A Guide to Records Created Under the New Poor Law

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The British Association for Local History
Guide to Records Created Under the New Poor Law

This guide was produced as part of the *Pauper Prisons... Pauper Palaces (the Midlands)* project run by the British Association for Local History between 2012 and 2015.\(^1\) Part of the project remit was to examine the nineteenth century archive created by the Poor Law Commission (and its successors) which are held by The National Archives (TNA),\(^2\) and the archive created by the hundreds of poor law unions across England and Wales,\(^3\) now held at county and borough record offices and local studies libraries.

The central authority created its own archive (minutes, registers, indexes, forms etc.) and it received and archived a huge collection of letters, reports, memos etc. from parishes, poor law unions and other government officials and their departments. Such central authority material that survives can now be found at TNA. In tandem with this each poor law union created its own archive mainly from the operational records of the workhouse and specific union employees; it is this material that is held locally. Rather than just list the various records created in the nineteenth century I have sought to explain them and so provide an account of the type of information a researcher might find in the various records.

There are thousands of sets of documents which will inform the researcher interested in the rather overarching subject of poverty in the nineteenth century. However, this guide is not an exhaustive work for the subject. In restricting myself to the records created by the central authority and by the poor law unions themselves, I have omitted sources such as newspapers, vestry minute books, records of quarter and borough sessions etc. Such other sources will be invaluable to the researcher of nineteenth century poverty; it is only that these sources are outside the concern of this guide. In addition, this guide is Midlands-centric: taking its cue from the fact that this was part of a bigger project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, British Association for Local History and the Friends of the

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\(^{1}\) I have also incorporated some of the work produced during my time as research associate at the University of Nottingham and the Southwell Workhouse (National Trust) during 2011-2012 where I concentrated on the Southwell Workhouse in Nottinghamshire.

\(^{2}\) The Poor Law Commission, later the Poor Law Board, later the Poor Law Department of the Local Government Board. I refer (where appropriate) to the generic ‘central authority’.

\(^{3}\) The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act concerned England and Wales. Ireland and Scotland had their own nineteenth century poor law legislation.
National Archives, to concentrate on the East and West Midlands. Thus Nottinghamshire and Southwell loom large in the ‘example stakes’. Nevertheless, I have referred to (and used document images concerning other parts of the country) to indicate the commonality of the type of archive material.

The reproduction of images of documents held at The National Archives is by their permission and I am grateful for their assistance. I would also like to thank Ann Morton, Friends of TNA, for reading through various versions of this guide. I would also like to record my thanks to the 100 or so project members who worked on the Pauper Prisons... Pauper Palaces (the Midlands) over the lifetime of this work and contributed in workshops, seminars and conferences. I learned a great deal in our shared experiences of the poor law archive.

I would also like to thank Natalie Carter who contributed so much to this guide and its making… and little John Stephen Carter for everything else.

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4 The primary funding was from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the British Association for Local History would like to record their thanks for all of their help to produce the various aspects of the Pauper Prisons… Pauper Palaces (The Midlands) project.
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The Records of the Poor Law Commission, the Poor Law Board and the Poor Law Department of the Local Government Board: the ‘Central Authority’.  

The records of the central authority may sensibly be divided firstly into the operational records themselves (the minutes, correspondence, workhouse plans etc.) and secondly into various finding aids which the department produced for themselves, that is to say the indexes or registers produced by the poor law clerks themselves to find their way around the huge and varied correspondence generated and collected by the central authorities.

There is no single overarching index or register to the records created or collected by the central authority and thus there is no single way into the collection. Some record series have their own internal index, others have separate indexes or registers (in different record series) and others still have no indexes or registers because such means of reference has not survived or were never created in the first instance. Although much of the central authority’s archive does not survive, enough is extent for us to piece together its main features. The clerks employed by the central authority needed a system to retrieve letters sent to them as well as enabling them to find copies of the letters they had sent out. To do this, individual pieces of correspondence were given a unique number, referred to as a ‘paper number’, which were findable through an elaborate set of indexes or registers. So when asked (for example) to find letters from unions asking about rules concerning apprenticeships, the clerks would look through the union correspondence registers under ‘apprenticeship’ and use the paper number to track down appropriate letters. Indeed, the main register to the incoming records of the central authority were destroyed during World War Two and so, by necessity, researchers are thus either thrown back on the time consuming activity of browsing large sets of volumes or consulting those registers to individual collections that do survive.

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5 The records of the central authority are held at The National Archives at Kew and are part of the huge Ministry of Health collection. This is because the records were inherited from the Local Government Board following the establishment of the Ministry of Health in 1919.

6 This was a common feature for a bureaucracy. A registry system was a necessity once the amount of correspondence reached a level beyond that of ‘clerical memory’.
The Poor Law Commission (PLC) kept minutes of its proceedings and its minute books constitute the record of the formal archival proceedings of the Commission. The series MH 1: Poor Law Commission: Minute Books, 1834-1842, is the starting point for these records. Physically, the minutes are clean (having been written up from rough minutes) and entered into hardback volumes. At the beginning of this series we see the first few meetings taking place in the late Factory Commissioners Office. [See figure 1: MH 1/1, Poor Law Commission Minute Book, 23 August to 31 December 1834, 25 August 1834.] At that first meeting the swearing in of the Poor Law Commissioners is recorded and the appointments of Edwin Chadwick as Secretary and George Coode, Arthur Moore, George Mence and Thomas Austin as Commission staff are detailed. Other Commission appointments, including clerks, messengers and assistant commissioners, are recorded throughout the minute books along with various details of their various individual salary payments. Summary details of correspondence are also noted in the minutes. At the beginning these are little more than notes on the number of letters received but this settles into a routine ‘style’ of recording correspondence by the paper number assigned to each letter with confirmation that it had been dealt with. For example, we see that on 3 September 1834 it is stated that letters numbered 145-177 were read, an answer for each was prepared then approved and that a minute of each was inserted in ‘the register’. There are some letters included in full within the minutes. These are sometimes bound in with the minutes; for example a printed circular to churchwardens and overseers follows a minute from September 1834 that it was expedient to send a ‘preliminary communication’ to parish officers across England and Wales because of doubts and confusion in regard to specific sections of the Poor Law Amendment Act. This circular was drawn up, printed and ordered to be sent to the churchwardens and overseers of each ‘parish, township or place’ separately maintaining its own poor. Researchers will also find some other letters written by hand into the minute book because of the importance attached to them by the PLC; for example, letters sent to the Treasury on financial matters concerning the PLC accommodation and staff establishment. However, such occurrences are rare.

The subject matter of the minutes reflects the full range of responsibilities the PLC managed and a couple of examples will illustrate this. In September 1834 Edwin Chadwick informed the PLC that the then present clerks in the current establishment

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7 The formal published proceedings and activities of the PLC are the annual parliamentary reports available in Parliamentary Papers.
8 Ibid, 3 September 1834.
are ‘employed considerably beyond the customary office hours...’ It was impossible to dispatch the act, circular and queries to more than 700 parishes daily and it was ordered that an extra set of clerks be employed to complete this work; their employment was not to continue once the work was completed.\(^9\) During the same month a deputation of the inhabitants of the Precinct of the Old Tower Without was heard by the PLC, in support of their memorial not to be united with any other parish, unless under the conditions set out in their memorial were met.\(^10\) The following month, in consequence of correspondence and representations regarding John Scott, late treasurer of the parish of St James, Clerkenwell, Middlesex, and a defaulter of the rates of that parish; the PLC desired the vestry clerk to attend the Board, which he did, for examination; and at the same meeting Major Sir Francis Head, Edward Gulson, Daniell Goodson Adey and Colonel Charles Ashe A’Court were appointed as assistant commissioners.\(^11\) These few examples indicate the broad range of data the researcher would glean from simply browsing the minutes.

The greatest proportion of the minute books refer to correspondence coming into the Poor Law Commission with the content of that correspondence ‘précised’ in the text of the minutes.\(^12\) So, for example, looking at the early years of the Poor Law Commission the minutes might refer to the dismissal of a union officer, the treatment of an individual pauper, the order of a local parish valuation or to any opposition the poor law may be encountering. In regard to such letters (where they are being sent from an individual union) a researcher should take a note of the name of the union, the date of the minute and the paper number; the paper number will be placed adjacent in the margin of the minute book. For example if we look at the Poor Law Commission minutes for 2 December 1837 [see figure 2: MH 1/1. Poor Law Commission Minute Book, 21 August to 30 December 1837, 2 December 1837] we see an entry regarding a letter from the Mansfield Poor Law Union concerning the then improving state of trade within the union (the paper number in the margin is 10306C). Therefore the relevant data to track the letter is: the Mansfield Poor Law Union, 2 December 1837 and 10306C.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) Ibid, 9 September 1834. Such entries show the enormous administrative task the New Poor Law presented to the Civil Service.
\(^10\) Ibid, 26 September 1834.
\(^11\) Ibid, 28 October 1834.
\(^12\) Correspondence from individual poor law unions will be dealt with separately later in this volume.
\(^13\) The A, B and C in the paper numbers refer to the three Poor Law Commissioners.
Armed with these pieces of information the researcher would be able to use TNA’s online Discovery catalogue and will see that the relevant Mansfield Poor Law Union correspondence volume is MH 12/9356 (as this covers 1834 to 1837). If the researcher now browses through this volume, roughly by date within 1837 to get into the general area, and then by paper number order, they will find the letter referred to in the Poor Law Commission minutes.\[14\] [See figure 3: MH 12/9356/224, Mansfield Poor Law Union Correspondence, 30 November 1837]. So the minutes can be used in an archival fashion to link the minuted action or item to an individual piece of correspondence from an individual poor law union. The main problem with the Poor Law Commission minutes is that they stop in 1842. However, there is a set of draft minutes which researchers can use to supplement the main set of minutes and to fill in the period 1843 to 1846.\[15\] These draft minute volumes change appearance over time from simple paginated volumes of minutes to large and pre-printed volumes differentiating at each meeting between ‘the minutes of the directions of the board upon correspondence’ and the ‘miscellaneous minutes of the board’.\[16\]

If we look at these later draft minutes of the Poor Law Commission we can see how the business of the meetings was dealt with under these two general headings. The first of these headings, ‘the minutes of the directions of the board upon correspondence’, records the incoming correspondence. It logs the paper number, the date, the writer, the union or place to which the letter refers, a brief line or two on the subject of the letter and finally the direction given by the Commissioners.\[17\] There are numerous references to valuations, some few references to named paupers and a large number of references to appointments of union staff (some named some not). Again the researcher should take a note of the name of the union, the date of the letter and the paper number in order to ascertain which volume from the MH 12 series they need to view the original letter: so Chesterfield, 14 September 1842 and 12099. Searching TNA’s catalogue

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\[14\] This particular volume has been catalogued and is fully searchable. MH 12/9356/224, folio 433. Letter from William Goodacre, Clerk to the Guardians of the Mansfield Poor Law Union, to the Poor Law Commission, 30 November 1837.

\[15\] MH 2: Poor Law Commission: Rough and Classified Minute Books, 1834-1847. This series (which overlaps MH 1) contains volumes variously described as ‘rough minutes’, ‘draft minutes’ or simply ‘minutes’. Other are described as minutes or just given a volume number. Researchers should be aware that much data may be missing from the drafts. Looking at the draft minutes for 2 December in MH 2/1: Rough Minutes, 23 August 1834 to 31 December 1834 (to replicate the example given here), there is no mention of the letter from Mansfield on the state of trade there.

\[16\] There is not always the two pro-formas for each meeting.

\[17\] Occasionally the ‘subject’ and ‘direction’ may be written up in some detail.
shows the volume for the Chesterfield Poor Law Union covering 1842 is MH 12/1922.\textsuperscript{18} We turn to 1842 and browse through to September and then browsing by paper number find 12099. In doing this we will find the actual appointment of the Bolsover district medical officer within the Chesterfield Union.

