Vict. c.98) received the Royal Assent on 7 August, 1851.⁴⁵ The whole of the Public Health Act was applied to the Borough except the controversial clause about rating exemptions in section 88. In addition a number of sections of the Gateshead Street Act were retained and clauses of the Towns' Improvement Clauses Act were incorporated which contained regulations regarding streets, slaughter houses and lodging houses.⁴⁶

Shortly afterwards, the Corporation's Health Committee demonstrated an eagerness to make effective use of their new powers by recommending that the Act, together with the other clauses applicable to the borough, should be printed in one volume together and circulated among those whose duty it would be to exercise them.⁴⁷ Commissioners Hume *et al*, in 1854, commended the local board for the speed with which it had appointed some of its officers and introduced several "very useful" bye-laws related to public health. For example they had acquired powers to control common lodging houses, and these appear to have been "regularly and stringently enforced" during the early years of the local board. The exercise of these powers helped to explain, as far as the Commissioners were concerned, the lower mortality rates which occurred during the 1853 cholera epidemic in registered lodging houses compared to other houses of similar "situation and calibre".⁴⁸ The beneficial effects arising out of the implementation

⁴⁴ Rawlinson, *Report to the GBH...Gateshead*, p.6; Kell to Austin, 21 Dec, 1850; Kell to Taylor, 11 Jan, 1851 [incorrectly dated 1850 but based on content, location in the file and associated correspondence, it is clear that it was actually written in 1851], PRO MH13/77; Editorial commending the readiness of the Gateshead Borough to assist Rawlinson, *GO*, 8 Dec, 1849, p.3F

⁴⁵ Kell to Austin, 18 Aug, 1851, PRO MH13/77

⁴⁶ Report of the Health Committee, Council Meeting, 1 Oct, 1851, GCM 7, pp.8-9, 11

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ Hume *et al*, pp.xxxv, xxxix

of the Act prompted one Newcastle citizen to press the General Board to impose the Act on them, under the high mortality clause.⁴⁹

Yet within just a few years of the adoption of the Public Health Act, the Corporation seems to have grown less committed to sanitary reform. Despite the fact that Gateshead came out of the Cholera Inquiry rather better than Newcastle, the Commissioners highlighted a number of shortcomings, particularly related to sewerage, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. Overall, they considered that the real problem in Gateshead was not the local board's unwillingness to act, but the resistance of the ratepayers at large to sanitary rates. This view was shared by Kell who complained to Rawlinson that when a sanitary improvement was proposed, it was discussed with reference not to its necessity, but to its expense.⁵⁰ This led to a shift in attitude to improvement works generally. A good example of this can be seen in the Council's response to the Quayside Improvements following the Great Fire of 1854. In 1855 "One of the Gateshead Burgesses" ["GB"] accused the Town Council of "repudiating their recorded opinions and eating their recorded words". This anonymous correspondent to the *Gateshead Observer* claimed that the Council had formerly supported the plan to take advantage of the fire's devastation to improve Gateshead "sanitarily and commercially". This, he stated, had been a unanimous decision of the Council and had been met with very little opposition on the part of the public except in "one solitary quarter".⁵¹

It is true that shortly after the fire the Public Health Committee of the Council had recommended that they promote a Gateshead Quayside Improvement Bill in order to take advantage of the damage to clear the site which included Pipewellgate, and replace the slums with commercial buildings. They had recommended that Parliamentary powers should be sought to authorize the purchase of several buildings and ground that had been laid bare by the fire, in order to carry out

⁴⁹ John Cail to GBH, 9 April, 1853, PRO MH13/232

⁵⁰ Hume *et al*, p.xxxix; Kell to Rawlinson, 17 Oct, 1853 [out of chronological order in the file, coming after a letter from Kenmir to the Secretary of the GBH, 4 Aug, 1854], PRO MH 13/77

⁵¹ Letter from "One of the Gateshead Burgesses" to the Editor, *GO*, 24 Feb, 1855, p.7B-C

improvements. Yet despite the claim of “GB”, the suggestion was not unanimously accepted. Four men - Hymers, Skelton, Cook and Prockter - all wanted the consideration of the Health Committee’s proposals to be deferred until a meeting of the ratepayers could be convened to ascertain their opinion of the proposals. This was presumably in the hopes that the ratepayers would oppose any wide-ranging and expensive scheme. However they were a minority voice and when the Report was put to the vote, only three voted against it.⁵²

Yet “GB” was right to be critical of the Corporation and to accuse them of having done an about turn “from support to opposition - from public principle to private interest.” At a Council meeting in February 1855 they did much to undermine the value of the Bill in terms of public health by excluding Pipewellgate from the projected works and significantly modifying the Bill’s compulsory elements. “GB” was clearly incensed by the turn of events, arguing that no improvements for the public good should be sacrificed or lost

...in order to pander to the vanity, gratify the spleen, or protect the interests of any individual, however highly he may have hitherto stood either in the opinion of the public or his own.

This anonymous letter is of particular interest because it claimed that the Council were out of step with the sentiments that were “generally prevalent” amongst the ratepayers of Gateshead, who were coming round to supporting sanitary reform.⁵³ It also points to a growing unwillingness on the part of the Corporation to antagonize a few influential citizens. Yet not everyone was dissatisfied with the activities of the Council. “Pro Bono Publico” [“PBP”] commended them for the new Public Baths and Wash-houses that had finally been built, after all the delays noted in Chapter 3. “PBP” declared the new building as “a manifestation of the growing intelligence of our local governors”, who, despite opposition from “the penny-wise” had adopted “a most judicious plan” to secure sanitary improvement to its fullest extent.⁵⁴

⁵² Council Meeting, 20 Oct, 1854, GCM 8, pp. 400-403

⁵³ Letter from “One of the Gateshead Burgesses”

⁵⁴ Letter from “Pro Bono Publico” to the Editor, *GO*, 13 May, 1854, p. 7A-B

Resistance to reform came in other forms as well. Under the Public Health Act, 1848, the local board had powers to control the formation of streets and to regulate new house construction or re-erection, which they “diligently exercised”.⁵⁵ However people disregarded the legislation, prompting the local board to issue a public notice in 1852 declaring their intention to enforce the penalties under the Act against all offenders.⁵⁶ They referred one particular case to the General Board related to a property owner who had raised the height of a large tenement by adding two storeys. This gave rise to doubts about the local board’s powers in a number of similar cases where the original building had not actually been pulled down to the ground floor. When it became evident that the Public Health Act provided no powers for the General Board or local board to interfere, it fuelled dissatisfaction with the Act, as will be explored shortly.⁵⁷

The actions and reactions of the Town Council highlight a number of aspects of the state intervention *v* *laissez-faire* and centralization *v* localism debates. In the early days, relationships with the General Board of Health were constructive, aided in part by the personal friendship between Kell and Rawlinson.⁵⁸ Once the Public Health Act was in operation, the Gateshead local board of health applied to the General Board for advice on a whole range of matters throughout the life of the central body, and then afterwards to the Local Government Act Office. For example, they sought clarification of their powers under the Public Health Act to restrict building heights;⁵⁹ advice relating to a code of bye-laws under the Public Health Act and regulations for the good management of lodging houses under the Common Lodging Houses Act.⁶⁰ When property owners showed a reluctance to pay for sewerage, drainage and other works for which they were liable, once again the local board turned to the General Board for advice.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Hume *et al*, p.xxiv

⁵⁶ Public Notice by the Gateshead Local Board of Health, 2 June, 1852, Brockett Papers, 10(II), p.451

⁵⁷ Kell to GBJ, 1 June, 1853; Taylor to Kell, 4 June, 1853, PRO MH13/77

⁵⁸ Kell to Rawlinson, 17 Oct, 1853, PRO MH13/77

⁵⁹ Kell to GBH, 1 June, 1853, PRO MH13/77

⁶⁰ Kell to GBH, 9 Dec, 1851, PRO MH13/77

⁶¹ Kell to GBH, 9 June, 1852, PRO MH13/77

The local board recognized the value of uniformity when it saved them unnecessary expense from costly legal contests over the construction of doubtful clauses in the Public Health Act.⁶² However, alongside the apparent loss of commitment to sanitary reform highlighted by “One of the Gateshead Burgesses”,⁶³ there was a growing resentment among Council members towards the centralizing tendencies of government generally, and of the activities of the General Board of Health in particular. In 1855, George Crawshay expressed the concerns of many of his colleagues that both the remodelled Nuisances Removal and Public Health Acts before Parliament struck at the “root of local municipal government”. Their real fear was that further centralization would strengthen the powers of “an already overgrown and mismanaged central government” and increase government patronage. They had been particularly upset by the Government inquiry of 1854 into the 1853 cholera epidemic on Tyneside. Crawshay claimed that their epidemic had been made a “stalking horse” for the purposes of the General Board of Health in connection with these two bills and pointed out that whatever could be alleged against the local authorities was as nothing compared to the criticisms that could be levelled at the Central Government’s disastrous handling of Balaklava.⁶⁴ Crawshay was right in that Palmerston, Lord Seymour and others used the epidemic and the Cholera Commissioners’ Report as grounds to restate the sanitarian case, and local pride was no doubt offended.⁶⁵ There was a feeling on Tyneside that the three Commissioners had arrived in Newcastle having already prejudged the case and were determined to prove the General Board correct that filth was the cause of the severity of the outbreak. This was something that many local people disputed.⁶⁶

When, in 1846, the Corporation discussed the Sewerage and Drainage Bill, it is clear that they supported the idea of state intervention when exercised by

⁶² Kell to GBH, 13 Aug, 1852, PRO MH13/77

⁶³ See also William Hall’s experiences whilst Town Surveyor in Chapter 8

⁶⁴ Report of the Gateshead Council Meeting - 2 May, 1855, *GO*, 5 May, 1855, p.6D-F

⁶⁵ *PD* 3rd Series, CXXXIV, (1854), 1295-1309; Finer, p.458

⁶⁶ “Monkchester”, *Cholera-Theories and Cholera-Facts; being a Review and Analysis of the Great Cholera-Outbreak at Newcastle, in 1853*, (London and Newcastle, 1855), pp.18, 20; Hume *et al*, pp.240-241

themselves.⁶⁷ Just before the application of the Public Health Act, 1848 to Gateshead, the Council were anxious that it did not provide them with sufficient powers to deal with all the problems in the town.⁶⁸ This was still their opinion in 1857 when they reported to the General Board some of the specific aspects of the Act they considered deficient. They particularly deplored their lack of effective powers to control house construction and help reduce overcrowding. This was partly due to the limited interpretation given in the Public Health Act concerning the word "house". There was no provision to prevent a building, such as a stable, afterwards being converted into a dwelling without planning permission. In addition, once a house was built according to the regulations, there was little to stop anyone adding further stories.⁶⁹ The regulations concerning the building or rebuilding of houses did not give the local board the power to require a certain proportion of land be left open for ventilation. This frustrated the attempts of the board to improve street ventilation and natural lighting by restricting building heights according to street widths. They therefore argued that they needed greater "power of interference" and control of the formation of new streets, to ensure that sufficient widths should be maintained.⁷⁰

Although they acknowledged that the Act gave them full and efficient powers for draining, cleaning, covering or filling up ditches and open sewers they felt that a more explicit provision for the removal and reconstruction of privies, water closets and ash pits was required. They found the existing provision for the removal of manure and refuse, whereby the costs involved were to be recovered from the sale of dung, to be inefficient, particularly in an area like Gateshead, where there was insufficient demand for the quantity of dung produced. This led to accumulations of manure and defeated one of the objects of the Public Health Act. In their 1857 Report they asked for the power to impose charges upon people from whose premises such refuse was removed.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Council Meeting, 4 March, 1846, GCM 4, p.500

⁶⁸ Kell to Taylor, 11 January, 1851

⁶⁹ Report of the Local Board of Health of the Borough of Gateshead upon the deficiencies of the existing Public Health Act, extracted from Minutes of Meeting, 4 Feb, 1857) and enclosed with a letter from Swinburne to GBH, 9 Feb, 1857, PRO MH13/77

⁷⁰ This relates to s.72 of the Public Health Act. Report, point 6

⁷¹ Report, points 2 and 3; Kell to Taylor, 24 Jan, 1854

Although the Corporation sought greater powers for themselves, they acknowledged that it was expedient that they should secure the “willing compliance” of the ratepayers over measures introduced by them. To this end they wished to include an additional section into the Public Health Act as applied to Gateshead to ensure that all ratepayers should fully understand the powers vested in the local board and the purpose to which the rates were intended.⁷² Despite these good intentions, it was inevitable that they could not please all of the people even some of the time. There were those who resisted all attempts to persuade them to support sanitary improvements, such as the individuals who pressurized the Corporation to dilute the Quayside Improvement Bill. Yet there were others who complained that the State, as represented by the local board of health, were failing to protect the inhabitants from the abuses of individuals or to carry out the necessary public works to ensure good health. Among these were a few Gateshead citizens who wrote to the General Board of Health, enlisting their help. For example Emanuel Walmsley wrote in March 1853 complaining at the lack of “prompt attention” given by the Gateshead local board of health to a petition signed by 38 inhabitants against a slaughter house,⁷³ and John Cail complained about the lack of drainage that was rendering his property unfit to live in, thereby causing his tenant to quit.⁷⁴ Yet these two examples highlight how very few letters there actually were from Gateshead citizens during the life of the General Board.

Gateshead Corporation made many mistakes, and as has been seen, there appears to have been a lessening of support for sanitary improvement by the mid 1850s. However, the criticisms made against them need to be taken in context. The Town Council continued to face many difficulties in terms of funding to carry out major works. Not a wealthy borough to begin with, by the end of 1861 their capital debt was nearly £50,000, a sum equal to five-eighths of the town’s gross

⁷² Kell to Taylor, 11 Jan, 1851, PRO MH13/77

⁷³ Walmsley to GBH, 4 March, 1853, PRO MH13/77

⁷⁴ Cail to GBH, 2 Feb, 1858, PRO MH13/77. In his letter Cail states that he had, for some years, “tried in vain to induce” the surveyors to drain his property and had been quite willing to pay his share of the expense, but all to no avail.

rateable value. Though, as Rodgers points out, nearly twice as much was borrowed to finance their commercial “will-o’-wisp” embodied in the Gateshead Quay Acts of 1855 and 1859, than was borrowed in connection with sanitary improvements. Moreover, Gateshead was still actively pursuing improvements by the end of the 1850s as is demonstrated by the range of bye-laws they introduced in 1859 related to public health. These included measures regarding the width and construction of new streets and the sewerage thereof; structure of buildings; ventilation; drainage and waste provision; the prevention of nuisances and regulation of slaughter houses; and street and privy cleansing.⁷⁵

What this section on Gateshead has revealed, though, is that having been originally supportive of the Public Health Act, the Council came to resent what they saw as the overpowering and dictatorial behaviour of the General Board of Health and the inadequate powers vested in the local board to carry out the improvements they actually wanted to undertake. It is difficult to know how much this antagonism was initiated by growing national propaganda against the General Board. However, the specific experience of the 1854 Cholera Inquiry provided apparent justification for local resentment. Nevertheless, the promising start does appear to have given way to the sorts of attitudes and responses to public health reform that were regarded as typical by both contemporaries and historians. Yet it could be that the Council’s initial enthusiasm for reform was not as great as appears. Internal tensions existed, as was explored in Chapter 4, over the Borough-holders property and the contested Guardian elections of 1850. While Brockett remained on the Council, he may well have effected an impression of unity on public health matters because of his own zealotry in this area. After his retirement in 1853 the less committed may have found themselves in a more powerful position to oppose change.

⁷⁵ Borough of Gateshead, Notice of proposed Bye Laws under Section 34 of The Local Government Act, enclosed in a letter from Swinburne to Taylor, 16 Feb, 1859; Frank Rogers, *Gateshead, An Early Victorian Boom Town*, (Wallsend, 1974), p.38

Sunderland

As already noted, Sunderland Corporation had limited powers concerning public health matters before the passing of the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851 but something of their determination to make use of the powers they did have is illustrated by the speed with which they implemented the Removal of Nuisances Act, 1846.⁷⁶ Four cases were brought before the police court held soon afterwards but on the assurances of all the defendants concerned that steps had already been taken, or were about to be taken, to remove the relevant nuisances, the magistrates took no further action. This was perhaps not the outcome that the Council had expected and such a lenient attitude may have done little to encourage others to clean up their own premises. It perhaps also demonstrates something of the resistance to local state intervention that existed in some quarters.

One of the four cases was of particular significance in that it concerned the Sunderland Paving and Lighting Commissioners over a stagnant surface drain in the Hat Case. Mr G W Wright, on behalf of the Commissioners, expressed his surprise that the Council had taken this action because they were neither owners nor occupiers, but merely had jurisdiction over the streets. In response Brunton, the Town Clerk, remarked that as the Commissioners received rates and tolls they were clearly “within the meaning of the Act” and argued that the Town Council “had as much right to lay a summons against them as against any other individual”. Because Wright reported that the nuisance was to be removed the court felt it unnecessary to act.⁷⁷ This neatly sidestepped the issue, avoiding, for the magistrates, any difficult judgment on the matter, yet it did not resolve the underlying dispute over powers and responsibilities, which was to linger on.

However, it would be unjust, not to say simplistic, to portray the local commissioners in solely negative terms whilst presenting the local council as the sole custodians of civic virtue. For example, reformers such as William Mordey

⁷⁶ Council Meeting, 30 Sept, 1846, SCM 1, p.458; *SH*, 2 Oct, 1846, p.7E

⁷⁷ *SH*, 2 Oct, 1846, 16 Oct, 1846, p.7E

faced derision from some of his colleagues during the early 1840s.⁷⁸ Nevertheless there was a marked difference between the two bodies in the 1840s as Rawlinson and Reid both observed. The local commissioners were apathetic towards reform, although they justified their inaction by claiming they had insufficient funds. This was a lame excuse given the sums they had spent in attempting to thwart gas and water bills, though, in mitigation, they were not empowered to borrow money on security of the rates for the purpose of “executing extensive works”.⁷⁹

In contrast, the attitude of the Council towards sanitary reform was positive. Reid commented that in none of the towns that he had visited had he been assisted by “a more anxious and able committee than in Sunderland and Rawlinson in his report noted that there had been “a most laudable anxiety” on the part of the Corporation to improve the town and ameliorate working-class conditions. In this they were supported by “all classes”.⁸⁰ They resolved to apply for the Act shortly after it received the Royal Assent and although they did not petition the ratepayers they invited objections to be sent to the Watch Committee. No one challenged the spirit of the Act, even if there were points of debate concerning rating anomalies and powers over the Town Moor.⁸¹

Yet despite the approbation of Reid and Rawlinson, the Town Council was not universally applauded for its efforts. The *Sunderland Herald* in April, 1848, suggested that they were only persuaded to take any real action towards improvements if they felt they were going to be investigated. As an example of this the *Herald* asked why the baths and wash houses had not yet been built, despite the appointment of a Committee “some months ago” to carry them through. The article inferred that if a Commissioner had been sent to Sunderland to see into them, they would have been in operation “some time since”. Yet the

⁷⁸ W Brockie, *Sunderland Notables*, (Sunderland, 1894), p.211

⁷⁹ Reed and Brunton to PLC, 4 Dec, 1844, PRO MH12/3269; Rawlinson, *Report to the GBH...Sunderland*, pp.41, 47

⁸⁰ Reid, *Report*, Part III, p.190; Rawlinson, p.23

⁸¹ Council Meeting, 4 Oct, 1848, SCM 2, pp.48-49; Rawlinson, pp.69-76; Public Notice, *SH*, 6 Oct, 1848, p.1C; Tom Corfe, “Local Government and Reform in Sunderland, 1835-1851”, undated and unpublished paper, p.6

Herald was not always so critical of the Council's policies. At the end of an Editorial in August 1846 in which it had condemned the local commissioners for not exercising their powers to remove nuisances, it had applauded the current mayor, Robert Brown, for his efforts in trying to remedy the situation, even though there was still a great deal that urgently needed to be done.⁸² Perhaps one of the reasons why Sunderland Corporation might appear to have been more conscientious than, say, Newcastle, was precisely because they did lack powers to do very much about it. It is so much easier to criticize those whose job it is to do something than to exercise responsibilities oneself in difficult circumstances. To do justice to the local commissioners, by the time that Rawlinson conducted his inquiries they were as supportive as the Corporation of moves to apply the provisions of the Public Health Act, 1848 to Sunderland, albeit in the guise of a local act so as to eliminate the hated rating anomalies.⁸³

Once the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851, (14 & 15 Vict, c.67) was passed, the full responsibility for the public health of the town devolved upon the Corporation and their local board of health. They immediately set up a number of committees to implement the Act, including the General Improvement Drainage and Sanatory Committee. This was made up of 21 members, including Dr Joseph Brown and William Mordey, both medical men who played a key role in the sanitary movement, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. In addition the committee included James Williams, the ex-Chartist. Something of the energy and proaction of the Council is demonstrated by the fact that over the next seven years there was a growth in the number and responsibility of Council Committees, reflecting developments in their sanitary programme. In November 1852, in addition to the Watch, Finance and General Improvement Committees that consisted of the full Council membership, there were eight other committees, varying in size, including the Paving, Lighting and Sewering Committee, the Sanatory Committee and the Baths and Wash Houses Committee. Two years

⁸² *SH*, 7 April, 1848, p.4E-F; 28 Aug, 1846, p.4E. As discussed in Chapter 3, the baths and wash houses had been delayed because of difficulties in finding a suitable site and arranging for the necessary plans and tenders.

⁸³ Rawlinson, *Report to the GBH...Sunderland*, pp.37-40

later this had grown to 11 with the addition of the Public Grounds Committee, the Building Committee and the Museum Committee. In October, 1855 a special sub-committee was set up to investigate Crozier's sewerage proposals but this became another fixed committee of the Council.⁸⁴

Although there seems to have been some overlap between the various committees, particularly the Paving, Lighting and Sewering Committee and the Sanatory Committee, in practice the former committee was principally concerned with paving, flagging and channelling the streets, whereas the latter was more involved with some of the key element embodied in the Public Health Act. Three months after their appointment, the Sanatory Committee had prepared bye-laws for regulating common lodging houses and had responded to a request regarding paving and ordered that powers under the Sunderland Act should be put into force.⁸⁵ However, by 1855, the Committee was apparently less active, reporting infrequently to the Council. For example, during 1855 they only made one significant proposal, which was to place a urinal near the ferry boat landing. In contrast the Paving, Lighting and Sewering Committee made reports to the Council at most of their weekly meetings throughout 1855, along with the Building Committee.⁸⁶

Up until November 1857 the number of common lodging houses registered within the borough amounted to 11, with accommodation for 221 people. Following the rearrangement of committees in November 1857, the Sanitary and Smoke Committee, chaired by James Williams and including Brown and Mordey, appears to have become more diligent in this area. In November 1858 they reported that a further 10 houses had been registered and 165 more people accommodated in the past year. They also reported that all registered houses were regularly visited by the Inspector, found to be generally clean and well ventilated and all were

⁸⁴ Council Meetings, 27 Aug, 10 Sept, 22 Oct 1851, 9 Nov, 1852, 15 Nov, 1854, SCM 2, pp. 287-289, 291-292, 300, 317-318, 413-444, 707-708; 3 Oct, 1855, SCM 3, p.203

⁸⁵ Council Meeting, 10 Nov, 1851, SCM 2, pp.334-335

⁸⁶ 7 Feb, 1855, SCM 3, p.25. For examples of recommendations made by the Sewering Committee regarding flagging, kerbing, etc. see Council Meetings of 3, 17, 24, 31 Jan, 7, 28 Feb, 7, 14, 22 March, 4, 11, 25 April, 1855, SCM 3, pp. 2, 7-8, 10, 15, 25-26, 34, 38, 51, 55, 65, 69, 71, 75

provided with water closets. In general they were healthier than the ordinary tenemented housing.⁸⁷

From the outset, Sunderland local board exercised their powers related to house construction and street formation and once weekly reports were received from the Building Committee, planning permission was considered on a large variety of building schemes at most meetings.⁸⁸ One particular case embroiled the local board in a dispute with the Rev Dr Ralph Tatham over his plans to build a new street with adjoining back streets. Because one end was blocked off by the back wall of another property it was effectively a *cul de sac*. To open it up for ventilation, cleansing and watching, the local board proposed that Tatham should build a cross street. However the Act did not empower them to impose this condition.⁸⁹

Some years later the Council sought the General Board's advice concerning a number of instances where builders were circumventing the building regulations. Although these builders had submitted plans for approval, they had not complied with them, thus effectively reducing the ventilation available. Two of them, Richard Bell and James Walton, had contended that all that was required under section 53 of the Act was that they should give notice of their intention to build and provide details of the levels of the lowest floor and the situation and construction of privies. They claimed that they were not liable to any penalty for altering anything but the levels or privies. When the Council attempted to prosecute them the local magistrates had been uncertain how to proceed. In consequence the local board appealed to the General Board to uphold their decision because they were faced with "a large number of cases" of a similar nature.⁹⁰ This was just one example of the way in which Sunderland actively

⁸⁷ Council Meeting, 18 Nov, 1857, SCM 3, pp.795-797; Report of the Sanatory Committee, Council Meeting, 3 Nov, 1858, SCM 4, pp.228-230

⁸⁸ See for example SCM 3, pp.6, 11, 15, 24-25, 28, 31-32, 33-34, 37-38 etc

⁸⁹ Statement of the Reverend Ralph Tatham to the GBH, undated; Statement on behalf of the Corporation of Sunderland in reference to Tatham's Memorial, signed by Snowball, 1 Jan, 1853; GBH to Snowball, 17 Jan, 1855, PRO MH13/177

⁹⁰ Snowball to GBH, 16 Feb, 1857.

sought greater state intervention from the General Board in enforcing improvements on unwilling individuals, as claimed in the Introduction.⁹¹

The business-like manner in which the Council fulfilled their responsibilities under the Borough of Sunderland Act is illustrated by the way in which they responded to complaints made to the General Board by C Parkinson in 1854, regarding the sanitary condition of Sunderland. The council passed the matter over to the United Sanitary and Sewerage Committees, chaired by Dr Joseph Brown, so that Parkinson's letter could be given serious consideration. Their Report lists numerous works that had been carried out since 1851, including expensive cleansing, flagging, paving and macadamizing work done to the streets. They had also produced extensive plans for sewerage the town but were awaiting the decision of the General Board before they could carry these out. Parkinson had accused Sunderland of being the "abode and Head Quarters of Cholera and fever", to which the Committee responded that during 1853, when the cholera had been so bad in Newcastle, there were only 33 deaths in Sunderland. Furthermore, deaths from all diseases during the epidemic did not exceed the ordinary average. This the Committee attributed to the stringent preventative measures taken by the local board and the fact that "*carte blanche*" had been given to the Surveyor to employ whatever additional staff he might need to deal with any crisis.⁹²

Yet despite their sanitary efforts, there was considerable criticism within the Council itself about the poor state of the town in 1853, and particularly the overflowing conveniences and ashpits. Both Councillor James Williams and Alderman Wilson criticized aspects of the town's environment and F H Johnson, a member of the Council's Sanatory Committee, remarked on the difficulties for farmers in collecting refuse given that the regulations required this to be done

⁹¹ See p.11

⁹² C Parkinson to the GBH, undated, but draft reply from GBH to Snowball is dated 5 Sept, 1854; Report of the United Sanitary and Sewerage Committees on a Letter regarding the Sanitary Condition of Sunderland addressed to the General Board of Health, and signed C Parkinson, 13 September, 1854, attached to letter from Snowball to GBH, 14 Sept, 1854, PRO MH13/177 and also in Minutes of Council Meeting, 13 Sept, 1854, SCM 2, pp.672-676

very early in the morning. He suggested that alternative arrangements should be made to allow some other times for removal. This discussion led to a resolution that the Sanitary Committee should be directed to consider the condition of cesspools and ashpits with a view to making arrangements for their elimination. Yet Mr Denniston felt that the Council's Sanatory Committee were themselves to blame for the poor conditions because they had not been producing regular reports. Denniston particularly complained at the lack of action taken over slaughter house nuisances. In response, Dr Brown explained that they were researching the matter by acquiring information from other towns but that it was coming in very slowly. He argued that it was not as easy as people thought to acquire land in the town that was suitable and yet conveniently placed for those who would be required to use it and declared "A rudely constructed edifice, such as that suggested by Mr Denniston would not do at all."⁹³

There were also critics outside the Council Chamber who felt that the Corporation were not meeting the needs of their constituents. For example John Bruce, a Sunderland teacher who had himself been an Inspector of Nuisances for the Board of Guardians for several years, wrote to the General Board of Health to complain that he had failed to get help from the local authorities in removing the ashes, nightsoil and accumulated filth in the backyard of a house he has just rented part of. Eventually, having been informed by the local Inspector of Nuisances that nothing could be done, Bruce had paid 2s 6d himself to have the nuisance removed by a man who eventually made 6s. from its sale. Bruce was aggrieved that, as a ratepayer, he had had to spend his own money for somebody else's refuse but also argued that the Local Board had performed a "suicidal act" in not taking advantage of this source of income themselves. Though, as has been noted earlier in connection with Gateshead, manure did not bring in much of a return for industrial towns with a limited agricultural sector nearby. Bruce also claimed that if he had put the manure out in the street at the proper time for the scavengers to collect, they would not have done so and he would have been fined. In response Snowball, on behalf of the local board, informed the Board that the

⁹³ "Sunderland Corporation", *SN*, 21 May, 1853, p.5C

subject of Bruce's complaint had "long" had their "serious consideration" but that they had not had the resources to undertake such cleansing themselves. However orders had been given to inform the public that manure and refuse depôts would be made available, hoping this would induce them to remove similar accumulations from their homes.⁹⁴

Regarding Bruce's specific case, the local board had felt that the Inspector of Nuisance should have compelled Bruce to have cleansed the middenstead in his backyard, which hardly answered the teacher's complaint. This provoked an outraged response from Bruce who complained to Macauley that in fact he had been compelled to act, not by the Inspector, but because no-one else would. He regretted that the local board had such an "affection for 'compelling'" instead of doing their duty by providing proper appliances for the removal of nuisances and by informing people as to what they should or should not do in such cases.⁹⁵

Part of the problem for the Council lay in the fact that it all took time to introduce the sanitary improvements required, particularly after years of neglect by the local commissioners. This is highlighted by their discussion of a Watch and General Improvement Committee's Report in 1853. Poor people were dumping their night soil on open grates in the street, which was obviously contributing to the insanitary conditions. The mayor commented that many such cases had come before the magistrates who had chosen to waive fines, as long as the nearest grates were being used, on the basis that defendants had nowhere else to put the refuse. James Williams acknowledged that bad as the nuisance was, it was better that it should be dumped in the street than left inside houses.⁹⁶

Yet there were occasions when there was less excuse for failures on the Council's part. For example J W Summers of Pemberton Street complained to the General Board concerning an iron palisade that had been erected by a councillor, Robert

⁹⁴ James Bruce, Sunderland, to Austin, 26 Nov, 1852; Snowball to Macauley, 1 Dec, 1852, PRO MH/13/177

⁹⁵ Bruce to Macauley, 16 Dec, 1852

⁹⁶ "Sunderland Corporation", *SN*, 23 July, 1853, p.5B

Fairclough, in front of his house. As a result the width of the street contravened existing bye-laws. What infuriated Summers was that the local board appeared to condone the encroachment, which would encourage others. He suggested to the General Board that this was not the only instance when the town's health had been tampered with to suit the private views of some members of the local board.⁹⁷

Despite this criticism, when it came to major improvements the Corporation do appear to have been determined to exercise all their powers under the Public Health Act. When the Borough Engineer was finally ready to present his plans for sewerage in September, 1855, the Council did not refer it either to the Sanatory or the Sewering Committees but appointed a Special Sewerage Committee to investigate the proposed sewerage system.. The work of this committee, with respect to the great sewerage scheme, will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. However something of the committee's commitment to sanitary reform can be seen in their proposal, in 1856, that regulations should be introduced whereby ashpits and privies adjoining dwellings, workshops etc, should be converted into water closets. Their suggestion met with a lukewarm reception from many on the Council but, undeterred, the Sewerage Committee, chaired by Dr Brown, directed the Town Clerk to write to the General Board of Health to ask whether the proposed regulations regarding privies and ashpits were such as would meet with their approval and also whether in the Board's opinion, the Council had power to enforce such regulations. The Board was supportive and constructive, demonstrating the extent to which the Sunderland Sewerage Committee were in tune with the views of the central body.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, despite all their efforts, when the proposal was finally put to the vote, the motion was lost with by 19 to 10. It was perhaps no coincidence that Joseph Brown resigned from office as Chairman of the Sewerage Committee the following week.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Summers to Macauley, 14, 25 and 28 April, 1853, PRO MH13/77

⁹⁸ Council Meetings, 26 Sept, 3 Oct, 3 Dec, 1856, 14 and 28 Jan, 1857, SCM 3, pp. 193-199, 203, 523-524, 560, 569; Letter from Taylor to Town Clerk, 22 Jan, 1857, recorded in Minutes of Council Meeting, 28 Jan, 1857, SCM 3, p.569

⁹⁹ Council Meetings, 6, 29 April, 6 May, 1857, SCM 3, pp.649-650, 663, 673

As far as the Council's attitude towards centralization and state intervention was concerned, the general tenor of the correspondence between the Sunderland local board of health and the General Board was one of co-operation. Both the Corporation and some local bodies and individuals, asked the General Board to adjudicate on various contentious issues.¹⁰⁰ There is no evidence to suggest that the local board resented the involvement of the General Board in their affairs. Indeed, Ranger's "interference" saved the Borough a considerable sum of money when he examined the details of their sewerage scheme, as will be seen in the next chapter.¹⁰¹

Reference has already been made above to the fact that the local board sought help from the Board to uphold their decisions concerning street widths. This was just one of a number of building Rules and Regulations that they had produced and sent to the General Board in 1854 for comment.¹⁰² Although the Board considered that they exceeded the existing powers of the local board, they were forwarded to Henry Austin, together with other documents in connection with building regulations, to aid the Board in their drafting of amendments to the 53rd and 72nd sections of the Public Health Act.¹⁰³ This, it would appear, had some effect, for the Corporation were satisfied with many of the proposed amendments to building regulations and the lay out of streets in the new Public Health Bill in 1855. However, they were disappointed that the matter of minimum street widths in relationship to house heights had still not been addressed. In addition they urged the Board to introduce measures that would increase powers concerning overall street layouts in relationship to existing ones so that they could prevent the creation of *cul de sacs* as in the Tatham case.¹⁰⁴ Although there were clearly

¹⁰⁰ For example the dispute with the Sunderland Dock Company over Special District rates to be charged for major sewerage works, Coxon to GBH, 23 July, 1856, Snowball to GBH, 13 Sept, 1856, J I and G W Wright to Campell, 24 Sept, 1856, Taylor to Snowball with copy to Coxon, 20 Oct, 1856, Snowball to Taylor, 25 Oct, 1856, GBH to Snowball, 1 Nov, 1856; also the dispute with Alderman Antony Moore over his building plans, Antony Moore to GBH, 24 July, 1858, Snowball to GBH, 4 Aug, 1858, Snowball to Walpole, 8 Oct, 1858, PRO MH13/177. This dispute with Moore continued over into the early days of the Local Government Office.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Crozier to the Sewerage Committee, 22 April, 1856, included in the Report of the Special Sewerage Committee, Council Meeting, 30 April, 1856, SCM 3, pp. 333-335

¹⁰² Snowball to GBH, 10 March, 1854, PRO MH13/177

¹⁰³ Taylor to Snowball, 25 March, 1854, PRO MH13/177

¹⁰⁴ Snowball to Sir B Hall, Bart, MP, GBH, 20 Feb, 1855, PRO MH13/177

law and order aspects to this, the local board were also concerned that *cul de sacs* would be difficult to drain and clean and so become receptacles for refuse and filth.¹⁰⁵ In fact the new Bill proposed giving local boards power to issue bye-laws on the points raised.¹⁰⁶ Yet this is a good example of the way in which Sunderland local board were ahead of the Government in this matter, and illustrates how they helped to promote additional legislation to achieve some aspects of sanitary reform.

An apt way of concluding this section on Sunderland is to quote a comment that members of the Corporation made about themselves. The United Sanitary and Sewerage Committees, convened to respond to Parkinson's criticisms of the Corporation in 1854, claimed that the Council consisted of a body of men who considered that if there were municipal honours, there were also municipal duties and responsibilities. This seems a fair statement, particularly when applied to men like Joseph Brown, William Mordey and James Williams, though these men could not have achieved what they did unless there was considerable support for their views among their colleagues. Sunderland Corporation, during the 1850s, showed a determination to take advantage of the Borough of Sunderland Act and public legislation to benefit the town. How far they were supported by their constituents will be considered in the next chapter when developments in sewerage and housing regulations are discussed.¹⁰⁷

Newcastle

The reformed Corporation was not entirely inactive towards aspects of public health and environmental improvements. From the outset they had a Town Improvement Committee and, as was discussed in the first section of this chapter, they obtained extensive powers between 1837 and 1850 to carry out and enforce a range of sanitary measures. However, progress seems to have been slow and piecemeal, despite the few 'voices in the wilderness', such as William Newton, a

¹⁰⁵ Statement on behalf of the Corporation with reference to Tatham's Memorial to the GBH, signed by Snowball, 1 Jan, 1853, PRO MH13/177

¹⁰⁶ Taylor to Snowball, 21 Feb, 1855, PRO MH13/177

¹⁰⁷ Report of the United Sanitary and Sewerage Committees, Snowball to GBH, 14 Sept, 1854, PRO MH13/177 and Council Meeting, 13 Sept, 1854, SCM 2, pp.672-676

Poor Law Union medical officer, and a town councillor from 1851, and Dr William Robinson, Secretary NGSA and town councillor from 1853.¹⁰⁸ There might have been high expectations generated with municipal reform,¹⁰⁹ but it does not seem that many people regarded environmental issues and public health as great priorities. For despite the Council's claims that they needed to strengthen their powers, they continued to do little to enforce them.¹¹⁰ During 1847 and 1848 the Council's attention was "pointedly and publicly drawn" to the deficiencies in the existing drainage and to the need for a more comprehensive system and greater powers. The NGSAs were certainly disappointed that despite having some powers already and much larger funds at their disposal than Gateshead, the Newcastle Corporation had, nevertheless, failed to take active measures to improve the town's sanitation.¹¹¹

The Corporation's initial attitude towards the Public Health Act is somewhat contradictory. Early in 1848 the Council unanimously supported Alderman Headlam's motion to petition Parliament in favour of the Health of Towns Bill, asserting that the provisions of the Bill, if carried out, would be beneficial to the inhabitants of populous towns.¹¹² Yet by the time that Rawlinson conducted his preliminary inquiry in December 1849 he found that the Corporation considered that "their Local Acts gave them all necessary powers" but if not, they intended to apply for an amended Act. Perhaps, however, their real opinion of the Act is reflected by the lack of interest shown by members of the Corporation in Rawlinson's visit. On the first day of his inquiry there were only two members present - the mayor, Joseph Crawhall, and Mr Arnett from the Town Clerk's office. This was in marked contrast to the large numbers present at the Gateshead

¹⁰⁸ *NCP for 1850-51*, p.lx; *NCP for 1853-4*, p.cvii

¹⁰⁹ See for example An address by George Hutton Wilkinson, Esq, Recorder of Newcastle, to the Grand Jury at the Winter Sessions Jan 1836, in which he urged that the health of the inhabitants should not be neglected at a time when the town was enjoying so many improvements through the rebuilding work of Grainger, Clayton and Dobson. *NCP for 1836*, p.5

¹¹⁰ Carleton Baynes, an Inspector of the General Board, considered the 1846 local act had been "a dead letter". Baynes to Chadwick, 16 September, 1848, PRO MH13/232. See also Hume *et al*, *Cholera Inquiry*, p.xiv

¹¹¹ Report of the Committee", *First Annual Report of the Newcastle & Gateshead Sanitary Association*, (Newcastle, 1848), p.9

¹¹² Council Meeting, 2 Feb, 1848, *NCP for 1847-8*, p.55

and particularly the Sunderland inquiries. As Rawlinson was to observe in 1854, the Corporation was not averse to having the power to deal with sanitary problems but they were decidedly against being brought under the operation of the Board of Health.¹¹³

One possible explanation for this unwillingness to adopt the Public Health Act may have been due to the relatively light number of cholera victims in the 1848 epidemic. Hume *et al* suggested that this was the result of the temporary measures that had been taken to mitigate the sanitary defects of the town during the “great Irish fever epidemic” of 1847-8. In particular the Corporation had conducted a general cleansing, together with the introduction of a new system of refuse removal and an improved water supply. This might have caused the council to have become complacent, convinced that they could manage their affairs perfectly well without outside interference.¹¹⁴

Dr Robinson considered that the proposed Newcastle Town Improvement Act,¹¹⁵ which came into force in 1850, was

...undoubtedly a well digested and able measure, containing many important provisions which, if fully carried into effect, would greatly conduce to the health and comfort of the inhabitants.¹¹⁶

However, the crux of the matter was whether or not the Corporation would indeed carry this new Act into effect, and given their indifferent record, there was nothing to suggest that this latest Act would fare any better. Despite Robinson’s optimism, he believed that the Public Health Act would have been much more effective in bringing about the reforms he believed were so necessary for Newcastle. Even though some financial provisions had been made in the new

¹¹³ Rawlinson’s Report to the GBH, on a preliminary inquiry in Newcastle, 7 March, 1853, PRO MH 13/232, Hume *et al*, pp.28-29, 44-45; *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.xxix-xxx. The reason why this Report appeared so long after the inquiry was because, as Newcastle chose not to adopt the Public Health Act, Rawlinson’s Report was never published. However, he submitted his report in manuscript form to the GBH at the time of Newcastle’s attempts to procure the 1853 Improvement Act.

