1 INTRODUCTION

It is difficult today, when longer lives and general good health are the norm, to understand how hard life was for the majority of people in the past. The state did not make any provision for welfare until the middle of the 20th century. Until then, the emphasis was on 'care' within the parish community, which was often care of the most minimal kind, particularly for those who lived on the margins of society. The experiences of these less fortunate people are difficult to unravel, especially those relating to the earlier periods of history, and broad assumptions often have to be made. Research carried out on other communities (such as Dingwall's work on late 17th century Edinburgh[1]) is a useful aid to explain what was probably happening in Prestonpans, where the wide range of industries attracted workers in. This 'fluid' workforce tended to dip in and out of destitution, never earning enough and, without a permanent income, never moving far from poverty. Together with the old and the young, the sick and disabled, these 'able-bodied' poor – often termed the idle or 'sturdy beggars'[2] – comprised a sizeable part of Prestonpans' population. Some of the destitute children were taken in by the several endowed 'hospitals' or schools in the parish and given the chance to improve their lot with education.

The slightly more fortunate people, who were employed in the many industries of the parish, drew on the support networks of their own people, namely the many and varied friendly societies. These were essentially self-help societies where, for a regular weekly payment, the sick, the widowed and the orphaned were provided for. Prestonpans had many such societies – for the potters, the sailors, the carters – many of which list members from other trades and occupations. By the end of the 19th century, societies were emerging that served other groups too; for example the Rechabites' Friendly Society catered for those 'of a temperate mind' from 1893. The Co-operative Wholesale Society (Co-op) provided a more general service, not being affiliated to any particular group. Gradually, too, over time, came more and more state intervention; legislation eased the lot of many, although the view of social welfare that pervades today has its root in the 19th century.

From the self-help groups emerged a whole gamut of leisure activities, firstly with the various society walks, when the society 'box' was paraded through the town, accompanied along the way by music and with a dance at the end of the day, and later with the miners' gala days and work-related sports clubs. Other social events were church-led, initially by the established Church of Scotland and, from the 19th century onwards, by the increasing number of other churches within the community. By the time the police burgh was created in 1862,[3] Prestonpans was home to a broad social mix of people, many of whom participated in the various social activities the town had to offer. Women had always played an important role in the informal social networks of home and community, and as the 20th century progressed, they came to take a more prominent public role in the burgh, with their own branches of political support groups, and more electoral rights. For many years, the working communities tended to keep apart from each other; similarly so the Catholics and Protestants.

2 PRESTONPANS IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

2.1 The settlement

While Prestonpans did not achieve burgh[4] status until the latter part of the 19th century it had long been a busy industrial centre, with the important port of Acheson's Haven nearby. This port dated back to the 17th century, when its exports were chiefly of coal and salt (to Germany and the Baltic) and also hides, corn, eggs and stockings.[5] Imports included pitch, lead and iron plate.[6] After his purchase of the barony of Prestoungrange in 1617, Alexander Morrison renamed it Morrison's Haven. A thriving harbour, together with the range of industries based at Prestonpans, meant that there was generally work available for temporary day-labourers as well as for those employed in the more permanent workforce. In 1793, the population of the parish was 1092 women and 936 men – 2028 in total. Of these, 769 were born outwith the parish. There were 19 day-labourers, and 614 people and their families were employed in the various industries in the town.[7]

Over time, the economic makeup of the parish changed, as different industries – including oyster fishing, coal, salt, glass,

brownware, stoneware (beginning c1750), chemicals (in 1784 the Prestonpans Vitriol Company was apparently the largest acid works in Britain[8]), soap and brick/tile production[9] – all thrived and declined (and in the case of coal revived and finally declined again); their workforces similarly ebbed and flowed. Morrison's Haven harbour also experienced fluctuating fortunes.

During the first 50 years of the 19th century, Prestonpans had become increasingly urbanised; it had progressed from a collection of different groups of industries to a busy centre that provided small town life to its many communities. Its elevation to a police burgh in 1862 signified that it was a settlement of some importance, and thereafter came under the aegis of its burgh council.