The second heading sheet within the MH 2 rough and classified minute series titled the ‘miscellaneous minutes of the board’ is less intuitive. Once again the page begins by logging the paper number but then goes on to record the parish, union, ‘Subject or Order’, subject of document sealed and ‘other matters’ (a miscellaneous column). There being no date column, a researcher approaches this part of the draft minutes in a slightly different manner. Let us take an example by looking at figure 4: MH 2/12, Poor Law Commission: Rough and Classified Minute Books, Volume 32, July to December 1842, 17 August 1842. Here, the paper number is circled concerning emigration at Northiam parish in the Rye Poor Law Union; the paper number being 10842. To find this the researcher should make a note of the date at the top of the page; in the example at figure 6 this is 19 August 1842. The researcher should note the paper number and the name of the union. The poor law union correspondence volume for the Rye Poor Law Union for 1842 is MH 12/13079.\textsuperscript{19} Here we would find the correspondence from the Rye Union clerk informing the Poor Law Commission that the guardians have no objection to the issuing of certificates of satisfaction to enable Messrs Carter and Bonus to receive the balance of passage money due to them for the conveyance of 12 paupers from Northiam parish, to Canada, on the ship Orbit. The ‘other matters’ column in the MH 2 volume shows that after receiving this letter from the Rye Union the Poor Law Commission have ordered £300 ‘be transmitted to Mr Moore, Chief Clerk at the Dublin Office’.

Along with the minutes and rough minutes of the Poor Law Commission are the appendices to the minutes.\textsuperscript{20} These three volumes of bound papers cover a broad miscellanea of subjects including: outbreaks of smallpox, vaccinations, elections of guardians, issues around rates and ratings, lists of assistant poor law commissioners and their districts, workhouse rules, medical regulations, lists of dismissed staff and a

\textsuperscript{18} MH 12/1922, Chesterfield Poor Law Union, 1841-1842.
\textsuperscript{19} This particular volume has been catalogued and is fully searchable. MH 12/13079/220, Folios 430-431. Letter from Henry Edwards Paine, Clerk to the Guardians of the Rye Poor Law Union, to the Poor Law Commission, concerning emigration, 16 August 1842.
\textsuperscript{20} MH 3: Poor Law Commission: Appendices to Minutes, 1835-1846.
great deal more. The records themselves are mainly the drafts and copies of standard letters-orders-circulars-‘riders’-schedules, memoranda, copies of blank forms/returns (which would be distributed to unions for completion and return by union officers), versions of specific minutes (many of which are annotated). There are also odd one-off items such as the *Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Law Amendment Act, 5 July 1837.*

There is also a series of ‘Extracts from Minutes and Abstracts of Correspondence’ in record series MH 4. This series is made up of bound and indexed volumes containing monthly abstracts (and in some cases complete copies) of correspondence that were received and issued by the Poor Law Commissioners and their successors (although mainly the Poor Law Commission). There are only six pieces within this series and in the first three pieces there is considerable overlap. From July 1839 through to March 1840 these abstracts and copies are duplicated and entitled ‘Extracts from Minutes’. There is a break until December 1840. At that point the series starts again in printed form. From June 1841 the series is entitled Abstract of Correspondence. The index to each set of extracts are as illustrated in *figure 5: MH 4/1: Poor Law Commission and successors: Extracts from Minutes and Abstracts of Correspondence, July 1839 to December 1840, opening index page.* This seems to indicate that at the time the index was produced the abstracts for April to November were not in existence (if ever they were). The subject matter indexes are wide ranging and cover areas such as: apprenticeship, bastardy, burials, desertion of family, dietary, guardians, lunatics, magistrates, officers of parishes, officers of unions, paupers (allowances to when engaged in household work of the workhouse; deceased and coroners inquests, employment in the workhouse, property of, punishment of etc.), pensions, poor rate, rating, relations, relief, religious worship, settlement, tithes, union, vaccination, vagrants, valuation, workhouse (union and parochial listed separately).

However, the indexes are not place name referenced so the local or regional historian would need to browse the minutes and abstracts to find the extracts to relevant correspondence. So, for example, looking through the minutes and abstracts for

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21 Copies of select committee reports are sometimes (but only very occasionally) bound into the volumes.
22 MH 4: Poor Law Commission and Successors: Extracts from Minutes and Abstracts of Correspondence, 1839-1879 (the main run of documents for this series is 1839-1843).
23 Numbers three to five were the copies of E Adrian, a clerk to the original Poor Law Commission. He first appears in the *Imperial Kalendar* as a third class clerk in 1839 and his last entry is as a second class clerk in the Local Government Board in 1878.
Nottinghamshire cases we would find this abstract concerning distress ‘amongst the labouring classes…’ in the Nottingham Poor Law Union [Figure 6: MH 4/1: Poor Law Commission and Successors: Extracts from Minutes and Abstracts of Correspondence, July 1839 to December 1840.]. The abstract was made from the meeting of 27 November 1839, the union is of course Nottingham and the paper number 8943 is to the side of the abstract. How would a researcher find the original correspondence on which the abstract is based? A search on TNA catalogue shows that MH 12/9445 is the Poor Law Union correspondence volume for Nottingham for 1839 to 1841. The researcher will need to browse this volume around November 1839 and track down the specific letter by the 8943 paper number; and here they would find that piece of correspondence. The ‘Extracts from Minutes and Abstracts of Correspondence’ are of limited use for referencing poor law union correspondence as researchers can browse the original correspondence via the MH 12 records themselves. However, where an early volume of a union’s correspondence may not have survived some limited benefit may come from using these records. The indexing for pieces MH 4/1-5 varies; so in MH 4/2 the contents/index pages refer to the whole volume. However, while the volume covers a whole year it is divided into the months of the year and the page numbering re-starts every month. This means that the researcher will find a dozen pages numbered ‘6’ within a 12 month volume. So when the researcher looks through the index/contents page and find an entry they want to look at they need to first, find the relevant month, then turn to the page number with that month. They will then often find several entries on a page (maybe 3 or 4) and it is easy to locate the item they are looking for as there is a small pithy title to each item in the margin, complete with the name of the union and paper number of the original incoming correspondence. In MH 4/4 the printed volume is very much like the previous volume except it is paginated through from page 1 to 433 and the contents/index refers to the page only for means of reference. In MH 4/5 the indexing differs slightly again; example in MH 4/4 ‘soldiers’ is an index term in its own right while in MH 4/5 ‘soldiers’ can be found cross-referenced to ‘Relief’ (although ‘Sailor’ is a term in itself). MH 4/6, which is entitled ‘Extracts from Minutes, 1839 to 1879’ is, unlike the other pieces in the series, a set of papers in a folder (treasury tagged) rather than bound volumes and in no way a useful index to the period.  

24 The first internal sheet reads ‘When you have read, perhaps you’d let Mr Lewis see. Then Mr Hooper for disposal. LH 13/10 [1895]. There are several loose papers including: General Order, 14 February 1879. Order, 8 December 1847.
One of the key mechanisms developed for supervising the local unions were the circulars and orders issued by the central authority. These can be found in various county and borough archives (although the survival rate will vary enormously). However, a set can be found in MH 10: Ministry of Health and predecessors: Circular Letters, 1834-1962. The series contains circulars, orders and other publications which were issued by the central authority to assistant poor law commissioners, district auditors, union and parish officers etc. The circulars could be sent to a single, a pair, or a collection of poor law unions or other authorities. This series are often overlooked by researchers but the various circulars and orders sent out by the central authority to the various unions and parishes constitute a major channel of information for the researcher across the widest possible of subject matters [see figure 7: MH 10/10, Ministry of Health and predecessors: Circular Letters, To Union and Parish Officers, 1842-1843. General Workhouse Order (Workhouse Rules), 5 February 1842. Some circulars and orders can be found in various MH 12: Poor Law Union correspondence volumes and others will be found distributed in the local union archives in county and borough record offices and local studies libraries.

The five records series referred to above might be considered the ‘high level core records’ of the activity of the Poor Law Commission: 1. the minutes, 2. draft minutes, 3. appendices to minutes and 4. the extract from minutes and abstracts from correspondence, and five, the circulars and orders. Yet this barely scratches the surface of the activities of the central authority. From the beginning of the Poor Law Commission ‘the central authority’ began asking for, collecting and sharing information;

1. internally within the central authority (including their own assistant commissioners) and within other government establishments and departments

2. with poor law unions across England and Wales.

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Standard printed letter (dated December 1839) from Chadwick to unions, which would be used to accompany an Order regarding the prohibition of out relief to the able bodied.

Copy of a minute dated 23 November 1839 stating that assistant poor law commissioners should, when writing notes on papers referred to them, desist and write their notes on a separate sheet of paper (on indeed draft letter sheets).

Standard printed letter (dated 12 November 1839) from Chadwick to unions, which accompanies sets of forms to be used in bastardy cases.

Standard printed letter (dated 21 August 1839) from Chadwick to assistant poor law commissioners, concerning medical cases referred to in the 4th and 5th annual reports of the Poor Law Commissioners. Also a handful of letters and copies of minutes.

Also a printed extract from the Morning Chronicle, 14 January 1839, from ‘A Guardian’, Bishop’s Stortford.

25 There were no similar records created for the Poor Law Board nor the Local Government Board.
Unfortunately this does not fall into some easily to describe archival picture. However, the list below should help us to see the wood before we start examining the trees:

- MH 12: Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Poor Law Unions and Other Local Authorities, 1833-1909.\(^\text{26}\)
- MH 19: Correspondence between the Poor Law Commission, Poor Law Board and Local Government Board and their own inspectorate: assistant poor law commissioners, poor law inspectors, local government board inspectors, 1837-1909.
- MH 32: Local Government Board and predecessors: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners and Inspectors, Correspondence, 1834-1904.
- MH 33: Poor Law Commission: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Registers of Correspondence, 1834-46.
- MH 12: Correspondence between the Poor Law Commission, Poor Law Board and Local Government Board and individual poor law unions:
- Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Poor Law Unions and Other Local Authorities, 1833-1909.
- MH 15: Local Government Board and predecessors: Subject Indexes of Correspondence, 1836-1920.