¹¹⁴ Hume *et al*, p.viii

¹¹⁵ 13 & 14 Vict, c.77, *An Act for Extending and Amending the Acts for Regulating and Improving the Borough of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

¹¹⁶ Robinson, *SH*, 31 May, 1850, p.4A-C

local act, the Public Health Act would have established a local board of health with powers to raise, on mortgage of the general district rate, sufficient sums to provide for “the simultaneous drainage of all the main streets” rather than the piecemeal efforts that were made possible under their local acts.¹¹⁷ Perhaps more importantly, the Public Health Act would have brought Newcastle Corporation under the authority of the General Board of Health, which, of course, their local acts did not, and which was to give rise to such conflicts during the cholera epidemic of 1853.

The lack of enthusiasm for the Public Health Act persisted, even when the overlap of powers with the Guardians at the time of the cholera epidemic hindered positive action. Yet there seems to have been general unanimity between the members of both bodies concerning the Act. Mr Hurst of the Poor Law Board attended a meeting of the Guardians in September 1853 and advocated the necessity of applying the Public Health Act to Newcastle. When it was pointed out to him that Gateshead had also suffered, thereby demonstrating the inefficacy of the Act, Hurst argued that Gateshead had been less severely affected and that the deaths in Gateshead were due to the fact that their water was supplied from the same source. The Guardians would have none of it and Hurst’s suggestion was not even put to the meeting.¹¹⁸

The 1853 Improvement Act was Newcastle’s attempt to produce an alternative to the Public Health Act. It provides a good example of a model clauses act incorporating as it did sections of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act, 1847. The Corporation also took over the responsibilities and powers previously given to the Guardians by the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Act, 1848. However, there is no mention of the Public Health Act at all. Although they introduced powers to compel paving, levelling, sewerage, draining and flagging at the owner’s expense, together with building regulations regarding drainage to new and rebuilt properties, which were both measures included in the Public

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁸ Report of a Meeting of the Board of Guardians, *GO*, 9 Sept, 1853, p.4C-F

Health Act, there were some significant omissions. In particular there was no introduction of a local board of health or provision for a medical officer and Newcastle did not have to submit plans to the General Board of Health for approval. Moreover, in the event of a dispute, the General Board had no powers or responsibilities to act as arbitrators.¹¹⁹

Yet there were also aspects of Newcastle's 1853 Act which gave them powers of compulsion not contained in the Public Health Act. For example they gained powers to regulate buildings and to carry various works into effect, "in default of the owner" undertaking them. They could then compel the owner to pay the cost of such works immediately. This Rawlinson regarded as a great injustice, particularly for holders of property under short-term leases, and felt that it would be fairer if the costs of all such works should be spread over a number of years by way of a private improvement rate.¹²⁰ However, other important clauses, such as those related to slaughter houses and building regulations, were struck out of the Improvement Bill during its passage through parliament as a result of objections made by vested interests.¹²¹

Under the 1846 local act, the Corporation already had powers to make bye-laws for the registration and regulation of common lodging houses yet when Alderman Losh brought forward a motion in 1851 for the adoption of a series of bye-laws to carry these measures into force, he met with resistance from his colleagues. Hodgson objected on the grounds that this would establish "a very objectionable system of surveillance in the hands of the police" and would make poverty a crime. Mr Philipson argued that unless the Council went further and gave the poor the means of going to an improved lodging house, they would be left with nowhere else to go. The motion was rejected with 16 for and 26 against.¹²² When the Common Lodging House Act, 1851 came into effect the Corporation

¹¹⁹ 16 & 17 Vict. c.182, ss.3, 8-11, 38, 41; 11 & 12 Vict. c.63, ss. 37, 49, 51; Council Meetings, 30 March, 2 May, 1853, *NCP for 1852-3*, pp.46, 77

¹²⁰ Rawlinson, Report to the GBH...on Newcastle

¹²¹ John Cail to GBH, 9 April, 1853, PRO MH13/232; Council Meeting, 2 May, 1853, *NCP for 1852-3*, p.72; Hume *et al*, pp.438-439

¹²² Council Meeting, 7 May, 1851, *NCP for 1850-1*, p.64

largely ignored it, except for the compulsory clause regarding the registration of 113 lodging houses in the town. In consequence, lodging houses were allowed to remain overcrowded and unclean. Newton drew the Council's attention to the subject again in the early part of 1853 but the Act remained a dead letter until the cholera epidemic later that year.¹²³

During the 1853 epidemic, the Committee appointed to act with the Board of Guardians, reported that the provisions of the Common Lodging Houses Act, 1851 had been carried out by the police "to a considerable extent". This claim was dismissed by the Cholera Commissioners, who believed that the Council had merely carried out "a vague surveillance" of lodging houses in the absence of proper regulations.¹²⁴ Yet the Committee acknowledged that the Council had not, until just before the epidemic reached its height, made "those minute regulations for the government and management" of lodging houses which had now been adopted. The Committee particularly drew the attention of the Watch Committee to the regulations, asking that they might be put into effect.¹²⁵

When challenged on this failure to introduce bye-laws the Council's excuse had been that there was a difficulty in the definition of the term "common lodging house". Clayton, on behalf of the Corporation, argued that it was not the registered lodging houses that were the problem but all the tenement buildings that could not be proved to be lodging houses yet were inhabited by casual visitors. This was particularly the case, he claimed, among the Irish.¹²⁶ The Commissioners acknowledged that the Common Lodging Houses Act had caused difficulties with regard to interpretation but that this was true elsewhere as well, where powers had nevertheless been used and enforced with great advantage. They argued that

¹²³ Council Meeting, 27 Oct, 1852, *NCP for 1851-2*, p.137; Hume *et al*, p.xiv

¹²⁴ Hume *et al*, pp.xiii-xiv

¹²⁵ Council Meeting, 12 Oct, 1853, *NCP for 1852-3*, p.138

¹²⁶ Hume *et al*, p.463

...considering the entire neglect by the Town Council of their apparently unlimited power as to 'cleaning filthy and unwholesome dwellings,' it would seem superfluous to go further into the difficulties arising in respect of the far more limited powers as to 'lodging-houses'.¹²⁷

In other words, given their failure to make use of their powers under their local acts to order the cleansing of private property, except during times of epidemic, their excuses over the application of the Common Lodging Houses Act were pretty feeble.

Of the three towns, Newcastle was the most ideologically opposed to state intervention from London. This view was commonly held by councillors, guardians and others, who favoured a *laissez-faire* approach. Even though some rate payers were not opposed to rate increases *per se*, it suited the Corporation to act as though any interference from them would be resisted. This was particularly the case concerning sewerage, which will be discussed further in Chapter 8, but also applied to common lodging houses. Sir John Fife reported to the Cholera Commissioners that the Council had discussed whether the Corporation should obtain greater powers for the regulation of lodging houses but it had been decided that this was an encroachment on the liberties of the subject. He personally believed that such powers, if any, should be exercised by some private or public company.¹²⁸ Although some bye-laws had been introduced they did not include provisions for the regulation and cleansing of tenement housing because, it was believed, that they would have been unenforceable.¹²⁹

The general picture that emerges within the Corporation is one of apathy at best, and hostility at worst, to anything that would cost money and endanger their electoral support. They charged minimal rates during the 1850s despite the growing demands for sanitary improvements. When they first introduced the sewer rate of 2d in the pound there were those, such as Alderman Hodson, who were opposed to it, and they actually reduced the paving and watering rate from

¹²⁷ Hume *et al*, p.xiv

¹²⁸ Hume *et al*, p.122

¹²⁹ Hume *et al*, pp.404-405

4d in the pound to 3d in the pound in 1854. Yet when expenditure exceeded income, the Council's response was to reduce Committee budgets.¹³⁰ The Town Clerk justified the low rates on the basis that the ratepayers were "afraid of expense", and would not have accepted any increase.¹³¹ Yet, as the Memorialists to the Cholera Commissioners made clear, it was not the idea of local taxation for sanitary purposes that was resented. As has already been discussed in Chapter 6, it was the fact that, given their income from property, they were doing so little with the money they did have, thereby giving rise to accusations of financial mismanagement. After all, the Council had spent just under £6,500 on their five improvement acts between 1837 and 1853, with very little to show for it.¹³²

Yet herein lies one of the apparent contradictions about Newcastle's attitude to reform. Why were they so keen to spend such a significant amount of money and council time on all these local acts which strengthened their powers and extended their responsibilities, and then not make use of them? Although the 1851 and 1853 acts may have been inspired by the desire to avoid having the Public Health Act foisted upon them, it does not really provide an entirely convincing explanation. This is particularly so as there was no influential group pushing for reform, despite the activities of the NGSAs which will be considered further in Chapter 10. One answer lies in the fact that Newcastle had a much more divided council than either Gateshead or Sunderland. Not only were the Conservatives more powerful but social divisions deepened following the election of a new breed of councillors after the adoption of the Small Tenements Act, 1850. Thus, perhaps, there was great internal pressure from some quarters to introduce further legislation, yet the more influential men in charge of the relevant committees maintained the *status quo* by refusing to apply the legislation to those areas for which they were responsible.

¹³⁰ Council Meetings, 13 Dec, 1848, *NCP for 1848-9*, pp.33-36; 22 Oct, 1851, *NCP for 1850-1*, p.163. 4, May, 1853, *NCP for 1852-3*, p.82; 3 May, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.133-134; 8 Dec, 1858, *NCP for 1858-9*, pp.32-33

¹³¹ Hume *et al*, p.141; *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.lii-liii

¹³² Hume *et al*, p.428; *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.lv-lvi

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From the evaluation of each of the individual towns it is evident that there were very different responses to the Public Health Act, 1848. Although both Gateshead and Sunderland were enthusiastic supporters initially, Sunderland went on to make effective use of the powers obtained under the Act. The Corporation showed a determination to institute change, and there was limited resistance from the inhabitants of the town. Most of the criticism that did exist tended to favour even greater efforts and more rapid improvements. In contrast, Gateshead Council succumbed to pressure from vested interests both inside and outside the Council Chamber. Newcastle Corporation was hostile to the Public Health Act, and although they introduced a number of local acts, these were only half-hearted measures. The 1853 Act, in particular, appears to have been motivated by a desire to avoid the possibility of state intervention by pre-empting interference from the General Board of Health.

The general attitude to state intervention varied greatly. Newcastle was very jealous of her independence and remained wedded to a *laissez-faire* ideology. This view was shared by Corporation and constituents alike, long after many towns had begun to accept that some state intervention was desirable.¹³³ Gateshead had begun to accept the need for state intervention by the mid 1850s but were anxious to ensure that power lay in their hands rather than in a Central body. Sunderland Corporation appears to have accepted the level of intervention that existed under the General Board of Health, and continued to make use of the public servants in London, even when it was the Local Government Act Office that took over responsibility for public health matters. They also were content to increase their own powers, through various bye-laws, in order to bring about improvement. The fact that on the whole this was tolerated suggests that a degree of civic pride already existed in the town.

¹³³ Shaw, F J, *Facts for Newcastle*, produced by Newcastle & District Labour Representation Committee, (Newcastle, 1907), p.19

As was discussed in Chapter 2, poor ventilation and overcrowding caused especial concern for contagionists. Thus any improvements in common lodging houses, house construction and street lay outs were considered important measures in the fight against disease. From the discussions in this chapter it would seem that Sunderland Corporation were particularly diligent in the matter of building regulations and street lay out. Although they were also anxious to improve common lodging houses, as their bye-laws testify, this was something that gathered momentum once James Williams became chairman of the relevant Committee. Gateshead Corporation also seems to have exercised their powers with regard to common lodging houses with diligence and to good effect and showed some appreciation of the need for further powers to control the excesses of unscrupulous builders. Only Newcastle was reluctant to interfere in the management of common lodging houses until forced to by the 1853 cholera epidemic. Given that overcrowding and poor ventilation were implicated in typhus and pulmonary tuberculosis, the indifference of Newcastle Corporation to these conditions probably contributed to ongoing high mortality rates.

One way of obtaining a better picture of the differences between the three towns is to examine one aspect of the Corporations' work in more detail. Given one of the main thrusts of the whole thesis, the following chapter explores the Corporations' progress in sewerage and drainage between 1851 and 1858. Inevitably little could be completed in such a short timescale, but there was enough opportunity for major schemes to be planned and initiated. In addition, the next chapter looks briefly at some of the key salaried officials employed by the three Corporations, which provides an additional clue to their attitudes.

Before ending this chapter, it is salutary to remember that no Corporation was going to please everybody. A Newcastle song of the early 1840s encapsulated some of the problems facing town councillors by suggesting that all councillors were doomed to be criticized whatever they did. The extracts below illustrate the point:

The moment we're popp'd in our places,
Our enemies show their grimaces,
And friends, with their cursed wry faces,
Our measures ill-naturedly scan...

If improvements we want to secure
(And our motives are ever so pure),
In making a mere common sewer,
We're blamed without if or an: [sic]
'Tis too wide or too narrow, they'll say,
And with the cost there's the devil to pay'
We're ruining the town with expenses,
And taking quite leave of our senses...¹³⁴

¹³⁴ *The Common Councilman*, sung by Mr Geddes at the dinner given to Mr Henry S Straker, Newcastle, 4 Nov, 1843 and first published in the *Gateshead Observer*. Wilson Collection, 10, Item 155

8: LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN SEWERAGE, 1851-1858

In Chapter 7 the attitudes of the three Corporations towards public health reform were discussed in general terms. In order to look at these in a more detailed way, this chapter concentrates on salaried officials appointed by the Corporations to carry out work associated with public health and also discusses one specific element of sanitary reform: sewerage. A L Lowell, an American observing English municipal life at the beginning of this century, pointed out that the quality of local government depended upon the calibre of salaried officials, who through their administration and guidance of borough committees had ample opportunity to exercise considerable influence over municipal affairs.¹ Although this was after our period his point has relevance to us. The sort of men chosen to be surveyors and town clerks inevitably reflects the underlying ideology and attitudes of the Corporations themselves. They in their turn could contribute greatly to the advance in sanitary ideas, or they could help reinforce the negativity already present within the council chamber. The first part of this chapter will be looking at the contributions made by individual town clerks and surveyors in the three towns and considering how far they help us to gain a better picture of the underlying attitudes of the Corporations themselves.

Salaried officials

Although the Public Health Act authorized local boards to appoint medical officers of health,² none of the three towns had instituted this office during our period. Gateshead, for example, believed that this appointment should be postponed until they had had an opportunity of “more maturely digesting the measures to be adopted” with reference to the Corporation’s own imperative duties.³ Gateshead’s first officer, Dr William Robinson, was appointed in 1865 with an annual salary of £50 and the following year Sunderland selected Dr Yeld

¹A Lawrence Lowell, *The Government of England*, 2 vols, II, (1908), (New York, 1926), pp.178-180

²11 & 12 Vict. c.63, s.40

³Council Meeting, 1 Oct, 1851, Gateshead Council Minutes Book [hereafter GCM] 7, pp.8-9, 11

and Mr Maling to jointly hold the office on an annual salary of £50 each.⁴ Both the salary and the tardiness with which the appointments were made were by no means untypical.⁵ At least Gateshead and Sunderland acted before it became compulsory to do so under the Public Health Act, 1872, unlike Newcastle, whose first medical officer, Dr Henry Armstrong, was not appointed until then. Even then there were members of the Council opposed to the idea, including Benjamin Plummer who considered the appointment was of “no more use to the town than an umbrella to a duck”.⁶

There is no evidence to suggest that John Clayton, Newcastle’s Town Clerk, showed the slightest interest in sanitary reform and did not attend either the Conference of Town Clerks, organized by Gateshead Corporation in 1848, concerning the adoption of the Public Health Act, or Rawlinson’s inquiry in 1849.⁷ Clayton’s interests lay in improving the town aesthetically and commercially and he was one of the triad responsible for the great architectural developments in the 1820s onwards. Not only did he do little to further public health reform, it could be argued that he positively hindered it through his failure to do his own job efficiently. As the legal representative of the Corporation, it was his duty to ensure that the local acts were drawn up as well as possible. Of course the final decision lay with the Council, but as their advisor, one wonders how much time and money could have been saved if the 1846 or even the 1851 local acts had been drafted properly. He admitted to the Cholera Commissioners

⁴Alexander P Stewart and Edward Jenkins, *The Medical and Legal Aspects of Sanitary Reform*, (1866, 1867), 2nd edn reprinted with Introduction by M W Flinn, (Leicester, 1969), p.31 and Table II.

⁵*Ibid.* Leicester, Liverpool and Southampton were unusual in having first appointed their MOHs between 1847 and 1850. Liverpool paid a salary of £1000 per annum, which was well in excess of any other stipend.

⁶Council Meeting, 2 July, 1873, *Proceedings of the Council of the Borough of Newcastle upon Tyne* [hereafter *NCP*] for 1872-3, p.389. See also Council Meeting, 4 June, 1872, pp.366-371

⁷*NCP* for 1836, p.5; Rawlinson’s Report to the GBH, on a preliminary inquiry in Newcastle upon Tyne - taken upon an excess of mortality, under the powers of the 8th Section of the Public Health Act, March 7, 1853, PRO MH13/232; Minutes of the Conference of Town Clerks etc held 16 Oct, 1848, enclosed with letter from Kell to Carlisle, 18 Oct, 1848; Kell to Austin, 8 Nov, 1849, PRO MH13/77; *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Causes which have led to, or have aggravated the Late Outbreak of Cholera in the towns of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead, and Tynemouth*, (London, 1854), signed by Joseph Burnely Hume, John Simon and John Frederick Bateman, 15 July, 1854, *PP* (1854) XXXV, 92, [hereafter *Hume et al*], p.29

that the clause in the 1846 Act concerning sewerage was somewhat vague but that this was the result of the “great clamour against it” and so it was the best wording that the Council could achieve at the time.⁸ Although quick to blame the public for any failures in the legislation, he was, himself, uncertain as to the powers the Corporation had to include beneficial clauses. For example, the Commissioners suggested that a clause could have been introduced into the 1853 Local Act, analogous to those in the Town Improvement and Public Health Acts, which would have empowered them to make landlords of slum property liable for water rates so that their tenants could have water supplies. In reply Clayton confessed himself uncertain whether they could have done so or not but dismissed the suggestion on the grounds that the landlords would probably have resisted it anyway.⁹ Given that the Corporation were major landlords of just such property, perhaps the real reason was the expense involved.

There were three town clerks in Sunderland during our period. John Kidson was elected as the first Clerk in December, 1835 but he resigned three years later. His successor, Thomas Brunton, an ex-member of the Council remained in post until his death in 1848 and was replaced by William Snowball, who continued in office beyond the end of our period. Brunton had shown some interest in public health reform in that he had planned to attend the Conference for Town Clerks organized by Gateshead Corporation but was struck down by his fatal illness. He also seems to have been active in pursuing, through the courts, claims against perpetrators of nuisances, as has been seen in Chapter 7. Although Brunton was among those singled out by Reid for their assistance to him during his inquiry in 1843, neither he nor Snowball appear to have played an instrumental part in promoting sanitary reform in the town. Given that there were a number of activists in key positions on the Council, perhaps their contributions were unnecessary. Conversely, there is no evidence to suggest that either Brunton or Snowball hindered developments.¹⁰

⁸ Hume, *et al*, p.411

⁹ Hume, *et al*, pp.412-413

¹⁰ Council Meetings 31 Dec, 1835, 18, 25 Oct, 1838, Sunderland Council Minute Book [hereafter SCM] 1, pp.5, 156, 158; Minutes of the Conference; Kell to Austin, 8 Nov, 1849; D B Reid, *Report on the Sanatory Condition of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Shields, Sunderland*,

Gateshead's Town Clerk, William Kell, was prominently involved with the local sanitary movement, as has already been seen in earlier chapters. He was closely associated with William Henry Brockett, who originally proposed him for the Clerkship in January 1836. One example of the way in which Kell was no mere cipher of the Corporation, as far as sanitary reform was concerned, was the fact that he was among the speakers who addressed a public meeting in 1848 on the Health of Towns Bill. After going over all the usual ground - high mortality, false economy, vested interests, cholera and so on - he commented that drainage and sewerage was admitted "on all hands" to be the basis of the town's improvements. He expressed his disappointment, however, that the Bill did not go far enough, particularly regarding burials and the window tax. Once the Bill was passed he worked hard to see it implemented. Although the decision to hold the Conference of Town Clerks in October 1848 lay with Gateshead Town Council, it is likely that Kell played an important part in the Conference's inception as well as in its execution.¹¹

Two years after the application of the Public Health Act to Gateshead in 1851, Kell observed that the powers of the General Board did not go far enough. He felt that they were being unjustly blamed for not exercising powers that were in fact denied them and appreciated that the powers they did have were being crippled by those individuals and local authorities who wanted to protect their vested rights from interference. He considered that ample powers had been given to local boards but acknowledged that as they were not compelled to exercise them, they were being neglected.¹²

Durham and Carlisle, with Remarks on some Points connected with the Health of the Inhabitants in the adjacent Mining Districts, Part III - "Local Reports, with Explanatory Remarks", PP (1845) XVIII, 461, [hereafter Reid III], p.156

¹¹Council Meeting, 1 Jan, 1836, GCM 1, p.5; Report of Public Meeting on the Health of Towns Bill, GO, 19 Feb, 1848, p.1A, p.4D-F; Kell to Rt Hon The Earl of Carlisle, 18 Oct, 1848; Kell to Austin, 8 Nov, 1849, PRO MH13/77

¹²Kell to Rawlinson, 17 Oct, 1853, PRO MH13/77. This is out of chronological order in the file, among the 1854 correspondence. Given that the main purpose of the letter was to report on the cholera epidemic, it has clearly not been mistakenly dated.

Most of the correspondence between him and the General Board of Health concerned matters in which he was acting as the servant of the local board. However there is one letter he wrote to Robert Rawlinson in 1853 which reveals something of his own feelings and attitudes. By this time he was exasperated by the lack of will he believed existed within the Council “to face their narrow-minded constituents” and deal decisively with the insanitary conditions in the town. Brockett’s resignation in April that year would have significantly reduced the active support for sanitary reform among Council members and resistance to some of the sewerage plans, to be discussed later, was beginning to be felt. Despite these complaints, however, Kell was willing to acknowledge that the 1853 cholera epidemic had been less severe than it might have been because of the “considerable vigilance” that had been shown by the local authorities in enforcing the Lodging House regulations some time before the outbreak. This was in marked contrast to Newcastle.¹³

Kell’s overall frustrations had led him to consider resigning his clerkship but he had been induced by “some friends” to retain it in the hope that the Council would no longer allow the Public Health Act to remain “nearly a dead-letter”. He was also encouraged by the Town Surveyor, William Hall, whom he perhaps saw as a kindred spirit. In the event he was forced out of office, in the spring of 1854, following a vote of no confidence in his handling of the Cail affair, when he had disagreed with the Corporation’s view of the case. Given the feelings he already had, he was perhaps not sorry to step down, even if the circumstances were unfortunate. He was replaced first, briefly, by William Kenmir and then by J W Swinburne, neither of whom played a significant part in the sanitary reform movement.¹⁴

Gateshead Council’s Health Committee, soon after the adoption of the Public Health Act, recommended the immediate appointment of a surveyor/inspector of

¹³*Ibid*; Council Meeting, 6 April, 1853, GMC 7, p.408

¹⁴Council Meetings, 5, 20 and 25 April, 1854, GCM 8, p.298, 300, 306; Open letter from Kell to the Mayor, *GO*, 8 April, 1854, p.1B; Editorial comment, *GO*, 8 April, 1854, p.5D; Kell to Rawlinson, 17 Oct, 1853. For a full discussion of the events surrounding Kell’s departure see Frank Rogers, *Gateshead, An Early Victorian Boom Town*, (Wallsend, 1974), p.18

nuisances, not just because of the need to expedite the sewerage and drainage of the borough but because the implementation of inspection of lodging houses required the services of an officer to carry them out.¹⁵ In their selection, Gateshead Corporation demonstrated their initial commitment to sanitary improvement by choosing William Hall, CE, a young and energetic sanitarian from Bradford, over a well respected local builder, Robert Coxon Young. The *Gateshead Observer* commended them for making their appointment on the grounds of merit rather than partisanship, which was not happening everywhere, according to one correspondent to *The Builder*.¹⁶ Although Hall was both surveyor and inspector of nuisances, Police Superintendent William Schorey was appointed to inspect common lodging houses under the Common Lodging Houses Act, 1851.¹⁷

Although the Institute of Civil Engineers were hostile to the new tubular system promoted by the General Board of Health, and were antagonistic towards Chadwick and his sewerage schemes,¹⁸ Hall does not appear to have shared the antipathy of many of his peers. He was anxious to effect improvements to Gateshead using the “best & cheapest method”,¹⁹ and seems to have earned the respect of Superintending Inspector Lee, who described him as “a clever excellent officer”. Based on his own knowledge of Gateshead, Lee corroborated Hall’s views as to the best system of drainage for the town, and recommended, to Macauley, that he deserved all the support that the Board could properly give him.²⁰

¹⁵Council Meeting, 1 Oct, 1851, GCM 7, pp.8-9, 11

¹⁶ “The Gateshead Surveyorship”, *GO*, 1 Nov, 1851, p.5E; ESR”, “Public Competitions: Hull - Durham”, *The Builder*, 457, 8 Nov, 1851, p.712

¹⁷ Council meeting, 29 Oct, 1851, GMC 7, p.48

¹⁸*Report of the General Board of Health on the Administration of the Public Health Act and the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Acts from 1848-1854*, (London, 1854), PP (1854) XXXV, 1, p.49. For discussion about the relationship between Chadwick and the Institute of Civil Engineers, see S E Finer, *Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*, (London, 1952), pp. 439-452, in particular pp.447-448. See also Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, KG, 3 vols, II, (London, Paris, etc, 1886), p.443

¹⁹Hall to Lee, 3 Feb, 1854, PRO MH13/77

²⁰“ESR”, *op cit*, Hall to Lee, 3 Feb, 1854; Lee to Macauley, 8 Feb, 1854, PRO MH13/77. “The Two Hundred Guinea Man”, *GO*, 1 Sept, 1855, p.5E. Hall was 28 when he was appointed as the first Town Surveyor in 1851.

However, Hall was frustrated by the fact that the adoption of his plans rested on the decision of men who had neither scientific qualifications nor engineering skills. Something of this can be seen in the way that the Council rejected his initial plans for the sewerage of the Eastern District, as will be discussed more fully later. Another example was when he recommended alterations to the level of Half Moon Lane in order to improve the street and footpath, which were in a “very dangerous state”. It was decided that although he should carry out the necessary improvements, he was not to interfere with the levels because of the expense involved. It must have been galling for Hall to be instructed to produce the desired results without being allowed to do it in a professional way.²¹

Hall had a staunch ally in William Kell, who commended Hall’s efforts to Rawlinson but acknowledged that he had “the life of a toad under a barrow”. However, after Kell’s unfortunate departure from the Corporation in 1854, this would have been of little value. Hall’s exasperation is reflected in his decision to resign in August, 1855, after only four years in office, despite the fact that his merits were “on all sides fairly and freely acknowledged”. Although there were those who had believed that he was overpaid, at £210 per annum, others came to appreciate that if anything, he was in fact underpaid, given his abilities and hard work. Nevertheless, the negative attitude that existed towards Hall’s role is illustrated by a comment made by one member of the council, the confectioner, Mr Dingwall. Whilst accepting Hall’s virtues, and not denying his worth, Dingwall argued that a less competent, but rather cheaper, man would suffice for Gateshead. Dingwall’s proposal was not accepted and the Council appointed another professional, John Lamb of Liverpool, rather than being swayed by local interest.²²

²¹Hall to Lee, 3 Feb, 1854, PRO MH13/77; Council Meeting, 2 Aug, 1854, GMC 8, pp.376-377

²²Kell to Rawlinson, 17 Oct, 1853 [this letter is out of chronological order in the file, coming after a letter from Kenmir to the Secretary of the GBH, 4 Aug, 1854], PRO MH13/77; Council Meetings, 29 Aug, 30 Oct, 1855, GCM 9, pp. 102-103, 133; Advert for Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances and “The Two Hundred Guinea Man”, *GO*, 1 Sept, 1855, p.5E; Notice of appointment of Surveyor, *GO*, 3 Nov, 1855, p.1B; *Ward’s Northumberland and Durham Directory*, (Newcastle, 1850)

As early as 1843 some members of Sunderland Corporation, including J I Wright, had appreciated the need for a professional and experienced surveyor to carry out a systematic sewerage and drainage scheme.²³ When the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851 was passed, they took immediate steps to appoint an "Engineer Surveyor" to prepare a plan of the town and lay down a proper system for sewerage of the Borough. In October, 1851 William Crozier beat off opposition from five other serious candidates and was appointed on the same salary as the Town Clerk - £250 per annum.²⁴ Although some considered this too much, attempts to reduce his salary to £170 per annum failed to win sufficient support.²⁵ In fact, once Crozier was engaged in the mammoth task of surveying the Borough and drawing up plans, he was given two assistants on half yearly salaries of £65 each. What is more, as the amount of work increased, the Corporation decided, in 1854, to appoint a permanent Sub-Engineer, Thomas Younger, on a salary of £120 per annum and to provide him with four foremen at 25s per week.²⁶

In addition, the Corporation appointed a police sergeant, William Banks, to be an "Inspector of Nuisances" on a salary of £78 per annum. He was to carry out the provisions of the Sunderland Act and take instruction from the Council's Sanitary Committee. He was also empowered to act on behalf of the Corporation in taking all necessary proceedings for the recovery of costs incurred in sewerage, levelling, paving, flagging and channelling private streets. The expansion in the salaried staff of the Corporation reflected the scale of the work they had undertaken in sewerage of the whole Borough in a systematic way and their overall commitment to other sanitary measures.²⁷

As will be seen later, Crozier received considerable support from the Council. Unlike Hall's experience in Gateshead, the Sewerage Committee appointed to study his proposals included men who had a sufficiently scientific outlook to give them intelligent consideration. This is not surprising considering that the

²³ Reid III, p.202

²⁴ Council Meetings, 24 Aug, 10 Sept, 22 Oct, 1851, SCM 2, pp.287, 291, 300, 317-318

²⁵ Council Meetings, 12 Jan, 3 Aug, 1853, SCM 2, 441-443, 529

²⁶ Council Meetings, 8 Feb, 3 May, 21 June, 1854, SCM 2, pp. 596, 628-9, 649-650

²⁷ Council Meetings, 10 Sept, 1851, 2 Feb, 1853, SCM 2, pp.300, 449-450, 596

Committee included Dr Brown and William Mordey, both committed reformers. What reservations they had related to questions of detail about the best possible means of ventilation.²⁸

Although Newcastle did not come under the Public Health Act, the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Improvement Act, 1851, allowed them to appoint an Inspector of Nuisances. The following year, when this still had not been done, John Gibson sought to remedy this omission so that the act might not become yet another 'dead letter'. He noted that the act had provided that an Inspector should look after the erection of all new buildings to see, among other things, that proper ash-pits were formed, and good ventilation preserved. Although he acknowledged that the Board of Guardians had their own inspector, he pointed out that this officer's powers were limited. Gibson's proposal gave rise to a certain amount of discussion about the sort of duties to be expected of an Inspector of Nuisances but as will be seen shortly, the sort of Inspector of Nuisances established by the Public Health Act, was not appointed in Newcastle until after our period.²⁹

It was not until 1853 that Newcastle acquired the powers and responsibilities that demanded the appointment of a Town Surveyor of the kind envisaged by the Public Health Act. Newcastle already had a Town Surveyor, Robert Wallace, who had been in office since 1834. His main job was to look after the Corporation Property but his work had grown over the years to embrace public health responsibilities as well. In October, 1853 he recommended that, in the light of the latest Town Improvement Act and the Corporation's new "determination to fully exercise" the powers they had under the various local acts, they consider increasing the number of officials employed for the purpose. He admitted to being unable to "discharge properly" all the duties expected of him and was aware that much was being left undone,³⁰ for which he was criticized during the Cholera Inquiry in January, 1854. One witness, a pawnbroker called William Wilson, considered him "wholly incompetent" to manage the drainage

²⁸Council Meetings, 3 Oct, 7, 21 Nov, 19 Dec, 1855, 30 April, 1856, SCM 3, pp.203, 217-218, 242-243, 258-259, 333-335

²⁹Meeting of 17 March, 1852, *NCP for 1851-2*, pp.88-90

and sewerage of the town and argued that only engineers should be entrusted with what was purely an engineering operation.³¹ Yet given the invidious position Wallace had been put in by the Corporation he cannot be entirely blamed for his shortcomings.

Initially Wallace suggested that the duties of the Town Surveyor's department should be divided between a "Borough Surveyor" and a Corporation Property Surveyor but five months later felt that a Scavenging and Cleansing Department should be established as well. He urged the appointment of a new Borough Surveyor to take charge of all sewers, roads and footpaths, and all other responsibilities under the 1853 Local Improvement Act, and a Scavenging Superintendent to be responsible for the cleansing of roads and privies and the removal of all manure. He wished to continue being responsible for the Corporation property.³²

It is indicative of the Council's overall reluctance to implement their own local acts that Wallace received no response to his original letter in October, 1853. Although, at the time, his proposals were referred to the Finance Committee they had not considered it when his second letter arrived in March, 1854.³³ After further discussions and delays it was finally decided in July, 1854 that three officers should be appointed. Thomas Bryson was elected to be the "Town Surveyor" on a salary of £200 per annum. He was to take responsibility for sewerage and drainage, street repairs, building inspection and enforcement of the provisions of the local acts. Thomas Dawson was appointed Superintendent of Scavenging as well as Township Road Surveyor on a combined salary for the two jobs of £200 per annum plus 5% commission for any manure he could sell. Robert Wallace was to retain his duties as Corporation Property Surveyor.³⁴

³⁰ Wallace to the Corporation, 10 Oct, 1853, *NCP for 1853-54*, p.149

³¹ *NCP for 1853-4*, p.xlv

³² Wallace to the Corporation, 10 Oct, 1853 and 14 March, 1854, *NCP for 1854-5*, pp.90-91

³³ Council Meeting, 10 Oct, 1853, p.149

³⁴ Council Meetings, 5 March, 3 May, 14 June, 12 July, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.91, 120-121, 161, 167-171, 177

Dawson was described as “a zealous, clever, trustworthy, and exceedingly hard working man” who had been connected with the Water Company.³⁵ He was not an “Inspector of Nuisances” and it was not until 1862 that an “Inspector of Nuisances” was appointed in Newcastle, following a recommendation of the Town Improvement Committee. At that time they expected the existing Inspector to continue his duties as Road Surveyor and Superintendent of Scavenging but by then the role of an “Inspector of Nuisances” was seen as having a much more investigative and regulatory element.³⁶ When one contrasts the range of duties that Dawson had to those given to Banks in Sunderland, it is evident that it was not expected that Dawson would really initiate change. Rather he was principally employed to supervise scavengers and refuse collectors and ensure that the roads were in good repair.

Thomas Bryson, the new Town Surveyor, had been Wallace’s assistant and presumably what knowledge he had of sanitary engineering was based on his experience on the job rather than through any formal training. Wallace had started using an egg-shaped sewer with a flat bottom in the years immediately prior to the 1853 cholera epidemic, in place of the old brick tunnels, but Superintendent Inspector William Lee, who had not seen the design before, considered it objectionable. Wallace had argued that the shape of the sewer pipes did not matter because of the great declivity of the town, which ensured that they were always cleaned out. This Lee very much doubted. Bryson, having no doubt been influenced by his superior, claimed that these egg-shaped sewers were the best that could be devised. It was not until 1857 that Bryson reported having recently adopted oval shaped pipes.³⁷

³⁵Council Meeting, 12 July, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, p.171

³⁶*Report of the Town Improvement Committee on the Sanitary Condition of the Town*, (Newcastle, 1862)

³⁷Hume *et al*, p.27, 397-399, 457; *Reports of the Town Surveyor of Roads, Scavenging, and Nuisances, of the Borough of Newcastle-upon-Tyne for the years ending 1857, and 1858*, (Newcastle, 1858), p.7; “Mr Wilkinson’s Drains”, *GO*, 21 Oct, 1848, p.3B; Edwin Chadwick *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, (1842), edited with an Introduction by M W Flinn, (Edinburgh, 1965), pp.127-128; General Board of Health, *Minutes of Information Collected with Reference to Works for the Removal of Soil Water or Drainage of Dwelling Houses and Public Edifices and for the Sewerage and Cleansing of the*

Bryson produced annual reports to the Town Improvement Committee listing works done each year. Although he appears to have exercised his duties with care, he was very much the servant of the Town Improvement Committee, carrying out their instructions in a reactive way as nuisances and problems arose. Although he made suggestions to the Committee concerning such matters as the possible location of a deodorizing works there is little sense, from the records, that he played any significant part in changing underlying attitudes to drainage.³⁸

Newcastle had salaried officials that reflected the Corporation's overall attitude to public health. Clayton did nothing to encourage or initiate reform, and from his comments at the Public Inquiry into the 1853 cholera epidemic, was unwilling to accept that there was a serious problem. Newcastle's Surveyor was, by the end of our period, beginning to adopt up-to-date drainage and sewerage methods, but he did not have the calibre and drive of William Hall or William Crozier. The Corporation were quite content to use local men and in the case of Bryson, to make use of an existing employee. Clearly expense was not at issue for although they paid Bryson less than Sunderland Corporation paid Crozier, they were far more generous to Dawson than Sunderland was to Banks, even if the two positions were different. Therefore they could have attracted a properly qualified civil engineer if they had wanted to. They were perhaps wary of bringing in a well-educated professional who might have been less willing simply to follow instructions. It may be that they did not appreciate the advantages in employing a skilled sanitary engineer, despite the recommendations made to them by Rawlinson that given the problems of the town's topography, a competent and well-trained engineer was required.³⁹

Gateshead's significant salaried officials appear to have been key players in sanitary reform in the town. Unfortunately for both Kell and Hall, their views were in advance of many of those employing them. Although they reflected

Sites of Towns, (London, 1852), pp.3-5

³⁸*Reports of the Town Surveyor*, pp.19-23; Council Meeting, 2 Dec, 1857, *NCP for 1857-7*, pp.28-29

³⁹ Council Meeting, 12 July, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, p.168; *Ward's Northumberland and Durham Directory*, (Newcastle, 1851); Hume *et al*, p.31

attitudes that seem to have existed in 1848-51, by 1854/55 the Council had begun to retrench, as was discussed in the last chapter. The Council's unwillingness to provoke the vested interests of some of their constituents forced both Kell and Hall to reconsider their positions, even if the actual reason for Kell's resignation was not directly related to public health issues.

Sunderland Corporation appears to have sustained its commitment to sanitary reform in a way that Gateshead seems not to have done. In addition they were willing to pay for competent officers to carry out the work and acknowledged the need for adequate manpower to achieve their ends. There is no sense that any of the salaried officials in Sunderland were instrumental in moulding attitudes towards sanitary reform but they proved to be able servants who efficiently carried out the duties assigned to them and Crozier initiated developments such as the conversion of ashpits and privies into water closets, as noted in the last chapter.

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As was discussed in Chapter 2, safe sewage disposal was an essential part of the sanitarian programme, and was one of the aspects of sanitary reform that particularly reduced the incidence of gastro-intestinal diseases such as typhoid and cholera. Although uncontaminated water supplies were also essential to this, it is with the building of sewerage and drainage systems that we are concerned. The record of progress made in sewerage works during our period provides further evidence on which to judge the degree of motivation there was, in each of the three towns, for sanitary improvement in the 1850s. It also provides an opportunity to consider some of the very real difficulties facing the towns in their endeavours to introduce reforms.

The reason this chapter concentrates on the last seven years of the period covered by this thesis is because it was not until 1851 that, as was seen in the last chapter, Gateshead and Sunderland acquired the necessary powers and duties associated with sewerage. Although Newcastle did not acquire many of the necessary

powers until 1853, they had the opportunity to do so rather earlier, under one of their various local acts. This in itself is indicative of the general lack of interest there was in the town for sanitary reform.

Sewerage Works

As was discussed in Chapter 3 none of the towns were adequately sewered and drained before the adoption of the Public Health Act, 1848 or its local equivalent. Some of the reasons for this have been suggested in earlier chapters, including lack of powers or finance to undertake extensive improvements, even where there was some support. In addition, there was inadequate knowledge and a serious shortage of new glazed pipes and soil pans in the 1840s. In 1853 the *Sunderland News and North of England Advertiser* acknowledged the vast amount of painstaking and scientific work involved and that this could not be hurried.⁴⁰

When Dr A P Stewart conducted his own national inquiries in the mid 1860s, he was informed by Gateshead's first medical officer of health, that little more than one-third of the borough had been drained, although for the preceding eighteen months, drainage works had been pursued with "great vigour". Stewart expressed his astonishment that towns like Gateshead should have been so slow in carrying out systematic drainage works, though, as will be seen shortly, this was a slightly unjust assessment of the situation. Newcastle's Public Health Committee reported that the town's drainage was fourteen miles in length, and was carried into the River Tyne. The pollution of rivers in this way prompted Stewart to urge sanitary reformers to direct their efforts to remove such "a gigantic evil". Thus, although progress had been made since Reid's inquiries in 1843, neither Newcastle nor Gateshead had improved as much as Jenkins believed that they ought to have done. In contrast Sunderland seems to have had an effective system by 1866. Dr Yeld, the medical officer of health, reported that Sunderland had "A most complete system of drainage", thus making it one of the places

⁴⁰ Finer, p.298; Editorial, *SN*, 23 July, 1853, p.4C

whose progress encouraged Stewart.⁴¹ Nevertheless, even in Sunderland progress had been hindered in various ways.