2.2 Control of the people – heritors and the kirk session

From the earliest times, parish life was structured – whether that structure was applied to work, to leisure or to faith – and it went hand in hand with social control. Control was implemented through the kirk session, which worked with the heritors – the landowners – of the parish, who had responsibility for both assessing the funds required to meet the session's obligations, and for providing that money. In 1751–2, the Court of Session decided that the heritors should take over complete control of the funds for the poor, a move initiated by the many landowners who were Episcopalian absentee landlords.[10] However, as the owner of Prestoungrange from 1745–64 was William Grant, a staunch supporter of the established church,[11] Prestonpans is unlikely to have experienced such problems. Understandably, the dual role made the heritors very cautious and, as the wealthiest people in the parish, their opinions coloured the kirk session's decisions. This often left the poor and destitute in an even more desperate situation.

In rural Scotland, the Crown exerted control in each locality by gifting lands to the nobility – heritable jurisdictions – known as baronies. The baron or laird had a franchise from the Crown to administer justice, in the baron court. Prestonpans parish was administered by two such baronies.

> The barony of Prestoungrange was granted to Mark Ker under the Great Seal of Scotland in 1587, ratified 1591. By 1622, it had passed to John Morrison, and was referred to as the west barony of the parish. By 1684,

> Prestoungrange barony had come into common ownership with that of Dolphinstoun.
>
> The east barony was established c1617 when it was granted to Sir John Hamilton; it encompassed the old villages of Preston and Prestonpans.

So the two holders of the baronies in the parish were the most influential of the heritors, and each had the right to hold a court. Many misdemeanours were dealt with at kirk session level, but more serious cases were referred to the baron court.[12] In the *Statistical Account*[13] (1790s) there were as many as 20 heritors referred to with the following listed: the Countess of Hyndford – Prestoungrange and Dolphinstoun; Mr Finlay of Drummore; Mr Syme of Northfield; Mrs Ramsay of Burnrigg; the trustees of Schaw's Hospital (owners of Preston House and parts of Preston estate); and the trustees of George Watson's Hospital (a charitable hospital for the less advantaged founded in 1741 by an Edinburgh merchant, the trust fund owned parts of Preston estate).

After 1845, social control continued, often in the hands of the same individuals as before, but through the new parochial boards that took over responsibility for the poor. The *New Statistical Account*,[14] published in 1845, listed the chief proprietors as: Sir George Grant-Suttie, Bart, Balgone and Prestoungrange; William Atchison, Drummore; George Sime, Northfield; John Fowler, Hallidoun and Burnrigg; the trustees of Schaw's Hospital; the trustees of George Watson's Hospital; Colonel Macdowell, Logan; Mrs Gowans; Sir William Hamilton, Bart, Preston and Fingalton; the heirs of the late Mrs Clapperton; and William Cockburn, Preston Cottage. The heritors' responsibility for the church, manse and school continued until 1925,[15] effectively maintaining their influence on parish life, and of course many of them remained active on the parish boards. So the running of the parish was the responsibility of the same group of people (with generational changes) until gradual alteration came with the formation of the burgh in 1862 and the social changes of the period.

This need to control was the manifestation of the concern of parts of the community (mainly the upper and middling classes) to control the lives of the rest of the community (the working classes). Everyone was keen to control the lives of the destitute, as they placed demands and expense on the community as a whole, but on occasion, members of the 'better' classes had to be brought under control as well. Any activity

that was perceived as a threat – rowdy and unseemly behaviour in particular – was deemed necessary to be controlled; the Kirk Session Minutes[16] throughout the 18th and 19th centuries are full of censure for antenuptial fornication – for which punishment took the form of three weeks of public penance in the kirk for the poor, while the wealthy were fined. For example, on 15 December 1717,[17] John Grahame, salt officer, was to be fined two guineas or 40 shillings sterling (he negotiated a reduction) for his 'irregular marriage'. Irregular marriages were carried out away from the parish, and so the church lost money (which was used for the poor). Many accused of antenuptial fornication claimed they were married elsewhere. Other 18th century sins (all committed on the Sabbath) included being drunk, carrying water, dancing before the sacrament, the taking of ale, and putting fire to the malt kilns. Two boys, John Fin and George Amos, were reprimanded for 'being on the streets during the time of divine service throwing stones at dogs'. Stealing apples, wife-beating and fighting (between women and men) were also censured. On 17 April 1717,[18] one couple were having an 'alliance' when neighbour Christian Spence suggested that Helen Reid should stop seeing William Crooks. Her response – 'Go to hell you and all them together; God's plague come on you Presbyterian devils' – came to the kirk session's notice, which demanded that she should be 'publickly' rebuked before the congregation. She was threatened with certification if she continued with such 'scandalous' behaviour; Crooks' transgressions were not seen as being so shocking.