Following the ‘key correspondence’ list above here we start with series MH 19: Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Government Offices, 1834-1909.\(^\text{27}\) Much of the central authority’s correspondence with specific departments can be tracked by virtue of the MH 19 volumes which are listed by the name of the corresponding department. For example the current TNA online Discovery catalogue list for the first 15 pieces (of a total of 280 pieces) of the MH 19 series looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Document Description</th>
<th>Years Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MH 19/1</td>
<td>Correspondence with government offices</td>
<td>1838-1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 19/1</td>
<td>Admiralty</td>
<td>1838-1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 19/1</td>
<td>Agriculture, Board of</td>
<td>1890-1892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{26}\) We will deal with MH 12 in great detail later in this guide.

\(^\text{27}\) MH 19: Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Government Offices, 1834-1909. Material from 1909 to 1919 has not survived in any great number. Some material can be found within the subject files in MH 78: Ministry of Health and Predecessors and Successor: Establishment and Organization Files, 1862-1985.
| MH 19/2 | Civil Service Commission | 1852-1878 |
| MH 19/3 | Civil Service Commission | 1879-1885 |
| MH 19/4 | Civil Service Commission | 1886-1892 |
| MH 19/5 | Colonial Office | 1835-1874 |
| MH 19/6 | Colonial Office | 1875-1882 |
| MH 19/7 | Colonial Office | 1883-1885 |
| MH 19/8 | Colonial Office | 1886-1887 July |
| MH 19/9 | Colonial Office | 1887 Aug. - 1888 |
| MH 19/10 | Colonial Office | 1889-1892 |
| MH 19/11 | Colonial Office: Emigration to Canada, Enclosures to Reports | 1887-1892 |
| MH 19/12 | Customs | 1871-1885 |
| MH 19/13 | Customs | 1886-1892 |
| MH 19/14 | Education Department | 1840-1850 |
| MH 19/15 | Education Department | 1851-1856 |

This list illustrates the way in which many of the volumes of MH 19 are listed. There are volumes for the Foreign Office, General Board of Health, Home Office, India Office, Inland Revenue, Irish Office and so on. Therefore to find the volumes containing correspondence between the central authority and the Lunacy Commission a researcher should search for ‘Lunacy’ within the MH 19 series: such a search would return:

| MH 19/168 | Lunacy Commission | 1840-1858 |
| MH 19/169 | Lunacy Commission | 1859-1866 |
| MH 19/170 | Lunacy Commission | 1867-1892 |

As well as government department volumes there are also ‘subject’ volumes concerning topics such as the plague, anthrax, cholera, leprosy, smallpox, yellow fever, quarantine and emigration. These descriptions are a good guide for researchers but should not always be relied upon. If we take the first volume, MH 19/1, this should contain the correspondence with the Admiralty for 1838-1892 and the Board of Agriculture for 1890-1892. It does contain Admiralty correspondence for 1838 to 1846 and then again for 1869-1892. At the end of the section for 1846 there is a note that Admiralty papers for 1847 to 1868 can be found in ‘Miscellas’ [miscellaneous]; this is either referring to the
miscellaneous volumes in MH 19 itself,\textsuperscript{28} or to record series MH 25: Local Government Board and predecessors: Miscellaneous Correspondence and Papers.\textsuperscript{29}

There is a set of registers to help researchers ‘get into’ the correspondence in MH 19 and these are in record series MH 20.\textsuperscript{30} So how do these work; let us say that a researcher is interested in looking at the welfare services in regard to those who served in the armed forces in the mid-Victorian period; specifically the army. A search for ‘war’ (as in War Office) within record series MH 20 would quickly find a single volume; MH 20/83, War Office, 1860-1918. The researcher can now browse the register to find any references to any specific subject/person in order to track down any department or inter-departmental correspondence. The data headings given in the registers are:\textsuperscript{31}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Address of Writer</th>
<th>From Whence</th>
<th>No of Letter\textsuperscript{32}</th>
<th>Date of Letter</th>
<th>When Received</th>
<th>Date of Answer</th>
<th>General Subject</th>
<th>Particular Subject</th>
<th>Minute of Letters written by the Commissioners, whether in answer to Letters received, or otherwise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

While browsing through the various entries in MH 20/83 a researcher would (for example) find a reference to Private William Gaff. This is a reference to a letter from C Talbot, War Office, and given paper number 32580. It was dated 13 August 1867 and was received the next day. The general subject title is ‘Case of William Gaff, 38\textsuperscript{th} Regiment’. The researcher now needs to find the letter in the MH 19 correspondence. We noted earlier that the correspondence is usually listed by department; and in this case the letter comes from an individual in the War Office. A search in TNA catalogue on ‘War Office’ within MH 19 brings up only one volume: MH 19/220. When looking through MH 19/220 the researcher should turn to 1867 and then follow the paper numbers to 32580 and there is the letter from Talbot concerning Gaff [see figure 8: MH 19/220, Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Government Offices, War Office, 1835 to 1892].

\textsuperscript{28} MH 19/224, Miscellaneous, 1834-1849 and MH 19/225, Miscellaneous, 1850-1881.
\textsuperscript{29} MH 25: Local Government Board and predecessors: Miscellaneous Correspondence and Papers, 1834-1900.
\textsuperscript{30} Local Government Board and predecessors: Registers of Correspondence with Government Offices, 1837-1920.
\textsuperscript{31} These may change slightly over time.
\textsuperscript{32} This is the paper number assigned to the individual piece of correspondence.
In addition to correspondence with other departments, the internal correspondence (within the Poor Law Commission, Poor Law Board and Local Government Board) can be found in the following volumes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MH 19/177</th>
<th>Poor Law Board (really Poor Law Commission)</th>
<th>1836-1848</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MH 19/178-181</td>
<td>Poor Law Board</td>
<td>1849-1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 19/85-167</td>
<td>Local Government Board</td>
<td>1872-1909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correspondence between the central authority and individual poor law unions can be found in record series MH 12. This is one of the largest (by far) and most significant of the MH series for nineteenth century social and welfare historians. There are one or two pre-New Poor Law papers but in the main the records begin in 1834 and finish on or just after 1900. From their inception the central authority in London and the poor law unions across England and Wales, entered into a continuous round of information sharing and their various letters, reports, memos etc. are to be found in the large volumes of letters, memos and reports in the MH 12 series. Some of these communications were of a standard nature, and we will look at these in a moment, while others are letters providing details of the fate of individual paupers, pauper families, members of staff, allegations of abuse or fraud, production of surveys or matters of rating and finances. Draft letters by the central authority, both responding to letters originating from the unions or simply initiated by the central authority, are also included in the MH 12 volumes. So for example, where a local ratepayer may have written to the central authority complaining of a supposed financial irregularity or fraud then the central authority could write to the local authorities asking for the details surrounding the allegation. In these cases the original letter, sent by the local ratepayer, the draft letter from the central authority and the report by the union into the allegation (and sent to the central authority) would all be retained in the relevant MH 12 volume. What this means is that both sides of the written conversations can be accessed by the researcher within the MH 12 volumes.

33 The main series appears to stop in 1896 with only provisional orders, circulars and instructions; and county and urban stock and amending regulations following them.
34 MH 12: Local Government Board and predecessors: Correspondence with Poor Law Unions and Other Local Authorities, 1833-1909. For a more detailed survey see P Carter and N Whistance, Living the Poor Life: a Guide to the Poor Law Union Correspondence c 1834 – 1871 held at the National Archives, BALH, 2011.
35 There are a few volumes that contain a small amount of post-1900 material.
36 Original letters from the central authority to the individual union would, where they survive, now be in the relevant county/borough records office or local studies library. In addition letters to overseers or other parish officers can still sometimes be found in the same local archives in the parish collections.
The vast majority of the materials that these volumes contain are the official incoming letters from the specific union. In the main these are then followed by the draft response from the central authority and it is worthwhile looking at a couple of examples to see how this worked in practice. Let us start with a letter from Thomas Marriott, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union, to the Poor Law Board, asking them to sanction the request of Eakring parish for help in the case of widow Ann Hayes and her five children who are ‘in the most destitute state next to starvation’ [see figure 9: MH 12/9529/157: Southwell Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1850 to 1852. Thomas Marriott to the Poor Law Board, 29 January 1851]. Out relief had previously been refused the previous November because one child was born two years after her husband's death. Hayes refused to go into the workhouse and Eakring had submitted a petition of 34 ratepayer signatures asking for two children to be taken into the workhouse in this extreme case. The letter was annotated by Mr Farnell, Poor Law Inspector, agreeing to this plan. The very next item in this volume is the draft letter from the Poor Law Board back to Marriott agreeing that the children could be brought into the workhouse if the family were still destitute and the guardians felt it was advisable [see figure 10: MH 12/9529/158: Southwell Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1850 to 1852. Poor Law Board to Thomas Marriott, 10 March 1851]. Note the number 6996 on the incoming letter. This was the paper number given to the letter as it entered the Poor Law Board. You can see how the same number is assigned to the draft letter written up by the Poor Law Board in response. There are a very small number of occasions where a letter or report enters the offices of the central authority and (for whatever reason) no surviving draft response exists. However, in perhaps somewhat more than 95% of cases we should expect an existing draft to follow any incoming report or letter.

Some events may result in a huge amount of correspondence going backwards and forwards between the central authority and the union. Indeed other institutions or people may be involved in a specific case and several items may have been generated. For example, when William Heather, described as a lunatic, died in 1869 we find the case

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37 MH 12/9529/157, 29 January 1851.
38 MH 12/9529/158, 10 March 1851. How difficult it must have been for families to choose which of their children should ‘go into the house’? Note that responses were usually quicker and the Board apologised for taking so long in this case.
39 Sometimes a case would require no response.
40 Occasionally the incoming and draft letters have been bound a few pages apart from each other.
starts with a letter and report from the Lunacy Commission.\footnote{MH 12/9534/360. 13 January 1870. Report of a visit to the Southwell Workhouse on 3 January 1870, made by George William Campbell, Lunacy Commissioner. Enclosed with a letter from Charles Palmer Phillips, Secretary to the Commissioners in Lunacy, to the Poor Law Board.} We then find a draft letter from the Poor Law Board to the Southwell Union asking for further information and whether a certificate had been made out to remove Heather to an asylum.\footnote{MH 12/9534/361. 18 January 1870. Draft letter from the Poor Law Board to John Kirkland, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union.} Three weeks later, John Kirkland, the Southwell Union clerk, sent copies of the reports by George Shaw, the workhouse master, and Richard Cooke, the medical officer on the case.\footnote{MH 12/9534/364. 9 February 1870. Letter from John Kirkland, to the Poor Law Board, enclosing reports from Mr Shaw and Mr Cooke.} In March Harry Farnell, Poor Law Inspector, wrote to the Poor Law Board critical of the union. In particular he points out that Kirkland, Cooke and Shaw all knew that Heather was insane (Cooke had minuted this in his medical book).\footnote{MH 12/9534/374. 8 March 1870. Letter from Harry Farnall, Inspector of Poor Laws, to the Poor Law Board.} This prompts a letter from the Poor Law Board stating that considerable neglect had been shown in the case, that a workhouse was not the appropriate place for ‘the protection of imbeciles and idiots’ and that the Southwell guardians were to adopt measures to prevent further similar occurrences.\footnote{MH 12/9534/375. 25 March 1870. Draft letter from the Poor Law Board, to John Kirkland, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union.} As can be seen by this short case study considerable data on a single case can be found across several pieces of correspondence within this record series.