One of the real difficulties facing towns, such as Gateshead and Sunderland, which came under the provisions of the Public Health Act, was that, with the best will in the world, it took time to introduce efficient drainage and sewerage systems. Under the terms of the Act, all major capital schemes, for which mortgage of the rates was required, had to be sanctioned by the General Board of Health. Before extensive sewerage and drainage schemes could be contemplated, full surveys had to be carried out and detailed plans, on a scale of 44 feet to an inch, prepared. This was a lengthy process, as the Sunderland local board discovered. In 1852 they informed the General Board that it would take two years to complete the detailed plan required by the Board, though in the end it took over two-and-a-half.⁴² Once the plan was finished, it took additional time for the Borough Engineer's proposals and estimates to be drawn up and approved by the Council, which was effected by January 1856. Although the general plan, particulars and estimates could be sent to the General Board, the detailed plan, which was on a 21 feet square sheet, was too cumbersome to be dispatched to London. Therefore Mr Ranger, a Superintending Inspector for the General Board, visited Sunderland on 18 February, 1856 to inspect them. He made his initial report on 16 March, and suggested a number of amendments to Crozier's plans which, he believed, would render the whole scheme more efficient and effect considerable savings for the town. The Board received an amended plan on 6 May and Crozier visited London four days later to give further explanation. As a result of this both Ranger and Henry Austin recommended that Sunderland Council should be granted permission to borrow the sum of £64,500 for the purpose of the drainage works. Thus it took nearly five years after the passing of the Borough of Sunderland Act and eight years after the passing of the Public

⁴¹ Stewart and Jenkins, *The Medical and Legal Aspects of Sanitary Reform*, pp. 30, 62-67. Stewart was a Glasgow-trained physician practising in London, a member of the British Medical Association and the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, and one of the sanitary reformers included in the original Royal Sanitary Commission appointed in November 1868, although excluded from the revised commission formed in early 1869. M W Flinn, Introduction to Stewart and Jenkins, pp.20-23

⁴² Snowball to GBH, 5 July, 1855, PRO MH13/177

Health Act before Sunderland could begin the systematic sewerage and drainage of the town.⁴³

Once sanction had been granted, it inevitably took years to carry out all the construction work required. Quite apart from the actual labour involved, it was a costly and time-consuming business obtaining the necessary funds and going through the legal process of giving property-owners sufficient notice. Even where improvements were not delayed by the bureaucratic requirements of the Public Health Act, or by the scale of the capital expense involved, difficulties were experienced by local authorities. This may have provided a useful excuse for those authorities that were half-hearted about reform anyway but for those who were more committed to change, local resistance, costly legal battles to enforce regulations and lack of funds created frustration.

Sunderland

The delays described above exasperated the Sunderland local board of health, who had been anxious to proceed with improvements as quickly as possible, after the passing of the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851. In 1852 they had asked the General Board for permission to go ahead with vitally needed works on the general system laid out on their existing, smaller-scale plan, which merely showed the streets and lanes, and their levels. They had promised that details of each house would afterwards be filled in and perfected whilst the works were in progress. They even proposed that if this was unacceptable to the Board, they should be allowed to commence drainage on one of the districts which had been properly surveyed and for which a large plan had been completed, without waiting for the whole town plan to be finalized.⁴⁴ From the General Board's response, it appears that they were unwilling to sanction works of main drainage, and the mortgage of rates for their execution, prior to the completion of detailed

⁴³ 11 & 12 Vict, c.63, s.119; Snowball to GBH, 3 Dec, 1855, 5 July, 1855, 5 Jan, 1856; Copy of Report of the Sewerage Committee to the Council, signed by Joseph Brown, chairman, undated, and enclosed in a letter from Snowball to GBH, 4 Jan, 1856; Crozier to GBH, 3 Jan, 1856; Campbell to Snowball, 15 Feb, 1856; Ranger's Sunderland Drainage Report, 14 May, 1856, , PRO MH13/177. Austin's concurrence with Ranger's recommendation is given in a scribbled note at the bottom.

⁴⁴ Snowball to GBH, 3 Dec, 1852, PRO MH13/177

plans for the whole town. Yet as the United Sanitary and Sewerage Committees observed in 1854, if the Council's wishes had been accepted by the General Board back in 1852, they would have already completed a considerable portion of the work, particularly in Monkwearmouth.⁴⁵

Something of Sunderland Corporation's serious commitment to the systematic sewerage and drainage of the borough is reflected by the fact that despite having a Sanatory Committee and a Paving, Lighting and Sewering Committee, they appointed a special Sewerage Committee in 1855, chaired by Dr Joseph Brown, to study Crozier's plans. This Committee was later retained to oversee the implementation of the plans once sanction by the General Board had been received. They gave careful consideration to Crozier's plans in 1856 and generally approved the system proposed, though they had two reservations. One concerned the proposed mode of ventilating the sewers, the other related to the depth of the drains to be laid. These arose, however, not from any desire to cut costs but anxiety to produce the best possible system. Concern about the depth of the drains arose because they wanted to be certain that all ordinary cellars and kitchens in the Borough should be properly drained. However, it was the issue of ventilation, and the way they dealt with it, that really illustrates the whole attitude and professionalism of the Committee.⁴⁶

Crozier's initial scheme included provision for ventilators at the end of each drain and at intervals. These would allow foul gases to escape safely through a three inch stoneware pipe which was to be inserted into the upper part of the drain and connected to a small purifying tank in which charcoal quick lime or some other deodorizer was to be placed to a depth of from two to three inches. By this means air passing from the sewers and coming into contact with the chemical was

⁴⁵ Report of the United Sanitary and Sewerage Committees on a Letter regarding the Sanitary condition of Sunderland addressed to the General Board of Health and signed C Parkinson, 13th Sept, 1854. Snowball to GBH, 14 Sept, 1854. See also Macauley to Snowball, 9 Dec, 1852, PRO MH13/177

⁴⁶ Council Meeting, 3 Oct, 1855, SCM 3, p.203; List of Committees for 1854-1855, Council Meeting, 15 Nov, 1854, SCM 2, pp.707-708; Copy of Report of the Sewerage Committee, signed by Joseph Brown, Chairman. Undated but originally given to the Council, and attached to a letter from Snowball to GBH, 4 Jan, 1856, PRO MH13/177

expected to be purified in the same manner as ordinary gas was purified by a lime purifier. The Sewerage Committee decided to carry out their own experiments to ascertain the efficiency of the proposed scheme and to make extensive enquiries generally on the subject of ventilation before committing themselves to Crozier's plan. However, they did not use this as an excuse to delay the overall project, nor were they quibbling for economic reasons. When Ranger saw Crozier's plans and the Committee's Report, he agreed with them that the proposed disinfecting ventilators should be deferred.⁴⁷

The committee met fortnightly and in addition to managing tenders and payment of contracts for municipal drainage works, served numerous notices on property owners, ordering them to join their private drains to the Corporation sewers.⁴⁸ For example, at a Council Meeting in June, 1858, the Sewerage Committee reported having served notices on 112 people.⁴⁹ They appear to have been willing to carry out private works in default of property owners failing to do so⁵⁰ simply charging them for the work.⁵¹ If property owners failed to pay, the committee did not hesitate to take legal action to recover the money owed.⁵² Generally the Sewerage Committee Minutes do not mention individuals by name,⁵³ but the Minutes of a meeting in September 1858 do list a number of people who were to be summonsed for their private drainage work accounts. The maximum sum involved was £3 6s 6d but charges ranged from 17s 7d upwards with the vast majority owing between £1 and £2. Although there were 26 separate accounts outstanding, in a number of cases the same individuals were involved. In particular, a Robert Adamson owed money for ten separate works.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Council Meetings, 26 Sept, 19 Dec, 1855, 30 April, 1856, SCM 3, pp.197, 259, 333

⁴⁸ For example, 23 Aug, 1858, Sunderland Sewerage Committee Minute Book, 15 May, 1858 to 31 October, 1859, TWAS CB/SU/52, [hereafter SSCM], p.17, Council Meetings, 13 Jan, 10 Feb, 1858, SCM 4, pp.1, 20,

⁴⁹ Council Meeting, 30 June, 1858, SCM 4, pp.111-115

⁵⁰ For example, on 14 June, 1858 it was ordered that a drain be laid by the Corporation from Thomas Brigg's house to the main drain, Brigg having failing to do so. SSCM, p.5.

⁵¹ For example, 28 June, 1858, SSCM, p.9

⁵² For example, 28 June and 9 Aug, 1858, SSCM, pp.9, 14; Council Meeting, 19 Oct, 1858, SCM 4, p.221

⁵³ On 26 July, 1858 it was resolved that no one should be allowed to see the lists of people upon whom notices had been ordered to be served to put in private drains. SSCM, p.13.

⁵⁴ Whellan's Directory lists three Robert Adamsons. One was a master mariner of 17 D'Arcy Street, Bishopwearmouth, one is given as a grocer etc, of 39 Queen Street and 49 Hendon Street

The Sewerage Committee were very active in undertaking and promoting both municipal and private sewerage construction. Perhaps what is particularly striking though is the fact that so many private property owners were anxious to obtain permission to connect their private drains to the Corporation sewers, once the drainage scheme was underway.⁵⁵ In addition the Committee appear to have responded well to those who petitioned them to lay municipal drains that would improve their own properties.⁵⁶ Yet one of the difficulties facing the Corporation over sewerage is highlighted by the number of claims made against them for damage done to private property. This was often of a structural nature, caused by inefficient sewers,⁵⁷ or as a result of construction operations,⁵⁸ but some of it was done to warehouse goods damaged by overflowing drains.⁵⁹ In many instances the Committee denied responsibility, and referred the petitioner to the contractor concerned,⁶⁰ some of whom appear to have been ready and willing to repair the damage.⁶¹ The social standing of the petitioner made no difference to the result. On one occasion Mr Cooper Abbs wrote to them claiming compensation for damage done to property belonging to Sir Hedworth Williamson as a result of the sewerage operation at the bottom of Malting Lane, Monkwearmouth, amounting to £48 but the Committee decided that the Corporation were not liable and

whilst the third one is listed as a smith and farrier, 39 Queen St and grocer, Hendon Street. It is most likely that the latter two Adamsons are father and son and it is perhaps more likely that one, other, or both of them owned the properties. W Whellan & Co, *History, Topography, and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (London and Manchester, 1856), p.679

⁵⁵ In one of their weekly reports to the Council in January 1858, there were 129 separate applications. Council Meeting, 13 Jan, 1858, SCM 4, pp.2-3. See also Council Meetings, 18 Nov, 1857, SCM 3, pp.785-786; 27 Jan, 24 Feb, 1858, SCM 4, pp.11-12, 37-38; Sewerage Committee Meetings, 31 May, 28 June, 20 Sept, 1858, SSCM pp.4, 8, 20-21

⁵⁶ For example the owners of property in Johnson Street and Water Street requested that a drain be made by the Corporation at the back of those streets and the Committee ordered that the engineer should proceed with the drainage works between these two streets. Committee Meetings, 15 Nov, 27 Dec, 1858, SSCM, pp.29, 35

⁵⁷ For example, 14 June and 12 July, 1858, SSCM, pp.6, 11

⁵⁸ For example, 7 July, 1859, SSCM, p.40

⁵⁹ For example, 23 Aug, 1858, SSCM, p.16

⁶⁰ For example when Mr William Thompson tried to make a claim in compensation for damage sustained to goods in his warehouse as a result of an overflow of the drain at the bottom of Burleigh Street, the Committee ordered that he be referred to Mr James Young the contractor. 23 Aug, 1858, SSCM, p.16.

⁶¹ For example in the case of damage done to property in Vine Street belonging to Messrs Wight & Sons, 9 Aug, 1858, SSCM, p.14.

referred Abbs to the contractor who had done the work.⁶² At times, when the contractor was slow to carry out the repairs the Committee were willing to carry them out themselves and then charge the contractor for them.⁶³ When the Committee did accept liability, as they did on a number of occasions, they were willing to discharge their financial obligations speedily.⁶⁴

The Sewerage Committee did not confine themselves to the work involved in organizing the sewerage scheme. Their efforts to introduce regulations enforcing the conversion of privies and ashpits into water closets was discussed in the last chapter. It made sense to them that for the full sewerage and drainage of the town to be accomplished, all human waste should be flushed away from dwelling houses and not be allowed to accumulate in festering privies. As was noted in Chapter 7, the Council did not support the scheme. However there appears to have been a change of heart for in July 1858 the Sanitary Committee reported that Crozier had discovered four houses without sufficient water closets or privies and ashpits and therefore recommended that the necessary notices should be served to compel owners to erect water closets on their premises. There is no explanation in the Minutes as to why the Council should have changed their policy on this, or why it was no longer the Sewerage Committee that was making the recommendation. What is important is that the recommendation was adopted without demur and a fortnight later the Sanitary Committee reported that a further 117 properties had been ordered to erect water closets. These properties were largely owned by absentee landlords and 25 of them were owned by Alderman James Allison. By November the Sanitary Committee reported that a "vast" number of houses in the town were entirely destitute of either a privy or water closet and that 206 notices had been served to such property owners to provide water closets. Work had been carried out for the most part, although one

⁶² 7 July, 1859, SSCM, p.40.

⁶³ For example, 12 July, 1858, SSCM, p.11

⁶⁴ For example it was ordered that £50 be paid to Mr Bramwell for damages done to him or his tenants as a result of drainage works being formed through Hendon Gardens. It was also ordered that £60 should be paid to Messrs Hoin & Scott for damages done by a sewer which was carried through a cellar of theirs plus £6 6s 0d to cover costs incurred as a result of arbitration. It was also accepted in this case that Messrs Hoin & Scott had power "should any nuisance arise from the sewer to remove it at the expense of the Corporation ...". 15 Nov, 1858, SSCM, p.28.

of the original four owners, Thomas Clarke, had had to be summonsed to recover the sum of £4 2s 11d due from him for the erection of a water closet in his property. The Sanatory Committee also reported that as works of drainage progressed, additional notices would be issued. In all cases Crozier inspected the premises concerned with a view to carrying out the requirements in the most economical and efficient manner.⁶⁵

All in all, Sunderland embarked on their sewerage scheme in a systematic manner and appear to have obtained considerable support from property owners who were willing to pay for branch sewers to the main drains. Where individuals resisted, the Council was willing to take action, and this does not appear to have aroused any significant outcry among the inhabitants. They were willing to borrow the necessary sum so that they could carry out the whole of the scheme in one concerted effort, and all the works were completed by 1860. Of course, as the town continued to grow so new streets required sewerage. Nevertheless, the evidence available for the 1850s demonstrates that the Council fulfilled their intentions to exercise their sanitary powers under the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851.⁶⁶

Gateshead

The lengthy time-scale involved in drawing up detailed plans is also illustrated by Gateshead's experience. William Hall, Surveyor to the Gateshead local board, was not ready to submit his plans to the Public Health Committee until February 1854, and it took a further seven months before the General Board of Health was ready to sanction the borrowing of monies to execute them.⁶⁷ Despite the fact that Gateshead Corporation had shown considerable enthusiasm for a sewerage system when they appointed Hall as Town Surveyor, by the time he presented his plans, attitudes had changed. In 1854 he complained to William Lee,

⁶⁵ Council Meetings, 14, 28 July, 22 Sept, 19 Oct, 3 Nov, 1858, SCM 4, pp.121-122, 131, 193-195, 221, 228-230

⁶⁶ Council Meeting, 21 May, 1856, SCM 3, pp. 353-355; Joshua Kidson, Chairman of Highways Sewerage Committee to Sir G C Lewis, Bart, MP, LGAO, 16 Aug, 1860, PRO MH 13/177

⁶⁷ William Hall to William Lee, GBH, 3 Feb, 1854, Kenmir to the Secretary of the GBH, 4 Aug, 1854, PRO MH13/77

Superintending Inspector of the General Board, that members of the board, who were large property owners in the higher parts of the town, had particularly opposed his Report. He believed that in so doing they were actuated by “sordid and selfish interests” because they did not want to have to pay the costs involved.⁶⁸ One reason for the apparent change may be traced to Brockett’s resignation in April 1853 due to ill health. As was demonstrated in Chapter 2, he was a powerful figure on the Council and had been a driving force for sanitary improvement, so his departure may well have had an impact. There were other reformers left behind, such as Peter Haggie, but economists like William Cook managed to thwart their efforts. For example, when Haggie and George Brinton proposed that plans should be ordered for the sewerage of the rest of the borough, following the adoption of the scheme to sewer the Eastern District, Cook and Skelton proposed and seconded an amendment that the plans should be deferred. The Amendment was carried by six votes to four, with one abstention, reflecting the deeply divided nature of the Corporation by 1854.⁶⁹ Yet it could be that the Corporation’s early enthusiasm for reform was more apparent than real, and that once the full financial implications had sunk in, members of the Corporation drew back.

Newcastle

Although Newcastle had introduced some measures related to sewerage in the 1846 and 1851 acts it was not until the 1853 Act that these powers were made explicit and were analogous to those contained in the Public Health Act. In particular they acquired the authority to compel property owners, in some cases, to construct branch sewers, though not to compel the making of a single house drain. This did not give the Corporation the same compulsory powers available under the Public Health Act, a shortcoming that still existed in 1873.⁷⁰ Yet from their delays in appointing a new Town Surveyor, and their unwillingness to select

⁶⁸ Hall to Lee, 3 Feb, 1854, PRO MH13/77

⁶⁹ Council Meeting, 8 March, 1854, GCM 8, p.274; Frank Rogers, *Gateshead, An Early Victorian Boom Town*, (Wallsend, 1974), pp.36, 38

⁷⁰ Borough of Newcastle, *Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Sanitary Condition of Newcastle-upon-Tyne with Tabular Returns, Diagrams, etc of the Sickness and Mortality during the year, 1873*, (Newcastle, 1874), p.11

a qualified civil engineer, it would seem that even after 1853 the Corporation did not make sewerage a great priority.⁷¹ Between 1847 and 1858 the Town Council ordered 91 streets to be sewered, flagged and paved by private individuals and groups, of which only 48 had been completed by 1858. Those left undone included the inaptly named Sanitary Place that had been ordered to be sewered in 1854. This lack of compliance indicates something of the attitude of the town's inhabitants to sewerage schemes, but also reflects the inertia of the Council in not exercising their powers of compulsion.⁷²

Although it was acknowledged that considerable sums had been spent on common sewers between 1847 and 1853, after the introduction of a sewer rate under the 1846 Local Act, it had been done in a piecemeal manner without any overall plan.⁷³ This was not helped by the lack of a suitable map despite the fact that the Town Improvement Act, 1846 contained a provision for one to be prepared that would be useful for engineering purposes. Although the Board of Guardians urged the Council to commission a map in 1853 and Robert Wallace, in 1854, told the Cholera Commissioners that one was in progress, George Robinson remarked, in 1858, that this still had not been done.⁷⁴ In fact Bryson did produce a map of the town's sewers in 1855, but this was no more than an ordinary street map with red lines marking the routes of the existing sewers.⁷⁵

Not only were many of the town's sewers built as brick tunnels but also six-sevenths of the town's gully grates, in 1854, lacked proper traps. Therefore the smells emanating from the sewers were foul. New sewers were simply connected to the old ones and the whole system proved ineffectual because few houses were

⁷¹ For example 9 & 10 Vict. c. 121, s.81 gave the Council authority to empower people to carry private drains into the common sewers but not to compel them. Under 13 & 14 Vict. c.77 c.16 they obtained power to compel, in certain cases, the making of private branch sewers, but not to compel the making of a single house-drain. Hume *et al*, pp.xvi-xvii

⁷² Table giving lists of streets ordered to be sewered, flagged and paved, *Reports of the Town Surveyor*, pp.61ff.

⁷³ Hume, *et al*, pp.xvi-xviii, 31, 45; *NCP for 1853-4*, p.xlv

⁷⁴ Hume, *et al*, pp.387, 397; *NCP for 1853-4*, p.xxix; Council Meeting, 13 Jan, 1858, *NCP for 1857-8*, p.44

⁷⁵ Thomas Bryson, Plan of the Town of Newcastle upon Tyne Showing the Sewerage, 1855, NPL, L912.2N536

connected to it through branch drains. There was no overall supervision of the works carried out and private builders who bothered to install drainage in new streets did not necessarily carry out the work on sound engineering principles. Wallace himself had only recently begun to abandon the old square shaped drains and as was discussed at the beginning, his flat-bottomed egg-shaped sewers were not a good substitute for the tubular system. He admitted that he had twice seen sewers explode, which, as Rawlinson explained, was because the sewers were too big for the steep declivity of the town. When large quantities of storm water rushed down and hit the river it acted like a battering ram, thus causing the sewers to burst.⁷⁶

Due to the inadequate sewer construction Newcastle inhabitants were unimpressed by the effectiveness of the system and so discouraged from investing in branch drains. One medical officer, Mr Harvey, told the Cholera Commission that the sewer in Darn Crook was a particular nuisance. Privies were placed over the open part of it and in heavy rain the water rose from the sewer and into the neighbouring houses. Another surgeon, Thomas Gregson, claimed that some of the worst cholera cases in 1853 had occurred in houses with water closets and those connected to the main drains. This was reiterated by the surgeon, George Clark, who believed that water closets were a perfect nuisance and that in almost every instance he had found an offensive odour arising from them.⁷⁷

Once Bryson was appointed Town Surveyor there was no move, on the part of the Council, to set up a specific committee to have responsibility for Sewerage, as had been the case in Sunderland. Instead, the Town Improvement Committee continued to exercise responsibility for drainage along with all their other responsibilities, including the major commercial building developments that formed such a big part of the Corporation's agenda. The contrast with Sunderland is marked in other ways. Throughout the period under discussion the Council continued to levy a sewer rate of 2d in the pound. Although the

⁷⁶Hume *et al*, pp.xvi, xviii, 30-32, 44-45, 245, 397; *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.xxix, xlv

⁷⁷Hume *et al*, pp.xvi, xviii, 210, 236, 246-247, 387; *NCP for 1853-4*, pp. xlv, xlix, l

introduction of tenement rating under the 1853 Local Act increased income, there was considerable resistance on the part of the Council to increase any of the rates in the belief that this would have been deeply resented. As was discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, ratepayers were not resistant to paying increased rates *per se*. What they objected to was that there was considerable evidence to suggest that the Council were mismanaging the funds they did have. The amount of 2d in the pound was small compared to the special district rates, ranging from 4d to 6d in the pound, that were being charged to the people of Sunderland for the works carried out there.⁷⁸

Another measure of Newcastle Council's attitude to sewerage is evident in the limited times the subject came up at Council Meetings. Whereas Sunderland's Council Minutes are full of reports and discussions concerning the major sewerage scheme, Newcastle Council Minutes for 1855-1859 give limited information. Yet Bryson was not inactive. At the end of 1857 he made a report to the Town Improvement Committee listing the work that had been carried out over the past year. These included six "very important sewers" into all of which house drains had been inserted. Their aggregate length was 2,870 yards, together with repairs to old sewers. The whole work had cost just under £3,731 of which about £670 had been recovered from proprietors. This brought the total length of sewers in the town to a total of 37,453 yards, or 21 miles 493 yards. The following year he reported that a further six major works had been completed. He suggested that many "virtually incurable faults" had been committed through a lack of skill on the part of various builders who had been responsible for many of the town's existing sewers. Yet his own tardiness in using circular pipes, despite the fact that private works in the town had been employing artificial stone pipes since 1848, suggests a lack of expertise on Bryson's part.⁷⁹

In 1858 Dr George Robinson moved that a special committee should be appointed to inquire into the most efficient and economical means of improving

⁷⁸ Finance Committee Report, Council Meeting, 24 Sept, 1856, pp.433-439

⁷⁹ *Reports of the Town Surveyor*, pp.6-7; "Mr Wilkinson's Drains", *GO*, 21 Oct, 1848, p.3B

the sanitary condition of the borough. In justifying his proposal he listed some of the failures of the Town Improvement Committee since the demise of the special Sanitary Committee. He complained that the existing sewerage works were defective, with poor connections between them and in several places, larger sewers emptying into smaller ones. In addition, inadequate account was taken of levels and so cellars were undrained. He also commented on the unsystematic basis on which the town's sewers had been built and pointed out cases where people, who had been paying sewer rates for a number of years, were still unable to install a water closet or a house drain because there was no main sewer to connect into. He concluded that the town's sewerage had not been based on a proper, comprehensive, and scientific survey and argued that the only way to achieve this was to borrow money on security of the rates. In this way the cost would be shared more equitably by present and future ratepayers. He suggested that whenever this subject had come before the Council in the past "there had been too much party feeling and excitement", so things had not been done. However he hoped that they were prepared to consider the matter in "a calm and impartial spirit" and out of a desire to serve the public interest.⁸⁰

It is very easy to criticize the local authorities for not doing more than they did, particularly given the ongoing high mortality rates highlighted in chapter 1. However, as was stressed in chapter 2, there were rational grounds for questioning medical opinion and in Newcastle, particularly, the views of some of the medical men were dismissed as untrustworthy in some quarters.⁸¹ In a climate where economy was one of the measures of effective government, local authorities were understandably cautious about embarking on expensive sewerage and drainage schemes based on controversial engineering innovations. Despite that, Gateshead and particularly Sunderland corporations had made a certain amount of progress by 1858, with further work in hand. Indeed, two years later, Sunderland had completed the whole of the sewerage of the town outlined in the

⁸⁰Council Meeting, 19 Jan, 1858, *NCP for 1857-8*, pp.44-45

⁸¹See for example comments made by Ald Hodgson in a Council Meeting, 2 May, 1855, *NCP for 1854-55*, p.131

plans sanctioned by the General Board in 1856.⁸² Therefore, despite all the difficulties, Sunderland demonstrated what could be achieved if there was sufficient motivation. The fact that Newcastle had done so little, in comparison, serves to show how little the Corporation were committed to modern sewerage.

⁸²Kidson to Sir G C Lewis, Bart, MP, LGAO, 16 Aug, 1860, PRO MH13/177

9: THE ATTITUDES OF MEDICAL MEN IN THE THREE TOWNS AND THEIR RESPONSE TO PUBLIC REFORM

During the 1830s there was an intellectual awakening amongst members of the medical profession, which was in part due to the debate concerning the nature of disease and its transmission, explored in Chapter 2. With the growing acceptance of an environmental theory of disease, health and sickness were seen as the collective responsibility of mankind. By the same token, society was believed to be capable of doing something to solve the problem of premature mortality. This in turn became a political issue as environmental theory gave rise to social criticism and reform. However, the socio-political attitudes of the medical profession need to be considered against a wider context, which has a bearing on the main theme of this chapter. The movement to reform English government and institutions, that began with the First Parliamentary Reform Act, had paved the way for changes in other institutions as well, including the medical establishment. Eyler suggests that the reform campaign of the early 1830s heightened the discontent that already existed amongst the lower ranks of medical men, whose status and incomes were being controlled by the traditional élites within the profession.¹ On the other hand, there was concern, both inside and outside the profession, about the quacks and incompetents who preyed on unsuspecting patients, promising cures with a host of “pseudo-specifics” and pandering to the rich and fashionable by “humouring the caprices of the sickly and silly”.² In 1841 medical reformers in the North of England demanded protection against unlicensed practitioners; minimum entry requirements to the profession; and full representation on a National Council which would, among other things, have

¹ John M Eyler, *Victorian Social Medicine, The Ideas and Methods of William Farr*, (Baltimore and London, 1979), pp.3; 198-199. See also the comparisons Pickstone makes between religious and medical orthodoxy and dissent. John V Pickstone, “Establishment and Dissent in Nineteenth-Century Medicine: An Exploration of Some Correspondence and Connections between Religious and Medical Belief-Systems in Early Industrial England”, pp.165-189 in W J Shiels, (ed), *Studies in Church History, Vol 19: The Church and Healing*, (Oxford, 1982), pp.165-166; 176-179

² “The ‘Profession’ and the Prevalent Epidemic, A Letter from Punch to the Public”, *Punch*, 17, (1849), p.105

powers to licence practitioners and determine on questions and measures affecting public health.³

There was a professional distinction between physicians on the one hand and apothecaries and surgeons on the other, the former generally holding a medical degree, although by the 1840s, surgeons and apothecaries were beginning to acquire academic credentials and professional respectability.⁴ Nevertheless, the medical professions were still riven with socio-economic divisions as well as professional rivalries. Thus, there was quite a gulf between physicians, with a thriving private practice of well-to-do patients, and the Poor Law medical officers struggling to survive on meagre stipends and negligible fees derived from the working classes.⁵ Yet, as Lord Shaftesbury noted in his Journal, it was the Poor Law medical officers who knew much more when it came to dealing with cholera than “all the flash and fashionable doctors of London”.⁶

Apart from priests and ministers of religion, medical practitioners, and particularly the Poor Law Surgeons, were the most closely acquainted with the living conditions of the working classes for they, unlike other members of their class, moved beyond the public world into the private space of the urban poor. There they were confronted with the misery that the conditions wrought and were not infrequently affronted and physically sickened by the smells and squalor they

³“RMG” [Robert Mortimer Glover], *Observations on Medical reform, address to the Members of the North of England Medical Reform Association*, first printed in the *Gateshead Observer*, 28 August, 1841, (Gateshead, 1841), p.4. See also Greenhow’s attempts to persuade general practitioners and surgeon apothecaries to adopt the principle of separating professional fees from price of medicines and to establish a fixed scale of fees for home visits and medicines. T M Greenhow, *Hints Towards the Adoption of an Improved Principle of Remunerating the Surgeon Apothecary or General Practitioner in Medicine, Addressed to the Members of the Profession and the Public at Large*, (Newcastle, 1824), pp.24-25; Pickstone, pp.184-188

⁴For example, William Newton, a Newcastle Poor Law medical officer, who will feature prominently in this chapter, went to Edinburgh University, where he achieved scholastic success, as well as undergoing an apprenticeship. Richard Welford, *Men of Mark Twixt Tyne and Tweed*, 3 vols, III, (London, 1895), p.220. See also W F Bynum, *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 5, 49

⁵For example Mr R H Wilson, a Gateshead Union medical officer, failed to get his annual salary increased from £70 p.a. despite a considerable increase in workload. At the same time the Town Surveyor was being paid £210 p.a. Reports of Board of Guardians Meetings - 3, 17 April, 1 May, 1855, *GO*, 7 April, p.5E, 21 April, p.6D, 5 May, 1855, p.6D

⁶Extract from Lord Shaftesbury’s Journal, 9 Aug. 1853, Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, KG*, 3 vols, II, (London, Paris, etc, 1886), p.443

encountered.⁷ Like priests, they “continually besought” the intervention of the Board on behalf of the labouring population⁸ for, as Robinson remarked, “no person of education or common humanity” could see their condition without perceiving that there was something “rotten in our social arrangements”.⁹ In addition they, like clergy and ministers, were exposed to the risks of infection and a number fell victim as a result.¹⁰ Yet *Punch* highlighted just how ineffectual a great part of their work was - their “sham fight with disease”.¹¹ Much of their practice was based on inadequate understanding of the nature of disease and its transmission, but their effectiveness was further hindered by the lack of resources available to them, with Poor Law medical officers sometimes having to pay for drugs out of their own pocket, as highlighted by a Gateshead practitioner, Charles Henderson.¹² *Punch* was not entirely unsympathetic to the plight of the underpaid, overworked surgeons and apothecaries as the cartoon on the next page demonstrates. Here an overweight London alderman seeks out the most miserable looking apothecary he can find to be an officer of health on the basis that no-one else would be willing to work for the pittance offered by the authorities.¹³

⁷ Newton admitted that he frequently vomited on house visits to patients in All Saints parish because of the smell in their rooms. Conditions were particularly bad during the winter when those windows that did exist were kept shut to keep out the cold. *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Causes which have led to, or have aggravated the Late Outbreak of Cholera in the towns of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead, and Tynemouth*, (London, 1854), signed by Joseph Burnely Hume, John Simon and John Frederick Bateman, 15 July, 1854, *PP* (1854) XXXV, 92, [hereafter Hume *et al*], p.181.

⁸ *Report of the General Board on the Administration of the Public Health Act and the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Acts from 1848-1854*, (London, 1854), *PP* (1854) XXXV, 1, pp.31, 36-37; Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, (1842), edited with an Introduction by M W Flinn, (Edinburgh, 1965), p.397

⁹ *GO*, 19 Feb, 1848, p.4D-F;

¹⁰ For example, Dr Davis of Gateshead, who died of typhus in 1847. List of local events of Year 1847, *Local Collections; or Records of Remarkable Events, Connected with the Borough of Gateshead, 1848*, (Gateshead, 1848), p.9. Others, such as William Shiell, surgeon, survived an attack but were dangerously ill for some time. “A Lecturer” [William Newton], *A Letter to the Venerable Archdeacon Thorp on the Causes which led to the Disruption of the School of Medicine, in Newcastle-on-Tyne*, (Newcastle, 1851), p.8. See also the account of the 1847 fever epidemic, *GO*, 13 Nov, 1847, p.2, col G

¹¹ “Review of the Medical Line”, *Punch*, 25 (1853), p.112

¹² Report of Board of Guardians Meeting - 12 June, *GO*, 16 June, 1855, p.6F. See also Gateshead Guardians towards the local medical officers in “The Health of Tyneside”, Letter I, *Northern Tribune*, I (1854), 28-29, p.29

¹³ *Punch*, 15 (1848), p.173



THE ALDERMAN AND THE APOTHECARY.

Ald. I do remember an Apothecary.
 And if we need an Officer of Health
 To toil upon the lowest salary,
 This object is the very man for us.

Come hither, Sir; I see you are hard up:
 Hold. There are fifty and a hundred pounds
 Per annum, for your wages. Let us have
 Your service to explore the sinks and sewers
 Of our foul city and its liberties.
Apoth. The pay is very small; and the employ

Is death to many a man that works at it.
 My poverty, and not my skill, consents.
Ald. We pay thy poverty and not thy skill.

Shakspeare (a little altered.)

Perhaps, not surprisingly, given his distrust of protectionist professional groups, Chadwick was critical and suspicious of the higher echelons of the medical profession, which he regarded as perpetuating and preserving all that was inefficient, corrupt and inadequate in British medical practice. This was to antagonise some members of the profession, who not only rejected his views, but also the views of some of the officers of the General Board, as will be seen later. In contrast Chadwick respected the surgeons who worked for the Poor Law Unions and the armed services.¹⁴ Although this says something about Chadwick, it also says something, perhaps, about the sort of divisions that existed between different parts of the medical profession and their attitudes towards sanitary reform - a point to be borne in mind when considering individual medical men in the three towns.

Chadwick was not alone in promoting the professionalization of medical practitioners. Kay foresaw the permanent establishment of boards of health which he believed should be "organized centres of medical police" with municipal powers directed by "scientific men".¹⁵ Yet despite Chadwick's respect for Poor Law medical officers, and their own first-hand experience, he was well aware of the difficulties that many of them faced in fulfilling their duties because of vested interests.¹⁶ He also provided an explanation as to why so few towns appointed

¹⁴ Margaret Pelling, *Cholera, Fever and English Medicine 1825-1865*, (Oxford, 1978), pp.7, 12; M W Flinn, Introduction to Chadwick, *Report*, pp.60-61; Chadwick, pp.406-410. Flinn discusses the extent of Chadwick's famed hostility to the medical profession, tempering received wisdom by suggesting that part of this hostility was more apparent than real. One reason he suggests is that given that a high proportion of the people he worked with after 1838 were in fact doctors, there was a high mathematical probability that if he was going to have any differences of opinion it would be with doctors. Flinn also suggests that given Chadwick's streak of vanity, he was perhaps subconsciously afraid that there were those doctors around him who might steal his own thunder. Flinn, pp.60-61

¹⁵ James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, (1832), new impression with Foreword by E L Burney, (Manchester, 1969), p.13

¹⁶ Chadwick, *Report*, pp.404, 424. The use of the word 'professionalism' in this context is not to be confused with that used by Flinn. Flinn comments that Chadwick has been regarded as having a wider distrust of all professionalism. In that context Flinn refers to the sort of education typical of professional men of his day that did not acknowledge the importance of practical skills. Flinn, p.60. The word 'professionalism' is being used in the text above to mean the development of scientific and clinical knowledge that was gradually being adopted by the new medical schools, such as the Newcastle Medical School up to its demise in 1851 and more particularly by one of its two successors, the Newcastle-upon-Tyne College of Medicine and Practical Science.

medical officers of health until the 1860s or later. His own sanitary scheme rested not on the skill of doctors but on the science and ingenuity of civil engineers. The physician had, in effect, done his job when he had pointed out the problems.¹⁷ However, much of the advice of local medical men, particularly in Newcastle, was ignored and their opinions derided.¹⁸ For example one Newcastle surgeon reported a nuisance caused by a sunken barrel designed to collect liquid manure from a cow-feeder's premise. This not only produced foul smells but when it overflowed, which it did regularly, the contents seeped into the nearby home of an old couple. Although this had gone on for three years and the barrel had been installed by "a gentleman", who was said to bear "the character of a philanthropist", the surgeon failed to get the situation remedied.¹⁹

Both Newcastle and Sunderland had medical practitioners on their Town Councils in 1849 - a time when decisions were being taken whether or not to apply for the adoption of the Public Health Act, 1848. In Newcastle Aldermen Sir John Fife, surgeon and Dr Thomas Emerson Headlam, had been long-standing members, having joined the unreformed Corporation in its final years.²⁰ In Sunderland there was one physician, Alderman Dr Joseph Brown, and two surgeons, Councillors William Mordey and John Watson.²¹ However, these were not the only medical men who had been members of Newcastle and Sunderland Corporations in the years immediately before, and other men were to join in subsequent years. In Newcastle, in particular, the changes in the Council membership in the 1850s as a result of the adoption of the Small Tenements Rating Act, brought a number of local surgeons onto the Council.²² Although Alderman Robert Davis, surgeon,

¹⁷ Chadwick, pp.396-397

¹⁸ See for example Editorial, *NC*, 27 Sept, 1850, p.4B

¹⁹ Anon, "Condition of the Poor", Letter V, *NC*, 10 May, 1850, p.4A-B

²⁰ Election of Councillors and Aldermen, *The Proceedings and Reports of the Town Council of the Borough of Newcastle* [hereafter *NCP*] for 1836, p.1. See also Appendices VIII(B) and IX(B)

²¹ See Appendix IX(A). Council Meetings, 9 Nov, 1838 and 9 Nov, 1842, Sunderland Council Minute Book [hereafter *SCM*] 1, pp.165, 356; 1 Nov, 1848 and 1 Nov, 1849, *SCM* 2, pp.50, 124. Although Brown's election as Alderman is recorded in the Minute Book on 9 Nov, 1838, there is no record of his original election to the Council. Mordey's first election is recorded in the *SH*, 18 Feb, 1842, p.3C

²² For example William Newton, George N Clark, Thomas L Gregson and Dr George Robinson. List of Councillors and Record of Events, *NCP for 1853-4*, frontispiece, pp. xlii-xliii; *NCP for 1854-5*, frontispiece

had been a member of Gateshead Corporation in 1836, he died of typhus in 1847 and by 1849 there was no other medical man on the Council.²³

Medical men perhaps had the greatest potential to influence their non-medical colleagues on the various local bodies, as well as their fellow citizens, in matters of public health. One of the aims of this chapter is to consider how far the personalities involved amongst the medical practitioners in the three towns influenced attitudes towards sanitary reform both inside and outside the Council chambers. All three towns were very different and so will be considered separately before drawing some general conclusions.

Newcastle

The kind of tensions that could exist between members of the medical profession in a particular town erupted into a major schism in Newcastle in 1851, which led to the formation of two rival medical schools until 1857. It arose, ostensibly, between Dr Dennis Embleton and Mr Shiell when Embleton, as a Poor Law Guardian, used his casting vote in the choice of a new Poor Law medical officer in favour of an old friend, William Winship, rather than his colleague at the Medical School, Mr Shiell.²⁴

The details of the event itself have been well described elsewhere, most notably by Stephen Harbottle in recent years, and it is therefore unnecessary to restate them here. However, what is relevant is Harbottle's suggestion that the dispute of 1851 throws "a revealing light upon the close-knit relationships of the local establishment of the time". It highlights the uneasy undercurrents that existed amongst the town's medical profession, based on social and economic inequality.