Bad behaviour could affect whether a pension was granted or not; in June 1717, 'a poor woman' Jean Cane begged at the church door, but did not attend, and she had no certificate of good behaviour from her last parish of residence. Her application for a pension was only considered after she agreed to behave in a more Christian manner; she was awarded 2d a week (in November the same year £2 Scots was given to a church officer for a pair of shoes). Similarly, in March 1718, Christine Preston's pension was stopped and she was called before the kirk session when found cursing and swearing; her pension was reinstated when she apologised. Elders who recorded those who 'abused the Lord's day by idling it away in the fields or by walking or otherwise' monitored behaviour on the Sabbath; such behaviour was reported back to the kirk session.

3 THE POOR, THE SICK AND THE IDLE

3.1 Managing the needs of the less fortunate – early poor relief until 1845

For the aged, the sick, the poor, the widowed and the orphaned, the difference between life and death was often on the say-so of one's 'betters' who sat in judgement on one's behaviour. The kirk session would pay small pensions, and provide clothes for the orphaned and other poor children. The years from the end of the 16th to the middle of the 17th centuries were a period when even the workers lived in poverty.[19] Those of 1782–83 were ones of scarcity and the number of poor increased, as did the amount of money required to maintain them, and this continued for a number of years afterwards. By the 19th century the process of industrialisation and urbanisation impacted on parishes on an unprecedented scale, and the problems worsened in the post-Napoleonic war period, 1815–22, when the country was beset by an economic depression. Work was hard to find, even in the lowlands. As the unemployed were classed as able-bodied poor, and were regarded as the lowest of the low, they were excluded from any form of relief; this was reinforced by legislation of 1819. In practice, during the 17th century there were exceptions to this, as in 1663 when manufacturers were permitted to 'press able-bodied vagrants into service',[20] and most kirk sessions would not see the children of an able-bodied pauper starve.

A letter written in 1829 (for quite another purpose) reveals much about the obstacles that the destitute had to overcome before getting any aid – *'the degradation of living on public and extorted charity, and … the inquisitorial examinations, and even cruel insults, to which applications, though for the smallest of pittance, frequently …give rise'.*[21]

The parish itself, through the heritors and the kirk session, had, since the Poor Law Act of 1575, a responsibility for the *deserving poor* born within its boundaries, or those who had lived there for five years; conversely it had no responsibility for those born elsewhere, although help was given on occasion, and the debt reclaimed from the claimant's home parish. Paltry pensions[22] were paid weekly to those in regular need (the aged, the infirm, the widows and the children; the needy

were predominately female) and occasional funds were released to keep the temporarily inconvenienced from destitution. The funds for the poor were collected in a number of ways: by fundraising (including the fines imposed on better-off parish residents for 'wrong-doing', and the fees imposed for the declaration of banns of marriage); by voluntary collections at the church door; by mortcloth dues (payments for the hire of a coffin cover[23]); by donations (made into an open ladle so that the donor's generosity or otherwise could not be hidden), mortifications and legacies; and by taxation, or assessment of the heritors – which of course was to be avoided if at all possible. Records from 1623 indicate that, at a time when two successive harvest failures brought famine to many, the county of East Lothian refused James VI's call for money to sustain the needs of the poor.[24] Dingwall comments that, in the Edinburgh parishes c1700, the *'kirk session had the expense of dealing with those who died on the street or with the corpses of exposed children'*.[25]

In 1740, the following blunt information was given relating to claimants of poor relief in Prestonpans:[26]