As well as correspondence in the form of letters and draft letters, each union was expected to make a series of structured information returns. In the main these are made up of pre-printed forms distributed to unions across the country for completion and to be sent back (when completed) to the central authority. Some of these returns were by virtue of specific ad-hoc requests from the central authority while others were more regular and indeed routine. Occasionally, returns were requested as the government desired specific details which may inform social policy in regard to the poor law, education, law and order or some other area of government administration. An example of the ad-hoc request for information can be found in 1846 when a selection of poor law unions were asked to make returns providing the names of women and the number of their children whose husbands had been convicted and transported. So for example, in August 1846, Joseph Lownes, Clerk to the Guardians of the Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union, completed the form for that union with the names and details of seven
wives of transported male convicts (the names of the men are also given along with numbers of children in each family) resident in the Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union.\textsuperscript{46}

Unlike the transportation forms referred to above some returns and reports were made on a regular basis across all unions and will be found, if they survive, repeatedly in the MH 12 volumes. The example given here is part of the completed annual return from Thomas Marriott, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Poor Law Union, to the Poor Law Commission, listing the names and details of all 'Insane Persons, Lunatics and Idiots' chargeable to each parish. [See figure 11: MH 12/9531/177, folios 215-216. [Letter from John Kirkland, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union, to the Poor Law Board, enclosing a copy of the] annual lunatic return listing the details of all 'lunatics, idiots and other persons of unsound mind, 5 February 1857]. These forms, which begin in 1842, give details of age, where placed and cost of maintenance for those listed.\textsuperscript{47} Another common and regular return from 1840 onward is the 'Vaccination Extension Act' form. Common details will be found on such returns. So for example, in March 1845, William Powell, Clerk to the Guardians of the Newport Pagnell Poor Law Union, sent to the Poor Law Commission the completed form providing the names or districts of the public vaccinators for the union and the numbers of people vaccinated for smallpox for the year reported.\textsuperscript{48} There is also a section within the form for the number of births in the union during the year and any observations of the vaccinators.

Printed returns and forms make up a significant portion of the poor law union correspondence. From 1847 the poor law inspectors regular workhouse visits were reported on and a Workhouse Inspection Report Form completed [see figure 12: MH 12/9362/19, folios 22-23: Mansfield Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1847-1849. Workhouse Inspection Report Form, 28 January 1854]. In addition to the annual lunatic returns we also find the reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy following their own regular inspections. There are also a large number of financial forms and reports

\textsuperscript{46} MH 12/11197/220, Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1843-1847, 3 August 1846.
\textsuperscript{47} MH 12/9531/177, folios 215-216. Enclosed in a letter from John Kirkland, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union, to the Poor Law Board. Annual lunatic return listing the details of all 'lunatics, idiots and other persons of unsound mind, 5 February 1857.
\textsuperscript{48} MH 12/9362/117, folio 142: 'Vaccination Extension Act' form from W E Goodacre, Clerk to the Guardians of the Mansfield Union to the Poor Law Board, 6 December 1854.
many of which relate to the inspection of union officers’ books by the auditors. District auditors also inspected the books of both the parish officers and the local union officials. The union correspondence also includes the staff appointment forms which were always sent to the central authority for approval. The forms relate to all union appointments (apart from chaplains) and the data provides the researcher with the capacity to construct detailed biographies by tracking them through the archive. We can see how this works by looking at the career of Charles Spray. We find on his appointment form, as schoolmaster at the Southwell Poor Law Union Workhouse in early 1847, that he was a 24 year old Wesleyan Methodist, unmarried and with over two years teaching experience and training. \[49\] [See figure 13, MH 12/9528/474, folios 593-594, Southwell Poor Law Union Correspondence, 7 March 1847]. We also find that in August 1850 Spray had resigned his post at Southwell and left for a post at the Southampton Incorporation;\[50\] thus we account for a decade of Spray’s professional career. When we look at the Southampton Incorporation correspondence we find their appointment form for Spray duly noted as formerly of the Southwell Poor Law Union School.\[51\] Six years later the Southampton Incorporation informed the Poor Law Board that Spray has tendered his resignation and is opening a private school.\[52\] Union staff appointment forms only come into use in the early 1840s but the central authority was notified of earlier union appointments via letters from the union clerk. Summaries of poor law union staff (their posts, dates of service, salaries and often their reasons for leaving) can be found in MH 9: Poor Law Commission and successors: Paid Officers Department and Metropolitan Department: Registers of Paid Officers, 1837 to 1921. These records are organised alphabetically by union and so can easily be searched by the Catalogue: search for ‘Southwell’ in series MH 9 will return [highlighted in yellow]:

MH 9/15: Register of paid officers and staff appointed by the Board of Guardians, etc, for:

1 Saddleworth, Yorkshire West Riding; 19 Saffron Walden, Essex; 41 Salford, Lancashire; 67 Salisbury, Wiltshire (1843-1874, 1895 onwards: see also Alderbury, MH 9/1); 85 Saxford, Suffolk; 105 St Saviour (Southwark), Surrey (1836-1866: see also MH 9/34); 125 Scarborough, Yorkshire North Riding; 145

\[49\] MH 12/9528/474, folios 593-594, Letter from Thomas Marriott, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Poor Law Union, to the Poor Law Board, enclosing completed appointment form for Charles Spray as schoolmaster, 7 March 1847.

\[50\] MH 12/9529/108, Folios 176-177. Thomas Marriott, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union, to the Poor Law Board, regarding the appointment of William Sumner as schoolmaster and noting Spray’s resignation, 29 August 1850. Southamptom was not a poor law union (until 1909) as its incorporation of several parishes for poor law purposes had been established by act of parliament in 1772.

\[51\] MH 12/10998/325, Letter from Thomas N Firmin, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southampton Incorporation, to the Poor Law Board, enclosing for approval the application form for Charles Spray as Schoolmaster, 16 September 1850.

\[52\] MH 12/11001/28, Letter from Thomas N Firmin, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southampton Incorporation, to the Poor Law Board, regarding Charles Spray’s [Schoolmaster] resignation, 29 March 1856.
Sculcoates, Yorkshire East Riding; 167 Sedburgh, Yorkshire West Riding; 185 Sedgefield, Durham; 205 Seisdon, Staffordshire; 227 Selby, Yorkshire West Riding; 247 Settle, Yorkshire West Riding; 271 Sevenoaks, Kent; 291 Shaftesbury, Dorset; 311 Shardlow, Derbyshire; 337 Sheffield, Yorkshire West Riding; 367 Sheppey, Kent; 387 Shepton Mallett, Somerset; 407 Sherborne, Dorset; 427 Shifnal, Shropshire; 447 Shipston on Stour, Worcestershire; 471 Shoreditch, Middlesex (1838-1866: see also MH 9/33); 501 Shrewsbury, Shropshire; 519 Skipton, Yorkshire West Riding; 543 Skirlaugh, Yorkshire East Riding; 563 Sleaford, Lincolnshire; (Smallburgh, Norfolk: see MH 9/16); 587 Solihull, Warwickshire; 607 Southam, Warwickshire; 627 Southampton, Hampshire; (South Manchester, Lancashire: see Chorlton MH 9/5, and MH 9/20); 649 South Molton, Devon; 673 South Shields, Durham; 695 South Stoneham, Hampshire; 715 Southwell, Nottinghamshire.  

See figure 14, MH 9/15, Register of Paid Officers and Staff Appointed by Boards of Guardians, etc., [including Southwell].

Returning to the poor law union correspondence volumes, it is only the lack of space which prevents anything like an exhaustive list of ‘subject contents’ which the researcher can find within them; although themes around poverty, strikes and other forms of industrial unrest, trade unionism, Chartism, unmarried mothers and bastardy, wages, unemployment, diet, medical cases, a wide range of medical matters, treatment of paupers, criminal issues (such as fraud, assault etc.) can be found within this incredible archive.

The poor law union correspondence is ably complemented by the papers and correspondence of the assistant poor law commissioners and their later incarnations the poor law inspectors and local government board inspectors in record series MH 32: Local Government Board and Predecessors: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners and Inspectors, Correspondence, 1834-1904. These officers were appointed to visit, provide advice to and supervise the various boards of guardians. Like the poor law union correspondence the assistant commissioners’ papers were bound and are held in large volumes. The MH 32 series also contains a number of separate volumes of correspondence on special subjects with various inspectors, circulars of the Board, reports of inspectors on the conditions and classification of workhouses, a medical

53 The registers in MH 9 appear to have been compiled from the 1840s onwards. Therefore a poor law union employee who was employed from 1836 to 1839 will not appear in the registers; one employed from 1836 to 1850 would be as his/her employment would have been current at the time the registers were first compiled.

54 During the period of the Poor Law Commission such officials were referred to as assistant commissioners. For the period of the Poor Law Board they were styled poor law inspectors. For the period of the Local Government Board they were called Local Government Board Inspectors.
The papers in MH 32 are for the most part arranged under the names of each assistant poor law commissioner/inspector. From 1834 these officials were employed by the Poor Law Commission and they were given the responsibility for the supervision of particular regions across England and Wales. Their initial work was the liaison with local gentry, landowners and local authorities etc., with a view of deciding which parishes would be included in the creation of specific poor law unions. Following the declaration of those unions (the date from which they assumed responsibility for managing relief) their role was more supervisory. These officials often attended the meetings of the boards of guardians in their areas providing face to face as well as written advice. They also reported on their area to the central authority; sometimes on the activities of a single union, but more often amalgamating information on all or a number of the unions under their jurisdiction. For example, they might report data on the salaries of staff in each union or a list of dates for each workhouse inspection done within a set period of time along with a note on the overall management of each.

Being organised by the names of assistant commissioners or inspectors can make it very difficult to locate papers referring to specific geographical areas or individual unions. For example MH 32/66 is the correspondence for Edward Senior, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner [see figure 15: MH 32/66. Edward Senior, correspondence and papers] and is currently titled:

Edward Senior, correspondence and papers related to the Welsh District (includes Carmarthen) and North Midland District (includes unions at Grantham, Lincoln and Mansfield). 1838-1847.