²³ List of local events of Year 1847, *Local Collections; or Records of Remarkable Events, Connected with the Borough of Gateshead, 1848* (Gateshead, 1848), p.9; Appendix IX(C)

²⁴ *NCP for 1850-1*, p.xxx; Dennis Embleton, *The History of the Medical School, afterwards the Durham College of Medicine at Newcastle-upon-Tyne for forty years from 1832 to 1872*, (Newcastle, 1890), pp.34-36; "A Lecturer" [William Newton], *A Letter to the Venerable Archdeacon Thorp on the Causes which led to the Disruption of the School of Medicine, in Newcastle-on-Tyne*, (Newcastle, 1851); Stephen Harbottle, "The Disruption of the Newcastle Medical School in 1851 and its Consequences", *Archæologia Aeliana*, 5th Series, XXI (1993), 241-264, p.243; G Grey Turner and W D Arnison, *The Newcastle upon Tyne School of Medicine 1834-1934*, (Newcastle, 1934), pp.35-40; 58-9; 67-68

This is well illustrated by comments made by one of the chief protagonists in the Disruption, William Newton (1815-1863). A controversial figure at the best of times, Newton had helped exacerbate things because of his personal hostility towards Embleton. This went much deeper than a sense of injustice on behalf of his friend, Shiell. Newton had been incensed by Embleton's attempts, on becoming a Guardian, to reduce the earnings of Poor Law medical officers like himself, who had none of the social and economic advantages of doctors like Embleton. There was also some professional rivalry between Embleton and Sir John Fife, who was the leader of the minority party which included Newton.²⁵

Embleton was considerably younger than Fife but was sophisticated and well-travelled, which secured him the support of professional and educated opinion in the town. In contrast, Sir John Fife, a surgeon since 1818, lacked Embleton's education.²⁶ The anonymous author of *Sketches of Public Men of the North* described him as:

Clever - ready without learning....correct without being profound....If he had been more striking in mental power he would not have been a local surgeon.²⁷

Nevertheless Fife was a popular man among the middle and working classes of the town and enjoyed considerable influence, particularly between 1834 to 1838, as a result of his Radical activities. Public attitudes towards him changed however when, as mayor, he was responsible for calling out the army to break up a Chartist demonstration. Although he was given a knighthood for this, he was branded a traitor by his former friends and never quite recovered his earlier popularity. He was a prominent and active member of the Council throughout our period, despite the remark made against him that "the municipal portion of his life [was] the least satisfactory portion of his eventful career."²⁸ Part of the

²⁵ Harbottle, pp.241, 244-245; Newton, p.14

²⁶ Harbottle, p.241; Hume *et al*, *Cholera Inquiry*, p.113

²⁷ *Sketches of Public Men of the North*, revised and corrected edn, (London and Newcastle, 1855), pp.89-90

²⁸ *Sketches*, pp.85-87; Welford, *Men of Mark*, p.233; *First Annual Report of the Newcastle & Gateshead Sanitary Association*, [hereafter *NGSA Report*] (Newcastle, 1848), pp.1; P Brett, "John Fife and Tyneside Radicalism in the Eighteen-Thirties: the Struggle for Progressive Compromise", *Northern History*, XXXIII, (1997), 184-217, pp.184, 187-188, 191-2

problem, highlighted by the *Sketches*, was that in the Council he was “out of his element”. The author notes:

His tastes, his associations, the character of his mind and thoughts, unfit him for a discussion on a township rate, or a debate on pipe drainage, or whether the egg shaped or flat-bottomed sewer is the safest and best.²⁹

This criticism was not entirely fair. For example, when discussion took place about introducing a sewer rate in 1849, Fife showed a certain amount of appreciation for a number of practical issues. He supported a higher rate than originally suggested because of the “vast importance” of cleansing the town and also urged that at a time of high unemployment more could be achieved with the money and provide much needed work in the town. Yet there is some truth in the picture given in the *Sketches* of Fife’s general attitude. In his testimony to the Cholera Commissioners he showed remarkable ignorance about the powers available under the 1846 local act despite being both an alderman and a magistrate. For example, he was unaware that the Council had powers to introduce lodging house regulations and bye-laws laying down rules for cleaning filthy and unwholesome houses. He also seemed ill-informed about the true state of the worst districts in the town. These examples suggest that he may have lacked interest in such commonplace details of municipal affairs, though on subjects that really stirred him, he could be a powerful and eloquent orator.³⁰

In the acrimonious relationship between Embleton on the one hand and Fife and Newton on the other, we see an example of just the sort of rivalries that existed between physicians and surgeons that Pickstone describes.³¹ It is against this background that we turn now to a consideration of the medical men’s attitudes towards public health problems. Neither side in the dispute were either totally supportive of, or opposed to sanitary reform. All the key medical men involved, apart from Newton, had been members of the Newcastle and Gateshead Sanitary Association [NGSA] when it first formed. Headlam and Fife were among the

²⁹ *Sketches*, p.88

³⁰ Hume *et al*, pp.113, 115-117, 123; Council Meeting, 13 Dec, 1848, *NCP for 1849*, p.34; *Sketches*, pp.88-89; Welford I, p.234; Brett, p.192

³¹ Pickstone, “Establishment and Dissent in Nineteenth-Century Medicine”, pp.184-188

group of vice-presidents, along with other local worthies and Embleton and Dr Charlton, leading members of the majority party, were on one of its sub-committees, along with Dr Robinson, Secretary of the Association, Dr Glover and Mr Furness, all members of the minority party. However, membership of the Association did not necessarily mean that the individuals were active reformers.³²

Neither Fife nor Headlam took a particularly active part in the Association's work, although they did present petitions to the Council on the NGSAs' behalf.³³ Embleton had been closely involved in the work of the sub-committees but when questioned by the Commissioners in 1854 he denied having taken an active part in the Association. This may have been due to a lapse of memory. It may be that as the period in which the Association had been particularly active and well supported was short-lived, he had not considered his involvement significant. However, his denial may also have been his way of distancing himself from Robinson and friends, who were the members who had continued the work for reform after their aims had been rejected by many in the town.³⁴

A number of the medical witnesses giving evidence to the Commissioners in 1854 were unwilling to accept that Newcastle's environmental conditions were any worse, or their mortality rates any higher, than many other industrial towns. This was partly due to the fact that Newcastle's senior physicians did not regularly enter the slums during the course of their professional work, although they would have seen patients from the slums whilst working at one of the town's medical institutions. It was generally the Poor Law medical officers, like William Newton, who had to go into the tenement dwellings of the poor on a regular basis, day and night. Another reason, though, for their complacency was that many believed that conditions had actually improved in recent years. Fife reported that the town had undergone extensive sewerage works and improvements through paving, flagging and ventilation as a result of the demolition of "masses of old buildings" and the

³² *NGSA Report*, pp.1,14

³³ Council Meetings, 4 Aug, 1847, *NCP for 1846-47*, p.221; 3 May, 1848, *NCP for 1847-48*, p.113

³⁴ *NGSA Report*, p.14; Hume *et al*, p.109, 114

street widening that had taken place. Even Newton felt that Sandgate had improved in recent years as a result of the changes mentioned by Fife, and argued that this had resulted in “a great diminution” of endemic fevers and diseases.³⁵

Even though it was acknowledged that there was still much to do, a number of the doctors were unwilling to blame the insanitary conditions for the mortality rates that existed, particularly the recent cholera epidemic. There appears to have been support for the Cullenian view of fever, with greater emphasis placed on overcrowding and poor ventilation than on the noxious gases emanating from the unsewered streets. Although Dr Charlton accepted that poor drainage contributed to disease, he believed that overcrowding was the greatest cause of infections such as typhus. As a contagionist, he attributed the virulence of the cholera epidemic to the particularly oppressive and heavy atmosphere at the time which made it difficult to ventilate, even the more spacious houses, adequately. For Fife, the biggest culprit was damp. It was suggested to him that clothes washed in the sewage-polluted river and hung to dry in crowded, unventilated dwellings would give rise to noxious poisons as the water evaporated into the room. In response, Fife dismissed the dangers of contamination on the basis that any toxicity from the river was too diluted to be hazardous, but argued that any wet clothes hanging to dry in an occupied room, regardless of the purity of the water in which they had been washed, would be detrimental to health. Headlam recalled that the typhus epidemic of 1847-8 had been most prevalent among the Irish trampers who had been suffering from famine, thus suggesting that he accepted the dearth model. Only Newton appears to have been in tune with the Commissioners in linking faecal waste and smells with typhus and in blaming sewage polluted water for intestinal diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera.³⁶

³⁵ Hume *et al*, pp.4-5, 103, 127-128; 185-186. Other examples include Embleton's comment that the town had materially improved since 1849, though the previous year, during the cholera epidemic, he had told Grainger that the condition of the town was “not much (if any) better than in 1849”. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that during and following the cholera epidemic the authorities had taken some action to improve conditions. Hume *et al*, pp.108-109

³⁶ Hume *et al*, pp.103, 113-114, 122, 131-133, 183-184

Headlam and Fife were both members of the Corporation's Town Improvement Committee and were among those who had assisted Dr Reid in his inquiries in 1843. Nevertheless they generally considered sanitary innovation to be too expensive and perceived difficulties regarding supervision.³⁷ Headlam, at the time of the Disruption, was an old man in his seventies, and was perhaps more a figurehead for the majority party than an active participant. Although Welford described him as a consistent advocate of "everything calculated to promote the welfare of the town", the author of the *Sketches* portrayed him as "Cold as the icicle on the wall" and lacking in enthusiasm "for any man or any cause." During the Inquiry into the cholera epidemic he seemed remarkably indifferent to the conditions of the town and lacked any real knowledge of what had been done to improve them. When questioned about a visit he had made to Sandgate with Mr Newton in 1847 he reported that he was unaware of having derived any impression of the Corporation property in particular although he remembered visiting some "very unwholesome" habitations.³⁸

He was convinced that the 1853 cholera epidemic had badly affected the higher parts of the town, which were normally healthy. This Superintending Inspector Lee rejected on the grounds that in all cases of cholera in the so-called "healthy districts" there had been obvious causes arising from filthy conditions. The fact that Headlam was adamant on this point indicates, perhaps, that his own personal contact with victims was confined to members of the middle and upper classes, thus giving him a false impression of the realities of the situation. However, it was perhaps convenient to claim that cholera struck the healthy districts as well, because it implied that environmental conditions were not directly responsible,

³⁷ D B Reid, *Report on the Sanatory Condition of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Shields, Sunderland, Durham and Carlisle, with Remarks on some Points connected with the Health of the Inhabitants in the adjacent Mining Districts*, Part III - "Local Reports, with Explanatory Remarks", *PP* (1845) XVIII, 461, [hereafter Reid III], p.156; Council Meeting, 9 Nov, 1848, *NCP for 1848-49*, p.6; John Smith, "Public Health on Tyneside, 1850-80" in Norman McCord (ed), *Essays in Tyneside Labour History*, (Newcastle, 1977), p.26; M Calcott, "The Challenge of Cholera: the last Epidemic at Newcastle upon Tyne", *Northern History*, XX, (1984), 167-186, p.169

³⁸ *Sketches*, p.40; Hume *et al*, pp.1-5, 9

thereby excusing the lack of improvement in the slum districts, which he, as a well-respected doctor and alderman could have done something about.³⁹ Yet the epidemic does appear to have jolted him into action, although, as Newton sneeringly remarked, it ought to have been taken ten years earlier.⁴⁰ The following year, as chairman of the Council's short-lived Sanitary Committee he introduced measures to deal with manure and refuse so that the town's deposits should cease to be a nuisance and remarked that nothing would be more conducive to health than perfectly clean footpaths. One wonders, though, whether his concern was truly for the health of the inhabitants or with the convenience of the well-to-do and the interests of trade and commerce. He remained unconvinced by sanitarianism and claimed that much had been done already to deal with nuisances and to improve the town's sewerage. He attributed the "calumnious statements" that had been made against Newcastle's streets and tenements to those who were attempting to bring the town under the operation of the Public Health Act - a measure he utterly opposed because he believed that the work could be better done by the local authorities.⁴¹ This seems a remarkable statement given his own membership of the Sanitary Association which was originally founded to adopt the Health of Town's Bill. The claim was also untrue in that some of those who had pressed for the cholera inquiry were, themselves, hostile to central intervention, as will be seen later. What is more, the Corporation's record on public health since 1836 provided little justification for Headlam's comment that the local authorities could do better. Given that he was a senior member of the Corporation throughout, his ignorance, arrogance and indifference are significant.

Although Fife was a medical and surgical advisor to some of the principal coal owners of the North-East, and had regular contact with Tyneside mining communities, he had little contact with Newcastle's slums and was insensible to the real dangers facing their inhabitants. For example, he considered the lack of privy accommodation or adequate scavenging in Sandgate to be insignificant

³⁹ Hume *et al*, p.3

⁴⁰ Council Meeting, 12 Oct, 1853, *NCP for 1852-3*, pp.135-138, 144

⁴¹ Council Meeting, 20 Feb, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.71-73

because of the declivity of the land which allowed accumulations to be carried away through surface drainage. Moreover, the proximity to the river allowed people to empty their 'kits' (chamber pots) without difficulty. Although he believed that there was seepage of poisonous matter into the subsoil he dismissed this as a serious problem because of the amount of slum clearance that had taken place, together with the construction of better housing. He rejected the suggestion that "poisonous exhalations" had grown worse, or that they were particularly responsible for the severity of the recent cholera outbreak.⁴² As a long-term member of the Corporation he was unwilling to accept the Cholera Commissioners' suggestion that the Corporation had totally neglected its powers to improve the public health, conceding, only, that it had "partly neglected them".⁴³ His own professional interests in eye surgery⁴⁴ perhaps did little to convince him of the need for change, except when it appeared to suit his private agenda.⁴⁵

In contrast to the indifference shown by Headlam and Fife, there were medical men from both sides of the Disruption who drew attention to the insanitary conditions of the town. Among the majority party, Dr Charlton, lecturer on the Practice of Physic and one-time President of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, linked the prevalence of disease to the filthy conditions of the town and the overcrowded, ill-ventilated and poorly lit dwellings of the poor.⁴⁶ T M Greenhow, the Senior Surgeon to the Newcastle Infirmary, complained about the lack of progress that had been made to mitigate those conditions that were well-known to exacerbate the cholera and blamed both the constituted authorities and the population of the town, whom he considered less than sensitive to the "health-imparting influences of order, cleanliness, and uncontaminated air in their houses". He urged the completion of the town's drainage, the removal of all

⁴² Hume *et al*, pp.115-117

⁴³ Hume *et al*, p.114

⁴⁴ Leslie Stephens, (ed), *Dictionary of National Biography*, XVIII, (London, 1886), p.436

⁴⁵ See for example the Council debate over the new Newcastle School of Medicine's attempts to obtain a site for their new building. Council Meeting, 4 Feb, 1852, *NCP for 1851-2*, pp.64-5, 73

⁴⁶ Edward Charlton, *An Account of the Late Epidemic of Scarlatina in Newcastle and its neighbourhood*, (Newcastle, 1847), p.25

nuisances and noxious accumulations by the local authorities over which they had powers, and the more careful enforcement of street cleansing. He also believed in the power of education and good example to effect change, arguing that once people became accustomed to seeing these improvements in public places they would be “more powerfully induced” to introduce them at home.⁴⁷

Among the minority group, both Dr George Robinson and William Newton did much to highlight the conditions in numerous ways. Robinson had begun practising in Newcastle in about 1846 but he claimed that he had been concerned about the condition of the town since 1837.⁴⁸ Some of his views about sanitary reform and his criticisms of the Corporation have been discussed already and his contributions to the sanitary movement, as Secretary of the NGSA, will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. He, along with H G Potter, a surgeon to the Infirmary, aroused hostility and censure when they addressed a memorial to the Commissioners in March 1854, requesting a more detailed inquiry into the condition of the town and the financial affairs of the Corporation. This provoked Hodgson, Chairman of the Finance committee, to reject every single accusation made in the memorial, and dismiss their well-intentioned comments in their conclusion as “absurd, bombastic...scarcely excusable from a schoolboy.” Benjamin Plummer rather agreed. He believed that the men concerned “cared nothing about the interests of the town or any class in the town” and that it was “too bad” that four or five fellow professionals who chose to quarrel among themselves should embroil the Corporation’s affairs in their squabbles. Indeed, he felt that until the town got rid of them, it would never get rid of its nuisances.⁴⁹ Robinson was elected to the Corporation in November, 1854 and became a member of the Town Improvement Committee and the Corporation Property Committee. Although he had much to say during Council meetings he was criticized for poor attendance at the Town Improvement Committee. In self-justification he claimed that Alderman Dodds, the chairman, had “on one or two

⁴⁷ T M Greenhow, *Cholera from the East. A Letter addressed to James Hodgson, Esq, Mayor of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, (Newcastle, 1852), pp.4-7

⁴⁸ Hume *et al*, p.271

⁴⁹ “Record of Events” and Council Meeting, 15 March, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, pp. lv-lvi, cvii, 106-110

occasions, been rather abrupt”, and told him “to hold his tongue or some intimation to that effect”!⁵⁰ If this petulance was typical, then it is unsurprising that he had such limited influence.

Newton, as a Poor Law medical officer, had much direct experience of the worst living conditions of the town and became one of its leading sanitarians. He was first elected a councillor in 1851 and regularly drew the attention of his colleagues to public health issues. For example, at a meeting in 1852 he proposed that the Council should enforce the provisions of the Lodging House Act by drawing up the necessary bye-laws for the regulation of lodging houses in place of the less stringent process of registration.⁵¹ Outside the council chamber he published only a few pamphlets under his own name, and none of these concerned public health, but he contributed a number of anonymous articles to the local papers.⁵² Newton was popular among the less respectable elements of the town, as his considerable support in municipal elections testified, and his professional talents and energy during the 1853 cholera epidemic were rewarded with a public presentation in December, 1853.⁵³ He possessed a “vigorous intellect” but also a combative and pugnacious temperament and “a strong will”.⁵⁴ By his own admission he had used intemperate language against Embleton at the time of the Disruption⁵⁵ and in Council Meetings he could be remarkably immature, making snide remarks and then becoming disruptive when victims retaliated.⁵⁶ He was

⁵⁰ Council Meeting, 21 Oct, 1857, *NCP for 1856-7*, p.379

⁵¹ *NCP for 1850-1*, p.lx; Council Meeting, 27 Oct, 1852, *NCP for 1851-2*, p.137

⁵² Welford, III, p.223. The only pamphlet Newton wrote of a medical nature was *Lecture on the Circulation of the Blood*, (Newcastle, 1860)

⁵³ *NCP for 1853-4*, pp. xvii, xxii. His election successes led to accusations of corruption and perversion of municipal elections by those opposed to the Small Tenements Act, 1850. *NCP for 1858-9*, p.xxxvii

⁵⁴ Welford, III, pp.220-222

⁵⁵ [Newton], *A Letter to...Thorp*, p.15

⁵⁶ For example when he had a *contretemps* with Thomas Gray over a proposed permanent sanitary committee. He had objected to the suggested membership, which seemed to perpetuate the power of the inner clique to control sanitary improvements arguing that the whole Council should be on it. He then made an innuendo that Gray had been responsible for the list. This prompted Gray to declare that he was not the one who had run away and libelled the town in “a distant newspaper” instead of stating his views in the Council Room in “a proper manner”. This referred to a recent letter that Newton had written to *The Times*. Newton reacted badly, disrupting the meeting until the Mayor had to intervene, quite forcefully, to get him to sit down and be quiet. Council Meeting, 12 Oct, 1853, *NCP for 1852-3*, pp.143-147

not well liked by fellow Council members and some of the Guardians, but his unpopularity was not just because of his personality and the Disruption. What particularly angered Council colleagues was the fact that he had been one of the key people who had caused the Commission of Inquiry to be held in the first place. This had resulted in the town coming under national censure. Thus, despite having the right credentials and experience, Newton's actions and personality may help to explain why he did not achieve more in bringing about a change in attitudes towards sanitary reform.⁵⁷

During the 1853 cholera epidemic the Disruption led some members of the medical profession to run into bitter conflict with officers of the General Board of Health. It appears that Newton and Robinson wanted to take an active part, under the Central Board's Inspector, Mr Grainger, in the management of the preventative measures to be introduced during the 1853 cholera epidemic but their offer was rejected. As Gavin was later to report to the Central Board, if Newton and Robinson had been included in this way:

...intense dissatisfaction and local jealousies would have arisen in the minds of the opposite party, who are by far the most respectable, and who carry with them the whole might of the wealthy, the respectability and the professional talent of the town".⁵⁸

Here, once again, we see something of the social and educational divisions that existed between the two sides in the dispute. This slight perhaps contributed to the determination on the part of Robinson and Newton, to seek an official censure of the Board's officers.

Robinson, Newton and their faction, held a meeting in September 1853 to discuss their grievances against the General Board and the local Guardians. One of the participants, Mr Furness, criticized the lack of preparation taken by the General Board in advance of the cholera's arrival. Although he acknowledged that the Corporation, Board of Guardians and Water Company all shared some responsibility for the scale of the epidemic, yet he singled out the Board as the

⁵⁷ Council Meeting, 20 Feb, 1854, *NCP for 1853-4*, pp.74-75; Report of Meeting of the Board of Guardians - 3 Oct, *GO*, 7 Oct, 1853, p.6C; J Smith, "Public Health on Tyneside", p.30

⁵⁸ Gavin to GBH, 3 Oct, 1853, PRO MH 13/232

major culprit.⁵⁹ Given that the Board had no jurisdiction over Newcastle, apart from during a crisis such as the cholera epidemic, when an order in Council put the Act for the Prevention of Diseases into effect, it is hard to see how they could be blamed for the impure water supplies, or the lack of preparations in the town.

This was the view of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, which suggested that professional jealousy was “not improbably” the ruling motive with some of the medical men who were complaining against the General Board. The paper pointed out that Grainger was sent to Newcastle as soon as the local authorities showed themselves “on the alert” and it was only because the Guardians had heeded his advice once he had arrived that his presence had any impact on the town. Instead, they considered the local authorities, and particularly the Town Council, were solely responsible for any inactivity and declared:

Thanks to the municipal wisdom that would neither do what was necessary itself, nor allow others to do it for it, the Board of Health had no power to do anything here whatever.⁶⁰

The paper were more sympathetic with the doctors’ complaint about lack of proper consultation with the local faculty and criticized the Board of Guardians for having chosen to constitute Grainger as medical supervisor instead of selecting one of the local doctors. Yet the paper indirectly criticized Newton and Robinson by blaming “some members” of the profession for their “want of cordiality” towards Grainger from the moment he arrived. Overall, however, the *Newcastle Chronicle* was much more interested in laying the blame for the high number of deaths at the door of the Council and were willing to support any efforts by the medical profession to obtain an investigation into municipal “carelessness”.⁶¹

Other local medical men agreed with Furness’ negative views about the Board of Health. Newton had already shown his opposition to centralism when he had promoted new bye-laws for the regulation of lodging houses. One of his concerns

⁵⁹ Meeting of the Medical Profession, 26 Sept, 1853, *NC*, 30 Sept, 1853, p.6E

⁶⁰ “The Doctors’ Complaints”, *NC*, 7 Oct, 1853, p.4B

⁶¹ *Ibid*

was that if the present state of the public health was allowed to persist unchecked, there was a danger that the Public Health Act would be applied to the town, which he believed would make the Council “the mere executive of a Board in London”.⁶² Given his own very real concern for the welfare of the labouring poor and his desire to see improvements made to their conditions, it seems somewhat strange that he should have been so hostile to the idea of state intervention well before his own personal brush with some of the Board’s personnel. It is difficult to find evidence to show what Newton thought about the Health of Towns Bill but he was not a member of the NGSA Committee during the time when they were most actively engaged in promoting the adoption of the Act.⁶³

One possible explanation for Newton’s own reactions to the Board of Health lies in the fact that he studied at Edinburgh University. One of the most influential men in Edinburgh at this time was Dr W P Alison, Professor of Medicine from 1820 to 1856. He combined the philosophy and ideology of his mentor, Dugald Stewart, with extensive practical experience amongst the most deprived people in Edinburgh. Alison was an outspoken critic of Chadwick’s sanitary programme because, as was discussed in Chapter 2, he did not believe that the removal of nuisances would prevent infections. Instead he argued that overcrowding and poverty, rather than foul smells, were the main cause of disease.⁶⁴ Although he linked cholera with contaminated water supplies and supported the need for efficient sewerage and pure water, Newton, too, highlighted the significance of overcrowding, particularly in lodging houses, as a cause of disease.⁶⁵ Given that Chadwick’s theories of disease and its prevention provided the *rationale* for the General Board of Health, it is possible that Newton rejected the advice of the Board’s officers because he, like Alison, disputed the underlying thesis upon which they were founded.

⁶² Council Meeting, 27 Oct, 1852, *NCP for 1851-2*, pp. 137-138

⁶³ Welford, III, pp.222-223

⁶⁴ Dr W P Alison, *Observations on the Generation of Fever*, (London, 1840), pp.2, 9, 11, 13; Flinn, pp.22-23

⁶⁵ Council Meeting, 17 March and 27 Oct, 1852, *NCP for 1851-2*, pp.90, 137; Welford, p.222

Another possible explanation for why Newton rejected the idea of state intervention was that he was an individualist by nature, and was temperamentally more suited to the ideology of *laissez-faire*. As Welford noted, he took an independent course in the Council Chamber, "following no man's lead, but hitting hard all round, and continually enlivening the debates with caustic wit and satirical invective." Although he spoke eloquently about the conditions of the poor, having rejected state intervention, as exercised by the Central Board, he was unable to convince his colleagues to exercise their powers of intervention locally. This was partly because *laissez-faire* ideology was so entrenched but also because he personally inspired so little confidence or commitment among the town's powerful élites. In many ways this was not only his tragedy, but also a tragedy for Newcastle.

Sunderland

The contrast between Sunderland and Newcastle is marked. Not only were Sunderland's most eminent medical men active supporters of sanitary reform, the Union medical officers played a relatively insignificant role compared to Newton and others in Newcastle.⁶⁶ However, perhaps the most striking thing about the medical profession in Sunderland, particularly when contrasted with their colleagues in Newcastle, was the degree of co-operation and communication that existed between them.⁶⁷ If there was any tension between the physicians and surgeons in the town, or between individuals over appointments to local bodies, the evidence is hard to find.⁶⁸

The two medical men who played the most important role in Sunderland's sanitary movement were Dr Joseph Brown and William Mordey, surgeon. Dr

⁶⁶ One exception was John Potts, a member of the Sanitary Association. Copy of Notice dated Sunderland, 17 Sept, 1853, PRO MH13/177; Report of the Meeting of the Sanitary Association, *SH*, 3 Dec, 1847, p.5D. Although there are six John Potts listed in *White's*, it seems most likely that the relevant one is the surgeon. *White's Directory*, (Sunderland, 1847), p.408

⁶⁷ See for example their membership of the Chit-Chat Club. William Brockie, *Sunderland Notables: Natives, Residents, and Visitors*, (Sunderland), p.261

⁶⁸ One exception was a disagreement between William Dixon and Dr Brown over additional dispensaries during the 1848 cholera epidemic. Report of a Meeting of the Board of Health - 17 Oct, *SH*, 20 Oct, 1848, p.5E.



Brown (1784-1869) was an ex-army medical officer who had settled in Sunderland in about 1820. He was sufficiently distinguished to be included in Leslie Stephens' *Dictionary of National Biography* for he was considered an expert in epidemical diseases, including cholera, typhus and typhoid. He contributed a number of articles to Sir John Forbes' *Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine* and to the *British and Foreign Quarterly Review*, of whose staff he was a member and was the author of *Medical Essays on Fever, Inflammation, Rheumatism, Diseases of the heart, etc.* (1828). A Quaker by birth, he had been brought up in North Shields and educated as a gentleman, before receiving his medical training in Edinburgh and London. He renounced the doctrines of his denomination in order to join the army, yet he did not abandon his interest in religion. Described as "a zealous but not bigoted Christian", he wrote *A Defence of Revealed Religion* in which he expressed his concern about the growing "Infidelity" in the nation which among other things he feared would effect the "eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures" and something of his Quaker origins can perhaps be seen in his "deeply sympathetic" attitude towards the poor,⁶⁹ though he could sometimes be high-handed, as on the occasion when he shoved his umbrella through a window in a poor patient's house to let in some fresh air, despite her anxieties about catching cold.⁷⁰ The author of the *Sketches* portrays him as a popular, cheerful and indefatigable man, who worked hard both for his patients and for the local community in many capacities, and one of the more accomplished and able provincial doctors of his generation. He also seems to have been a man of integrity, consistently maintaining liberal principles regardless of his own personal interests.⁷¹

William Mordey, (1803-1863), was less well-known outside the area, despite having co-authored a book on the 1831 cholera epidemic.⁷² He came from a

⁶⁹ Stephens, *Dictionary of National Biography*, pp.21-22; Brockie, pp.258-9; Joseph, Brown, *A Defence of Revealed Religion comprising a Vindication of the Miracles of the Old and New Testaments from the Attacks of Rationalists and Infidels.* (London, 1851), preface; Brockie, p.261; *Sketches of Public Men*, pp.125-126

⁷⁰ Brockie, p.259

⁷¹ *Sketches*, pp.130-133

⁷² Along with William Haslewood - *History and Medical Treatment of Cholera as it appeared in Sunderland in 1831*, (London, 1832)

respectable local shipbuilding family and received his education in London and Paris.⁷³ He was a Radical and was deeply interested in working men's affairs. For example, he was one of the chairmen of the Court of Arbitration established in 1851 to resolve trade disputes.⁷⁴ He was described by Brockie as "one of the ablest of that body of able men who grappled courageously and at length successfully against the hydra of filth".⁷⁵ He appears to have been popular in Sunderland, particularly amongst the working classes. Following an accident he was presented with an address by 350 working men of the town, initiated by members of the Mechanics' Institute. Ostensibly an expression of concern over his injuries it testified to Mordey's character and gratitude felt for the "warm interest" he showed "in every measure calculated to benefit" the labouring classes. The address suggests that there existed generally amongst the "working classes" of the town "a very deep feeling of respect and attachment" towards him.⁷⁶

Both Brown and Mordey were actively engaged in the public health movement from its earliest days and were among the original members of the Sunderland Sanitary Association, along with local surgeons William Dixon and Reginald Orton.⁷⁷ Although they represented opposing positions in the contagionist/miasmatic debate during the 1831 cholera epidemic, by the 1840s they reached similar conclusions about the nature of disease and its predisposing causes. Mordey, in 1842, acknowledged the contribution of both filthy environmental conditions and the lack of adequate food and clothing. Both men supported the need for a proper sewerage and drainage system, but argued that cleanliness, however scrupulous, could not protect people from disease but that adequate, uncrowded housing provision could.⁷⁸

⁷³ Brockie, p.207

⁷⁴ "How Sunderland is getting Along", *Northern Tribune*, I, (1854), 101-103, pp.102-103

⁷⁵ Brockie, p.208

⁷⁶ Presentation to Mr William Mordey, *SH*, 2 March, 1849, p.8C

⁷⁷ Brown as one of the Vice-Presidents and Mordey as a Committee member. *SH* 3 Dec, pp.3B, p.5D. See also a footnote to Report on the Public Meeting regarding the Health of Towns Bill, *GO*, 19 Feb, p.4F

⁷⁸ Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health as a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Borough of Sunderland*, (London, 1851), p.37; *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population; Local Reports on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of England, in consequence of an Inquiry directed to be made by the Poor Law Commissioners*, Report No.

Brown served as Chairman of the Sanitary Committee of the Town Council in the earlier years of the reformed corporation but meeting with little support at that time, he resigned. However, this did not stop him continuing his efforts to bring about reform and after the passing of the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851 he served on the General Improvement Drainage and Sanatory Committee. Later he was appointed chairman of the energetic Sewerage Committee, whose activities have been described in Chapter 8. It is likely that the empirical approach adopted by the Committee in their evaluation of Crozier's sewerage plans and in the proposals related to privies, owed much to Brown's input. He was also one of the instigators of the movement to improve the dwellings of the poor in Sunderland.⁷⁹

Mordey was even more active than Brown, both within the Sanitary Association and the Town Council, which was perhaps due to the fact that he was 19 years younger. He was among those members of the SSA who helped to form the Working Man's Association and took part in the visitations of the town to establish the extent of the problem.⁸⁰ On the Council he initiated the adoption of measures to secure cheap and abundant supplies of pure water for the Borough,⁸¹ and was a member of all the important committees and specially appointed sub-committees that dealt with public health and local improvement matters. For example in 1846 he was on several sub-committees, one appointed to meet with the local commissioners to discuss nuisances and general improvement measures, the other instructed to effect a Baths and Wash-houses Bill.⁸² In the 1850s he was on the Sanatory, Baths and Wash-houses, Paving, Lighting and Sewering and Public Grounds committees and was appointed to the

25, Second Report on the State of the Dwellings of the Labouring Classes in Cumberland, Durham, Northumberland and Westmoreland, by Sir John Walsham, Assistant Commissioner for the Northern Division, No 25, (1840), *PP* (1842) HL XXVII, 416, p.423

⁷⁹ Council Meetings, 27 Aug, 1851, 9 Nov, 1852, 9 Nov, 1854, SCM 2, pp.287, 413-4, 707; 3 Oct, 7 Nov, 1855, 29 April, 6 May, 1857, SCM 3, pp.203, 217, 663, 673

⁸⁰ *SH*, 10 Dec, 1847, p.5C, 7 Jan, 1848, p.5B, 21 Jan, 1848, p.5B

⁸¹ Council meetings of 9 and 19 Nov, 1844, 5 Feb, 1 May, 1845, SCM 1, pp.337, 344, 364-5. He was to become the chairman of the Sunderland Water Company. Notice of Extraordinary General Meeting of shareholders of the Sunderland Water Company, *SH* 21 April, 1848, p.4C

⁸² Council Meetings, 5 Aug, 2 Sept, 1846, SCM I, pp.434, 447

all-important Sewerage Committee when it was established,⁸³ and during the 1853 cholera epidemic he had responsibility for keeping the General Board informed at to conditions and progress made with preventative measures⁸⁴

In addition to all his municipal and professional duties, Mordey was involved in a Freehold Land Society in Sunderland and was committed to the idea that working people should be encouraged to take their own affairs into their own hands on the grounds that "Heaven...helped them who helped themselves". He was also Chairman of the Sunderland Water Company whose activities have been described in Chapter 3. All these interests reflect the range of measures he believed were necessary to bring about improvements in the public health and show what a public-spirited and energetic man he was.⁸⁵

In many ways the influence of medical men on local attitudes to public health reform was less significant in Sunderland than in Newcastle. After all, the Council unanimously supported the Public Health Act anyway and there was sufficient enthusiasm for it outside the Council Chamber as well. However, the fact that Brown and Mordey were active and influential on the council and were respected members of the community perhaps helped to further the public health cause before the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851 and ensure its enforcement in the years immediately after its enactment. Neither appear to have been Chadwickian sanitarians in the strictest sense, as their Report to Rawlinson indicates. However they appreciated the advantages of Chadwick's sanitary schemes and it is probable that the Council's determination to carry out systematic sewerage works owed much to their influence.⁸⁶ Yet their concern for housing and ventilation as well demonstrates how the Cullenian view of fever informed much of their work.

⁸³ Council Meetings, 15 Nov, 1854, SCM 2, pp.707-8; 3 Oct, 1855, SCM 3, p.201

⁸⁴ Mordey to Dr Sutherland, 13, 15, and 18 Sept, 1853, PRO MH13/177

⁸⁵ Notice of Extraordinary General Meeting of Shareholders of the Sunderland Water Company, *SH*, 21 April, 1848, p.4C

⁸⁶ Mordey to Sutherland, GBH, 13 Sept, 1853

Gateshead

Among the town's medical profession there were a number of pro-reformers, in particular Drs Jollie, Dixon and Barkus and Messrs. Bennet, Pearse and Robinson, who together produced a Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Gateshead in November 1847. They blamed a whole range of environmental conditions for the high mortality rate, in particular smoke pollution, ill-ventilated housing and contamination by effluvia arising from privies and middens. When a copy of this report was given to Rawlinson in 1849 he confirmed their findings and commended the ability with which it had been drawn up.⁸⁷ In addition to his involvement in this Report, Dixon participated in the public meeting held in February 1848 to support the Health of Towns Bill.⁸⁸ Yet curiously, none of these men were apparently members of the Newcastle and Gateshead Sanitary Association.⁸⁹

Although the Gateshead faculty did not suffer the divisions that existed in Newcastle, nevertheless something of the tensions that could exist between men who were in competition with each other is illustrated by the action of the medical vaccinators in 1855. One of the medical men responsible for vaccinations, Mr Henderson, was accused of irregularities in his records and claims for payment in a number of cases. Although Henderson was largely exonerated when a number of the "missing" children were traced, nevertheless the other eight vaccinators resigned on the basis that "no honourable professional man" could allow his name to be associated with that of Mr Hendersons after "so disreputable an exposure".⁹⁰

However, this sort of tension did not apparently have a detrimental affect on issues affecting public health reform. There is nothing to suggest that any particular medical practitioner was obstructive and although there is no-one who

⁸⁷ Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewrage, Drainage, and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Gateshead, in the County of Durham*, (London, 1851), pp.25-28

⁸⁸ He seconded one of the four resolutions (not specified in the Report), "Report on the Public Meeting", *GO*, 19 Feb, 1848, p.4D-F

⁸⁹ *NGSA Report*, p.1

⁹⁰ Board of Guardians Meeting- 24 July, *GO*, 28 July, 1855, p.6E-F

emerges from the sources who had the driving force of Robinson and Newton in Newcastle or Brown and Mordey in Sunderland, there were those who supported reform and were willing to co-operate with the General Board of Health in achieving this. For example Mr R H Wilson, a Union medical officer, was among those named by Hume *et al* as having offered valuable help to the Commissioners and who was “anxious in every way to promote and facilitate the inquiry”.⁹¹

* * * * *

Overall, the medical profession in Gateshead do not appear to have played a significant part either way in the promotion of sanitary reform. Although there was support for reform among the town’s medical practitioners, there were sufficient numbers of other people in positions of greater power and influence, such as Brockett and Kell, who provided the impetus for change. In contrast, Brown and Mordey played a significant role in shaping local attitudes inside and outside the Council chamber. The case of Newcastle highlights the pivotal role personality can play in human affairs. The timing of the Disruption and the professional rivalry involved, hindered the reform movement. However, the pugnacity of just one man, William Newton, did considerable damage to the sanitarian cause locally. Newton was well-placed to influence public opinion both as a Union medical officer and as a councillor. The fact that he achieved so little is in no small measure due to his unpopularity among the town’s élite. His colleague, Dr Robinson, also failed to win support because of the hostility he provoked for having memorialized the Cholera Commissioners to conduct a more extensive inquiry into the management of Corporate funds.

One of the interesting differences between the medical men in Newcastle and those in Sunderland was in their attitudes towards the General Board. It was not just Newton, Robinson and their circle who opposed centralization, for the one thing that all the Newcastle medical faculty had in common was their dislike of state intervention, even if for Newton and Robinson their dislike had become

⁹¹ Hume *et al*, p.xxxi

personal. In contrast, Mordey and Brown, along with their Council colleagues, appear to have been perfectly happy to be engaged in what they perhaps saw as a collaborative process with the Board's officers.

Finally, the discussion about the medical views of a number of local practitioners confirms the truth of Rosen's comment, noted in Chapter 2, that the more typical understanding of disease combined elements of both contagionist and miasmatic theory.⁹²

⁹² See p.84

10: THE ATTITUDES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS, THE LOCAL PRESS AND SANITARY ASSOCIATIONS TOWARDS PUBLIC HEALTH REFORM

The last three chapters have considered the attitudes of a number of key groups that had direct responsibility for overseeing the introduction and execution of public health reform. However, there were other groups that had the potential to exercise considerable influence on the local authorities and the electorate. These include religious groups, the local press and sanitary associations. Although distinct, these often overlapped with individual members involved in several different groups, along with those explored in the last three chapters.

Religious Groups

As was noted in Chapter 9, priests and ministers of religion were the one middle-class group, alongside medical men, who had the most direct contact with slum conditions and the plight of the urban poor. However, many of the religiously active members of the middle classes were concerned only with the souls of the working people. They believed that moral regeneration could be achieved by inculcating religious beliefs and practices among them. This, in turn, would produce social improvement as the labouring classes embraced the middle-class virtues of respectability, cleanliness and self-help.¹ Inglis suggests that before 1850, social reform was felt, by many Christians, to have nothing to do with religion, believing as they did that the iron laws of political economy were immutable.² When faced with poverty and distress, all they could do was to offer, through their charities, temporary relief from the worst effects of capitalism but they believed themselves powerless to change the underlying system. Not only did the middle-class church- and chapel-goers assume that God had ordered each man's estate³ but the poor were often responsible for their own suffering.

¹ See for example criticisms directed at those clergymen who only ventured into the homes of the poor to pay official visits and the "too-often intursive visit of the 'Evangelical' missionary, bent, with more zeal than wisdom, on their conversion...". "What May Be Done by the Working-Classes", No 1, *The Inquirer*, 323, 9 Sept, 1848, p.578

² K S Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, (London and Toronto, 1963), pp.252-254. See also P C Hammond, *The Parson and the Victorian Parish*, (London, Sydney, etc, 1977), p.190

³ As in the words of Mrs C F Alexander's hymn, "All Things Bright and Beautiful" in which the following verse is found in older hymn books: "The rich man in his castle, The poor man at

This belief was underpinned by evangelical pietism, where the onus was on the individual believer to seek his own salvation through self-help and moral rectitude. This pervaded Evangelical Anglicanism and Methodism particularly, during the first half of the nineteenth century, but touched the other denominations as well, including the Catholic Church.⁴ Even those who accepted that being poor was not, in itself, a disqualification from being a 'gentleman',⁵ nevertheless saw hardship as a God-given means of developing positive personal qualities such as endurance, perseverance and self-control.⁶ It was not until the emergence of Christian Socialism on the one hand, and Anglo-Catholic inner city missions and settlements on the other, that the corporate nature of the church was fully recognised and the theological justification for a spirit of co-operation was acknowledged.⁷

In addition to the ideological and theological positions of many religious groups during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, many of them were also involved in internal and external struggles which perhaps distracted them from paying more attention to social problems. The Church of England was making the transition from a rural-based parochial system to one that was more appropriate to a densely populated urban setting. It was confronted internally with Tractarianism and externally with religious scepticism and Dissent.⁸ The Roman Catholic Church, following Emancipation, was faced with the challenge of assimilating the influx of Irish immigrants into the urban slums alongside sometimes hostile English natives and ambivalent well-to-do English Catholics.⁹

his gate, God made them, high or lowly, And ordered their estate." *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1889 edn reprinted with altered preface, (London, 1906), Hymn 573, v.3

⁴ John Sharp, "Juvenile Holiness: Catholic Revivalism among Children in Victorian Britain", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35, II (1984), 220-238, p.221

⁵ By which was meant someone who was intelligent, sensible, honest and upright.

⁶ Channing [no reference], quoted by George Godwin, Editor, *The Builder*, VII, 312, 27 Jan, 1849, p.37. See also Rev Thomas Watson, "Devout Social Address", in Newcastle Unitarian Tract Society, *Helps to Family Worship, III*, (Bishopwearmouth, 1832), pp.77-78, 91-93

⁷ Inglis, pp.265-267

⁸ M A Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England*, (Newton Abbot, 1970), p.17

⁹ Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain 1815-1914*, (Dublin, 1991), p.139; Kevin O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain*, rev edn, (Dublin, 1974), pp.17, 23. See also G P Connolly, "Little Brother be at Peace: The Priest as Holy Man in the Nineteenth-Century Ghetto", pp.191-206 in W H J Shiels, *Studies in Church History, vol 19: The Church and Healing*, (Oxford, 1982), pp.191ff

Dissenters took advantage of urban growth to further their own cause for freedom and liberty from the Established Church but became embroiled in disputes over church rates and education, whilst Methodists were riven with factional splits and a series of secessions during the 1830s and 1840s.¹⁰

What this section seeks to explore is whether any particular denomination had a significant contribution to make to public health reform and whether there was any difference in religious affiliation between the three towns that might help explain their overall attitudes towards the Public Health Act. It is difficult to assess the actual extent of religious involvement during our period, apart from the picture presented by the Religious Census of 1851, illustrated in the charts below and in Appendix X. Even acknowledging the shortcomings of the Census itself,¹¹ church attendance is no indication of religious commitment and faith, and non-attendance should not be taken as a measure of formal secularism.¹² This is particularly true for the vast majority of the urban working classes.

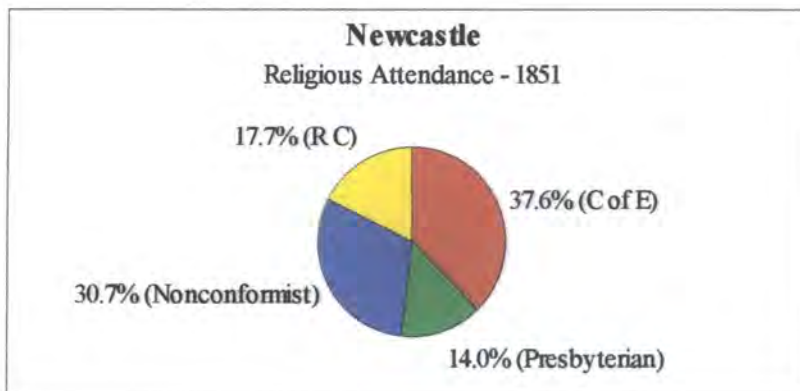


Chart 10.1: Showing denominational distribution of church attenders in Newcastle on Census Sunday, 1851

¹⁰ Crowther, p.17; David E H Mole, "Challenge to the Church, Birmingham 1815-65", pp.815-835 in H J Dyos and M Wolff, *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, 3 vols, II, (London and Boston, 1973), p.815

¹¹ John D Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England*, (London, 1971), pp.47-49, 63; G E Milburn, "Religion in Sunderland in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *Sunderland Polytechnic Occasional Paper*, 3, (Sunderland, 1983), pp.15-19

¹² See for example Thomas Wright's comments on middle-class attitudes towards working-class non-attendance. He also argued that middle-class church attendance was no proof of religious feeling. [Thomas Wright], *The Great Unwashed by the Journeyman Engineer*, (1866), reprint (New York, 1970), pp.82-83

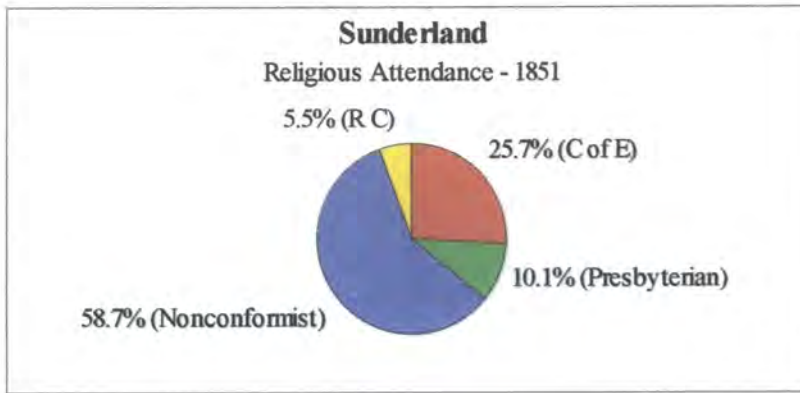


Chart 10.2: Showing denominational distribution of church attenders in Sunderland on Census Sunday, 1851

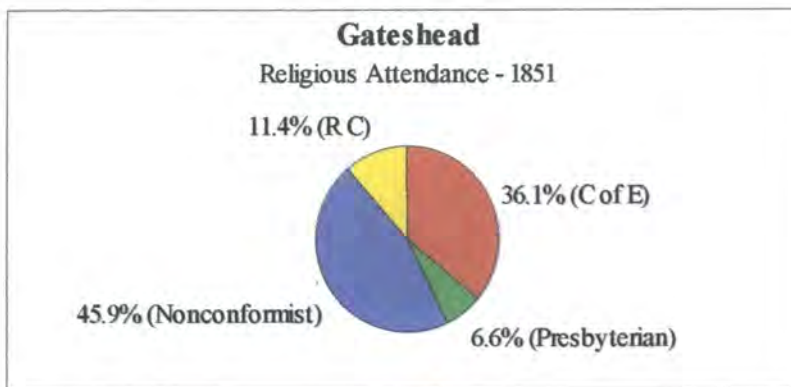


Chart 10.3: Showing denominational distribution of church attenders in Gateshead on Census Sunday, 1851

If one treats all Methodist sects separately (see Appendix X) the Church of England was the single largest denomination in all three towns but the proportion of Anglicans was higher in Gateshead and Newcastle than in Sunderland, where Nonconformist denominations and sects combined, greatly outnumbered the established church. There is evidence that some of the Anglican clergy in the North-East, as well as elsewhere, accepted a degree of social responsibility. However this often arose out of a Tory paternalism that had its roots in the parish squirearchy, and which expressed itself in the performance of charitable works rather than in actively supporting radical changes in the social structure or in causes such as the repeal of the Corn Laws. It could also be argued that some of this concern was politically motivated against Liberal capitalism and in reaction to a loss of social status in the face of industrialization and urbanization. Underlying

the Anglican Church's approach was a strong belief in the importance of self-help and the connection between suffering and moral responsibility. However, by the 1850s, parish clergy, who, through their ministry to the sick and dying could not fail to appreciate the extent to which bad housing and inadequate drainage and water supplies were causing health hazards, also perceived the corrupting moral influences of such conditions which they felt it their duty to address.¹³

There were some members of the local clergy who took an active part in sanitary reform during the 1840s, particularly Rev Richard Skipsey of Sunderland who was chairman of the Sunderland Sanitary Association [SSA] and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Guardians.¹⁴ Some of the Newcastle clergy were also involved in the local Sanitary Association. The Rev G Harris, for example, chaired the General Committee of the Newcastle and Gateshead Sanitary Association [NGSA] which carried out an extensive survey of the living conditions of the poor in the worst districts of the town, particularly Sandgate and Castle Garth. Despite this personal involvement by some members of the Newcastle clergy it would appear that the Church took very little interest in Sandgate and failed to improve the social and spiritual conditions of the poor inhabitants of the town.¹⁵ Overall the Established Church had no coherent policy on public health reform, other than to be interested in encouraging self-help and personal responsibility on the part of the poor, underpinned by acts of charity which were intended, perhaps, to serve the spiritual interests of the donor rather than the physical welfare of the recipient.

In Newcastle 31.7% of the total Christian attenders on Census day were either Presbyterians or Roman Catholics, reflecting the scale of immigration from

¹³ G Kitson Clark, *Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832-1885*, (London, 1973), pp.202-3, 214-216; Mole, p.817; Crowther, pp.13-14, 21; John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain, Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945*, (London, 1994), p.130; Hammond, pp.143, 192, 195

¹⁴ Report of a meeting of the Sanitary Association, *SH*, 24 March, 1848, p.5A; Richard Skipsey and Edward Backhouse to GBH, 19 Oct, 1848; Snowball to GBH, 2 Aug, 1849, PRO MH13/177

¹⁵ Newcastle and Gateshead Sanitary Association, *First Annual Report of the Newcastle and Gateshead Sanitary Association*, (Newcastle, 1848), [hereafter *NGSA Report*], pp.1, 14-15, 21-23; Anon, "Condition of the Poor", Letter IV, *NC*, 5 May, 1850, p.4A-C

Scotland and Ireland that had taken place. This was in marked contrast to the combined figures for Sunderland and Gateshead which were only 15.6% and 18% respectively,¹⁶ though before the new Catholic church was built in Gateshead,¹⁷ the Newcastle figures were probably inflated by Gateshead residents. There has been some debate as to the actual role of Catholic priests in urban England during this period.¹⁸ It would seem, however, that whereas the Church of England was failing to meet the needs of the English labouring poor in Newcastle and Gateshead during the 1830s and 1840s, Roman Catholic priests made regular pastoral visits to their flock in the slums. In consequence, a number of them fell victim to typhus during the great epidemic of 1847 including the Bishop of the Northern District, Dr Riddell.¹⁹ Yet despite their success in reaching parts of the labouring classes, their concerns, along with other denominations of the day, were centred on church participation, education and morality. Despite being confronted with the living conditions of so many of their parishioners, they do not appear to have taken an active role in public health reform in the three towns.

As Charts 10.1-10.3 show, all three towns had quite large numbers of Protestant Nonconformists but there was a marked difference between Newcastle, where they amounted to less than a third of the total church-attending population, and Sunderland, where they accounted for well over half the church-goers on Census Sunday. Milburn suggests that there were economic and sociological reasons, in addition to religious ones, for this high number of Nonconformists in Sunderland. This was due to the fact that the wealth and nature of the ancient parish of Bishopwearmouth had led the Anglican clergy to be more in tune with the gentry and yeomen farmers of the parish rather than the "outspoken and independent-

¹⁶ See Appendix X

¹⁷ *GO*, 22 March, 1851, p.3C-D

¹⁸ Gay, pp.90-1; Davis, pp.65, 119; E P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1963), rev edn (London, 1980), pp.479-80; Lynn H Lees, "Patterns of Lower-Class Life: Irish Slum Communities in Nineteenth-Century London", pp.359-385 in S Thernstrom and R Sennet, (eds), *Nineteenth-Century Cities*, (New Haven and London, 1969), p.383; Lynn H Lees, *Exiles of Erin, Irish Migrants in Victorian London*, (Manchester, 1979), pp.164-212; Gerard Connolly, "The Transubstantiation of Myth: towards a New Popular History of Nineteenth-Century Catholicism in England", *Journ. Eccl. History*, 35, 1 (1984), 78-104, pp.101-103; Sharp, p.224

¹⁹ "Condition of the Poor", Letter IV; *GO*, 13 Nov, 1847, p.2G; List of Local Events of the Year 1847, *Local Collections; or Records of Remarkable Events Connected with the Borough of Gateshead 1848*, (Gateshead, 1848), p.8

minded” artisans and businessmen of the growing port.²⁰ Miller notes that Nonconformity was one of the vital mainsprings of the town’s commercial and social development from the seventeenth century onwards, and Nossiter claims that it was almost as important as shipping in Sunderland politics. He argues that it was this combination of dissent and commercial influence which made radicalism as a whole more than just a force amongst the unenfranchised working class. This, he believes, accounts for the fact that Radical parliamentary candidates normally won one-quarter of the votes, which was rather better than on Tyneside.²¹ Thus Sunderland’s experience supports Mole’s claim that the strength of Nonconformity depended upon two things: “the social weight of its leading members, and the radical atmosphere of the town which tended to swing public opinion behind the advocates of Dissent.”²² One of the striking things about Nonconformity in Sunderland during this period was the degree of co-operation and interaction there was between different religious groups. For example, when Dock Street Methodist Free Church opened their new schools in Whickham Street in 1868, the Quaker banker, Edward Backhouse, was invited to lay the foundation stone.²³

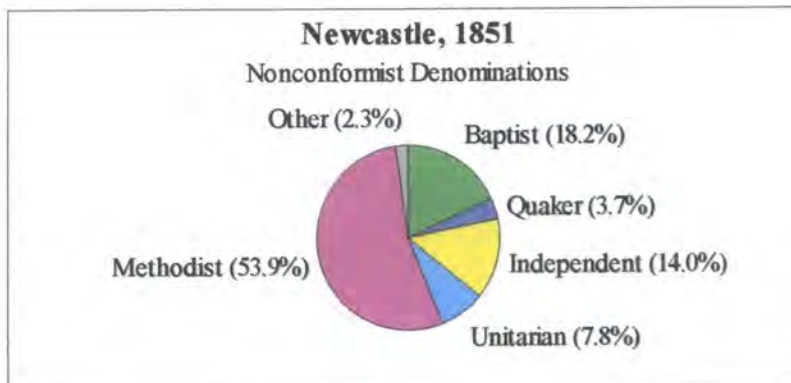


Chart 10.4: Showing Nonconformist denominational distribution of church attenders in Newcastle on Census Sunday, 1851²⁴

²⁰ Milburn, p.8

²¹ S Miller, *The Book of Sunderland*, (Buckingham, 1989), pp.20, 27; T Nossiter, “Dock Politics and Unholy Alliances, 1832-52”, pp.78-88 in Helen G Bowling, (ed), *Some Chapters on the History of Sunderland*, (Sunderland, 1969), pp.84, 86

²² Mole, pp.819-820

²³ Jubilee of Methodist Free Church Dock Street, (1901), p.7, TWAS CSU18/22

²⁴ See Appendix X

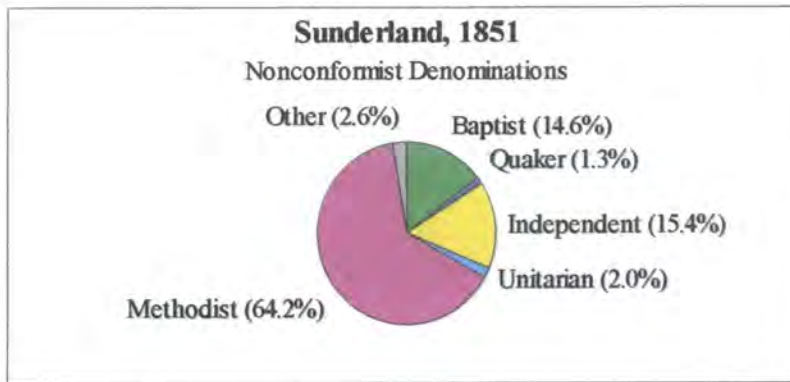


Chart 10.5: Showing Nonconformist Denominational distribution of church attenders in Sunderland on Census Sunday, 1851²⁵

All the Protestant Nonconformist worshippers in Gateshead were Methodists, although there were some Dissenters in the town. In Newcastle and Sunderland there were also other Nonconformist chapels, as Charts 10.4 and 10.5 demonstrate. Methodism was an important feature of North-East religious life at this period and constituted the single largest Nonconformist denominational group in all three towns when all the separate sects are combined.²⁶ There was growing resentment towards the interference in local chapel affairs by a centralizing Conference headed by the autocratic Jabez Bunting which conflicted with the essential individualism of the sect's views on salvation.²⁷ Perhaps there was some overlap between religious and secular affairs, particularly amongst the smaller ratepayers, who saw London as representing, both at a chapel and local administrative level, unwarranted interference in community matters and individual liberties. In consequence, there may well have been little support for public health reform that involved greater state intervention. Certainly there is no mention in any of the primary sources studied to suggest that there was any direct involvement by any of the Methodist sects in social reform that would bring about underlying change. Even amongst working-class Methodists there seems to have been a reluctance to articulate and pursue class interests as such, or to tackle

²⁵ See Appendix X

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part One: 1829-1859*, (1966), 3rd edn, (London, 1978), pp.370-386; Alec R Vidler, *The Church in An Age of Revolution, 1789 to the Present Day*, (1961), 2nd edn, (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp.142-3

social problems.²⁸ Although there were Methodists on the local councils, particularly in Sunderland,²⁹ they do not appear to have been any more concerned about sanitary problems than their colleagues and there is no evidence to suggest that the Methodists in the three towns took a stance on sanitary reform for religious or denominational reasons.

The most significant older Dissenting sects were the Quakers and Unitarians. Dissenters had long been at home in towns where they had traditionally found it easier to use their freedom without “the unwelcome interference of the clergyman of the Established Church.”³⁰ Because Unitarians and Quakers went against the trend of the urban élites who moved out of the town to join the rural landed classes, they remained to become part of the urban social establishment. Many were traders, bankers, capitalists and factory owners who had a longer experience than many of being men of wealth and influence, yet they were not immune to the social problems around them.³¹ Unitarians and Quakers in particular played a part in the development of public policy which addressed social problems, the former being part of what Kitson Clark describes as “the philanthropic élite”.³²

In Sunderland some Unitarians and Quakers were actively involved in Chartism and it is perhaps no coincidence that one of the Chartist’ meeting places was a Unitarian Chapel. The Unitarian, James Williams, and the Quaker, George Binns, were both activists and belonged to the moral force wing which united with part of the Anti-Corn Law League to form the Complete Suffrage Union. Wilson suggests that Sunderland Chartists were among the first group to try and alleviate

²⁸ David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850*, (London, Melbourne, etc, 1984), pp.182-3, 211-216; Maldwyn Edwards, *After Wesley: A Study of the social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Middle Period (1791-1849)*, (London, 1935), pp.33-35, 40; Robert Moore, *Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics*, (Cambridge, 1974), pp.27, 259-68

²⁹ For example Andrew and Richard White and Robert Brown in Sunderland and John Benson in Newcastle. Patricia J Storey, “Mayors of Victorian Sunderland” part 1, *Antiquities of Sunderland*, XXXIII (1992), 27-40, pp.29, 33, 37; Angela and John Airey, *The Bainbridges of Newcastle, A Family History 1679-1976*, (Newcastle, 1979), p.45

³⁰ Mole, p.815

³¹ Mole, p.816, 820; Wolffe, p.56; E P Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, (London, 1973), p.7

³² Kitson Clark, *Churchmen*, pp.xvi, 212

poverty in a constructive manner, which was perhaps due to the religious commitments of their local leaders.³³

Unitarianism had grown out of English Presbyterianism. Instead of being influenced by the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century they had responded to the more secular and liberal strands of Enlightenment thought and rejected or modified the doctrinal framework of mainstream Christianity, concentrating instead on rational and scientific interpretations of faith. By rejecting the divinity of Christ and focusing instead on His humanity, they embraced the possibility of the universal human capacity for improvement, thereby rejecting the Calvinist doctrine of sin. As they became less concerned with doctrines about atonement, salvation and life after death, they concentrated instead on humanitarian issues concerning the way people actually spent their lives. Their stress upon a rational and ordered universe, fortified as it was by a deep hostility to entrenched dogmas and institutions, gave them a strong impetus towards scientific investigations. This led Unitarian intellectuals into social and political enquiry, particularly concerning the problems of the growing cities.³⁴

Despite being a small group nationally, Unitarianism played a role in social reform that was “out of all proportion to its numbers”.³⁵ There was a close link between Unitarianism and Utilitarianism, symbolized by the political alliance between the Mills, father and son, and the Rev W J Fox, editor of the denomination’s journal, the *Monthly Repository*.³⁶ This connection can also be seen among some of the early sanitary reformers including the Unitarian Southwood Smith. Members of

³³ K Wilson, “Leaders of the Sunderland Chartists”, *Sunderland Antiquarian Society*, XXXII (1989), unpaginated

³⁴ *An Address, from a Society of Unitarian Christians, on the Truth and Value of the Doctrines they Profess*, (Newcastle, 1815), p.251; *A Letter from a Unitarian Christian in Answer to the Revilings of a Trinitarian*, (Newcastle, nd but pre 1832); Howard M Wach, “Unitarian Philanthropy and Cultural Hegemony in Comparative Perspective: Manchester and Boston, 1827-1848”, *Journal of Social History*, 26, 3, (1992-2), 539-557, p.545; Raymond Holt, *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England*, (Woking, 1938), p.16; Graeme Davison, “The City as a Natural System: Theories of Urban Society in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain”, pp.349-370 in Derek Fraser and Antony Sutcliffe (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History*, (London, 1983), p.352; Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain*, p.56

³⁵ Kitson Clark, p.199

³⁶ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, (London and Toronto, 1969), pp.204-205

the sect also occupied strategic positions within civic life, particularly in the Midlands and the North.³⁷ In Sunderland there was only one Unitarian church which had a minimum number of worshippers on Census Sunday of 200, representing only 2% of all Nonconformists and 0.3% of the total population.³⁸ Yet at least one active sanitary reformer was a Unitarian: James Williams, the ex-Chartist mentioned above. Williams served on a number of important Council Committees including the Baths and Wash-houses Committee, Paving, Lighting and Sewering committee and the Watch Committee, which had responsibility for lodging houses.³⁹ Brockie considered his greatest achievement to have been his involvement in the Sunderland Town Improvement Act, passed shortly before his death in 1868.⁴⁰

The Census figures suggest that there were rather more Unitarians in Newcastle than in Sunderland with 461 people present at the best attended service on Census Sunday, which represented 7.8% of Protestant Nonconformists and 0.5% of the total population.⁴¹ However, as there was no Unitarian chapel in Gateshead, the town's Unitarians perhaps swelled the Newcastle congregation, making the true Newcastle figures slightly lower than first appears. Among the Newcastle Unitarians were six members of the Town Council including James Hodgson, proprietor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* until 1850 and Chairman of the Finance Committee.⁴² Outside the Council, members included W A Mitchell, editor of the *Tyne Mercury*, Mark William Lambert, one of the owners of the *Newcastle Chronicle* after 1850 and Dr Thomas M Greenhow, brother-in-law of Harriet Martineau.⁴³ Although, as will be seen in the next section, Mitchell and Lambert

³⁷ Gay, p.181; Davison, p.352; Holt, p.23

³⁸ See Appendix X

³⁹ Council Meetings, 9 Nov, 1852, Sunderland Council Minute Book, [hereafter SCM] 2, pp.413-414; 3 Dec, 1856, SCM 3, pp.525-527

⁴⁰ William Brockie, *Sunderland Notables: Natives, Residents, and Visitors*, (Sunderland, 1894), pp.268, 272-4

⁴¹ See Appendix X

⁴² A List of Members of the Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarian Tract Society, 1840, Wilson Collection, 7, item 1632; "Report of Newcastle and North of England Unitarian Christian Tract and Missionary Society", *The Inquirer*, 318, 5 August, 1848, p.509; Richard Welford, *Men of Mark 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed*, 3 vols, II, (London, 1895), pp.455, 548; Peter Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle*, (Consett, 1975), pp.39-40

⁴³ Welford, p.455; M Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham, a study of their progress during the 'Golden Age' of the Provincial Press*, (Newcastle, nd), p.41

played a part in publicizing public health matters, Newcastle Unitarians do not appear to have been unduly involved in sanitary health reform, devoting their energies to adult education instead. Indeed, Hodgson actually hindered reform as has been discussed already in previous chapters. In Gateshead the most significant Unitarians from our point of view were Thomas Wilson, a member of the Town Council,⁴⁴ and James Clephan, Editor of the *Gateshead Observer*, whose contributions will be considered in more detail in the next section.⁴⁵

The Quakers were also a tiny group in terms of numbers but had considerable influence, particularly in Sunderland. They, like the other denominations, were active in education, charities for the relief of the “deserving poor” and home and foreign mission. They also supported various social reform movements including temperance, the Anti Corn Law League, the abolition of slavery and prison reform.⁴⁶ However, they do not appear to have been any more involved in public health reform, at a denominational level, than the other Christian groups already discussed.

Generally the Quakers in Newcastle and Gateshead were mainly shopkeepers and small tradesmen, although there was a Newcastle solicitor and a Gateshead surgeon among the membership in the 1830s.⁴⁷ In contrast there were some influential and wealthy Quakers in Sunderland, including the banker, Edward Backhouse and the businessman Bernard Ogden.⁴⁸ Although not a member of the Corporation, Backhouse participated in local affairs and backed Dr Brown and William Mordey in their efforts to open additional dispensaries during the

⁴⁴ The Wilson Collection in Newcastle Public Library, consisting of volumes of papers, handbills and newspaper cuttings, provides insight into Wilson’s interests which did not include public health reform.

⁴⁵ He was among the donors for the New Unitarian Society in Birmingham, 3 April, 1839, Wilson Collection, 7, item 1511. See also the report of the third anniversary meeting of the Newcastle and North of England Unitarian Christian Tract and Missionary Society, 23 and 24 July, 1848 at which he proposed the vote of thanks. *The Inquirer*, 318, 5 Aug. 1848, p.509

⁴⁶ John W Steel, *A Historical Sketch of the Society of Friends in Newcastle and Gateshead 1653-1898*, (London and Newcastle, 1899), pp. 61, 65, 73-78, 81-88.

⁴⁷ Steel, pp. 66-70

⁴⁸ Steel, p.41; Humphrey Simpson, “Bernard Ogden”, *Antiquities of Sunderland and its Vicinity*, XXII, (1960), 57-62

1848/9 epidemic in Sunderland against the opposition of the local health board.⁴⁹ As was noted in Chapter 9, Brown himself had been brought up a Quaker though it is impossible to determine to what extent his religious background as opposed to his medical experiences, stimulated his sanitarian interests.

Although there were clearly individual church and chapel ministers and members, of the various denominations, who actively participated in attempts to introduce sanitary reform, there is no evidence that this involvement was representative of a co-ordinated policy on the part of any one denomination. Although many reformers were concerned about the moral implications of crowded living conditions, and doubtless many too were concerned, on humanitarian grounds, about the suffering of the sick poor, these concerns were not confined to churchmen. What co-operation that did exist between those who were religiously motivated, seems to have been focused on the temperance movement. Nevertheless, Nonconformity, particularly in Sunderland, may well have had a more subtle impact on attitudes, not least because of the degree of radicalism already noted. As Cherry has observed, the evangelical-humanitarian approach ran counter to those who sanctified private property and resisted any extension to state powers.⁵⁰

The Local Press

In the Introduction, reference was made to Mayne's thesis that "*the slum*" had no objective reality but was a social construct which was "encoded with the meanings of a dominant bourgeois culture". Mayne goes on to note the role that the popular press played in creating a popular image of "the slums".⁵¹ Although Mayne identifies this as having emerged during the last quarter of the nineteenth

⁴⁹ Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health as a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Borough of Sunderland*, (London, 1851), p.9; Richard Skipsey and Edward Backhouse to GBH, 19 Oct, 1848, PRO MH13/177

⁵⁰ Gordon E Cherry, *Cities and Plans: the shaping of urban Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, (London, 1988), p.20

⁵¹ Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: newspaper representations in three cities 1870-1914*, (Leicester, 1993), pp.2; 6-7

century, in fact his comments are equally valid for the period covered by this thesis. To some extent, perhaps, journalists wrote what their readers already believed to be true, and thereby substantiated received wisdom about working-class districts. Myths about “the slums” were further reinforced as provincial newspapers borrowed from the imagery of the “Great Wen”, and the rookeries of London’s East End, and recast their own towns in a similar image. Much of this sensationalism was possibly done for sound commercial reasons for, as today, shocking revelations sell newspapers. Yet the other side of the coin is that newspapers had the power to shape public opinion as well as to reflect it. It is true that newspapers were skilled at selecting the most appalling examples to illustrate their point, but so, too, did government inspectors and social reformers. Mayne highlights the dangers of accepting, too readily, the apparently value-free empirical evidence of the official investigators, on the one hand, whilst rejecting the evidence of journalists on the other because of their supposed sensationalism, for both judged the dwellings of the poor and their occupants against a bourgeois concept of what was acceptable. However we are not concerned, here, with the accuracy of newspaper reporting as such but rather with the extent to which the local press in the three towns acted as agents for public health reform. Given that there was a significant political element to this, the ownership, editorship and character of the local press is significant.⁵²

In 1837 Henry Morton, Lord Durham’s local agent, complained to William Brockett about the “apathetic state of the local liberal press”:

There are three what may be styled liberal prints, viz. the Durham Chronicle, Sunderland Herald, and Tyne Mercury, as for the Newcastle Chronicle, it is an emasculated liberal, feeble and indolent to a celebrated degree. It has a large circulation, and might in good hands, be made immediately and highly influential in disseminating liberal doctrines, were it in proper hands.⁵³

Morton was interested in advancing the political interests of Lord Durham and was attempting to prevent the further dilution of moderate liberal influence by discouraging Brockett and his friends from launching yet another local moderate

⁵² Mayne, pp.2-3

⁵³ Morton to Brockett, 31 Aug, 1837, Brockett Papers, 7, p.325

radical paper.⁵⁴ Morton's advice went unheeded, for the following day the *Gateshead Observer* was launched, with its first edition appearing in November.⁵⁵

The first proprietors were William Henry Brockett, merchant, and James Hymers, ironfounder. Hymers had withdrawn from the paper by 1851, following his bankruptcy two years earlier and by 1857 James Clephan, the editor since 1838, had become proprietor. Both Brockett and Hymers were members of the Corporation from its inauguration and staunch opponents of the Borough-holders in the property dispute. In addition to being members of the Watch Committee in the early days of the Corporation, Brockett was on the Bye-laws Committee and Hymers on the Encroachment Committee. This latter fact did not discourage Hymers from causing a nuisance himself for in 1845 he was prosecuted for encroachment onto the public highway at a time when he was improving his own property. Brockett was also a member of the NGSA and they were both members of the local committee that reported to Dr Reid on conditions in the town in 1844 and were present at Rawlinson's inquiry in 1849.⁵⁶

Brockett's attitude to public health reform has already been discussed in Chapter 7. As was noted then, he was one of the authors of the Sub-Committee Report of

⁵⁴M Milne, "The *Tyne Mercury*" and Parliamentary Reform, 1802-1846", pp.227-242, *Northern History*, XIV, 1978, p.237

⁵⁵*Ibid*

⁵⁶D B Reid, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of Newcastle, Gateshead, North Shields, Sunderland, Durham and Carlisle, with Remarks on some Points connected with the Health of the Inhabitants in the adjacent Mining Districts*, Part III - "Local Reports, with Explanatory Remarks", PP (1845) XVIII, 461, [hereafter Reid III], p.156; Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage, and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Gateshead, in the County of Durham*, (London, 1850), p.6; *NGSA Report*, p.4; Council Meeting, 31 Dec, 1835, *Gateshead Council Minute Book* [hereafter GCM] 1, p.1; Public notice giving Council members for 1840-1, Brockett Papers, 8(II), p.1025; Election notice, *GO*, 27 Nov, 1838, p.1B; Election notice, *GO*, 12 Oct, 1844, p.1B; *GO*, 5 July, 1845, p.4D-E; "Diseases or Drainage:- Choose for Yourselves", *GO*, 28 Oct, 1848, p.2G; *GO*, 5 May, 1849, p.1D; "The First of November Elections", *Gateshead Observer, Local Collections; or Records of Remarkable Events, Connected with the Borough of Gateshead, 1848*, (Gateshead, 1848), p.99; Charles Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory: Containing full particulars relative to each Journal published in the United Kingdom and the British Isles; together with a Complete Guide to the Newspaper Press of each County, etc, etc, etc, for the year 1847*, (London, nd), p.184; Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory...*, 3rd edn, revised, (London, 1851), p.191; Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory...for the year 1857*, (London, nd), p.44

District 16 on the eve of the cholera epidemic and strongly urged council action on sewer construction. Despite being a member of the Corporation he was publicly critical of the local authorities for their failure to solve the environmental problems which existed in the town,⁵⁷ and was willing to put public interest before his own.⁵⁸

James Hymers' own attitude to public health reform is harder to discern than Brockett's. Hymers was a substantial landlord, owning 63 rooms in Ellison Square and was among the members of the Corporation who attempted to have their rate assessments reduced in 1839, arguing that some of his tenants should be made to pay instead. The Council were unconvinced for they rejected his request. In addition to apparently being a self-interested landlord, he was something of a *laissez-faire* individualist. At the end of his trial in 1845 into alleged encroachments, he was unwilling to accept the interference of the Corporation in what he considered to be his private business.⁵⁹ Given all this, it is likely that the editorial policy of the *Gateshead Observer* owed more to Brockett than to Hymers. However, the real driving force behind the newspaper was its editor, the journalist James Clephan. He was an active sanitary reformer, a Committee member of the NGSA and one of the small group of Gateshead men who were singled out by the Cholera Commissioners in their Report because of the valuable help he had given to them during their inquiry.⁶⁰

Of the liberal papers mentioned by Morton, we are not concerned with the *Durham Chronicle*. The *Sunderland Herald* had originally been owned by

⁵⁷ Report of Gateshead Council Meeting - 9 November, 1848, *NC*, 10 Nov, 1848, p.8B

⁵⁸ Report of Council Meeting - 17 May, 1849, *Gateshead Observer*, *Local Collections; or Records of Remarkable Events, Connected with the Borough of Gateshead, 1848*, (Gateshead, 1848), p.57

⁵⁹ *GO*, 5 July, 1845, p.4D-E; Council Meetings, 16 Oct, 1839 and 5 May, 1841, *Gateshead Council Minute Book*, [hereafter *GCM*] 2, pp.196-198, 459; Notice of Election of Guardians, 27 March, 1839, Brockett Papers 8(I), p.325; *Richardson's Directory of the Towns of Newcastle and Gateshead*, (Newcastle, 1838)

⁶⁰ *NGSA Report*, p.4; Milne, (1978), p.238; Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland*, (nd), p.57; *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Causes which have led to, or have aggravated the late Outbreak of Cholera in the Towns of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Gateshead, and Tynemouth*, (London, 1854), signed by Joseph Burnely Hume, John Simon and John Frederick Bateman, 15 July, 1854, *PP XXXV* (1854), 92 [hereafter *Hume et al*], p.xxxi

Thomas Marwood. He ceased to be associated with it in 1838, at which time it became the *Sunderland and Durham County Herald*, although throughout this thesis it has been called by its original name. By 1841 the owners were Robert Vint and Thomas Carr, booksellers, stationers and patent medicine vendors. Carr was a Methodist local preacher with Whig views and Vint was a member of the Council from 1846-49 and was a Committee member of the Sunderland Sanitary Association. In addition he was a director of the Sunderland and South Shields Water Company from 1851. He participated in one of the local sub-committees reporting to Reid in 1844, though he was not among the list of people attending the first day of Rawlinson's inquiry in 1849.⁶¹ No-one seems to know who the editor was.

During the 1830s and 1840s the *Newcastle Chronicle*, under the ownership of Thomas and James Hodgson, was a Whig paper, though it supported moderate radical reformers in the Parliamentary elections of 1837. James Hodgson was a member of the first reform Council and continued a member throughout our period. As has been seen in Chapter 5, he was a leading 'economist' in the town and he was much criticized for his chairmanship of the Finance Committee and the secrecy with which he handled Corporate financial affairs.⁶² He took no part in Reid's inquiries, nor was he involved in the NGSA, not even as a token gesture towards reform. In 1850 the *Chronicle* was sold to a triumverate headed by the Unitarian, Mark William Lambert. From 1857 onwards, Joseph Cowen, junior, a leading member of the Northern Reform Union, gained increasing proprietorial control and with his help the paper was relaunched in 1858 as a daily, called the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. It went on to become the region's outstanding radical newspaper, rivalling other provincial giants, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, in terms of circulation.⁶³

⁶¹ Mitchell, (1851), p.254; *SH*, 3 Dec, 1847, p.5D; Reid III, p.156; Robert Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health as a Preliminary Inquiry to the Sewerage, Drainage, Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Borough of Sunderland*, (London, 1851), pp.9-10; Patricia J Storey, "Some Sunderland Newspapers and their Proprietors", unpublished working paper of the "History of the Book Trades in the North" Project, pp.1, 4, SPL, LP072

⁶² See Chapter 5, p.159

⁶³ Cuttings from *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 19th 1837 and *Newcastle Journal*, July 29, 1837, Wilson Collection, 6, items 1333-6; Public Notice, signed by the Mayor, giving list of new

During the early nineteenth century the *Tyne Mercury* was owned and edited by William Andrew Mitchell, son of its founder but with the collapse of the Tory opposition and the passing of the Parliamentary Reform Bill, the paper parted company with the more radical reformers. Mitchell died in 1845 before the sanitary reform movement had really taken off. He had sold the paper to William Fordyce in 1843, under whose control there was a shift in emphasis. Whereas Mitchell had supported the tenets of political economy, Fordyce's brand of radicalism belonged more to the Cobbett tradition. In 1846 Fordyce sold the paper to P S Macliver and T N Cathrall, who absorbed it into their new weekly, the *Newcastle Guardian*. Although Milne describes it as "a visibly different newspaper" to the *Mercury* it continued something of the moderate liberal ethos established by the Mitchells. Such principles were given fresh life in "the ably-edited *Newcastle Guardian*", which advocated civil and religious liberty, parliamentary reform, and legal, educational and sanitary improvements.⁶⁴

Other significant Newcastle newspapers that Morton does not mention, because they were not Liberal publications, were the *Newcastle Courant*, the *Newcastle Journal* and the *Northern Tribune*. The *Courant* had been established in 1711 and had the largest circulation in the early 1830s, though the *Newcastle Chronicle* had just overtaken it by 1840. Described by Mitchell as politically neutral, it was owned by Blackwell and Company, general printers and patent medicine vendors. The *Journal* was founded in 1832 by John Hernaman and Robert Perring of the *Leeds Intelligencer*, at the invitation of a local group of Conservatives. By 1851 it had an extensive circulation, indicating the strength of local Conservatism despite the Liberal control of the Town Council. The *Journal* stood against Reform of any kind, which clearly ran counter to the prevailing spirit in the North-East towns, but it would appear that it was Hernaman's own editorial style

councillors elected on 26 Dec, 1835, dated 28 Dec, 1835, Wilson Collection, 5(I), Item 1170; Reid III, p.156; *NGSA Report*, p.4; Mitchell, ...1847, (nd), p.217; Mitchell, (1851), p.224; Welford, *Men of Mark* II, pp.455, 547; Milne, (1978) pp 234,242; Milne, (nd), pp.41, 64; Nigel Todd, *The Militant Democracy: Joseph Cowen and Victorian Radicalism*, (Whitley Bay, 1991), pp.50-56

⁶⁴ Welford III, pp.202-205; Mitchell, 1847, p.217; Mitchell, (1851), pp.224-225; Milne, (1978), pp.227, 230, 238-242; *NG*, 21 Feb, 1846

that gave particular cause for offence, inciting personal physical attack from outraged victims on occasion. The *Northern Tribune*, was a short-lived republican monthly paper founded in 1854 by the Radical, Joseph Cowen, junior, and was intended 'for the people'. It supported educational and public health reforms, but was far more interested in republican ideals and European nationalism. Given its short life and timing, it does not play a significant part in press involvement in sanitary reform on Tyneside.⁶⁵

In Sunderland, in addition to the *Herald*, there was the *Sunderland Times*. This began life as a moderate Tory paper, having emerged from an amalgamation with the Tory *Sunderland Beacon*, and continued to advocate Tory views until taken over by the ex-Chartist sanitary reformer, James Williams in 1858. Williams turned it into a "widely-read and influential" independent paper with "a strong, hearty, Radical impulse", particularly after 1860 when William Brockie, "a free-thinking Liberal" became its editor. Before then, John Candlish had started another Radical paper, the *Sunderland News*, in 1851 but this failed to attract sufficient advertising to make it viable, despite a reasonable circulation.⁶⁶

There was considerable variation between the local newspapers concerning coverage about sanitary conditions and public health generally, throughout the 1840s and 1850s and of Lord Morpeth's Health of Towns' Bill through both Houses during 1848. This perhaps reflects the underlying attitude of the various proprietors and editors to sanitary reform. There is insufficient space to explore the contribution to public health reform made by all the local papers mentioned above though the ones being examined in more detail were not the only exponents of reform. The *Tyne Mercury*, for example, was an early advocate of public health improvement, arguing that fresh air, plentiful and fresh water supplies,

⁶⁵ Mitchell, (1851), p.217; Circulation of Newspapers According to the Official Return printed by Order of the House of Commons, undated, Wilson Collection, 8, undated papers up to 1840, Item 1705; Milne (nd), pp.35-37; Milne, (1978), p.234; Todd, p.39; Susan Scott, "The *Northern Tribune*, a North East Radical Magazine", *BNEGSLH*, 19 (1985), (pp.9-17), p.10

⁶⁶ Brockie, *Sunderland Notables*, p.275; Milburn, "Religion in Sunderland in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", Appendix II, p.55; Patricia J Storey, "Personalities and Power 1860s to 1914", pp.141-154 in G E Milburn and S T Miller (eds), *Sunderland River, Town and People*, (Sunderland, 1988), pp.123-4

personal cleanliness and unadulterated and wholesome food were essential for health. It demonstrated some acceptance of the dearth model of disease by also blaming poor conditions on the social gulf which existed between the “haves and have nots”. Given the demise of the paper in 1846, however, its contributions to the debate were perhaps not particularly significant. The *Sunderland News and North of England Advertiser* was also supportive of reform. An editorial in July 1853 reminded the Council of the on-going need to properly drain and sewer the town, reflecting the editor’s concurrence with the Chadwickian model of disease. Although the *News* acknowledged that until the sewerage and drainage schemes were completed, “King Dirt” would continue to reign, nevertheless it argued that efforts needed to be made to remove nuisances and middens and to regularly scour the streets and lanes.⁶⁷ However, the *Sunderland News* was short-lived, and therefore, once again, was perhaps not particularly significant for our purposes. Instead the focus will be on four of the principal local newspapers, one each for Sunderland and Gateshead, and two for Newcastle. These are the Liberal *Sunderland Herald*, *Gateshead Observer* and *Newcastle Chronicle*, and the Conservative *Newcastle Journal*.