If a researcher is interested in a region, or a union within a region, then speculatively browsing through the volumes of appropriate assistant commissioners might be a way of picking up relevant material. So for example, MH 32/66 (as above) begins with a few letters from Senior from Carmarthen, Bridgend, Grantham, Southwell, Bingham, Bulwell, Loughborough and Nottingham on the general news of local unions. In these first half a dozen or so letters the correspondence covers such subjects as the illegal appointment of auditors at Llandilo Fawr, an arson attack on the Narberth Workhouse, the general
‘mischief’ of the local chartists in South Wales [see figure 16: also from MH 32/66. Edward Senior, correspondence and papers], a report on a meeting in Basford, a report on Mary Davis who was reported as a drunkard receiving relief by way of a loan; there were also questions which arose concerning the legitimate applications for affiliation by overseers and whether punishment under the vagrant act might be brought to bear upon mothers neglecting their illegitimate children. There are relatively few references to individual paupers within the assistant commissioners’/inspectors’ papers. But researchers must not equate this with none or an ‘insignificant number’ (whatever that might mean to a record series spanning some 80 years and a system which touched millions of people). For example, Senior had a list compiled of paupers illegally receiving out relief across the several unions under his jurisdiction [see figure 17: also from MH 32/66. Edward Senior, correspondence and papers]. As we further browse the volume we can see that there are many ‘aggregated returns’ of data from the unions across his district. So for example a form giving the name of the union, number of times visited in the last quarter and date of last visit, number of workhouses across the union and whether the workhouse was under regulations which act as an effective test [see figure 18: MH 32/66, Edward Senior, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Correspondence and Papers, Related to the Welsh District (includes Carmarthen) and North Midland District (includes unions at Grantham, Lincoln and Mansfield, 1838 to 1847, form showing reports of visits to workhouses]. As well as this very specific data the final column affords a general remarks section which provides a summary insight on the individual boards efficiency or even its opposition to the New Poor Law. There are other aggregated returns within the volume such as ‘Form B. Summary of Form A, so far as relates to the Total Number of Inmates, with the Amount of Relief’ and also the ‘Return shewing the progress of which has been made in providing adequate Workhouses for the several Unions under the superintendence of Edward Senior’. There are also various ad-hoc reports, or comments on reports, such as wonderfully titled ‘Observations on Medical attendance upon the Poor and Report on a Document in connection with that subject submitted to the Council of the British Medical Association by the Poor Law Commissioners with the Plans of the Association for an amended system of Medical Relief’ and the more mundane sounding ‘Report on the further amendment of the Law’. The range of subject matters is simply enormous.

From what has already been said it should be clear that the papers from one single volume of MH 32 can vary in geography, content and type of document. As the papers
are currently poorly catalogued, researchers are often reduced to browsing several volumes to ‘see’ if their person, place or subject matter is contained in this record series. However, for most of the period of the Poor Law Commission (for the years 1834 to 1846) there is a series of contemporary registers or finding aids to the assistant poor law commissioners’ papers. These are MH 33: Poor Law Commission: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Registers of Correspondence, 1834-1846. There are only seven MH 33 registers and each volume contains sections relating to anything from two to seven assistant commissioners: see table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume Reference</th>
<th>Names of Assistant Commissioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MH 33/1</td>
<td>Colonel A C A’Court, D G Adey, Alfred Austin, C S Clements and George Clive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 33/3</td>
<td>R Hall, W H T Hawley, E W Head and Sir F B Head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 33/4</td>
<td>J P Kay, C Mott, H W Parker and R D Neave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 33/5</td>
<td>W E Parry, G G W Pigott, H Pilkington, A Power, J Revans, E Senior and T Stevens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 33/6</td>
<td>E C Tufnell, E Twiselton, W J Voules and C Wade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 33/7</td>
<td>Sir John Walsham and R Weale.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difficulty for the researcher is knowing which assistant commissioner was responsible for the district in which the unions he/she is researching and thus which set of papers are likely to be useful. Edward Gulson is the first assistant commissioner for the Southwell (Nottinghamshire area) and we can see from the table above his papers for the period 1834-1846 are registered in MH 33/2 Poor Law Commission: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Registers of Correspondence, W Day, R Earle, W J Gilbert, J T Graves and E Gulson. If we turned to the volume we would see five ‘cuts’ or ‘tabs’ which separate the lists of correspondence for the five assistant commissioners within this single volume. In this volume the ‘Gulson’ tab is towards the end part of the register (he is the last assistant commissioner designated in the volume) and we would note his first registered paper is dated 30 August 1834. We would also see that the registers themselves are set out in a standard way giving:

- Name and address of writer

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55 There are no similar registers to MH 32 volumes for the period covered by the Poor Law Board and Local Government Board.

56 Each volume covers 1834 to 1846.
If a researcher leafed through this MH 33 volume in the section for Gulson they would see that it has little at the beginning on Nottinghamshire, or the midlands, although there are a number of early references to the United Parishes of the City of Coventry (an incorporation which pre-dated the Poor Law Amendment Act). Almost immediately we find ourselves in 1835 and would see that Gulson is writing from Witney, Watlington, Oxford, Henley on Thames, Maidenhead, Reading etc. and referring to the establishment of unions in these areas and their initial meetings. This should be expected as the Poor Law Commission started its work in the south of the country and worked its way through to the midlands and then onto the north over time. Not until February 1836 do we see an entry for a letter from him in Nottinghamshire received and registered in the MH 32/2 register. He writes from Newark concerning the dissolution of the Claypole Union in Lincolnshire (another earlier incorporation). He also asks for a copy of the official queries for the counties of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. He then refers to the conduct of the clerk to the guardians of the Witney Union recommending his dismissal.57 These examples are illustrative of a problem for the researcher. We can see that although the letter was written from Newark it does not apply to Newark (although in other cases the address of the writer and the union which the letter concerns may indeed be the same). This means that researchers should look through the ‘particular subject’ matter column for any indication of place. For example, see figure 19: MH 33/2, Poor Law Commission: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Registers of Correspondence, W Day, R Earle, W J Gilbert, J T Graves and E Gulson]. Here Gulson has written from Newark on 23 February 1836. It was received on 24 February and given the paper number 2285. As we can see the general subject is ‘Incorporation, Dissolution of’ and in the particular subject column is:

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57 MH 33/2, Poor Law Commission: Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Registers of Correspondence, W Day, R Earle, W J Gilbert, J T Graves and E Gulson, 3 February 1836.
Relative to the dissolution of the Southwell Union. Giving an Acct of a meeting held upon the subject which was attended by the Duke of Newcastle, Sir Robert Bromley, Admiral Southeron and nearly all the Guardians (Addressed to Mr Nicholls)

Bearing in mind this relates to the dissolution of the Thurgarton Hundred Incorporation (not the Southwell Union as this was not yet created) the relevant information to track down this letter is:

Name of the assistant commissioner: Edward Gulson
Year: 1836
Paper number: 2285

If the researcher now searches the TNA catalogue for ‘Gulson’ within record series MH 32 they would find that there are three volumes of his correspondence. The first covers the period 1834 to 1838, the second 1839 to 1855 and the final volume covers 1856 to 1871. As the year of the letter referred to in the MH 33 register is 1836 then the researcher would need the first of the three volumes. This is MH 32/28: Edward Gulson, correspondence and papers related to the West and South Midland Districts (includes unions at Berkshire and Oxfordshire). This is the piece (volume) which would need to be ordered. As the researcher looks through MH 32/28 they would need to leaf through the volume to 1836 (each volume would be in rough chronological order). Then the researcher should note the paper number, usually in the top left hand corner of the letter, and work backwards and forwards until they find letter numbered 2285 [see figure 20: MH 32/28. Edward Gulson, correspondence and papers related to the West and South Midland Districts (includes unions at Berkshire and Oxfordshire). 1834-1838. Gulson to the Poor Law Commission, 23 February 1836. Here the full content of the letter would tell us that the meeting was of around 200 people, that various people opposed the dissolution of the Thurgarton Hundred, that the opposition was ‘altogether violent’ and rude in their approach, doubting the legality of the meeting and Gulson’s right to enter the workhouse. Others such as the Duke of Newcastle, Sir

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58 Letters may be bound out of chronological order by mistake or, depending on how long a letter took to reach the Poor Law Commission, a later dated letter may have been received (and so numbered) prior to an earlier dated letter.
Robert Bromley, Admiral Southeron and Lord Manvers being in favour of dissolving the incorporation.\textsuperscript{59}

The example given above is a kind of ‘paradigm’ view of the registers and the assistant commissioners’ correspondence. However, much of their correspondence have been bound within the poor law union correspondence (MH 12) volumes of the specific union to which it applies. This seems to have been done when the correspondence from the assistant commissioner refers to only a single union. So for example in the MH 33/7 register for Robert Weale, Assistant Commissioner, a researcher would find an entry referring to a charge against the Basford Union relieving officer, dated 4 November 1842. Once again the researcher needs to take a note of the name of the assistant commissioner, the year and the paper number: so… Robert Weale, 1842 and 14038. However, when the process outlined in the example previously given is repeated, that is to say a search is made for Weale in 1842 under record series MH 32, and then an examination the relevant volume is made, which in this instance would be MH 32/86: Robert Weale, correspondence and papers etc.\textsuperscript{60} we find no correspondence where we should have expected paper number 14038. What the researcher should now do now is to try to track the paper number within the MH 12 Poor Law Union correspondence. If we go back to the MH 32/86: Robert Weale register image we can see from the address column that the letter was written from Basford [Nottinghamshire]. If the researcher searched for the Basford MH 12 volume for 1842 they would find it is MH 12/9232. If a researcher then browsed that volume throughout the year 1842 and then browsed the year by paper number they would find paper number 14038. Indeed it is a report by Robert Weale submitted to the Poor Law Commission, following a complaint made by the guardians of the Basford Poor Law Union against John Staton one of the relieving officers. His report is annotated that a dismissal order is prepared.\textsuperscript{61} So in this instance (and probably many other cases) the paper referred to in the assistant commissioners’ register refers not to MH 32 at all but to MH 12.