The *Sunderland Herald* was very supportive of Sanitary Reform and gave considerable space, over the years, to a range of subjects that served to publicize the problems and explain the implications of some of the possible solutions to the environmental conditions of the town. Overall the paper acted as a propagandist for the sanitarian cause and educator of the public in understanding the medical theories of the day and the connection between dirt and disease. It did this in numerous ways. For example it highlighted the shortcomings of the existing sewerage system and the advantages of smaller diameter pipes.⁶⁸ Prior to the Health of Towns Bill the paper gave extensive coverage to Dr Reid’s inquiry of 1843; printed all the reports that were produced by the local sub-committees and demonstrated its general acceptance of the aims and objectives of the Health of Towns’ Association.⁶⁹ Three years later, the editor highlighted the extent of the

⁶⁷ *TM*, 5 Dec, 1843, p.2D; Editorial, *SN*, 23 July, 1853, p.4C

⁶⁸ Editorial, *SH*, 26 Nov, 1847, p.4C-D

⁶⁹ 8 Dec, 1843, p.7C; 15 Dec, 1843, p.5E; 26 Jan, 1844, p.6A-D; 2 Feb, 1844, p.7A-D

local problems by quoting an extract from the Registrar General's most recent quarterly report, which had made the link between insanitary conditions and high urban mortality rates. He blamed the local commissioners for the state of the town and strongly urged them to exercise their powers to tackle the problems concerned. He demanded that the commissioners stop wasting public funds on unnecessary parliamentary expenses, urging them, instead, to use them for the purpose for which they were intended.⁷⁰ This was a theme the *Herald* regularly returned to during the years before the passing of the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851.⁷¹ In addition, it kept the whole subject of sanitary reform before the mind of its readers by drawing links between disease and dirt during the 1847 typhus and 1848 cholera epidemics and by giving extensive coverage to the proceedings of the SSA. Furthermore it highlighted the shortcomings of the existing sewerage system and promoted the advantages of smaller diameter pipes.⁷² To compliment its own campaign for reform, the *Herald* printed a number of letters from readers concerning sanitary matters, including a series of eight letters it had commissioned from the aptly named "Argus" in the autumn of 1849.⁷³ The *Sunderland Herald* was an exponent of the Public Health Act and during its passage through Parliament it reproduced lengthy extracts of the Bill.⁷⁴ The paper was critical of all attempts to dilute the Act and supported state intervention on the basis that without the "interference of the General Board itself", there was little chance that towns would benefit from it. It also supported centralization and uniformity on the grounds of greater efficiency and economy.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Editorial, *SH*, 28 Aug, 1846, p.4E

⁷¹ See for example 11 Dec, 1846, p.5C; Editorial concerning Sunderland Improvement Bills, 19 March, 1847, p.4E; and Editorial complaining about the existing sewerage system, 26 Nov, 1847, p.4C-D

⁷² "Fever epidemic in Sunderland", *SH*, 5 Nov, 1847, p.5C; Editorial, 26 Nov, 1847, p.4C-D; "The Health of Sunderland", 10 Dec, 1847, p.5C and Editorial, 19 Jan, 1849, p.5A-B; 3 Dec, 1847, p.3B and p.5D; 10 Dec, 1847, p.5D; 31 Dec, 1847, p.5B; and 24 March, 1848, p.5A

⁷³ These ran between 21 Sept and 30 Nov, 1849. According to the *OED*, Argos was a Greek mythological person with a hundred eyes and in late Middle English, the word meant a very vigilant watcher or guardian.

⁷⁴ See for example *SH*, 22 Sept, 1848, p.6F, p.6A-C; 29 Sept, 1848, p.4E-F

⁷⁵ *SH*, 11 Aug, 1848, p.4E; 20 Oct, 1848, p.2B; Editorial, *SH*, 19 Jan, 1849, p.5A-B; *SH*, 20 Oct, 1848, p.2B

The *Gateshead Observer*, with the sanitary reformer James Clephan at its helm, had promoted sanitary reform since its establishment and accepted the sanitarian model of disease, promoting the new orthodoxy concerning drainage and sewerage.⁷⁶ Although the paper did not reproduce lengthy extracts from the Public Health Act, it kept the whole question of sanitary reform in the public mind by drawing its readers' attention to progress made or problems that needed to be addressed. In particular, in an editorial in 1849, Clephan highlighted the shortcomings of the existing legislation in order to persuade the public that permanent solutions were needed. He explained why the Nuisances Removal Act, 1849, did not deal with the root causes of disease because it did not empower the local authorities to compel house-owners to pave and drain their properties, nor did it control or regulate the action of speculators. When, in February 1848, a public meeting was held to petition Parliament in support of the Health of Towns Bill, the paper gave considerable column space to it, and clearly supported the sentiments expressed at the meeting in favour of the Bill. James Clephan, who was at the meeting, testified to the improvements that had taken place in Gateshead in recent years but argued that if the country would only support the government's plan to give the authorities greater powers, and if the public would help them to carry these out, the sanitary evils might soon be destroyed.⁷⁷

Clephan regarded the Public Health Act as a great step forward in combating the self-interest and individualism of "reckless builders" and others who had shown a complete disregard for public health. He believed it would place the whole country under "a uniform and permanent system of sanitary protection", which was not dependent upon the acceptance or rejection of individuals: "by niggardliness in broadcloth or obstinacy in rags". Although he regarded it rather more optimistically than perhaps it deserved, he did show some understanding of the complexity of the resistance that the Act encountered. He noted the limited

⁷⁶ See for example Editorial, *GO*, 21 Oct, 1848, p.3A; "Mr Wilkinson's drains", *GO*, 21 Oct, 1848, p.3B. In this second article, the paper publicized the effectiveness of artificial stone piping for drains in an article.

⁷⁷ Report of the Meeting, *GO*, 19 Feb, 1848, p.1A and p.4D-F; "Disease or Drainage:- Choose for Yourselves", *GO*, 28 Oct, 1848, p.2G; Editorial, *GO*, 11 Aug, 1849, p.2F

effectiveness of Newcastle Town Council in particular in enforcing their existing powers and pointed to the inefficiencies arising from piecemeal improvements. Although he blamed landlords for their failure to support permanent solutions, he also demonstrated his awareness that tenants, too, were culpable. By introducing a uniform system, he believed it would prevent the “extravagant outlay” of both public and private resources incurred through periodical and piecemeal improvements, a claim that Toulmin Smith condemned as being “*material selfishness*” in another form.⁷⁸

Clephan’s own views on public health reform generally can be discerned from a pamphlet he published in 1854 on the town’s three cholera epidemics, entitled *The Three Warnings*. He drew attention to the dangers caused by overcrowded, ill-ventilated and insanitary housing and particularly criticized the practice of allowing “decomposing matter and foul emanations” to collect. He argued that the very fact that cartloads of rubbish were removed as soon as cholera threatened simply demonstrated that this “secondary cause”, at least of cholera, was well known, even if the “primary origin” was still a mystery. In painting the contrast between the conditions in the overcrowded districts with those experienced in the middle-class suburbs, he reinforced his message that the solution to epidemics lay in taking proper sanitary precautions. As he declared:

The clean, well-ventilated, not over-crowded portion of New Gateshead, was a land of Goshen in 1853, where there was neither Death nor Disease, while, all around, there was Infection and Mortality; and so, likewise, were a whole town pure and wholesome, it would, under the blessing of Heaven, be free from Epidemics.⁷⁹

Clephan addressed his warning to “the medical and general public” and did not single out any individual group to blame. He provided no detailed solutions but contented himself with allowing the facts to speak for themselves. Yet quite

⁷⁸ *Ibid*; *GO*, Editorial, 11 Aug, 1849, p.2F; 10 Nov, 1849, p.3A; Editorial, 8 Dec, 1849, p.3F; J Toulmin Smith, *Local Self-Government Un-Mystified. A Vindication of Common Sense, Human Nature, and Practical Improvement. Against the Manifesto of Centralism*, a lecture given at the Social Science Association, 1857, (London, 1857), p.23

⁷⁹ James Clephan, “Advertisement” dated May 1854, as a preface to *The Three Warnings: or, Facts and Figures of the Cholera Epidemics of Gateshead*, (Gateshead, Newcastle and London, 1854). Goshen was the district in Egypt where the Israelites lived before the Exodus and where they escaped the plagues of Egypt.

clearly, the real target of his warning were the ratepayers, especially all those who had sufficient wealth to escape the worst affected places themselves, but who had failed to use their resources to ensure that this situation should never be allowed to happen again.⁸⁰

The *Newcastle Chronicle* appears to have been little interested in sanitary reform throughout the 1840s and, in contrast to the *Sunderland Herald*, gave limited coverage to the progress of the Health of Towns' Bill during its progress through Parliament in 1848. Hodgson's influence can be seen in the paper's criticism of the amendments introduced to it by the House of Lords. It argued that the Lords were unconcerned about the costs involved to the urban ratepayers because most of them were unlikely to be personally affected. Although it gave some coverage to Rawlinson's public inquiry in Gateshead there was little mention of Rawlinson's visit to Newcastle, or any criticism directed towards the Council for not particularly co-operating with Rawlinson when he was in the town.⁸¹

However in 1850, after the sale of the paper, there was an ideological change in its editorial policy. This is immediately evident in the two series of letters on the "Condition of the Poor", which were published that year and which have provided a valuable source of evidence for a number of sections of this thesis. These not only gave detailed descriptions of some of the worst parts of Newcastle, especially Sandgate, but also highlighted the lack of education and religious provision in these districts, as well as the need for better housing for workers. Dr Robinson, author of the second series, also considered the various agencies by which the conditions of the poor could be improved and discussed to what extent the poor could help themselves. In addition he addressed the controversial issues of economy and centralisation.⁸² Yet, as Calcott comments, the paper left the letters to speak for themselves.⁸³ Moreover, they had little impact. In 1853, just after the cholera epidemic, the paper complained that they:

⁸⁰ Clephan, Preface

⁸¹ Editorial, *NC*, 11 Aug, 1848, p.4E; *NC*, 30 Nov, 1849, p.6C

⁸² *NC*, 12, 19, 26 April, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 May, 7, 14, 21, 28 June, 5 July, 1850

⁸³ M Calcott, "The challenge of Cholera: the last Epidemic at Newcastle upon tyne", *Northern History*, XX, (1984), 78-104, p.174

...were even sneered at as unnecessary and of little value; and the authorities and the people of Newcastle alike went to sleep composedly over the mine which has now exploded with such appalling results.⁸⁴

The *Chronicle* goes on to criticise the complacency that had existed following the 1848 epidemic, and expressed its hope that the 1853 epidemic would serve to persuade the local authorities that public health measures were indeed necessary, as had been highlighted in the series of Letters of 1850.⁸⁵

The *Chronicle* demonstrated its support for state intervention in an editorial in September, 1850. It complained that despite the efforts of sanitary reformers and “hard-worked, ill-paid, ill-considered surgeons” there was resistance from “vested rights, entangled with religious discords, denounced as philanthropic ‘humbug’...” In consequence, the demands of the poor were too great to be dealt with by individuals and therefore, the *Chronicle* argued, it was “the proper duty of Government” to meet them. From the list of immediate remedial steps the editor recommended it is clear he regarded “Government” in this context as embracing both national and local administration. These steps included the abolition of the window tax, the building of model lodgings and houses, greater Council involvement in the erection of public baths and wash-houses and ragged schools.⁸⁶

The Conservative *Newcastle Journal* was scornful of the local sanitary reformers and Government Commissioners just before Rawlinson’s visit in 1849 and some years later it accused sanitary reformers of “humbug” and the General Board of “jobbery” particularly in relation to Rawlinson himself.⁸⁷ During the 1853 cholera epidemic, however, it was as concerned about the sanitary state of Newcastle as the Liberal local papers, but did not accept that the remedy lay with a change in the law. It was highly critical of the ineffectiveness and interference

⁸⁴ “Neglect and its Consequences”, *NC*, 23 Sept, 1853, p.4C-D

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ Editorial, *NC*, 27 Sept, 1850, p.4B

⁸⁷ *NJ*, 15 Dec, 1849, p3B; 2 April, 1853, p.8A

of the Board during the cholera epidemic that year and challenged the suggestion that the immediate application of the Public Health Act would solve Newcastle's problems, given that Gateshead, which came under the Act, had also suffered during the epidemic and had not been protected from the harmful effects of the water provided by the Whittle Dean Water Company.⁸⁸ Two years later it described the Public Health Act as being "a daring violation of the rational rights and liberties of Englishmen." It objected to sewers on the grounds that they caused obnoxious effluvia to collect, arguing that they should be as few and as big as possible. It believed that scavenging and surface drainage after rain was quite sufficient to maintain health.⁸⁹

The paper claimed that the real danger to public health was not due to the inadequacy of the law but to the negligence of the public authorities to enforce it, both at the national and local level. It argued that if the Corporation had enforced all the legislation already available to it there would be little need for the Public Health Act as well. In particular the *Journal* criticized the Corporation for failing to do its duty during the previous two years under the Lodging Houses Act, 1851. This, rather than sewerage and drainage, was the key to the social problems in Newcastle, as far as the paper was concerned.⁹⁰ The *Journal* also blamed the Board of Guardians for failing to bring the provisions of the Nuisances Act into operation, which, it claimed, would have removed all the filth that encouraged the epidemic. In the absence of the application of the Public Health Act to Newcastle, the Guardians had been responsible for dealing with the emergency. Yet, the *Journal* claimed, they had demonstrated their unfitness to be entrusted with public health measures by their inability to deal with the crisis effectively, even ignoring the advice of Dr Gavin of the General Board regarding the safe burial of the dead.⁹¹

⁸⁸ "Sanitary State of Newcastle", *NJ*, 24 Sept, 1853, p.5A-C

⁸⁹ *NJ*, 17 Sept, 1853, p.6F

⁹⁰ *NJ*, 24 Sept, 1853, p.5A-C

⁹¹ *Ibid*

What had particularly sparked off this attack against the local authorities and Mr Grainger from the General Board was the fact that the press had been excluded from a meeting of the united committee of the Board of Guardians and the Town Council during the cholera epidemic, to prevent the public from becoming aware of the true state of the town's overcrowding. The *Journal* argued that the real reason for the secrecy was to conceal the abuses and neglect on the part of the authorities.⁹² There was undoubtedly a political dimension to the paper's hostility towards the essentially Liberal Corporation and Board of Guardians so it is hard to know whether the paper was genuinely concerned about the apathy of the local authorities, for the sake of the community, or whether it simply had its own political axe to grind. It is difficult, too, to establish precisely what it *did* advocate, though the article in some way anticipates some of the arguments put forward by J Toulmin Smith against Centralism and in support of "True Local Self-Government". Smith claimed that the whole system of Municipalities which had been established both under the Municipal Reform Act and the Public Health Act encouraged cliqueism instead of ensuring that local bodies were primarily concerned with the public good. He also argued that "the honest man and good citizen" had a responsibility to ensure that local governors fulfilled their duties properly.⁹³ Both Toulmin Smith and the *Newcastle Journal* believed that all citizens had a duty to be vigilant in ensuring that their local representatives were truly working for the public good, and not be serving the interests of minority factions. Yet it is clear from its reponse to the General Board of Health, and its attitudes about legislation, the *Journal* was not a paper that advocated root and branch measures to improve the town's environmental problems.

* * * * *

Although publicity was given to the need for sanitary reform in some of the local press, the real question is, what contribution did the local press make in initiating change in the 1840s and 1850s? Of course circulation figures were never high,

⁹² *Ibid*

⁹³ Smith, pp.28-29

relative to population,⁹⁴ and although some copies were available to a multiple readership in public libraries and working men's institutes, they only reached a small proportion of the towns' populations. In addition, individual papers were probably read by people who already shared the underlying ideology of the proprietor and editor. Thus, in many ways, they were preaching to the converted. In this way the local press can be regarded, to some extent, as barometers of local public interest in health reform. Yet it is possible that the press helped to shape informed opinion and that those men who were engaged in local affairs as councillors and magistrates, poor law guardians and street commissioners, doctors and ministers, were influenced and encouraged in their views. The fact that a number of the local newspaper proprietors were themselves involved in local government suggests that they were well aware of the way in which the local press could promote their own political agendas. For example it is likely that James Hodgson's own negative attitude to sanitary reform, on the grounds of economy, was behind the *Chronicle's* indifference to the Public Health Act in the late 1840s. It would also seem likely that it played a part in persuading the ratepayers not to sign the petition to appeal for the act to be adopted, on the grounds of expense.

Of course the impact of a more positive message was not immediate, as has already been demonstrated by the limited response to the *Newcastle Chronicle's* series of Letters on the Conditions of the Poor. Yet the *Sunderland Herald* and the *Gateshead Observer*, throughout our period, encouraged debate on the whole subject of public health reform, as reflected by the number of letters to the editors on this subject, including letters from members of the working classes.⁹⁵ They both published lengthy reports of the council and guardian meetings and editorials on the Health of Towns' Bill and the Public Health Act.⁹⁶ Once it was passed,

⁹⁴ "Circulation of Newspapers According to the Official Return printed by Order of the House of Commons", (nd), amongst undated papers up to 1840 in Wilson Collection, 8, item 1705; Milne (nd), pp.39-40, 48; F W D Manders, "A History of Gateshead Newspapers", *BGDLHS*, I, 15, (April, 1976), 195-203, pp.198-9

⁹⁵ For example, letter from "A Working Man" to the Editor, *SH*, 7 April, 1848, p.2A and letter from a member of the NGWMA, *GO*, 20 Nov, 1847, p.4E. See also letters in *SH*, 17, 24 March, 7, 21, 28 April, 15 Sept, 1848 and *GO*, 29 Jan, 21 Oct, 1848, 24 Feb, 1855

⁹⁶ For example *SH*, 7, April, 12 and 19 May, 9 June, 28 July, 11 Aug, 22 and 29 Sept 1848

they informed interested parties and alerted the apathetic to some of the issues, even if this did not prompt them to direct action. It is possible that one of the reasons why Sunderland was so quick to embrace the spirit of the Public Health Act, despite local rating anomalies, was in part due to the high profile given to the Act during 1848 by the *Sunderland Herald*. It may also account for why Gateshead town council acted so swiftly after the Act received the Royal Assent.

No evidence is available to make an accurate assessment of direct cause and effect in terms of the role played by the local press in promoting or retarding sanitary reform. Nevertheless, the marked difference between the *Gateshead Observer* and the *Sunderland Herald* on the one hand, and the *Newcastle Chronicle* under Hodgson, and the *Newcastle Journal* on the other, provides one explanation, among many, for the different responses to the Public Health Act in the three towns. Yet, as has already been pointed out, there is a subtle interplay between the newspapers' role in shaping public opinion and the degree to which they simply reflected that opinion.

Local Sanitary Associations

Sanitary Associations were established in the three towns in 1847, bringing together representatives of the local political, administrative, religious and medical groups. Newcastle and Gateshead established a joint association, the NGSA, which arose out of a meeting of "the friends of sanitary reform" held on 16th March, 1847, whilst Sunderland established the SSA, eight months later. Both associations included the local members of parliament and senior parish clergy amongst their vice-presidents but perhaps the most striking difference between the two lies in the number of committee members involved. Sunderland's committee was initially made up of just eight men, all of whom took an active part in the Association's affairs. In contrast, the NGSA had 63 members, which was too many for effective decision-making, and included

people, like Dr Headlam, who were not actively engaged in the workings of the Association, or indeed particularly interested in its aims and objectives.⁹⁷

The President of the NGSA was the Bishop of Durham, who would have been a figurehead only whereas the President of the SSA was the mayor, Sir Hedworth Williamson. In addition to the 15 vice-presidents, who included Headlam and Fife, the Committee consisted of 13 clergymen, 8 doctors and 45 other men. Dr George Robinson, the Honorary Secretary, was perhaps the most active individual member, and the man most closely identified with the declared aims and objectives of the Association.⁹⁸ The nine vice-presidents of the SSA included two prominent aldermen: Dr Joseph Brown and Robert Brown; four clergymen and Dr Clanny. The Secretary was T F Hedley, as Assistant Overseer and Collector.⁹⁹ The first committee, chaired by the Rev Richard Skipsey, included four town councillors out of the eight members initially appointed. Two of the councillors were medical men: William Mordey and William Dixon. Two other surgeons were also on the Committee: Reginald Orton and John Potts.¹⁰⁰

The objects of both associations included the collection of information as to the nature and extent of local causes of disease and with that aim, carried out detailed examinations of the streets and courts inhabited by the labouring populations of the towns. These investigations provided them with the evidence needed to press the case for reform and as a result of its findings the NGSA memorialized both town Councils, “praying them to adopt speedy and efficient measures for

⁹⁷ *NGSA Report*, p.4, Report of the First Meeting of the SSA held on 26 Nov, 1847, *SH*, 3 Dec, 1847, p.3B

⁹⁸ *NGSA Report*, p.4; Hume *et al*, *Cholera Inquiry*, p.5

⁹⁹ *GO*, 19 Feb, 1848, p.4D-F; *Ward's North of England Directory*, (Newcastle, 1853), p.179

¹⁰⁰ *SH*, 3 Dec, 1847, pp.3B, 5D. The article only gives surnames for seven out of the eight names so assumptions have been made based on the list of Council members and surgeons given in *White's Directory*, (Sunderland, 1847) pp. 479, 410. The names given in the article were Messrs Mordey, Dixon, Orton, John Potts, Vint, Wight jun and Reay. There were two Dixons on the Council, John and William, but I have assumed that it was Wm, who was a surgeon. There was a Reginald Orton listed as a surgeon in *White's Directory* (p.405), also a Robert Vint, owner of the *Herald*, and a Robert Wight listed on the Town Council. (p.479). Regarding John Potts, there are six John Potts' listed in the alphabetical list (p.408) but the most likely one to have been included was the John Potts, surgeon. There are 2 Reays listed in *White's Directory* (p.410), neither of whom would seem likely candidates. There was a John Ray listed as a councillor (p.479), but the *Sunderland Herald* uses the spelling “Reay” in subsequent articles, so it is unclear who or what this Reay was.

improving the drainage and cleaning of the boroughs under their charge, and for preventing various nuisances therein".¹⁰¹ However, not everybody was impressed by their undoubted labours and the personal risks involved. "Argus" suggested that whilst the SSA had worked initially with "great vigour", ferreting out nuisances and reporting them, they were all "froth" and had achieved little, despite being watched over by "gentlemen learned in physic". Indeed, he considered their reports to have been superficial and incomplete, with one exception. He acknowledged that the Association's "natural enemy", the Poor Law Board, had thwarted all its efforts, and that it had failed to attract sufficient donations for its cause. Nevertheless, he was clearly critical of the fact that it had simply abandoned the work so soon. However the real difficulty, according to one ex-member, was that as it was a voluntary body it had no legal powers to ensure that its recommendations were carried out.¹⁰²

Both associations hoped to obtain prompt removal of nuisances; to investigate the physical conditions of the working classes and to educate them in the hazards that arose from "bad ventilation", lack of exercise and "neglect of cleanliness".¹⁰³ This educative role was important and the NGSAs sought to impress upon the working classes the advantages of positive health measures "by every available means", though the SSA was aware that it was better to influence them to adopt "habits of cleanliness" by persuasion than by force.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless "Civis", writing about the achievements of the short-lived SSA, believed that it had managed to diffuse information that had previously gone unheeded. However, once again "Argus" was sceptical of such claims and asked where the results were of such dissemination, arguing that the sanitary association should not just simply have highlighted the problems but should have done something to remedy the situation.¹⁰⁵ This was somewhat unfair given that members of the SSA, such as William Mordey and Dr Joseph Brown, did a considerable amount to bring about

¹⁰¹ *NGSA Report*, pp.7-8; *SH*, 10 Dec, 1847, p.5C. See also Hume *et al*, pp.v-vi

¹⁰² "Argus" to the Editor on the Sanitary State of the Town, Letter I, *SH*, 21 Sept, 1849, p.5E-F; "Argus" Letter IV, *SH*, 19 Oct, 1849, p.5, C-D; "Civis" to the Editor, *SH*, 2 Nov, 1849, p.7D

¹⁰³ Petition from the Members of the NGSAs, Council Meeting, 4 Aug, 1847, *NCP for 1846-7*, pp.221-2; *NGSA Report*, p.4; *SH*, 3 Dec, 1847, p.3B

¹⁰⁴ *NGSA Report*, p.4; *SH*, 3 Dec, 1848, p.5D

¹⁰⁵ "Argus", Letter IV

reform in their capacity both as medical men and members of the Town Council. They also did much more than simply preach to those incapable of helping themselves. Furthermore the SSA endeavoured to co-operate with other local bodies to institute change.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless "Argus" does have a point in that essentially the sanitary associations were involved in organizing propaganda for the sanitarian cause rather than in implementing change. Yet if the conditions had not been so assiduously highlighted by these local men in the late 1840s perhaps there would have been less enthusiasm for the Public Health Act on the part of the Corporations of Sunderland and Gateshead. For although there were active members of the Sunderland and Gateshead Councils in the two sanitary associations, they may have remained minority voices if the associations had not existed.

In contrast the NGSA appears to have had little influence over the Newcastle Corporation, despite the fact that both Sir John Fife and Dr Headlam were vice-presidents of the Association and aldermen of the town. Robinson admitted, in 1850, that although the NGSA had been instrumental in persuading the Council to adopt temporary measures in the face of the 1847-8 typhus epidemic, it had had insufficient influence to obtain more permanent ones. He also acknowledged that it had failed to drum up sufficient interest and support from the ratepayers to get the necessary number of signatures for a petition to have the Public Health Act applied.¹⁰⁷

One important element of the educative aims of both associations was the decision to establish Working Men's Associations. In Sunderland Rev Richard Skipsey, William Mordey and three others, were appointed to this task and the first meeting of the Sunderland Working Men's Association [SWMA] took place in December, 1847. Although an admirable aim, "Argus", was sceptical about the achievements of the SWMA and pointedly suggested that a "strong petition" to the Council or local board from the working classes would have "re-echoed from

¹⁰⁶ See for example Report of a Meeting of the SSA, *SH*, 24 March, 1848, p.5A

¹⁰⁷ Robinson, "Condition of the Poor", Second series, Letter I, *NC*, 31 May, 1850, p.4A-C; Kell to Austin, 16 Oct, 1848, PRO MH13/77

Sunderland to Somerset House!”¹⁰⁸ The NGSa formed a sub-committee, which included Dr Robinson, Rev Jones and James Clephan, to communicate with the towns’ operatives to help in the dissemination of “fever-rules” and other sanitary advice. They met about 30 foremen and other “influential working men”, who unanimously pledged their support. As a result, the Newcastle and Gateshead Working Men’s Association [NGWMA] was established in the autumn of 1847 with the election of officers and committee members and the necessary steps were taken for re-inspecting the more neglected districts of the towns. The *First Report of the NGSa* noted how important it was for working men, who had direct experience of the sanitary evils, to be involved in their removal. To further their knowledge and understanding of public health issues, the NGSa provided them with a reading room.¹⁰⁹ The NGWMA was quick to show its involvement in, and concern for, the health of the towns and did not hesitate to challenge the local authorities to do something to improve conditions. For example, in November 1847, one of the members wrote to the *Gateshead Observer* complaining at the lack of “energetic action” on the part of the local authorities in Gateshead in dealing with insanitary conditions, particularly in the light of the recent typhus epidemic and news of a possible cholera visitation.¹¹⁰ A year later a deputation from the NGWMA attended a Council meeting and reported that, based on their investigations, they had found inadequate sewerage and lavatory provision in various parts of Newcastle, particularly in Westgate and Sandgate.¹¹¹ What is particularly interesting about this is that although most of the investigations and visitations of working-class dwellings carried out during this period were conducted by members of the middle classes, this shows that there were people visiting these tenements who were labouring men. Yet a social and cultural gulf existed between even these working-class sanitary association members and the tenement dwellers they visited.

¹⁰⁸ *SH*, 10 Dec, 1847, p.5C; 31 Dec, 1847, p.5B; 28 Jan, 1848, p.5D; “Argus”, Letter IV

¹⁰⁹ *NGSA Report*, pp.14-16

¹¹⁰ Letter from a member of the NGWMA, *GO*, 20 Nov, 1847, p.4E

¹¹¹ Council Meeting, 13 Dec, 1848, *NCP for 1849*, p.18

Both the NGSAs and the SSAs intended to disseminate relevant information based on scientific advance and recent enquiries “as to the physical and moral evils” that resulted from insanitary conditions. To this end, the SSA organized a number of public lectures of a scientific and a “practical” nature, given by local people such as Messrs Mordey and Orton, or by visitors such as Thomas Beggs of the Metropolitan Sanitary Association, but they were not always well attended. In addition both associations attempted to overcome misconceptions about costs of reform and to generally oversee the health of their towns and surrounding districts and co-operate with London and elsewhere in facilitating the application of sanitary measures.¹¹²

Although both associations included members of the three corporations, they considered it important that they should be independent of them. This enabled them to freely petition the local town councils, which they did on a number of occasions, particularly the Newcastle Town Council. However, the SSA decided that all interested people, particularly those on local bodies and medical officers, should be permitted to attend their committee meetings and contribute to their discussions. The SSA disbanded once the Public Health Act had come into operation, not because of apathy on the part of its members but because many of them were members of the Council and Board of Guardians. They felt it unnecessary to act in a two-fold capacity but pursued their goals within these local administrative bodies, which after all had the power to instigate change.¹¹³

Once the Public Health Act was passed, the NGSAs met to consider the course to be adopted regarding its adoption in Newcastle and Gateshead. It was unanimously accepted that the Central Board of Health should be petitioned to introduce the Act on the basis of high mortality figures. It was acknowledged, however, that because of the existence of local acts, the Public Health Act could not be put into operation in the two boroughs until sanctioned by Parliament.

¹¹² Report of the first meeting of the SSA, *SH*, 3 Dec, 1847, p.5D; “Civis” to the Editor, *SH*, 2 Nov, 1849, p.7D

¹¹³ Report of the first meeting of the SSA; Newcastle Council Meetings, 4 Aug, 1847, *NCP for 1847*, 3 May, 13 Dec, *NCP for 1848*; 9 Nov, 1849, *NCP for 1849*; Sunderland Council Meeting, 4 Feb, 1848, *SCM 2*, pp.9-12; “Civis”, *op cit*

Thus, as a temporary measure, it was agreed that memorials should be addressed to the two Town Councils to appoint their own health committees to carry into effect the sanitary provisions of the Town Improvement Acts until such time as local boards of health could be appointed under the Public Health Act.¹¹⁴ As has already been discussed in earlier chapters, there was support for the aims and objectives of the NGSAs in Gateshead, particularly by the Town Council. However they met with little success in Newcastle and it was the NGSAs that were instrumental in obtaining an inspection from Robert Rawlinson, hoping that he would recommend its introduction. Yet there was only a small number of men present at the preliminary inquiry held by Rawlinson on 18 December, 1849, demonstrating just how little real impact the NGSAs had had in Newcastle.¹¹⁵

In terms of overall influence in shaping public opinion, it would appear that the local sanitary associations provided some impetus for reform in those towns that were already moving in that direction. Through their investigations of the slum districts, they put the spotlight on those conditions hitherto unknown, and reminded councillors and ratepayers alike of the dangers of ignoring the towns' problems. This was certainly the case in both Gateshead and Sunderland. Furthermore, the involvement of active reformers in the Association who were also engaged in local government, such as Brown and Mordey in Sunderland and Brockett and Kell in Gateshead, aided the advancement of the sanitarians' cause by providing a voice in local government that could inspire change. In addition, the inclusion, in the Associations, of Robert Vint, owner of the *Sunderland Herald*, and Brockett and Clephan, owner and editor of the *Gateshead Observer*, ensured that these papers continued to reflect the views and promote the aims of the two associations.

¹¹⁴ Report of a Special Meeting of the NGSAs, held on Monday, 18 Sept, *SH*, 22 Sept, 1848, p.5D

¹¹⁵ Dr George Robinson, "Condition of the Poor", Letter 1, *NC*, 31 May, 1850, p.4A-C; Robert Rawlinson's Report to the General Board of Health, on a preliminary inquiry in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, taken upon an excess of mortality, under the powers of the 8th Section of the Public Health Act, 7 March, 1853, PRO MH13/232; Hume *et al*, pp.28-29

However in Newcastle, where the local élite was at best indifferent, and at worst, hostile to public health reform, and in particular to the perceived loss of powers associated with the application of the Public Health Act, the local sanitary association appears to have had little impact. The NGSA's influence was further undermined by the fact that its moving spirit was Robinson, whose activities and reputation among the influential sections of the town have been discussed in Chapter 9. In consequence the NGSA did little to convert an already antipathetic community to the need for sanitary reform generally and the Public Health Act in particular.

CONCLUSION

We return to our starting point, namely, to what extent did 'King Dirt' and 'bumbledom' defeat the objects of the Public Health Act in each of the three towns and what differences were there in their responses? Taking the second part of this question first, it has been argued that the responses to the Public Health Act in the three towns were distinctively different. Thus this thesis does challenge the impression of uniformity that has been given by contemporaries such as Chadwick, and historians such as MacDonagh, who was more interested in the development of social administration from the centre. The nature of these differences and the reasons for them will be discussed further below. Yet if we are to avoid antiquarianism, it is important to be able to draw some general conclusions from these three individual case studies. Although a whole range of determining factors - local politics, socio-economic structures, demography, religion, medical personnel, salaried officials, pressure groups, local press - have been discussed, no one factor emerges from the evidence as having been pre-eminently responsible for the differences described. Instead each adds something, often quite subtle, to the overall mixture.

There is a sense in which "King Dirt" did defeat the objects of the Public Health Act in all three towns. After all, the problems were immense, as have been described in Chapter 3, and it was going to take time, further legislation, medical and technological advances and a rise in living standards before conditions improved significantly. Indeed, the magnitude of the problems perhaps created a sense of helplessness and inertia,¹ although there were those, particularly in Newcastle, who were quick to justify inactivity on the grounds that the town was no worse than any other large urban area. The intransigence of the problem is illustrated by the fact that even in Sunderland, which had done most to improve conditions by 1858, much of the town remained dirty. One visitor in 1865 described the squalid and filthy lanes and alleys in the East End and argued that the town was badly in need of a sanitary inspector "to poke his nose into" the

¹ This was acknowledged by Dr Gavin in 1853. Gavin to GBH, 12 Oct, 1853, PRO MH13/232

slums. Although “CCH” acknowledged that the Corporation had done “a good deal” he was dismissive of their achievements, commenting that they had merely “drained a little, opened a park, and...erected public urinals..”²

In his published reply, James Williams claimed that “CCH” had exaggerated the conditions and underestimated the achievements of the Corporation who had in fact done “a good deal” as had been confirmed by Rawlinson on a recent visit to the town. Nevertheless, Williams acknowledged that “with all the vigilance” the Corporation could exercise they found it impossible to prevent, completely, the “nightly commision” of nuisances in some of the narrow lanes. In addition, the old back-to-back tenement housing made improvements difficult but still much had been done to an extent which Williams believed had not been exceeded in any other town.³

Although “CCH” had perhaps been unjust, the fact that he described the narrow entries as uncleansed, the houses overcrowded and without cheap and convenient water supply, and the mortality rates still high, is indicative of just what an up hill struggle it was to introduce comprehensive reform. Yet despite the problems caused by ongoing filthy conditions, this did not stop Sunderland Corporation from actively seeking to advance the cause of sanitary reform and under James William’s chairmanship, the Sanitary Committee was an energetic and proactive body in the 1860s. One of William’s personal triumphs was the Sunderland Town Improvement Act, 1868, which he managed to steer through the Council despite a certain amount of opposition.⁴

Yet “King Dirt” not only characterizes the insanitary conditions themselves, but also the attitudes of those ratepayers who were unwilling to acknowledge the problems or pay for the solutions. So when asking if “King Dirt” defeated the objects of the Public Health Act, one part of the answer involves assessing the influence of the ‘dirty’ party in each place. Finer has argued that whilst minority

² Letter from “CCH”, “From Sunderland”, *The Builder*, , XXIII, 1183, 7 Oct, 1865, pp.713-714

³ Letter from “J W”, “A Word for Sunderland”, *The Builder*, , XXIII, 1183, 7 Oct, 1865, p.748

⁴ W Brockie, *Sunderland Notables: Natives, Residents, and Visitors*, (Sunderland, 1894), p.274

groups of reformers were responsible for introducing the Act into their towns “there was scarcely a single instance where a large and disaffected ‘dirty’ party was not watching the proceedings in sullen discontent.”⁵ Reformers, by the very nature of their desire to change the *status quo*, leave evidence behind, which is not the case for the vast majority of the population. There is difficulty for historians in assessing how large the ‘dirty’ parties actually were, because although the term implies a degree of organized resistance, the reality was very different. The majority of the population, of all classes, were probably apathetic and indifferent, except when sudden epidemics challenged their complacency. However, given that the majority are usually ‘silent’ they leave few records. It is too easy, therefore, to exaggerate the impact of the reformers and underestimate the reactions and attitudes of everyone else. Moreover, those who were not active reformers themselves were not necessarily opposed to reform, *per se*, even if they had quite legitimate concerns about cost and efficacy.

When Finer mentions a ‘dirty’ party he is presumably referring to ratepayers, opposed to reform on the grounds of economy and self-interest. The implication of this, and the tension that existed between them and the reformers, is that only the middle classes were engaged in the conflict. Something of the ongoing difficulties arising from the insanitary habits of the urban labouring classes was highlighted by Williams, above, concerning the nightly nuisances. Although not a ‘dirty’ party in the accepted sense of the word, the unwitting insanitary practices of the urban masses did far more to limit the work of the reformers than any organized resistance from a group of ratepayers.

One of the differences that emerges between the three towns concerns the degree to which the local ‘dirty’ parties specifically, and the ratepayers generally, succeeded in thwarting the reformers. Relatively few Newcastle ratepayers supported the Public Health Act, and even when they were critical of the Town Council, it concerned mismanagement of local funds and unenforcement of the local acts rather than a desire to see the Public Health Act adopted. It has been

⁵ S E Finer, *Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*, (London, 1952), p.437

shown that the influence of reformers in Newcastle was negligible. Robinson and Newton were not part of the social élite, either within the town generally or within the medical faculty specifically. Any impact they might have had was undermined by their own personalities, their part in the Disruption and their actions during the 1853 cholera epidemic and subsequent inquiry. The 'dirty' party on the other hand, in terms of organized opposition to reforming measures that entailed expense, was undoubtedly in a powerful position. James Hodgson, controller of the Corporate funds for 25 years, would not have retained his influence if there had not been many who agreed with him both inside and outside the Council. So the picture described by Finer does not apply particularly to Newcastle, because it was the 'dirty' party and not the reformers who held sway. Therefore, in a very real sense, 'King Dirt' in Newcastle not only resisted the introduction of the Public Health Act but thwarted most of the objects of the local acts that were similar to measures contained in the Health Act.

In contrast, the reformers in Sunderland were in positions of power and influence and any 'dirty' party that might have existed did little to promote their cause. There was no organized opposition to the Borough of Sunderland Act, 1851 and from the responses to sewerage described in Chapter 8, it would seem that there was general acceptance, if not whole-hearted support, for the major objects of the Public Health Act. In portraying Sunderland as the most pro-active town of the three, there is a danger of exaggerating its virtues. When, in the 1860s, there were plans to purchase land for a public park for recreation and public health, there was a determined opposition party, both within and outside the Council but this was not because of antipathy towards sanitary reform. Rather it was inspired by a belief that the cost involved was excessive and it was unjust to charge all ratepayers for it when not everyone had equally convenient access.⁶ It would seem, therefore, that for the ratepayers and Corporation of Sunderland, "King Dirt" was not allowed to defeat the objects of the Public Health Act, even if filthy conditions persisted for some considerable time.

⁶ Report upon local inquiry, as to the propriety or otherwise, of purchasing an additional area of land for the purposes of a public park and recreation ground, by Robert Rawlinson, 8 July, 1863 to the Rt Hon Sir George Grey, Home Secretary, PRO MH13/177

Finer's description of the sullen discontent of a 'dirty' party would appear, most accurately, to describe the situation in Gateshead. Although the Corporation had enthusiastically embraced the Public Health Act initially, the negativity on the Council by 1854 was possibly influenced by just such a 'dirty' party. In addition, it was perhaps no coincidence that attitudes changed following the departure of Brockett and Kell, prime movers in the local reform movement. Yet if one correspondent to the *Gateshead Observer* is to be believed, by the mid 1850s the Council were in fact out of step with public opinion and coming under the influence of a tiny minority of self-interested 'economists',⁷ suggesting that the 'dirty' party was very small. It is important not to exaggerate the Corporation's "about turn" based on their attitudes to the Quayside Improvement schemes alone. There were people in the town, such as "Pro Bono Publico", who believed that the Corporation were doing much to improve conditions,⁸ and something of their commitment to ongoing reform was demonstrated by the fact that when Hall resigned as Town Surveyor, they appointed another well-qualified engineer rather than a local builder. Nevertheless the evidence suggests that by 1865 conditions in Gateshead, as well as Newcastle, continued to be very bad and both municipal authorities were blamed by Dr Embleton for allowing "hot-beds" of disease to continue.⁹

Associated with "King Dirt" are the cultural attitudes that existed toward dirt and odour. It has been argued that although the urban environment deteriorated as a result of demographic changes, nevertheless the new concern with dirt and smell was based on a number of factors. High mortality rates demanded action and miasmatist theory and Chadwickian sanitarianism provided both the explanation and the solution. Given the miasmatists' theory about smell it was unsurprising that dirt, in all its forms, should have been targeted as a major culprit of disease. Yet as was explored in Chapter 5, there was another dimension to dirt and smell

⁷ Letter from "One of the Gateshead Burgesses" to the Editor, *GO*, 24 Feb, 1855, p.7B-C

⁸ Letter from "Pro Bono Publico" to the Editor, *GO*, 13 May, 1854, p.7A-B. See also Chapter 7, p.218

⁹ Extract from Dr Embleton's Report, "The Sanitary Movement in Our Towns: Newcastle and Gateshead", *The Builder*, 21 Oct, 1865, XXIII, 1185, p.749

which was culturally determined. Dirt took on a new meaning associated with class distinctiveness, anxieties about social disorder and the “otherness” of the great mass of the population. Considering “King Dirt” in this way, it could be argued that dirt in fact stimulated reform that was to directly benefit the public health. This was the case with sewerage and drainage schemes and the introduction of improved water supplies, as will be discussed below.

Linked in with cultural attitudes to dirt and smell were middle-class assumptions about the sensibilities of the urban masses. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties regarding evidence, it has been argued in Chapter 6 that the working classes were not necessarily as indifferent to their conditions as many middle-class observers suggested, although few were in a position to express their views or take direct action. Yet there were also those who did not necessarily share middle-class values about cleanliness and ventilation, and who would not have adopted sanitary practices even if they had possessed the means to do so. We need to be aware, too, of our own cultural attitudes before we make judgements about theirs.

The other main theme of this thesis was the extent to which “bumbledom” defeated the objects of the Public Health Act. Newcastle’s Corporation personified “bumbledom” and went to expensive lengths to avoid having the Public Health Act forced upon them by procuring the local acts of 1851 and 1853. There is limited evidence of a change of attitude by the end of our period and when, in 1861, the town was publicly criticised by *The Builder* for its insanitary conditions, the response was vigorous denial.¹⁰ In the mid 1860s the Public Health Committee, set up by the Tyne Improvement Committee and including guardians and medical practitioners, recorded the deplorable state of much of the housing and the ongoing insanitary conditions highlighted in the

¹⁰ *The Builder*, XIX, 949, 13 April, 1861, pp.241-3, 957, 8 June, 1861, pp.385-386; Thomas Bryson, *Remarks by the Town Surveyor, T Bryson, and Inspector of Nuisances, On An Article in the “Builder”*, (Newcastle, 1861)

previous decades. They recommended the appointment of a medical officer of health but still the Council refused to act.¹¹

The history of public health reform in Newcastle throughout our period and beyond is characterized by a series of local acts, each one introduced on the basis that insanitary conditions demanded that the Corporation acquire new powers. Yet they really did not make use of the powers they already had. This extravagance on the part of the authorities contributed to their financial difficulties, which justified them in not effecting the powers they had acquired. Although there were sound commercial reasons for the town improvements they did introduce, their unwillingness to expend the same degree of energy or resources on introducing a systematic sewerage scheme was short-sighted. By 1874 they were still constructing sewers on a piecemeal basis. What is more the lack of compulsory powers related to house drains persisted into the 1870s, as was seen in Chapter 8.¹² Middlebrook has highlighted the marked contrast between Grainger's nine elegant streets built between 1834-9 and the "neighbouring fever districts".¹³ There was an average of 7.8 persons to a house at the time of the 1871 Census, with 8 in St Nicholas' and St John's and 8.2 in Elwick.¹⁴

Sunderland Corporation cannot be accused of idleness or stupidity in the face of the problems in their town. Although the civic gospel was a movement more commonly associated with Birmingham later in the century, there is a sense in which Sunderland exhibited just this quality in the 1850s. Having the dubious honour of being the first official town to have cholera in 1831 appears to have stimulated local people to salvage the town's reputation. The Corporation's commitment to public health reform has been evident throughout this thesis and

¹¹ F J W Miller, "The Newcastle Dispensary 1777-1976", *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 5th series, XVIII, (1990), p.187

¹² Borough of Newcastle, *Report of the Medical Officer of Health on the Sanitary Condition of Newcastle-upon-Tyne with Tabular Returns, Diagrams, etc, of the Sickness and Mortality during the year, 1873*, (Newcastle, 1874), p.11; *Report of the MOH...during the year 1874*, (Newcastle, 1875), p.17

¹³ S Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, (Newcastle, 1950), p.211

¹⁴ *Report of the MOH...1873*, pp.13-15

was remarked upon by both Reid and Rawlinson in the 1840s. Yet by the 1860s, although the Council succeeded in obtaining the Town Improvement Act, 1867, it was not without some resistance.¹⁵

It would be unfair, as well, to accuse Gateshead of “bumbledom”. Although the early enthusiasm for reform was somewhat diminished in the mid 1850s, Gateshead continued to introduce improvements. One of the difficulties for Gateshead was that it was not a wealthy town and did not have the resources of Sunderland. For example, when the Corporation sought sanction from the Local Government Act Office to raise a loan of about £4000 to cover the cost of draining the Western District of the Borough, the current net rateable value of the property within the district concerned, after making all the necessary deductions and abatements provided in the Local Government Act, was little more than £5000.¹⁶ Although this was only one part of the borough, it is in marked contrast to Sunderland where, in 1855, the rateable value of the town’s property was about £120,000 pa.¹⁷

In Chapter 8 two themes were discussed as a means of assessing, further, the different attitudes to reform shown by the three Corporations. It was argued that the calibre of salaried officials was one measure of their commitment to public health. Both Sunderland and Gateshead appointed competent engineers with the training and skills to undertake extensive sewerage works. Newcastle, on the other hand, exhibited more of their “bumbledom” by appointing a man with insufficient qualifications for the job and then refused to provide him with the necessary map to plan a coherent system.

More significant was the difference in attitude towards sewerage and drainage schemes themselves. Given the available information, the members of Newcastle Corporation can have been in little doubt that a comprehensive sewerage system was essential to health. Yet they relied instead on piecemeal works that were

¹⁵ Brockie, pp.436-437

¹⁶ Swinburne to Taylor, 17 February, 1859, PRO MH13/77

¹⁷ Snowball to GBH, 16 April, 1855, PRO MH13/177

expensive and inefficient. When "CCH" visited the town in 1865 he found that the sewerage in the worst districts to be "woefully deficient and defective" and surface drainage ineffective. He concluded that "the civil Solons" were members of the "stand-still movement", invariably standing upon "the ceremony of doing, instead of acting", in sanitary matters.¹⁸ In contrast, Sunderland had completed its main sewerage system by 1858 and, by 1865, nearly 10,000 houses had been connected to the main sewers by properly-trapped house-drains, suggesting that in this area, at least, Sunderland Corporation continued sanitary works with the same vigour that they had done during our period.¹⁹

John Smith has argued that one of the reasons why Newcastle had a different attitude to sanitary reform compared to Gateshead and the other Tyneside towns was because of the fact that they did not rely on the rates for their main source of income, unlike Gateshead and the other towns. For this reason, they welcomed the opportunity that the public health laws gave them to increase their income and therefore their power. In contrast, Smith argues, Newcastle had nothing to gain from similar increases in rates and much to lose. As Newcastle's main source of income was derived from rents and tolls, any scheme that involved financial outlay on the part of property owners directly affected them as the largest property owners in the borough. The improvements they were interested in were those that aided commercial and industrial growth which would have increased the value of their own property.²⁰

There is much truth in Smith's assessment, but it does not explain everything. Gateshead Corporation's enthusiasm for sanitary reform in the late 1840s and early 1850s gave way to the same concerns for 'economy' that were being expressed in Newcastle. In contrast Sunderland Corporation, which was in a similar position regarding reliance on the rates for income, seemed to be motivated by more than just the desire for increased political power. This brings us to the second question considered in this thesis namely, the extent to which it

¹⁸ "CCH", "A Walk in 'Canny Newcastle'", *The Builder*, XXIII, 1195, 30 Dec, 1865, p.920

¹⁹ Letter from "JW", *The Builder*, *op cit*

²⁰ Smith, pp. 26-7; *The Builder*, XIX, 9, 13 April, 1861, pp.241-3

is possible to explain the different responses to reform in politically or culturally determined patterns of behaviour as opposed to the influence of key individuals. One of the difficulties in assessing the role of individuals in human affairs is to know how far they determined events as opposed to simply reflecting and articulating commonly held views. Whilst rejecting the "heroic" interpretation of public health, there is no doubt that there were certain people who played a significant part in promoting or thwarting public health reform. In particular it has been argued that reformers such as Brown and Mordey fulfilled an important role in Sunderland whilst Newton and Robinson probably hindered reform in Newcastle. Clephan, Kell and Brockett may have helped initiate a reform movement in Gateshead in 1847, but their influence was relatively short-lived and the objects of the Public Health Act were gradually subsumed to the interests of ratepayers and councillors anxious to preserve their popularity. However no individual in the three towns had sufficient power or charisma to swing public opinion if that opinion was decidedly opposed to theirs. Therefore, other factors must have been at work in determining whether a town pursued or rejected public health reform.

As was discussed in chapter 4, all three towns had liberal majorities but this did not mean that they had identical ideologies. There was a pronounced Radical element in Sunderland, with the ex-Chartist leader James Williams and the ex-Chartist sympathiser, William Mordey, both playing central roles in public health reform. Yet it was with the liberal majority themselves that the differences lie. Reference was made in Chapter 4 to E P Hennock's thesis that the impact of either negligence or efficiency on the part of local bodies was likely to have more far-reaching consequences than they do today because of the lack of effective control or supervision from central government.²¹ Given that the three towns were in the hands of small oligarchies, these differences in ideology were significant.

²¹ E P Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons, Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government*, (London, 1973), p.4

Newcastle Corporation embodied *laissez-faire* individualism combined with a conservatism that disliked change. Although municipal reform had been welcomed by many, once the new breed of councillors were in power, they adopted much of the secrecy and élitism of their predecessors. This was unsurprising given the continuity in membership between the old corporation and the new. This led to clashes when the Small Tenements Act, 1850 widened the electorate and produced a new generation of councillors from outside the clique. In contrast Sunderland Corporation, despite having a similar socio-economic structure to that of Newcastle in 1849, had very different attitudes. It may be that the youthfulness of the borough promoted the sense of radicalism and pioneering that was evident. However, it seems, too, that the Nonconformist tradition of the town contributed to the general spirit that predominated on the Council and found support among many property owners, as was illustrated by the acceptance by many that sewers and branch drains needed to be built.²²

One aspect of culturally determined patterns of behaviour has already been alluded to concerning dirt and smell. A major factor in determining responses to public health was “economy”. This has been regarded in the past as one of the principal reasons for resistance to sanitary reform. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, “economy” went much further than the hostility of ratepayers to paying local taxes. An important element in this was concern over value for money and good financial management. In Newcastle “economists” had ample justification for their rejection of public health reform in that the existing sewerage system was both costly and inefficient. Ongoing concerns about financial mismanagement by the Corporation, and by the Finance Committee in particular, provoked even reformers like George Robinson to object to increases in the rates. In consequence there were limited resources available to pay for major capital works. By rejecting the Public Health Act the Corporation forfeited

²² There would appear to be certain parallels between Sunderland and Leicester. Elliott has claimed that Leicester presented a curious paradox to sanitary reformers in that it continued to have poor conditions yet had a Corporation that actively tackled environmental problems. The Council was “solidly Liberal” after 1835 and was dominated by Nonconformist businessmen, particularly Unitarians, who were eager to promote the wellbeing of the town and remove its stigma of high mortality. M J Elliott, “Public Health in Leicester in the Nineteenth Century”, *Social History of Medicine*, 8, (Sept, 1972), 15, p.15

the protection available under the Act for the Board's sanction for capital works. Although Newcastle's Improvement Act, 1850 enabled them to raise money up to £20,000 at interest,²³ this was a fraction of the sum made available to Sunderland under the Public Health Act.²⁴

The role of the sanitary associations and local press has been evaluated in seeking an explanation for some of the differences in cultural attitudes. Although the two sanitary associations were energetic for a short period, it is doubtful whether either of them really made an appreciable difference. In Sunderland the key members were already exerting an influence through their council membership, so in many ways the work of the SSA was redundant. The NGSA may have contributed to the early enthusiasm for the Public Health Act in Gateshead, but it is difficult to know whether it really helped shape public opinion because the ratepayers were never invited to petition for the Act. In Newcastle the NGSA singularly failed to win over support, as testified by the derisory number of signatures to a petition for the Act.

The local newspapers perhaps played a more significant and longer-term role in shaping public opinion, although, as was discussed in Chapter 10, the extent to which the press influenced rather than reflected public opinion remains unknown. Nevertheless it has been argued that both the *Gateshead Observer* and the *Sunderland Herald* promoted debate on the whole subject of public health reform. They informed, encouraged, challenged and scolded local authorities and readers alike. This may help to explain, in part, why many of Gateshead's ratepayers were, apparently, coming to accept the need for further reform at a time when the Corporation appeared to be retrenching. It also may help to explain why the ratepayers of Sunderland were relatively sanguine about the need for a costly sewerage system and why they were ready to build branch drains from their properties. Although the *Newcastle Chronicle*, in the 1850s, supported

²³ 13 & 14 Vict c.77, s.24

²⁴ 11 & 12 Vict. c.63, s.87. For example the Board sanctioned a loan of £64,000 for the drainage and sewerage works alone. Ranger's Sunderland Drainage Report, 14 May, 1856, PRO MH13/177

reform, much had already been done, perhaps, under Hodgson's proprietorship in the 1840s, to encourage and reinforce the 'economist' attitude in the town.

The final question raised in the Introduction was did provincial centres contribute to public health reform or was it really just a movement promoted by the state against local opposition? There is no doubt that national figures such as Chadwick, Shaftesbury, Arnott and Kay were driving forces behind reform. Yet it would be inaccurate to suggest that the Commissioners and officers of the General Board took all the initiative and the local authorities simply acted as ciphers or barriers to reform. As this thesis has demonstrated, there were individuals and groups who were sufficiently appalled by the insanitary conditions and high mortality rates, to promote public health reform locally. One example of this occurred in Sunderland over the proposal by the Sewerage Committee to compel people to convert their privies into waterclosets. Unfortunately the existing legislation, whilst allowing this in principle, was encumbered with restrictions and provisos that meant it was not easy to achieve the desired result. However, they managed to overcome the difficulties and succeeded in persuading many houseowners over the following years, to carry out the necessary conversions.

Ursula Henriques has claimed that the "machinery of reform was successful because it circumvented public opinion" while at the same time it also provided "effective means of action" for committed reformers.²⁵ Although she was referring to social reforms generally, this is patently not an accurate assessment of public health reform in particular. Henriques has overestimated the powers of the General Board of Health,²⁶ for it most certainly could not circumvent public opinion, as the Board itself acknowledged. In 1854 it complained about the difficult circumstances over which it was having to operate, with "imperfect powers and active opposition". It had found it necessary to select towns for the application of the Act according to the "apparent probability of local support"

²⁵ Ursula Henriques, "Jeremy Bentham and the Machinery of Social Reform", pp.169-186 in H Hearder and H R Loyd, (eds), *British Government and Administration*, (Cardiff, 1974), p.179

²⁶ Henriques, p.177

rather than on objective measures of need,²⁷ as was the case in Newcastle. Nor did the Public Health Act necessarily provide “effective means of action” for committed reformers. As has been seen in Chapter 7, Sunderland’s board of health were frustrated by the lack of powers it had under the Act to restrict the height of houses to the widths of streets.

Associated with this question is the issue of *laissez-faire* and state intervention. It has been argued that state intervention did not just exist at the national level but local authorities could choose to enforce the existing regulations through the use of their powers of compulsion, or they could allow the laws to remain dead letters. As has been discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, Sunderland Corporation were energetic and proactive in achieving their aims and this was reflected in the range of Council committees established and the regularity with which they reported to the main body. They made good use of their powers under the Borough of Sunderland Act and the various public acts connected with public health and interfered in the lives and property of their constituents to attain their objectives. In many ways Sunderland Corporation at a local level replicated the system of government that was being developed centrally in that they exercised a degree of state intervention through their different sub-committees and salaried officials. What is interesting is that this did not appear to be greatly resented by the majority of ratepayers, although, as has been seen in Chapter 7, there were individuals who challenged some of the Council’s rulings and sought adjudication from the General Board.²⁸ Instead of regarding the Board as interfering busybodies, the general impression arising out of the correspondence between the Corporation and the Board was one of mutual collaboration and support. This attitude carried on after the abolition of the Board and the establishment of the Local Government Act Office.

²⁷ *Report of the General Board of Health on the Administration of the Public Health Act and the Nuisances Removal and Diseases Prevention Acts from 1848-1854*, PP (1854) XXXV, 1, p.36

²⁸ For example the case of the Rev R Tatham, mentioned in Chapter 7. At the end of the life of the General Board, Antony Moore appealed to them over the local board’s decision to reject his plans for building in St Bede’s Terrace. Correspondence to the GBH and LGAO extended from 24 July to 15 Oct, 1858, PRO MH13/177

Newcastle Corporation could not have been more different. Just as they resented any form of state intervention from London and were suspicious of the General Board, they assumed that their own electorate were equally distrustful of any interference from the local authorities. As we have seen, much of the lack of action before 1853 was justified, to the Cholera Commissioners, on the grounds that the electorate would not have tolerated the exercise of their powers. This may well have been so, but it was hardly ever put to the test. Yet in many ways the Corporation was reflecting a more general attitude in the town which even reformers accepted to a certain degree, as has been seen with regards to the attitudes of Newton and Robinson towards the Board of Health. The town's antipathy towards any form of outside interference was reinforced when national censure followed the publication of the Cholera Commissioners' Report.

In addition to these three main questions a number of other issues have been touched upon during the course of this work which deserve further comment. One measure of the success or failure of the Public Health Act and subsequent legislation was the extent to which infectious diseases were conquered. There was a gradual decline in typhoid and typhus from the 1870s, with improvements in sewerage and water supply accounting for the reduction in the former.²⁹ Because of the complexity of typhus, a range of factors contributed to its decline: improvements in diet, housing, water supplies, personal and environmental cleanliness and the increased distribution of cheap, washable cotton clothing.³⁰ In addition, Luckin has argued that urban populations became increasingly insulated from foci of infection derived from Irish immigrants. This, for him, explains why the disease declined less rapidly in trading and seaborne centres in the North-East

²⁹ H E Armstrong, *Sketch of the Sanitary History of Newcastle upon Tyne*, read at the Congress of the Sanitary Institute, 27 Sept, 1882, printed in a pamphlet, being an extract from *Trans. of Sanitary Inst. of GB*, p.10

³⁰ See for example T McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population*, (London, 1976), pp.128-129, 134-136, 141, 153; John V Pickstone, "Dearth, dirt and fever epidemics: rewriting the history of British 'public' health, 1780-1850", pp.125-148 in Terence Ranger and Paul Slack, (eds), *Epidemics and ideas: Essays on the historical perception of pestilence*, (Cambridge, 1992), 126-127, 138;

and North-West than elsewhere.³¹ In 1871, J T Harrison of the Local Government Act Office, reported that Sunderland was generally one of the healthier towns in England, although at the time they were suffering from an unusual number of deaths.³² In contrast, Newcastle's death rate was 30.1 per 1,000 in 1873 when Armstrong noted a decline in typhus as a result of a reduction in overcrowding. However his optimism was short-lived because the following year, despite a drop in death rate to 29.2 per 1,000 there had been an upturn in both typhus and typhoid deaths.³³ Pulmonary tuberculosis continued to be a major problem in the North-East well into this century. Miller, Court *et al*, in their follow up to their famous study *A Thousand Families in Newcastle upon Tyne* (1954) recorded that Newcastle and Tyneside had always had an "unduly large share" of tubercular deaths until the 1950s.³⁴ Thus any assessment of what had been achieved by 1858 needs to be set against persistently high mortality figures.

The influence of Chadwickian sanitarianism and the impact on gastro-intestinal diseases has already been touched upon. Whilst not doubting the importance of miasmatic theory in promoting this sort of reform, this thesis has made it clear that the Cullenian view of fever and the dearth model of disease still informed much medical and lay opinion about the nature of disease. This was evident in the attitudes of men like Brown and Mordey to ventilation and overcrowding. The disagreements over disease causation provided ample opportunities for 'economists' to challenge the need for reform. It could also be argued that where the contagionist theory predominated, there would be little rational justification for sewerage schemes. In reality, the prevailing views of the local medical faculties combined aspects of both miasmatic and contagionist theory,

³¹ Bill Luckin, "Evaluating the sanitary revolution: typhus and typhoid in London, 1851-1900", pp.102-119, Robert Woods and John Woodward, (eds), *Urban Disease & Mortality in Nineteenth-Century England*, (London and New York, 1984), p.115

³² J T Harrison, LGAO, "Report on the Local Board's Petition to borrow £20,000 for Sewerage purposes", to Henry Austin Bruce, MP, Home Secretary, 14 July, 1871, PRO MH13/177

³³ *Report of the Medical Officer of Health...1873*, (Newcastle, 1874), pp.5, 7; *Report of the MOH..1874*, pp.5-6, 16

³⁴ F J W Miller, S D M Court, W A Walton and E G Knox, *Growing up in Newcastle upon Tyne, A Continuing Study of Health and Illness in Young Children within their Families*, (London, New York, Toronto, 1960), p.111

and although a slightly different emphasis was placed on the most significant predisposing and exciting causes of disease by individual practitioners, most accepted the multi-causal nature of disease. Thus both overcrowding and poor ventilation on the one hand and inadequate sewerage, drainage and water supply on the other, were generally recognized as hazardous to health. Therefore, although Brown and Mordey were convinced, in 1849, that overcrowding was the most significant cause of disease, nevertheless they actively promoted a comprehensive sewerage system as has already been seen.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, typhus and pulmonary tuberculosis were both associated, in part, with overcrowded, ill-ventilated and dark tenement slums and lodging houses. In 1851 housing regulations were introduced and exercised, particularly in Sunderland and the success of the working men's cottages and the efficacy of the regulations controlling street widths is evident today in many parts of the town. Tyneside flats also helped provide improved housing for many working people. Yet ongoing mortality from typhus and particularly from pulmonary tuberculosis can be partly explained by the fact that overcrowding and squalid conditions continued to be a serious problem in all three towns well into this century.³⁵ In 1901, around 30% of the population in Newcastle and Gateshead lived in one or two rooms, of which about two-thirds were declared officially overcrowded.³⁶ By the 1940s Miller *et al* described Newcastle as a city in which 1 in 9 of its families with young children were 'statutorily overcrowded', and 1 in 7 of their dwellings structurally inadequate.³⁷ The 1931 census showed Sunderland to be the most overcrowded county borough in England and Wales with a major reason being its tenemented housing.³⁸

³⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, standard of living and nutrition also played a role in the decline in tuberculosis.

³⁶ R Grace, "Tyneside Housing in the 19th century" pp.178-197 in N McCord (ed), *Essays in Tyneside Labour History for the North East Group for the Study of Labour History*, (Newcastle, 1977), Table IV, p.182

³⁷ Miller, *et al*, p.28

³⁸ George Patterson, "Between the Wars", pp.169-182 in G E Milburn and S T Miller (eds), *Sunderland River, Town and People, A history from the 1780s*, (Sunderland, 1988), p.178

Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging that subsequent generations of town councillors failed to solve the housing problems does not diminish the contributions or excuse the failings of the first generation of council members functioning under the Public Health Act or its equivalent. As has been shown, Newcastle Corporation were reluctant to exercise their powers under their local acts and the Common Lodging Houses Acts of 1851 and 1853 to control overcrowding and conditions in the town's common lodging houses. In contrast, both Gateshead and Sunderland took advantage of these powers to some effect. Gateshead's vigilance over the enforcement of Lodging House regulations some time before the 1853 cholera epidemic was regarded as one of the main reasons why the effects of the epidemic had been less severe there than in Newcastle.

By 1865 the lodging houses were being regulated according to the law, but as Rev J C Street observed, "It is all very well to regulate and supervise - that is, doing the best with a bad things; but places like these ought not to exist." He believed that clean, decent and well-regulated temporary homes should be provided for tramps and strangers where cooking could be done properly, where separate sleeping accommodation was available for individual families and where order and sobriety were enforced.³⁹ It was not just the common lodging houses, though that continued to be bad. Dr Embleton's Report on Gateshead and Newcastle in 1865 reveals just how little had really changed for the labouring classes.⁴⁰

In the light of current concerns about inequalities in health, it was suggested in the Introduction that we might have lessons to learn from our ancestors. From the complexity of the subject it is clear that no individual remedy solves all the problems and there needs to be an interrelationship between self-help and state intervention and between environmental improvements and economic factors. One of the motivations of the nineteenth century public health reformers was to

³⁹ Report of a lecture given by the Rev J C Street, entitled "The Night Side of Newcastle, or a Saturday Night's Ramble in some of the Back Streets and Lodging-houses", reported in "The Condition of Newcastle and Gateshead", *The Builder*, XXIII, 1186, 28 Oct, 1865, p.768

⁴⁰ "The Sanitary Movement in Our Towns: Newcastle and Gateshead", *The Builder*, XXIII, 1185, 21 Oct, 1865, p.749

prevent disease. Although we immunize against potentially fatal infections we tend to rely too much on Medicine's ability to cure us once we are sick, and perhaps pay too little attention to the ways in which we can maintain health. The fact that the 1992 edition of *The Health Divide* confirmed earlier findings that material and structural factors such as income and housing can affect health does not appear to have had sufficient impact on Government policy.⁴¹ We too can be accused of being 'economists' as we avoid expensive re-housing schemes and strive to lower welfare benefit spending whilst paying out large sums of government money on unavoidable medical treatment. Perhaps we need to heed the experiences of the nineteenth century and tackle health problems on many fronts.

Thomas Carlyle argued in *Past and Present* (1843) that there was no simple solution to the problems facing contemporary society, no quick fix remedy to be taken, like "a Morrison's Pill".⁴² This was certainly the case in terms of overcrowded housing, which, as has already been noted, remained a serious problem in the North-East well into this century.⁴³ Yet inspite of Szreter's claims that the middle decades of the nineteenth century were ones of sluggishness and small beginnings, this was not always the case. From the evidence in this work, Newcastle's progress was undoubtedly sluggish, and Gateshead's was erratic. Sunderland, however, made considerable progress during the 1850s, not just in terms of the works completed but also in administrative development.⁴⁴ Therefore, "King Dirt" and "bumbledom" did not defeat the objects of the Public Health Act in all cases. Although there is no single explanation for this, it has been suggested that a combination of factors - Nonconformity, a degree of

⁴¹ Margaret Whitehead, *The Health Divide*, new edn revised and updated, 1992 in one volume with *The Black Report*, entitled *Inequalities in Health*, (London, 1992), p.336

⁴² Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, (1843), (London, 1905), p.49

⁴³ "By our Special Commissioners", "Those who Toil', How and Where They Live XVI - Central Gateshead", *Newcastle Daily Leader*, 8 Aug, 1901, reprinted in *BGDLHS*, I, 7, (January 1972), 104-109, p.104; Richard G Rodger, "The Invisible Hand: Market Forces, Housing and the Urban Form in Victorian Cities", pp.190-211 in Derek Fraser and Antony Sutcliffe, (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History*, (London, 1983), pp.209, 211; John Smith, "Public Health on Tyneside, 1850-80", pp.25-41 in McCord, *Essays in Tyneside Labour History*, p.34

⁴⁴ S Szreter, "Mortality and Public Health, 1815-1914", pp.136-148 in A Digby, C Feinstein and D Jenkins, (eds), *New Directions in Economic and Social History Vol II*, (Basingstoke and London, 1992), p.144

Radicalism, civic pride and the particular contributions made by Brown and Mordey - all combined to determine Sunderland's responses to the insanitary conditions.

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APPENDIX I

POPULATIONS OF NEWCASTLE, SUNDERLAND AND GATESHEAD, 1801-1861

PARISH, TOWNSHIP OR EXTRA-PAROCHIAL PLACE	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861
St John	4707	4466	6290	8135	8741	9858	9145
St Andrew	4460	4784	7231	11436	13320	15643	17100
All Saints	14396	14171	16555	17063	21474	26117	29490
St Nicholas	4803	4166	5105	6126	6325	6586	7487
Byker	3254	3029	3852	5176	6024	7040	7663
Elswick	301	398	464	787	1789	3539	14345
Westgate	669	745	1360	2996	10489	16477	21272
Heaton	183	497	470	501	450	435	376
Jesmond	275	317	467	1393	1725	2089	2230
NEWCASTLE TOTAL	33048	32573	41794	53613	70337	87784	109108
Bishopwearmouth	6126	7060	9477	14462	24206	31048	42350
Bishopwearmouth Panns	564	476	483	363	298	316	272
Monkwearmouth	1103	1091	1278	1498	2155	3366	3343
Monkwearmouth Shore	4239	4264	4924	6051	7742	10109	15139
Sunderland	12412	12289	14725	17060	17022	19058	17107
SUNDERLAND TOTAL	24444	25180	30887	39434	51423	63897	78211
GATESHEAD TOTAL	8597	8782	11767	15177	19505	24805	32749

Sources:

Abstract of Answers and Returns under the Population Act, 3 & 4 Vict c.99, (1841), p.222; Census of Great Britain, 1851 - Population Tables I: Number of Inhabitants in the Years 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851, Vol II (1852-3), Division X: Northern Counties, PP LXXXVI (1852-3), 319, pp.20-23; Census of England and Wales, 1861 - Population Tables I: Number and Distribution of the People, (1862), PP L (1862), 1, pp.35, 90; 1861 Census, Division X, PP L (1862), 691, pp.668-689

Notes:

The Bishopwearmouth sub-totals for 1851 and 1861 are not as given in the *Abstracts* and *Population Tables*. Only that part of Bishopwearmouth Township that was within a one mile radius of Wearmouth Bridge lay within the municipal boundaries. By 1851 buildings within the township had extended beyond the municipal boundaries. The revised figures have been calculated by deducting the municipal borough total given elsewhere (1851 Census, pp ; 1861 Census, pp. 35, 90) from the total number of inhabitants for all four townships and the parish of Sunderland. This balance has been deducted from the Bishopwearmouth township sub-total to produce a revised township figure.

The Gateshead totals exclude that part of Heworth within the municipal boundaries as these figures are not given separately in the Tables. The Gateshead total is for the town plus Gateshead Fell. After deducting the Gateshead and Gateshead Fell figures from the municipal borough population figures, given elsewhere, there were only 763 Heworth residents within the municipal boundaries in 1851 and 834 in 1861. Thus their exclusion from the above Table does not significantly alter the overall picture.

APPENDIX II

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT FIGURES 1841:

A comparison of the number of females in paid employment in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland with some other Industrial Towns

TOWN OR BOROUGH	POPULATION		EMPLOYEES		RESIDUE		% EMPLOYED	
	20+	-20	20+	-20	20+	-20	20+	-20
Sunderland	16050	12642	1899	904	12268	11577	11.83	7.15
Gateshead	5447	4459	670	325	4450	4115	12.3	7.29
Newcastle	15015	10747	3113	1166	10535	9530	20.73	10.85
Liverpool*	87029	61699	20702	7164	57308	53724	23.79	11.61
Manchester*	72929	54231	26486	11425	42494	42505	36.32	21.07
Oldham	11161	10738	3770	2341	6957	8354	33.78	21.8
Preston*	14049	12389	5182	3201	7802	9082	36.89	25.84
Bradford*	9884	9480	3054	2515	6360	6946	30.9	26.53
Halifax	33085	32988	8695	5997	22314	26861	26.28	18.18

* towns where the residue figures include lunatics, prisoners, barn or tent dwellers, etc.

Sources:

Abstract of Answers and Returns under the Population Act, 3 & 4 Vict. c.99, pp. 42-43, 98-99, 141, 236

Note:

Figure in table for employees under 20 in Halifax is given in the *Census* as 26,81 – which is clearly a misprint. However the total sums in *1841 Census*, p.236 suggest that this figure should be 26861, as given in the table.

APPENDIX III(A)

**THE NUMBER OF IRISH BORN INHABITANTS IN THE PRINCIPAL
ENGLISH TOWNS, 1851 – IN DESCENDING ORDER**

	Town	Population			Irish			% Irish to Total
		Under 20	Over 20	Total	Under 20	Over 20	Total	
1	London	967273	1394963	2362236	20006	88542	108548	4.60
2	Liverpool	162188	213767	375955	22724	61089	83813	22.29
3	Manchester/Salford	175594	225727	401321	13127	39377	52504	13.08
4	Birmingham	106020	126821	232841	2420	6921	9341	4.01
5	Bradford	47333	56445	103778	3018	6261	9279	8.94
6	Leeds	77455	94815	172270	2559	5907	8466	4.91
7	Newcastle-on-Tyne	38251	49533	87784	2127	4997	7124	8.12
8	Stockport	24360	29475	53835	2153	3548	5701	10.59
9	Preston	32372	37170	69542	1942	3180	5122	7.37
10	Bristol	58039	79289	137328	949	3812	4761	3.47
11	Sheffield	62220	73090	135310	1180	3297	4477	3.31
12	Bolton	28361	32810	61171	1381	3072	4453	7.28
13	Sunderland	29210	34687	63897	1126	2475	3601	5.64
14	Wolverhampton	22591	27394	49985	892	2599	3491	6.98
15	Hull	36549	48141	84690	892	2091	2983	3.52
16	Portsmouth	29616	42480	72096	509	2220	2729	3.79
17	Macclesfield	17034	22014	39048	662	1696	2358	6.04
18	Gateshead	11702	13866	25568	633	1562	2195	8.58
19	Carlisle	11781	14529	26310	527	1573	2100	7.98
20	Halifax	14695	18887	33582	771	1317	2088	6.22
21	Chester	12060	15706	27766	595	1437	2032	7.32
22	York	15246	21057	36303	578	1350	1928	5.31
23	Plymouth	21411	30810	52221	508	1284	1792	3.43
24	Huddersfield	14353	16527	30880	353	1209	1562	5.06
25	Notttingham	24528	32879	57407	447	1110	1557	2.71
26	Derby	18450	22159	40609	387	927	1314	3.24
27	Tynemouth	12858	16312	29170	265	843	1108	3.80
28	Bath	20991	33249	54240	255	830	1085	2.00
29	South Shields	13515	15459	28974	261	661	922	3.18
30	Dudley	18869	19093	37962	225	694	919	2.42
31	Leicester	27319	33265	60584	214	663	877	1.45
32	Winchester	5439	8265	13704	138	674	812	5.93
33	Brighton	29703	39970	69673	190	597	787	1.13
34	Durham	5632	7556	13188	218	568	786	5.96
35	Southampton	15174	20131	35305	194	577	771	2.18
36	Coventry	16378	20434	36812	154	544	698	1.90
37	Shrewsbury	7999	11682	19681	156	397	553	2.81
38	Lancaster	6951	9217	16168	97	345	442	2.73
39	Northampton	11746	14911	26657	75	328	403	1.51
40	Norwich	27643	40552	68195	65	251	316	0.46
41	Exeter	13600	19218	32818	62	247	309	0.94
42	Canterbury	7732	10666	18398	110	174	284	1.54
43	Cambridge	11688	16127	27815	38	218	256	0.92
44	Gloucester	7212	10360	17572	45	206	251	1.43
45	Lincoln	7735	9801	17536	48	182	230	1.31

APPENDIX III(A)/p.2

	Town	Population			Irish			% Irish to Total
		Under 20	Over 20	Total	Under 20	Over 20	Total	
46	Worcester	11428	16100	27528	36	190	226	0.82
47	Maidstone	8831	11909	20740	48	170	218	1.05
48	Boston	6617	8116	14733	31	165	196	1.33
49	Ipswich	14234	18680	32914	35	146	181	0.55
50	Yarmouth	13263	17616	30879	23	139	162	0.52
51	Reading	9275	12181	21456	33	124	157	0.73
52	Oxford	12199	15644	27843	25	129	154	0.55
53	Bedford	5339	6354	11693	28	69	97	0.83
54	Colchester	8798	10645	19443	23	72	95	0.49
55	Salisbury	4885	6772	11657	20	51	71	0.61
56	Dorchester	2660	3734	6394	10	58	68	1.06
57	Bury St Edmunds	6338	7562	13900	13	46	59	0.42
58	Truro	4572	6161	10733	19	39	58	0.54

Source:

Census of Great Britain, 1851 – Population Tables II, vol II, p.clxxxiii

APPENDIX III(B)

**THE PERCENTAGE OF IRISH BORN INHABITANTS TO TOTAL
POPULATION IN THE PRINCIPAL ENGLISH TOWNS, 1851 - IN
DESCENDING ORDER**

	Town	Population			Irish			% Irish to Total
		Under 20	Over 20	Total	Under 20	Over 20	Total	
1	Liverpool	162188	213767	375955	22724	61089	83813	22.29
2	Manchester/Salford	175594	225727	401321	13127	39377	52504	13.08
3	Stockport	24360	29475	53835	2153	3548	5701	10.59
4	Bradford	47333	56445	103778	3018	6261	9279	8.94
5	Gatshead	11702	13866	25568	633	1562	2195	8.58
6	Newcastle-on-Tyne	38251	49533	87784	2127	4997	7124	8.12
7	Carlisle	11781	14529	26310	527	1573	2100	7.98
8	Preston	32372	37170	69542	1942	3180	5122	7.37
9	Chester	12060	15706	27766	595	1437	2032	7.32
10	Bolton	28361	32810	61171	1381	3072	4453	7.28
11	Wolverhampton	22591	27394	49985	892	2599	3491	6.98
12	Halifax	14695	18887	33582	771	1317	2088	6.22
13	Macclesfield	17034	22014	39048	662	1696	2358	6.04
14	Durham	5632	7556	13188	218	568	786	5.96
15	Winchester	5439	8265	13704	138	674	812	5.93
16	Sunderland	29210	34687	63897	1126	2475	3601	5.64
17	York	15246	21057	36303	578	1350	1928	5.31
18	Huddersfield	14353	16527	30880	353	1209	1562	5.06
19	Leeds	77455	94815	172270	2559	5907	8466	4.91
20	London	967273	1394963	2362236	20006	88542	108548	4.60
21	Birmingham	106020	126821	232841	2420	6921	9341	4.01
22	Tynemouth	12858	16312	29170	265	843	1108	3.80
23	Portsmouth	29616	42480	72096	509	2220	2729	3.79
24	Hull	36549	48141	84690	892	2091	2983	3.52
25	Bristol	58039	79289	137328	949	3812	4761	3.47
26	Plymouth	21411	30810	52221	508	1284	1792	3.43
27	Sheffield	62220	73090	135310	1180	3297	4477	3.31
28	Derby	18450	22159	40609	387	927	1314	3.24
29	South Shields	13515	15459	28974	261	661	922	3.18
30	Shrewsbury	7999	11682	19681	156	397	553	2.81
31	Lancaster	6951	9217	16168	97	345	442	2.73
32	Nottingham	24528	32879	57407	447	1110	1557	2.71
33	Dudley	18869	19093	37962	225	694	919	2.42
34	Southampton	15174	20131	35305	194	577	771	2.18
35	Bath	20991	33249	54240	255	830	1085	2.00
36	Coventry	16378	20434	36812	154	544	698	1.90
37	Canterbury	7732	10666	18398	110	174	284	1.54
38	Northampton	11746	14911	26657	75	328	403	1.51
39	Leicester	27319	33265	60584	214	663	877	1.45
40	Gloucester	7212	10360	17572	45	206	251	1.43
41	Boston	6617	8116	14733	31	165	196	1.33
42	Lincoln	7735	9801	17536	48	182	230	1.31
43	Brighton	29703	39970	69673	190	597	787	1.13
44	Dorchester	2660	3734	6394	10	58	68	1.06
45	Maidstone	8831	11909	20740	48	170	218	1.05

APPENDIX III(B)/p.2

	Town	Population			Irish			% Irish to Total
		Under 20	Over 20	Total	Under 20	Over 20	Total	
46	Exeter	13600	19218	32818	62	247	309	0.94
47	Cambridge	11688	16127	27815	38	218	256	0.92
48	Bedford	5339	6354	11693	28	69	97	0.83
49	Worcester	11428	16100	27528	36	190	226	0.82
50	Reading	9275	12181	21456	33	124	157	0.73
51	Salisbury	4885	6772	11657	20	51	71	0.61
52	Oxford	12199	15644	27843	25	129	154	0.55
53	Ipswich	14234	18680	32914	35	146	181	0.55
54	Truro	4572	6161	10733	19	39	58	0.54
55	Yarmouth	13263	17616	30879	23	139	162	0.52
56	Colchester	8798	10645	19443	23	72	95	0.49
57	Norwich	27643	40552	68195	65	251	316	0.46
58	Bury St Edmunds	6338	7562	13900	13	46	59	0.42

Source:

Census of Great Britain, 1851 – Population Tables II, vol II, p.clxxxiii

APPENDIX IV

POPULATION DENSITY IN NEWCASTLE, SUNDERLAND AND GATESHEAD 1831 AND 1851

PARISH, TOWNSHIP OR EXTRA-PAROCHIAL PLACE	HOUSES			POPULATION	DENSITY
	Inhabited	Unin- habited	Building	Totals	Number of people per house
				1831	
St John	1002	37	0	8135	8.12
St Andrew	1407	40	46	11436	8.13
All Saints	2082	38	2	17063	8.20
St Nicholas	557	6	2	6126	11.00
NEWCASTLE	5048	121	50	42760	8.47
Sunderland Parish	1744	49	4	17060	9.78
Bishopwearmouth	2226	61	65	14462	6.50
Bishopwearmouth Panns	28	0	0	363	12.96
Monkwearmouth	234	22	1	1498	6.40
Monkwearmouth Shore	670	15	6	6051	9.03
SUNDERLAND	4902	147	76	39434	8.04
GATESHEAD AND G FELL	2317	77	43	15177	6.55
				1851	
St John	1017	17	17	9858	9.69
St Andrew	2052	54	19	15643	7.62
All Saints	2425	60	31	26117	10.77
St Nicholas	546	64	1	6586	12.06
NEWCASTLE	6040	195	68	58204	9.64
Sunderland Parish	1775	26	4	19058	10.74
Bishopwearmouth	4514	77	76	31824	7.05
Bishopwearmouth Panns	27	0	0	316	11.70
Monkwearmouth	505	13	3	3366	6.67
Monkwearmouth Shore	1292	14	33	131109	101.48
SUNDERLAND	8113	130	116	67673	8.34
GATESHEAD AND G FELL	3379	72	65	24805	7.34

Sources:

Abstract of Answers and Returns under the Population Act, 11 Geo IV, c.30, (1831), pp.162-3; 168-9; 176-7 and 472-3

Census of Great Britain, 1851 - Population Tables I: Number of Inhabitants in the Years 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851, Vol II (1852-3), Division X: Northern Counties, pp.20-23

Notes:

The information for Newcastle concerns only the four ancient boroughs and not the additional five townships added to the Borough in 1832.