\textsuperscript{59} MH 32/28, Gulson to the Poor Law Commission, 23 February 1836.
\textsuperscript{60} The full reference entry for this is: MH 32/86: Robert Weale, correspondence and papers etc. related to the North and South Midlands Districts (includes unions in Bedford, Bucks, Herts, Hunts, Leicester, Stafford, Warwickshire, Watford and Wolverhampton). Includes copy of report by the committee appointed by Leicester town council to consider Sir James Graham’s Parochial Settlement Report.
\textsuperscript{61} MH 12/9232/385, report by Robert Weale, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, submitted to the Poor Law Commission, 4 November 1842. This particular volume was catalogued as part of The National Archives ‘Living the Poor Life’ project c. 2008-2010. See P Carter and N Whistance, Living the Poor Life: A Guide to the Poor Law Union Correspondence c1834 to 1871 held at the National Archives, British Association for Local History, 2012.
Before leaving the records of the Central authority it is worthwhile considering the Local Government Board and predecessors: Subject Indexes of Correspondence in record series MH 15 [see figure 21: MH 15/1: Local Government Board and predecessors: Subject Indexes of Correspondence, 1836]. This series contains indexes of selected subjects dealt with in correspondence and papers of the Poor Law Commission and Board and the Local Government Board, and noted precedents in the Index Department. In the early part of the series each year is covered by a single volume (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MH 15/1</th>
<th>Subject indexes of correspondence</th>
<th>1836</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MH 15/2</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 15/3</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1838</td>
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<tr>
<td>MH 15/4</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1839</td>
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<tr>
<td>MH 15/5</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1840</td>
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<tr>
<td>MH 15/6</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1841</td>
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<tr>
<td>MH 15/7</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 15/8</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1843</td>
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<tr>
<td>MH 15/9</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MH 15/10</td>
<td>Subject indexes of correspondence</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, over time multiple volumes were created to cover a number of years (see below):

| MH 15/38 | Part 1. A to Accounts (P) | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/39 | Part 2. Accounts (R) to Aud | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/40 | Part 3. B. to Cons. | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/41 | Part 4. Cont. to F. | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/42 | Part 5. G to L. | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/43 | Part 6. M to Pau. | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/44 | Part 7. Pen to Rel. | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/45 | Part 8. Rem. to S. | 1876-1881 |
| MH 15/46 | Part 9. T to Y. | 1876-1881 |

The clerks in the Poor Law Commission began the process by simply creating a series of alphabetical headings, for example: Able bodied, Absconding, Accounts etc... Adultery,Advertisements, Agricultural Statistics, Affiliation (see Bastards), Agreements (see Contracts) and so on. Underneath these general headings are references to incoming correspondence that relate to the heading itself. These references need to be converted along the following lines:

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62 MH 15: Local Government Board and predecessors: Subject Indexes of Correspondence, 1836-1920.

63 At least this is what the TNA Catalogue says at the moment. However, there is no real satisfactory description of this series and why certain papers are referenced by it and others not. See further discussion in P Carter and Steve King, “Keeping Track”: Modern Methods, Administration and the Victorian Poor Law”, Archives, XL, 128-9, 2014, pp 31-52.
A researcher who has looked through MH 15/26 under the heading ‘Children’ may wish to follow up the reference to a paper entitled ‘Practice to place orphans with relatives of friends at the cost of the Poor Rates + to set them to work in factories when they are of such age as not to be able to get their own living’. This entry has the contemporary reference ‘64/3178/571’. The 64 gives the year of the document; thus the year for the document will be 1864. The third number is the union number (each poor law union was assigned a union number) and this number relates to the Keighley Union in Yorkshire West Riding. The researcher should now search for ‘Keighley 571’ within series MH 12 and on the year 1864 on The National Archives catalogue. Here they will find that MH 12/15164 is the relevant poor law union correspondence volume. Browsing by paper number in that year they will look for 3178; and here is the letter [see figure 22: MH 12/15164: Keighley Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1861-1864].

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64 In earlier volumes, which cover only a single year, this part of the reference would be redundant (the whole index referring to that single year) and so no year would be part of the reference. So, for example, all references in MH 15/5 refer to papers from 1840 (see table on previous page).
**The Records of ‘The Union’**

Whereas the records of the central authority were organised and archived under a single (or at least a series of single) authorities, the records of the individual unions themselves have been produced, organised and successively weeded by the 600+ unions themselves and then later weeded and listed by the various local authorities and country record offices, local studies libraries etc. that hold them for consultation by historians. This means that no useful general account of the survival of such records has been done on a national basis. It also means that the types of records created may have differed (although some only slightly) from union to union and the types of records that survive again differ in comparison across different regions and unions. This being the case, archivists have attempted to impose a structure or ‘scheme’ on the records that can be used across the archive service. This scheme was first used by the Somerset Record Office and has been modified since. The scheme is based on provenance where classes of records are grouped together according to which officer created them. In most record offices then a scheme (similar to the one outlined here) will be used.

BG – archive group (in this case Board of Guardians)

Followed by a mnemonic for the name of the poor law union

Then the subgroup – records of the board itself

Then the class – minutes of the boards’ meetings

Then the item or file volume

Records are usually listed by archive group, then by union and then by the following subgroups:

- A. Records of the Board
- B. Records of the Clerk to the Guardians
- C. Records of the Treasurer
- D. Records of the Workhouse Master
- E. Records of the Officer in Charge of the Children’s Home
- F. Records of the Relieving Officer

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65 So, for example, most admission and discharge registers for Berkshire poor law union workhouses were destroyed in 1948

66 Somerset Record Office, *Handlist of Boards of Guardians Records*, 1949,
G. Records of the District Medical Officer
H. Records of the Collector of the Guardians
I. Records of Non Poor-Law Duties Devolving Upon Boards of Guardians

Each of the subgroups is then divided again into a more specific set of records [see listed at Appendix I, p 41].

It is not possible to include full details of all records created and collected by individual poor law unions. This is partly because of limited space within the guide, partly because in some cases so few survive nationally to stand comparison and partly due to incomplete lists or mis-described records across the country. Nevertheless, the following examples, heavily drawing on the West and East Midlands, but supplemented by other counties’ materials, describe and illustrate the more common surviving records which may be found in most country/borough record offices and local study libraries.

Perhaps the most common set of union records are the guardians’ minute books as this type of union record has survived in the greatest number. As the primary ‘record’ of decision making by the local authority they are also a first point of call for the historian interested in any aspect of past local welfare. Although in the main the survival rate is good it varies from union to union. For example, the Newcastle under Lyme Poor Law Union in Staffordshire has a full set of guardian minutes book which dates from its inception in April 1838 through the disbanding of the guardians in 1930.\(^{67}\) The guardians’ minute books for Southwell in Nottinghamshire also cover the full period of the union’s existence, this time from 1836 to 1930.\(^{68}\) Other unions do not always fare so well. The Seisdon Poor law Union in Staffordshire was created in 1836 but the surviving guardians’ minute books only begin in 1852 (although they continue to 1930).\(^ {69}\) The Staines, Middlesex, union records fared even less well and I understand no minute books survive at all.

There are similarities and differences within the multitude of surviving guardians’ minutes across the country. Most, if not all, will follow the pattern of recording business
on a meeting to meeting basis. So, for example, in the early Southwell guardians’ minute books, each meeting is dated and usually two weeks apart. The very early meetings are dominated by elections of guardians, chair and vice chair, appointments of paid union officers and the division of the union into districts for administrative purposes. There are also discussions over the rating, payment of rates and average parish (and union) expenditure. Indeed the main administrative duties of the board are discussed and these continue over the years. Resignations, dismissals and new appointments are regularly a part of the recorded business. The minutes settle quickly into a routine of recording the guardians present at each meeting before moving onto the often routine work on the board: monies expended by relieving officers, details of contractors and contracted goods and services and of tradesmen’s bills, selected lists of out-relief recipients, followed by the odd notice of a letter from the Poor Law Commission or subject matter resolved by the board. By the second half of the nineteenth century the books very much reflect the financial nature of the union and often contain copies of overarching accounts. Notwithstanding this the minutes will often refer to a wide variety of local events, concerns and matters; so the Southwell minutes record in 1850 that a committee appointed to investigate the salaries of union officers recommended all salaries to be reduced in proportion to local prices, that is to say by 10%; in 1867 the minutes record that Mr Herring, Workhouse Master, was to resign due to ill health, and in 1897 the relieving officer was to be censured following the death of Joseph Bramley. The nature of subject matters within the minute books are varied and the examples above (partial though they are) will have to stand as illustrative cases.

Admission and discharge registers record people entering and leaving the workhouse. They are used extensively by historians looking at ‘repeat entrants’. These records change over time but in the 1840s they would record the name, year of birth, their parish, their calling (occupation), various family details, whether able bodied, what if any disability, general and specific observations, religion, when and in whose authority admitted and the classification given the pauper (man/woman, boy or girl under 16). The same volume then records their discharge. Several details are repeated but also included would be when, and on whose order, they were discharged. There was also an option to record their general character and behaviour during their time in the

70 NA: PUS 1/1/5, Southwell Poor Law Union: Guardians Minute Book, 1850-1858, 8 October 1850; PUS 1/1/7, Southwell Poor Law Union: Guardians Minute Book, 1867 to 1875, 10 December 1867; PUS 1/1/13: Southwell Poor Law Union: Guardians Minute Book, 1896-1899, 30 April 1897. From the 1850s onwards the selected lists of out-relief recipients cease.
workhouse and for ‘general remarks. Thus we see at Clutton, Somerset, we see that Sarah Bartlett was admitted to the workhouse in December 1841 when her husband was convicted and sentenced to transportation.\footnote{SHC: D/G/CL/60/1, Clutton Poor Law Union, Admission and Discharge Book, 1841 to 1843, week ending 28 December 1841}

Southwell is poorly served in regard to admission and discharge registers and there are none for the period of the New Poor Law (although there are some for the post 1930 period). In fact very few Nottinghamshire poor law unions have anything like a ‘run’ of these registers. Basford has four years worth in the 1850s and Newark have a run of twentieth century registers. Only Nottingham has what might be termed a decent collection but even here the early decades of the New Poor Law are missing.

Punishment books were designed to record the names of workhouse inmate offenders, their offences and the punishments directed by the union (and where appropriate) the punishments directed by magistrates or some other qualified official. The necessity of some form of disciplinary code was recognised in the first Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners.\footnote{The Poor Law Commission and then the Poor Law Board and then later the Local Government Board produced their annual reports to parliament starting with their first in 1835.} Here the Commission laid down a set of rules under the title of ‘Discipline and Diet’; most minor infractions, were punished either by being ‘placed in apartments provided for such offenders, or shall otherwise be distinguished in dress, and placed upon such diet as the board of guardians shall prescribe’. As well as in-house punishments some non-minor or repeat cases might be handed to local magistrates to be dealt with under the criminal justice system.\footnote{First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales (1835) pp 98-100.} These rules were repeated and clarified by the Poor Law Commission in their General Consolidated Order issued in July 1847.\footnote{General Consolidated Order (July 1847). The punishments for misbehaviour are contained within articles 127-147, pp 97-105}
However, in their seventh report the Commission accepted that in ‘consequence of some recent instances of excessive improper punishments inflicted by masters of workhouses upon some of the pauper inmates, we revised that portion of our workhouse order which relates to punishments, and we prepared a new set of regulations on this subject, which we intend to issue generally to the Unions’.  