The information for Sunderland includes the whole of the Parish of Bishopwearmouth and not just that part that was in the Municipal Borough.

APPENDIX V

DISTRIBUTION OF MAIN OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS BETWEEN THE PARISHES OF NEWCASTLE AND SUNDERLAND, 1831

Parish or Township	Agriculture	Manufacturing Industry	Retail Trades and Handicrafts	Capitalists and Professionals	Labourers	Servants (male and female)	Other males 20+
All Saints	9	170	2064	179	1172	530	367
St Andrew	44	26	1598	490	280	1110	106
St John	24	63	1438	196	233	528	233
St Nicholas	4	157	933	89	294	210	59
Sunderland	16	16	1649	88	1167	264	299
BWM	167	142	1472	397	448	862	314
BWM Panns	1	11	58	0	15	1	0
MWM	16	0	118	27	94	48	13
MWM Shore	10	2	484	127	344	132	25

Sources:

Abstract of Answers and Returns under the Population Act, 11 Geo IV, c.30, (1831), pp.163, 169, 17, 473

Notes:

- The figure for those employed in Agriculture includes occupiers who employed labourers and occupiers that did not, as well as agricultural labourers.
- Those numbers employed in manufacturing include those who also made manufacturing machinery.
- Those listed under Retail, Trades and Handicrafts include both masters and workmen.
- Those listed under Capitalists and Professionals include bankers and other educated men.
- Those listed under labourers exclude those employed in agriculture.
- The figure given under "Servants" includes all males below and above 20 years and all female servants – which are given as separate figures in the *Abstract of Answers and Returns*.

APPENDIX VI

TOTAL ANNUAL DEATHS AND DEATHS FROM SPECIFIED CAUSES
Newcastle, Sunderland and Gateshead, 1832-1842

Newcastle

	1838/9	1839/40	1840	1841	1842
All causes	1829	2117	1957	2104	1737
Zymotic	320	599	371	480	195
Phthisis	244	256	275	328	349
Scarlatina	24	14	92	40	15
Typhus	69	54	60	62	26
Convulsions	80	80	98	90	69

Sunderland

	1838/9	1839/40	1840	1841	1842
All causes	1479	1524	1513	1512	1358
Zymotic	314	312	305	224	274
Phthisis	196	183	187	205	165
Scarlatina	7	97	167	22	8
Typhus	93	55	59	64	21
Convulsions	120	117	103	105	131

Gateshead

	1838/9	1839/40	1840	1841	1842
All causes	881	968	1016	989	909
Zymotic	122	167	208	190	103
Phthisis	147	149	157	135	152
Scarlatina	20	5	83	30	5
Typhus	27	19	43	33	23
Convulsions	80	84	93	78	86

Sources:

Second Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages in England, (London, 1840), pp.219-220; *Third Annual Report*, (1841), pp.284-5; *Fourth Annual Report*, (1842), pp. 268, 286; *Fifth Annual Report*, (1843), pp.222-5, 264-7; *Sixth Annual Report*, (1845), pp. 146-149, 188-191

Note:

Figures for 1841 and 1842 are based on C Friswell's calculations of totals given for males and females.

APPENDIX VII

SUNDERLAND SHIPOWNERS IN 1841

Table showing the relationship between the number of ships owned and the numbers of individual owners, syndicates and companies/partnerships

No of ships owned	No of individual owners	No of owners/ partnerships in syndicates	No of companies/ partnerships
12	1	0	0
11	1	0	1
10	0	0	0
9	2	0	0
8	0	0	0
7	2	0	0
6	7	1	3
5	11	0	0
4	14	1	0
3	20	2	8
2	68	24	2
1	218	109	42
TOTALS	344	137	56

Table showing Occupational groups of a Random Sample of 100 shipowners

Other Occupations	Nos of shipowners
None	25
master mariners and brokers	20
shopkeepers	22
tradesmen	13
commercial	12
shipbuilder	4
independent means	3
manufacturer	1

Sources:

“A List of Ships Insured in the Sunderland Assurance Association, 5 August, 1841”, in bound volume entitled *Shipping Registers*, SPL.

R Vint & Carr, *Directory of the Borough of S.underland*, (Sunderland, 1844), pp.3-60, 121-122
Datasets at the end of this volume

Notes:

There were 618 registered vessels listed by the Sunderland Assurance Association in 1841

Findings:

- 83% of individual shipowners owned only one or two boats (or part thereof)
- 40% of all shipowners were in a syndicate, of which 97% owned only one or two boats
- Of the 56 partnerships or companies, only one, the Wearside Shipping Company, had eleven boats and 79% owned only one or two boats.

APPENDIX VIII(A)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF SUNDERLAND TOWN COUNCIL
1835-1836

Name	Occupation	Cat
Lee, Joseph (1)	gentleman	G
Lotherington, John	gentleman	G
Nesbitt, Robert Cairns	gentleman	G
Spoor, Richard	gentleman	G
White, Richard	gentleman	G
Abbs, Cooper	attorney	P
Brunton, Thomas, jun	solicitor	P
Cay, Robert Burdon (2)	attorney	P
Clanny, William Reid	physician	P
Black, John Gordon	wharfinger	C
Booth, William	shipowner	C
Brown, Thomas, jun	shipowner	C
Carr, John Coull	coal fitter	C
Carr, William	coal fitter	C
French, William	wharfinger	C
Husdell, Jacob	coal fitter, ship/insurance broker	C
Kirk, William, jun	shipowner	C
Kirkaldy, Alex	agent	C
Marwood, Thomas, jun	newspaper proprietor	C
Ord, Errington Bell	merchant	C
Ord, William	ship owner	C
Panton, Hugh	coal fitter	C
Rahn, Andrew Godfrey	ship broker	C
Rickaby, R	ship owner	C
Robson, Matthew (3)	ship owner	C
Scott, Henry	earthenware manufacturer	C
Shevill, Joseph	agent	C
Walker, William Boyce (4)	wharfinger	C
White, Andrew (5)	coal fitter/ship owner	C
Allison, James	shipbuilder	M
Barry, John, jun	blockmaker	M
Dixon, Robert	earthenware manufact	M
Hall, George Wilkin	ship builder	M
Hutchinson, John	ship builder	M
Laing, Philip	ship builder	M
Muschamp, Emerson	ironworks	M
Nicholson, William	chain and anchor manufacturer	M
Alcock, Samuel	upholsterer	T
Hudson, George	rope maker	T
Pratt, Thomas	mason	T
Reed, Thomas (Nicholson St)	brewer	T
Reed, Thomas, jun	printer	T

APPENDIX VIII(A)/p.2

SUNDERLAND COUNCIL CONTINUED

Name	Occupation	Cat
Speeding, Thomas	cooper	T
Taylor, Thomas	brewer	T
Atkin, John	wine/spirit merchant	S
Blackett, William	draper	S
Booth, George (6)	grocer	S
Hopper, John	grocer	S
Joplin, John	draper	S
Robson, J (7)	miller or grocer	S
Sharp, Barnabas	hosier and glover	S
Sowerby, Jeremiah	druggist	S
Spoor, John	draper	S
Spoor, Robert	wine/spirit merchant	S
Vint, James	druggist	S
Walton, Henry	grocer	S

Sources*Council Members*

Sunderland Council Minute Book I, TWAS CB/Su/1/1

Sunderland Herald and Shields & Stockton Observer, 2 January, 1836, p.2, col G and 16 January, p.2, col F. The article about newly elected councillors to replace the fourteen aldermen inexplicably lists fifteen men.

Occupations

Borough of Sunderland, *A Copy of the Register of Electors to Vote in the Choice of Members of Serve in Parliament for the Borough of Sunderland*, (Sunderland, 1841) [RoE]

Burnett, James, *A Directory for the Parishes of Sunderland, Bishopwearmouth, Monkwearmouth and Monkwearmouth Shore*, (Sunderland, 1831)

Parson, W and W White, *History of Newcastle, Durham and Northumberland*, Vol I, (Newcastle, 1827), pp. 349-354 and Trade Directory

Pigot & Co's National Commercial Directory, (1828), pp.185-202

Vint, R & Carr, *Directory of the Borough of Sunderland*, (Sunderland, 1844)

Williams' Commercial Directory, (Newcastle, 1844), pp.39-124; 349-354, Trade Directory

Notes

(1) Joseph Lee has no occupation given in *Williams'* or Burnett against his name, suggesting that he was a gentleman. However, the Register of Electors lists him as the owner of a foundry.

(2) Burnett gives no occupation, implying that he was a gentleman but Parson & White, (p.355), records that he was an attorney. It is possible that he had retired from his profession by 1831 but for the purposes of this exercise I have listed him as a professional man.

(3) Burnett, p.46, gives two M Robsons - a ropemaker and a ship owner. *Williams'*, p.69, also lists two. The *Register of Electors* does not help. Matthew Robson is listed under "Trades" in Burnett as a ship owner.

APPENDIX VIII(A)/p.3

Notes continued

(4) Burnett, p.50, lists Walker as a druggist. William Boyce Walker does not appear in *Williams'* though there are two W Walkers - one a basket maker of 175 New Market, residence in High Street, BWM, the other a wharfinger of 7 New Grey Street and Holmes Wharf, Low Street.

In the Poll for County Durham, August 1837 in Sunderland District, William Boyes [sic] Walker is listed, (p.47), as living in New Grey Street with a freehold house. In the previous Register for December 1832, (p.33), he is listed as William Boyce Walker living in High Street, Sunderland, in a freehold house.

In the 1841 *Register* under BWM, William Boys [sic] Walker is listed as having a brewery in Low Row (p.28) and William Walker as having a dwelling house in New Grey Street, (p.58)

In Copy of the Register of Electors for 1842-3 (1842) there is no William Walker in BWM. There is a William Walker with wharf and warehouses in Low Street, Sunderland (p.57).

In *Copy of the Register of Electors* for 1849-50 (1849) there is a William Walker with a house in West Sunnyside, BWM (p.30), also a William Walker with wharf and warehouses in 25 Low Street with house in Cousin Street, BWM (p.58). There is a Wallace Walker with a shop in 3 High Street, Sunderland and house in William Street, BWM, (p.58).

On the basis of the above I believe that W B Walker was a wharfinger.

(5) *Pigot's Directory* lists Andrew White under the gentry but the other references give his occupation.

(6) Burnett, (p.27), records that a George Booth was a grocer. The only George Booth in *Parson & White* is listed as a ship broker. As Burnett's *Directory* was published closer to the relevant date I have opted for that reference.

(7) Burnett lists three J Robsons - an assistant overseer, a miller and a grocer. It is unlikely to be the overseer, and given that the miller and grocer are of similar socio-economic status, I have put down both occupations as part of the shopkeeper category.

APPENDIX VIII(B)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF NEWCASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
1835-1836

Name	Occupation	Cat
Dunn, George Thomas	gentleman/merchant	G
Dunn, Thomas	gentleman	G
Hood, John Lionel	gentleman/iron merchant	G
Lamb, Joseph	gentleman/merchant	G
Lowrey, Edward	gentleman	G
Dawson, Abraham	solicitor	P
Donkin, Armorer	solicitor	P
Fife, John	surgeon	P
Headlam, Dr Thomas	doctor	P
Losh, James	barrister	P
Philipson, Ralph Park	solicitor	P
Fenwick, John (1)	solicitor	P?
Batson, Thomas	ship owner	C
Bell, Thomas	merchant	C
Bigge, Charles John	banker	C
Boyd, George	merchant	C
Bradshaw, Benjamin	merchant	C
Brandling, John	coal owner	C
Johnson, Joshua	merchant	C
Lowrey, Stephen	shipowner/merchant	C
Nichol, Anthony	ship owner/broker	C
Plummer, Robert	merchant	C
Proctor, W B	merchant	C
Ridley, John	merchant	C
Spedding, John jun	banker	C
Burrell, Isaac	iron founder	M
Crawhall, Joseph	rope manufacturer/lead merchant	M
Doubleday, Thomas	soap manufacturer	M
Easterby, Anthony	soap manufacturer	M
Rayne, Robert	iron merchant	M
Wright, William	shipbuilder	M
Archbold, James	slater/tiler	T
Bargate, George	tanner	T
Bell, Henry	brewer/wholesale grocer	T
Hodgson, James	printer	T
Potter, Addison L	brewer & malster	T
Sillick, James	currier	T

APPENDIX VIII(B)/p.2

NEWCASTLE COUNCIL CONTINUED

Name	Occupation	Cat
Bell, Robert (2)	grocer/druggist	S
Charnley, Emerson	bookseller/stationer	S
Featherston, Jacob R	grocer	S
Finlay, James	bookseller	S
Myers, Christopher	druggist	S
Nichol, John	confectioner	S
Reed, Alexander	china & glass ware	S
Robinson, Robert	wholesale stationer	S
Sheild, Henry	wine merchant	S

Sources*Council Members*

Election of Councillors and Aldermen, *The Proceedings and Reports of the Town Council of the Borough of Newcastle for 1836*, (Newcastle, 1837), p.1

Occupation

Pigot & Co's Commercial Directory, (1834)

Notes

(1) There are two John Fenwicks listed, one a silk dyer, the other a solicitor. I have assumed that this one was the solicitor.

(2) There are two Robert Bells listed but given that both would count as Shopkeepers, there is no difficulty in assigning them to that category

APPENDIX VIII(C)

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF GATESHEAD TOWN COUNCIL
1835-1836**

Name	Occupation	Cat
Davis, Robert	surgeon	P
Brockett, William Henry	merchant	C
Graham, Edmund	wharfinger	C
Wilson, Thomas	merchant	C
Abbott, John	iron founder	M
Hawks, George	iron founder	M
Hymers, James	ironfounder	M
Hymers, William	ironfounder/merchant	M
Price, Joseph	glass manufacturer	M
Sowerby, George	glass manufacturer	M
Barras, John (1)	brewer and malster	T
Cummins, Thomas	painter	T
Pollock, James	silk dyer	T
Rowntree, William	malster	T
Colman, John	chemist	S
Cout, John	grocer	S
Fairbairn, John	wine merchant	S
Greene, John	grocer	S
Johnson, John Bell	druggist/colour man	S
Matchitt, Benjamin	grocer	S
Revely, Thomas	victualler	S
Hall, Michael	farmer	F
Robson, Joseph	farmer	F

Sources*Councillors*

Council Meetings of 31 December, 1835 and 6 and 13 January, 1836, Gateshead Council
Minute Book I, pp.1, 3, 5 and 11, TWAS CB/Ga/1/1
Brockett Papers, Vol 6, I, p.399

Occupations

List of nominees for Union Guardians, Brockett Papers Vol 6, II, pp. 183, 513; Vol 8, I, p.43;
Vol 9, II, p.679; Vol 10, I, p.209;
M A Richardson, *Directory of the Towns of Newcastle and Gateshead for the Year 1838*,
(Newcastle, nd)
Pigot's National Commercial Directory, (London, 1834)

Notes

(1) There is only one T Wilson listed in Pigot's Directory - a tavern keeper in Bigg Market, Newcastle. Richardson lists a merchant called T Wilson of Fell House, Low Fell, which I have taken to be the correct Thomas Wilson.

APPENDIX IX(A)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF SUNDERLAND TOWN COUNCIL
1848-1849

Name	Occupation	Cat
Crozier, John	gentleman	G
Robson, Matthew	gentleman	G
Sharp, Barnabus	gentleman	G
Simpson, Joseph	gentleman	G
Williamson, Sir Hedworth	baronet	G
Brown, Dr Joseph	physician	P
Brown, Robert	solicitor	P
Brunton, John	surveyor of shipping	P
Moore, William	solicitor	P
Mordey, William*	surgeon	P
Potts, Christopher Thomas*	attorney	P
Pratt, Thomas*	architect	P
Ranson, George Smith	solicitor	P
Thompson, Thomas	solicitor	P
Watson, John*	surgeon	P
Barry, John	shipowner	C
Brown, Thomas	banker	C
Cropton, John	shipowner	C
Ewart, John	agent	C
French, Robert	merchant	C
French, William*	wharfinger	C
Givens, William	agent	C
Halcro, Richard	merchant	C
Howe, Sanderson John	shipowner	C
Laing, Philip	shipowner	C
Moore, Martin	shipowner	C
Morton, Henry	coal owner	C
Nicholson, William*	shipowner	C
Ord, Erington Bell	shipowner	C
Simey, Thomas Boyes	shipowner	C
Walker, Thomas	shipowner	C
Whitfield, George	agent	C
Candlish, John	shipbuilder	M
Featherstonhaugh, Walker	glass manufacturer	M
Hall, George Wilkin	shipbuilder	M
Hartley, James	glass manufacturer	M
Hay, John*	rope maker	M
Hutchinson, John*	shipbuilder	M
Scott, John	glass manufacturer	M
Wake, William Morgan*	boat builder	M
Wight, Robert	ironfounder	M

APPENDIX IX(A)/p.2

SUNDERLAND COUNCIL CONTINUED

Name	Occupation	Cat
Lindsay, John*	carver and guilder	T
Reed, Thomas	stationer	T
Reed, Thomas	brewer and spirit merchant	T
Vint, Robert	printer	T
Williams, James	printer	T
Alcock, Samuel	upholsterer	T
Allison, James	brewer, ex shipbuilder	T
Bramwell, Christopher*	wine merchant	S
Chapman, Thomas Edward	wine and spirit merchant	S
Dixon, Thomas*	cork cutter and grocer	S
Hills, James	ironmonger	S
Murray, John	innkeeper	S
Taylor, Henry*	grocer	S
Thompson, William	chemist	S

* Indicates those who were also Guardians

Sources*Council Members and Occupations*

Sunderland Council Minute Book 1, TWAS CB/Su/1/1. pp. 197, 216, 327, 467, 577, 580;

Sunderland Council Minute Book 2, TWAS CB/Su/1/2, pp.50, 124, 197, 320, 580

Guardians

Sunderland Herald, 13 April, 1849, p.5C

APPENDIX IX(B)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF NEWCASTLE TOWN COUNCIL
1848-1849

Name	Occupation	Cat
Dunn, George Thomas	gentleman/merchant	G
Dunn, Thomas	gentleman	G
Lamb, Joseph	gentleman/merchant	G
Taylor, Francis	gentleman	G
Weatherley, James Dent (Capt)	gentleman	G
Donkin, Armorer	solicitor	P
Fife, Sir John	surgeon	P
Forster, George	solicitor	P
Hall, Edward	solicitor	P
Harle, William Lockey	attorney	P
Headlam, Thomas Emerson	doctor	P
Ingledeew, Henry*	solicitor	P
Jobling, Mark Lambert	solicitor	P
Keenlyside, Thomas William	attorney	P
Losh, James	barrister, county court judge	P
Philipson, Ralph Park	solicitor	P
Preston, John Hughes	solicitor	P
Armstrong, William	merchant	C
Blackwell, John	newspaper proprietor	C
Brockett, William Henry	merchant	C
Carr, John	coal owner	C
Gray, Alexander George	merchant	C
Lowrey, Stephen	shipowner/merchant	C
Nichol, Anthony	shipbroker	C
Ormston, John	shipping agent	C
Parker, Anthony	coal exporter	C
Parker, Samuel	agent	C
Potter, Addison Langhorn	merchant	C
Proctor, William Brownsword	merchant	C
Rayne, Charles	seedcrusher and merchant	C
Ridley, John	merchant/broker	C
Sanderson, Francis	iron merchants	C
Burnup, John	coach or brick manufacturer	M
Burrell, Isaac	iron founder	M
Crawhall, Joseph	rope manufacturer	M
Ridley, Thomas	bottle manufacturer	M
Turner, Henry	brick/tile manufacturer/land agent	M

APPENDIX IX(B)/p.2

NEWCASTLE TOWN COUNCIL CONTINUED

Name	Occupation	Cat
Bargate, George	tanner	T
Dodds, Ralph*	plasterer	T
Gibson, John	glass stainer and painter	T
Hodgson, James	printer	T
Liddell, Robert *(1)	brewer	T
Sillick, James	currier	T
Brown, William	hotel/inn keeper	S
Burn, David	victualler	S
Carr, John Thomas	wine and spirit merchant	S
Dale, James	corn merchant	S
Gibson, William*	chemist and druggist	S
Lambert, George	grocer	S
Lambert, Nathaniel Grace	wine merchant	S
Nichol, John*	confectioner	S
Robinson, Robert	wholesale stationer	S
Stokoe, Samuel	wine and spirit merchant	S
Carr, John (2)		U
Finlay, James (3)	master mariner???	U
Turner, William (4)		U

* Indicates those who were also Guardians

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Brockett Papers, 8(I), p.43

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Guardians

Gateshead Observer, 14 April, 1849, p.3D

Notes

(1) Liddell was elected early in 1849 to replace William Armstrong who was elected an alderman on the death of Alderman Archbold at the beginning of 1849

APPENDIX IX(B)/p.3

Notes continued

(2) Whelan lists seven J Carrs ranging from commercial men and a manufacturer to small tradesmen. Ward lists a J Carr that may well be the right one - a coke and firebrick manufacturer. However, given the range of possibilities I have labelled his occupational category Unknown [U].

(3) Whelan and Ward both list a James Finlay as a master mariner - double check

(4) There are three William Turners listed in Whelan and Ward - a surgeon, a chemist and a brewer.

APPENDIX IX(C)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF GATESHEAD TOWN COUNCIL 1848-9

Name	Occupation	Cat
Hymers, James	gentleman	G
Coulthard, Ralph	engineer	P
Brockett, William Henry	merchant	C
Wilson, Thomas	merchant	C
Brown, William*	brass founder	M
Cummins, Thomas	ironfounder	M
Hawks, George	ironfounder	M
Prockter, Bryan John	glass manufacturer	M
Wilson, James*	worsted manufacturer	M
Angus, John*	currier	T
Cook, William*	brewer	T
Douglas, William*	printer	T
Kenmir, William	brewer	T
Lister, John	builder	T
Pearson, Charles John	builder	T
Russell, John	draper	T
Walker, Forster	joiner	T
Young, John Coxon jun	builder	T
Blagburn, Robert	inn keeper	S
Ionn, Frederick Peter	draper	S
Potts, John*	wine merchant	S
Potts, John Cuthbert	wine merchant	S
Robson, John	draper	S
Smith, James*	draper/merchant	S
Robson, Joseph*	farmer	F

* Indicates those who were also Guardians

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Guardians

Gateshead Observer, 14 April, 1849, p.1C

APPENDIX X

CHURCH ATTENDANCE ON CENSUS SUNDAY, 1851

	GATESHEAD			NEWCASTLE			SUNDERLAND		
	<i>morn</i>	<i>aft</i>	<i>eve</i>	<i>morn</i>	<i>aft</i>	<i>eve</i>	<i>morn</i>	<i>aft</i>	<i>eve</i>
Total	3519	2424	2467	18710	4640	11730	14098	1942	14972
Protestant									
Church of England	1583	619	1162	7202	2643	4891	4461	1061	3526
Church of Scotland	X	X	X	625	-	800	X	X	X
United Presby. Church	X	X	X	1170	225	275	1219	-	1296
Presby. ch in England	290	-	100	704	-	548	456	-	418
Independents	X	X	X	826	-	518	1387	-	1563
Particular Baptists	X	X	X	1028	40	698	814	125	1407
Scotch Baptists	X	X	X	44	-	42	X	X	X
Baptists (undefined)	X	X	X	X	X	X	80	-	-
Society of Friends	X	X	X	217	112	-	136	93	-
Unitarians	X	X	X	461	-	118	20	-	200
Particular Methodist	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wesleyan Methodist	516	255	664	1270	139	1307	1350	301	2052
Methodist New Connex	630	1006	392	210	145	280	328	-	452
Primitive Methodist	-	344	149	806	370	742	1510	-	2080
Weleyan Reformers	X	X	X	630	-	780	722	56	1280
Wesleyan Association	X	X	X	X	X	X	637	46	665
New Church	X	X	X	70	-	70	X	X	X
Isolated Congretation	X	X	X	8	66	57	16	260	20
Other Christian									
Roman Catholic	500	200	-	3389	900	604	950	-	-
Non Christian									
Jews	X	X	X	50	-	-	12	-	13

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Count	Name
12	Robinson, John
11	Hutchinson, John
9	Scurfield, Robert
9	Walker, Thomas
7	Longstaff, Thomas
7	Tully, John
6	Brown, Robert
6	Douglas, Thomas
6	Horn, Frederic
6	Hudson, George
6	Hutchinson, Ralph
6	Potts, William
6	Thompson, George
5	Andrews, Joseph
5	Davison, Christopher
5	Green, William
5	Harrison, George
5	Oliver, Thompson
5	Penman, John
5	Ritson, John
5	Speeding, Thomas
5	Thompson, Turner
5	Walker, William
5	Wilson, Caleb
4	Bell, John
4	Elliot, John
4	Herring, William, jun
4	Hudson, Ralph
4	Lonie, Martin
4	Moon, Henry
4	Nicholson, Thomas
4	Ord, Robert
4	Thompson, Matthew, jun
4	Tiffin, Thomas
4	Watson, John
4	White, Richard
4	Wilkinson, Thomas
4	Wilkinson, William
3	Atkin, John
3	Barry, John
3	Booth, G R
3	Briggs, William
3	Cropton, John
3	Crozier, John
3	Doxford, William
3	Gourley, J Y
3	Hall, G W

Count	OID	Name
3		Holmes, William
3		Hunter, John
3		Nicholson, William
3		Oliver, Richard
3		Penman, Isabella
3		Robson, W W
3		Scott, Peter
3		Spence, Joseph
3		Storey, John
3		Wood, Thomas
2		Anderson, Thomas
2		Armstrong, Thomas
2		Ayre, James
2		Brown, William
2		Byers, William
2		Clark, Robert
2		Cockerill, Anthony
2		Crawford, John
2		Crozier, Thomas
2		Culliford, Joseph
2		Dauson, Ralph
2		Dixon, Hugh
2		Eggleston, Henry
2		Eggleston, William
2		Elliott, Mark
2		Fairley, Barker
2		Fisher, John
2		Forster, George
2		Frost, William
2		Gowland, G T
2		Greenwell, Richard
2		Hall, J C
2		Hall, W J's exors
2		Hay, John
2		Herring, J C
2		Hodgson, William
2		Hoggard, Anthony
2		Hunter, Thomas
2		Jameson, William
2		Jonassohn, D
2		Kerss, William
2		Kilvinton, Jonathan
2		Kirk, William
2		Kirk, William, jun
2		Kirton, Ralph
2		Longstaff, Henry
2		Lumsdon, Joseph

Count	OID	Name
2		Magee, Henry
2		Micklam, William
2		Mitcheson, Thos's exors
2		Moore, Samuel
2		Muir, Andrew
2		Parke, James
2		Parker, Hill
2		Pegg, Joseph
2		Pratt, Thomas
2		Reed, Thomas
2		Robson, J H
2		Robson, Matthew
2		Robson, Robert
2		Sanderson, William
2		Sharp, Cuthbert
2		Sheraton, George
2		Smith, Jane
2		Surtees, Robert
2		Surtees, William
2		Thompson, Henry
2		Thompson, John
2		Thompson, Matthew
2		Vaux, Cuthbert
2		Vint, James
2		Vipond, Richard
2		Wake, Margaret
2		Watson, Robert
2		Webster, John
2		Wight, Robert
2		Wilson, J N
2		Wilson, Joshua
1		Alcock, Henry
1		Alcock, Samuel
1		Alderson, W D
1		Alderson, William
1		Allison, James
1		Angus, Silas
1		Appleby, J P
1		Arther, James
1		Atkinson, Hannah
1		Attey, William
1		Ayre, Robert
1		Baker, Albany
1		Baker, Elizabeth
1		Baker, Thomas
1		Bell, Joseph
1		Bell, W T

Count	OID	Name
1		Bertram, Watson
1		Black, J G
1		Blackit, Matthew
1		Blakey, James
1		Blyth, William
1		Brantingham, George
1		Brough, Robert
1		Brown, John
1		Brown, T, jun
1		Brown, Thomas
1		Brunton, Thomas
1		Buchanan, Joseph
1		Burdes, E F
1		Burdes, John
1		Burn, John
1		Byres, William
1		Calvert, Robert
1		Campbell, John
1		Campbell, Robert
1		Carr, J C
1		Carr, Richard
1		Cave, John
1		Caward, Nicholas
1		Charlton, J
1		Chatt, Leonard
1		Chisholm, Isabella
1		Clay, John
1		Colling, Anthony
1		Crosby, J
1		Cuthbertson, James
1		Davison, David
1		Davison, Richard
1		Davison, William
1		Dawson, William
1		Dixon, Jane
1		Dixon, John
1		Dixon, Michael
1		Dobson, Edward
1		Dodds, Ann
1		Dowell, Bartholomew
1		Dowell, Richard
1		Ebdel, J's reprs
1		Elliot, Christopher
1		Elliot, Thomas
1		Elliott, Christopher
1		Elliott, Thomas
1		Elstob, W H

Count	OFID	Name
1		Embleton, Isaac
1		Esson, Andrew
1		Ewart, John
1		Farquhar, William
1		Favell, J M
1		Fleming, John
1		Fletcher, Thomas
1		Forster, Ann
1		French, Robert
1		Gales, Lawson
1		Garrick, William
1		Gee, John
1		Glaves, Thomas
1		Graham, George
1		Graydon, Edward
1		Graydon, George
1		Graydon, M W
1		Graydon, Thomas
1		Grimes, Robert
1		Grimshaw, William
1		Haddock, William
1		Hagens, Jane
1		Halliday, John
1		Happer, Thomas
1		Harper, Joshua
1		Harrison, Andrew
1		Harrison, George, jun
1		Hemsley, Joseph
1		Hodgson, Richard
1		Hodgson, William
1		Holmes, Robert
1		Hopper, John
1		Howe, Sanderson J
1		Howe, Susannah P
1		Hunter, Ann
1		Hunter, William
1		Hutchinson, Edward
1		Hutchinson, George
1		Hutchinson, Thos' repres
1		Hutton, Robert E
1		Jackson, Mary, Trustees
1		Jackson, William
1		Kay, Robert
1		Kay, William
1		Kearney, Matthew
1		Kirkby, John
1		Kirton, Chater

Count	OHD	Name
1		Kirton, Isabella
1		Kirton, Thomas
1		Kish, Thomas
1		Laing, Philip
1		Lamb, Matthew
1		Lax, James
1		Lee, James
1		Leech, Robert
1		Leithead, James
1		Lindsay, John
1		Longstaff, George
1		Lowden, John
1		Lumsdon, Mark
1		Mallaburn, William
1		Matthew, George
1		Menham, Eleanor
1		Merriman, T's exors
1		Middleton, Humphrey
1		Mitchinson, Robert
1		Moffat, J R
1		Moon, C S
1		Moon, George
1		Moon, H A
1		Moor, John
1		Moore, Anthony John
1		Moore, Charles
1		Morgan, Charlton
1		Morland, Thomas
1		Needham, Christopher
1		Nesom, William
1		Newton, Matthias
1		Noble, George
1		Ogden, Thomas
1		Oliver, Francis
1		Palin, Anthony
1		Parkin, Joseph
1		Pattison, Cuthbert
1		Penman, H
1		Penman, Thomas
1		Powe, John
1		Price, Richard
1		Proudfoot, William
1		Rankin, Ann
1		Ray, John
1		Reed, George
1		Reed, Robert
1		Reynolds, William

Count	OFID	Name
1		Richardson, John
1		Richardson, Thomas
1		Richardson, William
1		Ridley, John
1		Ridley, Thomas
1		Riseborough, John
1		Robinson, Richard
1		Robinson, Thomas
1		Robson, Thomas
1		Rose, James
1		Rowell, William
1		Rutherford, Frances
1		Saville, James
1		Sharp, Richard
1		Shaw, Barbara
1		Shepherd, George
1		Shields, John James
1		Simpson, Robert
1		Smith, Edward
1		Smith, John
1		Smith, Thomas
1		Snaith, William
1		Snowball, William
1		Spoor, John
1		Stafford J C
1		Stephenson, Robert
1		Storow, Mary
1		Tate, Robert
1		Taylor, Anthony
1		Taylor, John
1		Taylorson, Thomas
1		Temperley, John
1		Thompson, Catherine
1		Thompson, D's exors
1		Thompson, John's exors
1		Thompson, Mark
1		Thompson, Peter
1		Thompson, R C
1		Thurlbeck, William
1		Tilley, James
1		Tinmouth, William
1		Wake, John
1		Walker, James
1		Walker, Richard
1		Wallace, John
1		Waters, William, exors
1		Watson, Peter

Count	OHID	Name
1		Watson, R M
1		Wells, William
1		White, William
1		Whitfield, Allison
1		Wilkinson, Ann
1		Wilkinson, John
1		Wilkinson, Moses
1		Wilkinson, R B
1		Wilkinson, Richard
1		Willerton, Robert
1		Willey, Michael
1		Wilson, Lancelot
1		Wright, George
1		Young, T B

Count	Name
6	Tully, John
4	Walker, Thomas
3	Andrews, Joseph
3	Oliver, Thompson
2	Alcock, J T & C
2	Anderson, Thomas
2	Ayre, James
2	Clark, Robert
2	Cockerill, Anthony
2	Douglas, Thomas
2	Eggleston, Henry
2	Eggleston, William
2	Fairley, Barker
2	Frost, William
2	Hall, G W
2	Hall, W J's exors
2	Hoggard, Anthony
2	Hutchinson, Ralph
2	Kerss, William
2	Longstaff, Henry
2	Lonie, Martin
2	Mitcheson, Thos's exors
2	Moore, Samuel
2	Muir, Andrew
2	Pegg, Joseph
2	Sanderson, William
2	Tiffin, Thomas
2	Wilkinson, Thomas
1	Armstrong, Thomas
1	Arther, James
1	Atkin, John
1	Bertram, Watson
1	Blakey, James
1	Booth, G R
1	Brough, Robert
1	Brown, T, jun
1	Brown, Thomas
1	Brunton, Thomas
1	Burn, John
1	Cave, John
1	Caward, Nicholas
1	Charlton, J
1	Clay, John
1	Crozier, John
1	Culliford, Joseph
1	Cuthbertson, James
1	Davison, David

Count	Name
1	Davison, Richard
1	Davison, William
1	Dawson, William
1	Dodds, Ann
1	Ebdel, J's reprs
1	Elliot, Christopher
1	Elstob, W H
1	Embleton, Isaac
1	Farquhar, William
1	Fleming, John
1	Frost & Kirton
1	Gales, Lawson
1	Garrick, William
1	Glaves, Thomas
1	Gourley, J Y
1	Graydon, George
1	Graydon, M W
1	Grimes, Robert
1	Grimshaw, William
1	Haddock, William
1	Happer, Thomas
1	Harrison, George
1	Harrison, George, jun
1	Hemsley, Joseph
1	Hodgson, Richard
1	Hopper, John
1	Howe, Sanderson J
1	Howe, Susannah P
1	Hutchinson, John
1	Jackson, Mary, Trustees
1	Jameson, William
1	Kay, Robert
1	Kearney, Matthew
1	Kerss & Mitcheson
1	Kilvinton, Jonathan
1	Kirk, William, jun
1	Kirton, Chater
1	Kirton, Isabella
1	Kirton, Ralph
1	Kirton, Thomas
1	Lamb, Matthew
1	Lax, James
1	Lowden, John
1	Lumsdon, Joseph
1	Mallaburn, William
1	Micklams, William
1	Mitchinson, Robert

Count	OID	Name
1		Moore, Charles
1		Morland, Thomas
1		Needham, Christopher
1		Newton, Matthias
1		Oliver, Francis
1		Parke, James
1		Parker, Hill
1		Price, Richard
1		Rankin, Ann
1		Reed, Robert
1		Richardson, John
1		Riseborough, John
1		Robson, J H
1		Robson, Matthew
1		Robson, Thomas
1		Robson, W W
1		Saville, James
1		Scotson, G & A
1		Scurfield, Robert
1		Shepherd, George
1		Smith, Thomas
1		Snaith, William
1		Spoor, John
1		Surtees, William
1		Tate, Robert
1		Taylorson, Thomas
1		Temperley, John
1		Thompson, Mark
1		Thompson, Matthew
1		Thompson, Matthew, jun
1		Thompson, Peter
1		Vint, James
1		Wake, John
1		Wake, Margaret
1		White, William
1		Whitfield & Rutter
1		Whitfield, Allison
1		Wight, Robert
1		Wilkinson, Ann
1		Wilkinson, Moses
1		Wilkinson, R B
1		Wilkinson, Richard
1		Wilson, Lancelot

Count	Name
11	Wear Shipping Co
6	Brown, T, jun & R
6	Ord, William & Co
6	Tanner & Beckwith
3	Alcock, J T & C
3	Borough Shipping Co
3	Carr, William & Co
3	Greenwell & Sacker
3	Panton, H & Son
3	Parker, T & H
3	Reed, Thomas & Co
3	Richardson, G & C
2	Dodd & Bird
2	Leadbitter, R & Son
1	Atkinson, Ralph & Co
1	Austin & Consitt
1	Austin, P & Son
1	Bell & Weighill
1	Blair & Co
1	Blair, Simey & Spark
1	Brown, T, jun and R
1	Burdes, Todd & March
1	Carr, W & E F Burdes
1	Cooper & Douglas
1	Cropton, John & Thomas
1	Crosby, J & Co
1	Douglas & Stothard
1	Elliott & Oliver
1	Elstob, T & W H
1	Fairlam, G & R
1	Frost & Kirton
1	Gray & Thompson
1	Harrison, A & M
1	Hodge, Thomas & Co
1	Hunter & Moore
1	Hunter, Fell & Dodd
1	Kerss & Mitcheson
1	Lonie & Hudson
1	Lonie & Reed
1	Merriman & Ball
1	Muschamp & Thompson
1	Nicholson, W & Son
1	Oliver, G & R
1	Panton, H & Sons
1	Parker & Liddell
1	Petree & Phillips
1	Potts, C & Co's Assig

Count	ID	Name
1		Purse & Tongs
1		Scotson, G & A
1		Stothard & Routledge
1		Surtees & Wilkin
1		Tully, John & Co
1		Vint & Co
1		Whitfield & Rutter
1		Wilson, T & W
1		Woods, Spence & Co