The Commissioners also included a copy (right) of the form in which entries, records of punishments, were to be made. Only a single punishment book exists for the whole of Nottinghamshire (the survival rate nationally is poor) and this is the Southwell Poor Law Union book. This book covers the period 1852 to 1936 and shows paupers punished for offences such as absconding from the workhouse, fighting, swearing, damaging union property, assault etc.  

For a detailed examination of the Llandilofawr Union Workhouse punishment book, held by the Carmarthenshire County Archives Service, see http://www.llandeilo.org/workhouse2.php

Registers of pauper lunatics can be found for various periods in the nineteenth century. The registers vary in detail and some will give:

- the name of the pauper lunatic
- date of admission
- name of the person who ordered the pauper lunatic into the workhouse
- the description of the ‘Lunacy, or Nature of Disease’
- a note on the examination of the pauper lunatic on their admission (to note any bodily defects, bruises, marks or scars etc.)
- a copy of the certificate with the reason for the medical officer to believe the person to be a lunatic

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75 Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales (1841), p 118.
76 A really good online detailed examination of the Llandilofawr Union Workhouse punishment book, held by the Carmarthenshire County Archives Service, can be viewed at http://www.llandeilo.org/workhouse2.php
- the date of the magistrates order for detention of the pauper lunatic into the workhouse
- copy from the certificate referred to in the detention order
- date of the certificate in case of the pauper lunatic discharged from asylum but not recovered
- how and when discharged
- any result of examination on discharge (to note any bodily defects, bruises, marks, scars or pregnancy etc.).

There is only one surviving register of pauper lunatics in workhouses for Nottinghamshire and that is for the Southwell Poor Law Union for the period 1891 to 1928. The information in this record is closed for 100 years.\(^\text{77}\) Early lists of pauper inmates may be found in the poor law union correspondence in series MH 12 at The National Archives (see above p 21) and the union lists, from which these central returns were made, may survive in local archives.

**Vaccination Registers** for most of the Nottinghamshire poor law unions survive from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. As can be seen by the table opposite some unions have a good run of the registers (particularly Bingham) while others have little (particularly Mansfield). These registers provide details on the children vaccinated and record:
- the name, place and date of birth of the child
- the father’s name or, if the child was illegitimate, the mother’s name
- rank or occupation of the father.

In addition is information on notice given for vaccination, the name of the vaccinator and the date of vaccination itself. Details of children who died prior to any vaccination are also included in the registers.

**Non-Settled Poor Accounts** came into being following an order of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1845. These records list people living in one union who received poor

\(^{77}\) NA: PUS 3/1/1: Southwell Poor Law Union Lunatic Register of Workhouse Inmates, 1891 to 1928. As of 2012 only pages up to the year 1911 would be made available to researchers.
relief from another. There is a single volume that survives for the Southwell Poor Law Union and this covers the period 1866 to 1910.\(^{78}\) The records include the following standard data:

- name of pauper
- parish of residence
- parish (and union) or residence
- number of weeks at amount of relief paid.

The amounts of money are then usually aggregated by each quarter (13 week period). Most paupers listed in such volumes come from adjoining unions. So for example in the Southwell Poor law Union accounts we find paupers mainly with settlements in East Retford, Newark, Bingham, Basford, Mansfield or Worksop. A few were from further afield such as Lincoln, Gainsborough (Lincolnshire) and Keighley (Yorkshire West Riding).

As well as running their own workhouse schools, board of guardians, also took on a variety of non-poor law duties. School attendance committees were established following the 1876 Elementary Education Act and a committee for the Southwell Poor Law Union was set up in April 1877 and a single School Attendance Committee Minute Book for the period 1886 to 1915 survives.\(^{79}\) The minute book charts the various elections of members of the committee and the appointments and the setting of salary levels for the school attendance officer and school enquiry officers (sometimes a joint post) and committee clerk. Here we find references to the contact between the committee and the Local Government Board and Education Department. There are also references to the duties of school attendance officer and school enquiry officers; the various census and returns they are to make. There are also references to:

- attendance officers being ordered to send notices to parents and employers of children where the child was neglecting school or where they were improperly employed
- reports of the attendance of children in each district
- questions concerning vagrants
- some (very few) children by name
- institutions such as the Nottingham Blind Institution, Liverpool Blind School, Leeds Blind School etc.

\(^{78}\) NA: PUS 1/9/1: Southwell Poor Law Union, Non Settled Poor Ledger, 1866 to 1910.
\(^{79}\) NA: PUS 6/7/1: School Attendance Committee Minute Book, 1886 to 1915.
The union Chaplain was an anomolly amongst those employed by the union in so much as his employment needed to be confirmed by an individual outside the poor law system; the relevant bishop. The chaplain was to provide prayers and preach every Sunday to the workhouse inmates, he was to provide Christian teaching to the children and to record dates of their attendance at formal religious endeavours and their general progress and condition. He was also to visit the sick paupers, and administer religious consolation to them. As well as these defined duties he had a more general brief overlooking the moral and religious state of the inmates generally. Some volumes may show details regarding some named inmates while other volumes might only record a brief description of the chaplain’s daily activities. On other occasions ‘clashes’ of personality with other union officers or misunderstandings in regard to respective responsibilities and duties are recorded.80

Union Assessment Committees were established under an Act of 1862 to 'make more effective provision for securing uniform and correct valuations of parishes'. Assessment Committee Minute Books were produced by these committees as a record of the appeals by named individuals from the various parishes across a union and any agreed reductions in their rates. The volumes give:

- the names of the committees' members and any elected positions
- references to the parish valuation lists
- the name of rate payer and the parish in which their land is situated, and the detail of the their claim, and what if any, success.

Most references are to members of the committee or people claiming against their assessments.81 However, there are some specific notices in regard to businesses such as the assessments for the posts and wires of the National Telephone Company and the line of the Lancashire, Derbyshire and East Coast Railway.82

Parochial ledgers were made up ‘to contain the Accounts of the several Parishes with the Union, to the Debit of which Accounts are to be posted the Portions of the several Classes of Expenditure chargeable to such Parishes; and to the Credit of which are to

80 Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC): D/G/CL/33/1, Clutton Poor Law Union, Chaplains Report Book, 1857 to 1874, part of April and May 1862.
81 NA: PUS 6/8/1: Southwell Poor Law Union, Assessment Committee Minute Book, 1886 to 1915, p 4, 28 May 1886.
82 Ibid, 1 September 1899, p 136 and 24 October 1899, p 138.
be posted the Contributions paid by the Overseers to the Treasurer of the Union’ etc. It is one of the key archives in looking at the financial arrangements for the poor law in regard to the individual parishes within the union. The ledgers contain the data regarding parish expenditure for ‘separate charges’ such as in-maintenance, out-relief (as would be found on the out-door relief lists), relief in way of loans, maintenance of lunatics in asylums, extra medical fees/payments, emigration expenses, vaccination or registration fees etc. It also provides data on ‘common charges’ such as the instalments paid on workhouse loans or the amount paid from the parish to the salaries of workhouse officers. The ledgers are organised in chronological order and then by parish.

The parochial ledgers should be used (if survival rates allow) with the union general ledgers. They provide financial data on the costs per union on out-relief, in-maintenance, establishment costs, registration, vaccination etc. They also provide weekly expenditure averages of the relieving officers. These ledgers are organised in chronological order and then by parish (divided into quarters: periods of 13 weeks).

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83 Explanation printed on the first page within the ledgers. I have taken this from NA: PUS 1/7/1, Southwell Poor Law Union, Parish Ledger, 1848 to 1850.
84 NA: PUS 1/5/5: Southwell Poor Law Union, General Ledger, 1842 to 1844.
85 This section is drawn from an investigation of NA: PUS 1/5/5, Southwell Poor Law Union General Ledger, 1842 to 1844.
Appendix I: Sub-group Listings for Poor Law Union Records held at Local Archives

A. Records of the Board
Declarations by guardians of acceptance of office
Guardians’ election papers
Standing orders of the board of guardians
Minutes of the board
Minutes of the finance committee
Minutes of the house committee
Minutes of the boarding out committee
Minutes of the children’s or cottage home committee
Minutes of the relief committee
Minutes of the other committee

B. Records of the Clerk to the Guardians

CORRESPONDENCE
In-letters
Out-letters

ACCOUNTS
General ledgers
Treasurers’ accounts or ledgers
Parochial ledgers
Non-settled poor ledgers
Petty cash accounts
Receipts for rent of pay stations
Agreements by relatives to contribute
Orders for contributions by relatives
Precepts for expenditure
Claims for grants in aid of poor rate expenditure under the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896
Claims towards maintenance of pauper lunatics
Claims for repayment of salaries of teachers in poor-law schools
Claims for the repayment of the salaries of medical officers
Officers' bonds
Agreements, etc. re maintenance of indoor paupers in institutions of other authorities

REGISTERS, REPORTS AND ORDERS, ETC.
Officers' service register
Pauper classifications books
Relief order books
Registers of non-resident poor
Registers of relief granted on loan
Reports of relief to aliens
Registers of lunatics in asylums
Lists of lunatics not in asylums
Papers re maintenance of lunatics
Tenders and supplies of materials and services
Registers of mortgages for loans on security of rates
Registers of children under control of the guardians
Indentures of apprenticeship of pauper children
Registers of apprentices and children placed in service
Records of children apprenticed or employed
Registers of children boarded out by guardians
Reports by boarding out visitors
Accounts of maintenance of boarded out children
Miscellaneous files relating to boarding out
Reports of irremovable poor
Reports of removable poor
Settlement journey books
Records of examination on application for removal orders
Orders of adjudication and removal
Consents to receive paupers without justices' orders

RETURNS TO CENTRAL AUTHORITY
Lists of guardians and paid officers
Returns under Poor Law Officers, Superannuation Act, 1896
Returns of pauper lunatics
Weekly returns of numbers chargeable
Half Yearly returns of numbers chargeable
Weekly returns of persons chargeable and other information
Returns of paupers relieved and money expended
Financial statements (statutory)
Statements of expenditure
Statements of expenditure out of loans
Poor rate returns
Returns of pauper children
Statements under the Agricultural Rates Act
Unclassified returns

STATEMENTS RECEIVED FOR PRESERVATION
Overseers’ balance sheets
Rate collectors’ monthly statements
Order for maintenance under the bastardy act

PROPERTY
Terriers of lands
Title deeds
Documents relating to the provision of cottage or children’s homes
Plans

CASE PAPERS
Case papers

APPOINTMENT OF OVERSEERS
Documents relating to the appointment of overseers

MISCELLANEOUS
Regulations for the administration of relief and of the workhouse (printed)
Lists of paupers
Cuttings books

C. Records of the Treasurer
Receipt and payment book

D. Records of the Workhouse Master

REGULATIONS
Regulations for conduct of institutions and staff

INMATES
Admission and discharge books
Registers of admissions without orders
Registers of admissions and discharges to workhouse school
Registers of attendance at workhouse school
Admissions and discharges of inmates chargeable to other authorities
Indexes to admission and discharge books
Registers of admissions refused
Registers of births in workhouse
Registers of baptisms in workhouse
Registers of deaths in workhouse
Registers of apprentices and servants placed out from the workhouse
Indoor relief lists
Indexes to indoor relief lists
Medical examination books (inmates)
Medical examination books (children)
Medical examination books (alleged lunatics)
Workhouse medical relief books
Registers of lunatics in workhouse
Certificates for detention of lunatics in workhouse
Registers of medical restraint
Notices to coroner of death of lunatic
Post mortem books (lunatics)
Medical officer’s reports for the detention of inmates suffering from mental or bodily disease
Registers of inmates
Creed registers
Inmates individual record cards
Leave of absence books
Labour books
Certificates of employment of pauper nurses
Certificates of employment of inmates of sick wards
Registers of inmates own clothing
Registers of applications and complaints by inmates
Bathing registers
Offences and punishment books
 Registers of addresses of paupers, next of kin or friends
Notices of illness to next of kin or friends
Notices of death to next of kin or friends

REPORTS
Porters’ books
Porters’ admission and discharge books
Chaplains’ report books
Masters’ report books or journals
Matrons’ Report books
Nurses’ report books
Fire brigade report books
General visiting committee report books
Visiting committee for lunatics report books
Committee of lady visitors report books

ACCOUNTS
Masters’ day books
Masters’ receipt and payment books
Salaries and wages receipt book
Officers’ allowance accounts
Baking accounts
Farm, garden and pig accounts
Oakum accounts
Stone accounts
Wood accounts
Order and requisition books
Inventory books
Bedding, crockery and linen accounts
Clothing materials receipt and conversions accounts
Clothing receipt and expenditure accounts
Clothing and materials in store accounts
Coffin accounts
Drug stock books
General inmates’ dietary tables
Children’s dietary tables
Daily provisions consumption accounts
Alcohol books
Extra and special diet accounts
Tea and sugar accounts
Weekly provisions accounts
Quarterly provisions summary and balance accounts
Weekly necessaries and miscellaneous accounts
Tobacco and Snuff accounts
Quarterly necessaries and miscellaneous accounts

RELIEF TO CASUAL POOR
Registers of wayfarers relieved
Casuals’ admission and discharge books
Records of ex-servicemen passing through casual wards
Dietary tables for casual poor

CORRESPONDENCE
In-letters
Out-letters

MISCELLANEOUS

E. Records of the officer in charge of the children’s Home
Admission and discharge books
Indoor relief lists
Superintendents’ report book
Visitors’ report book
Superintendents’ day book
Inventories
Provisions and necessaries accounts

F. Records of the relieving officer

RECORDS OF THE RELIEVING OFFICER
Out relief books
Application and report books
Abstracts of application and report books
Out relief lists
Abstract of out relief lists
Receipts and expenditure books
Diaries
Orders for medical relief
Pauper description books
Orders on tradesmen (relief in kind)
Our-relief lists for vagrants
Weekly report books
Relief on loan records
Copies of orders for the reception of lunatics into county asylums

G. RECORDS OF THE DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER

Medical relief lists

H. RECORDS OF THE GUARDIANS

Collectors’ ledgers
Statements of contributions in arrears
Receipt and payments books

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Vaccination report books
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Allotments committee minute books
Bye laws
Ledgers
Parochial ledgers
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Receipts and expenditure returns
Registers of common lodging houses
Correspondence
Miscellaneous

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Figure 1: MH 1/1, Poor Law Commission Minute Book, 23 August to 31 December 1834, 25 August 1834.
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Figure 3: MH 12/9356/224, Mansfield Poor Law Union Correspondence, 30 November 1837.
**Figure 4:** MH 2/12, Poor Law Commission: Rough and Classified Minute Book, Volume 32, July to December 1842, 17 August 1842.

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**POOR LAW COMMISSION.**

**INDEX TO EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES.**

**JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, AND DECEMBER, 1840.**

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Settlement of bastards [See Settlement.]
Figure 6: MH 4/1, Poor Law Commission and Successors: Extracts from Minutes and Abstracts of Correspondence, July 1839 to December 1840.

Read a Letter from the Clerk of the Nottingham Union, stating that the distress amongst the labouring classes is becoming more severe, and the applications for relief more numerous; and the Guardians therefore request the Commissioners to adopt the course which was followed in the year 1837, and for a time to suspend the Order now in force in that Union, which prohibits outdoor relief to the able-bodied.

Resolved that an Order be issued to suspend the prohibiting Order, as requested by the Guardians.

Ordered that W. Senior, Assistant Commissioner, and the Clerk of the Nottingham Union, be informed accordingly.
Figure 7: MH 10/10, Ministry of Health and predecessors: Circular Letters, To Union and Parish Officers, 1842-1843. General Workhouse Order (Workhouse Rules), 5 February 1842.

[Workhouse Rules.]

To the Guardians of the Poor

Of the several Unions and of the several Parishes

Under a Board of Guardians, named in the Schedule

Hereunto annexed, and the Officers of such Unions and

Parishes.

To the Churchwardens and Overseers of the several Parishes and Places comprised within the said Unions;

And of the several other Parishes named in the said Schedule.

To the Clerk or Clerks to the Justices of the Petty Sessions held for the Division or Divisions in which the Parishes and Places comprised within the said Unions, and the said other Parishes named in the said Schedule, are situate; — and to all others whom it may concern.

WE, THE POOR LAW COMMISSIONERS, do hereby, in pursuance of the authorities vested in Us by an Act passed in the fifth Year of the Reign of His late Majesty King William the Fourth, intituled “An Act for the Amendment and better Administration of the Laws relating to the Poor in England and Wales,” rescind so much of every Order heretofore issued by the Poor Law Commissioners to each of the Unions, and of the Parishes under a Board of Guardians, named in the Schedule hereunto annexed, as relates to the government of the Workhouse, or the powers and duties of the Officers for such Workhouse, except in so far as the said Orders, or any of them, may have authorized the appointment of the existing Officers, or may have prescribed a Diet for the use of the inmates of the Workhouse, or the times of labour and the intervals for meals.

And We do hereby Order, Direct, and Declare, with respect to each and every of the Unions, and of the Parishes under a Board of Guardians, named in the said Schedule, and with respect to the government of the Workhouse in the said Unions and Parishes respectively, as follows: —
Figure 8: MH 19/220, Local Government Board and Predecessors: Correspondence with Government Offices. War Office, 1835-1892.
Figure 9: MH 12/9529/157, folio 236, Southwell Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1850 to 1852. Thomas Marriott to the Poor Law Board, 29 January 1851.
Figure 10: MH 12/9529/158, folio 238, Poor Law Board to Thomas Marriott, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Poor Law Union, 10 March 1851.
Figure 11: MH 12/9531/177, folios 215-216. [Letter from John Kirkland, Clerk to the Guardians of the Southwell Union, to the Poor Law Board, enclosing a copy of the] annual lunatic return listing the details of all 'lunatics, idiots and other persons of unsound mind', 5 February 1857.
Figure 12: MH 12/9362/19, folios 22-23, Mansfield Poor Law Union Correspondence, 1847-1849. Workhouse Inspection Report Form, 28 January 1854.
Figure 13: MH 12/9528/474, Southwell Poor Law Union Correspondence, Appointment Form for Charles Spray, 7 March 1847
Figure 14: MH 9/15, Register of Paid Officers and Staff Appointed by Boards of Guardians, etc, [including Southwell].
Figure 15: MH 32/66, Edward Senior, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District (includes Carmarthen) and North Midland District (includes unions at Grantham, Lincoln and Mansfield). 1838 to 1847.
Figure 16: MH 32/66, Edward Senior, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Correspondence and Papers Related to the Welsh District (includes Carmarthen) and North Midland District (includes unions at Grantham, Lincoln and Mansfield), 1838 to 1847. Part of a letter covering such subjects as an arson attack on the Narberth Workhouse, the general ‘mischief’ of the local chartists in South Wales.
Figure 17: MH 32/66, Edward Senior, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Correspondence and Papers, Related to the Welsh District (includes Carmarthen) and North Midland District (includes unions at Grantham, Lincoln and Mansfield), 1838 to 1847. List of paupers illegally receiving out relief across the several unions under Senior's jurisdiction.
Figure 18: MH 32/66, Edward Senior, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Correspondence and Papers, Related to the Welsh District (includes Carmarthen) and North Midland District (includes unions at Grantham, Lincoln and Mansfield, 1838 to 1847. Form showing reports of visits to workhouses.
Figure 19: MH 33/2, Poor Law Commission, Assistant Poor Law Commissioners, Registers of Correspondence, W Day, R Earle, W J Gilbert, J T Graves and E Gulson.

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<td>422</td>
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Figure 20: MH 32/28, Edward Gulson, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Correspondence and Papers, Related to the West and South Midland Districts (includes unions at Berkshire and Oxfordshire). 1834-1838. Gulson to the Poor Law Commission, paper number 22851, 23 February 1836.

My Dear Sir,

The Meeting yesterday did not break up very long after first time — Lord Shrewsbury took the chair. — It was attended by the Duke of Newcastle — Sir Robt. Bromley — Robert Southey and every person interested — Guardians, &c. — (objecting).

A great opposition was raised before hand by Mr. Becher — who sent his son to represent himself — to whom brought Mr. Denison the visitor of Basford and xxx if a neighbour — Mr. Denison behaved very rudely — and the opposition was altogether violent in the part of Mr. Becher's friends — Mr. Denison denied the law as to the almsbodied under Gilbert and said no case had been decided in his favour — No stone was left unturned to damage my cause — even to the disputing my right to call the heeding women to enter their Workhouse, where the meeting was held — I however, made some considerable impression — Mr. Denison attacked me most mainly. We are greatly indebted to him — and I hope some
Figure 21: MH 15/1, Local Government Board and Predecessors, Subject Indexes of Correspondence, 1836.
Figure 22: MH 12/15164, folio 482. Letter from George Spencer, Clerk to the Guardians of the Keighley Poor Law Union, to the Poor Law Board. Letter concerning orphans: paper number 3178, 2 January 1864.

KEIGHLEY UNION.

DAY OF WEEKLY MEETING--WEDNESDAY.

GEORGE SPENCER, Solicitor,

GEO. Clerk to the KEIGHLEY UNION.

YORKSHIRE.

2 January 1864.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

I am directed by the Guardians to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th Instant No. 131 A., in which you call attention to the entry made by Mr. Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, in the waiting book of the Workhouse on the 17th March 1862, in which letter you state that before further considering the arrangement with reference to the education of the children, you wish to be informed whether it is the fact that there are now many orphan and deserted children in receipt of out-door relief, and if so, that you think some of these children might be advantageously admitted into the Workhouse and thus raise the numbers therein sufficiently to justify the appointment of a paid Schoolmistress.