John Petegroes wife is dead got two pence weekly
Robert Flinn criple
Janet Choicely
Helen White
Jean Flight
Jean Banks for her children
Stopped George Fforsyth pension was 6 pence weekly in room of his wife deceast
James Bickerhorn
John Charles wife and married daughter
Margaret Ross
John Cannie
Patrick Horseburgh
6 pence added to Isabell Grant weekly pension because she is in great distress and most have come to serve her
John Charrel
Janet and Rachel Wood
Marie Barnard
John Thomson
Kathrine Mark for her children
Isabell Spears and daughter
Margaret Hepburn
Margaret Beaton

Margaret Mathieson
Rebecka Christie
Rachel Robertson and lame daughter
Widow Reid in Preston for her son
Janet Smart for her child
Elizabeth Reburn
Jean Clark
George Forsyth
Margaret Hooker and Elizabeth White
Elizabeth Henderson for her child
Margaret Reid
Janet Haley and Margaret Davidson

The kirk session records of 1745 state that the parish supported 46 poor; of whom three were bedridden, one was blind, 11 were children aged about 10, and eight more who were able to work. The rest were generally old and infirm. The comment is made that '*but most of them are capable of doing something*'; payment is also noted for '*the big bell rung at funerals'*.[27]

In 1753, Prestonpans' heritors had provided accommodation for the poor, raising the funds to pay for the purchase of a house by making an impost (2d Scots) on each pint of Scotch ale brewed. It soon became evident that the plan was not successful: the house was rented out, with the income going into the poor funds. The reason given for the abandonment was *'besides the utter aversion which many in actual want had against entering into the house the expenses was found to be greater than when the pensioners had a stated allowance given to them and permitted to spend it after their own way.'*[28] [This impost was re-introduced by the Barons Courts on July 27th 2004 to be payable by Fowler's Ales (Prestoungrange) Limited to the Arts Festival Charity – EII. 53. P&D 2004.05.]

In 1793, some £30 was required to pay the 42 regular pensioners; the amount received could be increased or decreased as the recipient's circumstances changed. A pensioner with a family received 2/– weekly at most, and an individual 1/4d.[29]

As well as the sources of income listed above, Prestonpans' kirk session had an income from the interest accrued on £250 sterling of 'sunk' money that had been left by various people specifically to be used in support of the poor. £100 of this money was a bequest by *'Andrew MacDowal of Bankton one of the senators of the College of Justice who bequeathed a like sum to the poor of every parish in which he had property'*.[30]

There was also an income from the rental of a house in Preston (see 1753 above). Some of the funds were *'distributed by the kirk session to those suddenly reduced to want by misfortune or disease'* and used for *'wages for the education … poor scholars … for clothes for the poor; and funeral expenses of the pensioned poor'*.[31] Money was used from the same fund to pay the wages of church staff and the schoolmaster.

Examples of the process in practice can be seen from kirk session records; applications for parochial aid were considered at a meeting of the heritors and the kirk session on 12 February 1845.[32] At the meeting were the great and the good of the parish, namely George Syme, Rev Mr Struthers, Robert Hislop, Mr Turnbull, Mr Stevenson, Mr Spence, Sir G Grant-Suttie Bt., and Mr Knox. Applications had been received for consideration of allowances from the following since the last kirk session meeting:

Margaret Richardson	*1/6*
Marrion Baxter	*1/–*
James Bell	*1/6*
Thomas Dobson & wife	*1/6*

These seem to be ongoing claimants, because the next group are given as new applicants:

Widow Stewart	*6d*
James Renton	*2/1*
John Howden & wife	*6d*
Elizabeth Simpson	*1/–*
Walter Nicol	*1/6*

The other matters for consideration were the cases of two men whose illegitimate children had received some support from the session, and the session were seeking repayment through petitions to the sheriff. The men concerned were James Marr junior (fisherman) *'father of Elizabeth Simpson's child'* and James Burns (labourer) *'father of Mary Crombie's illegitimate child'*.

Schaw's Hospital 1789–1881[33]

This school for boys *'whose parents are in poor circumstances'* opened in Preston House in 1789; it was funded by the considerable income from a trust fund set up by Doctor James Schaw, owner of most of the old Preston estate from 1780

until his death four years later. Boys aged between four and seven could be admitted, educated until aged 14; those with the names of Schaw, MacNeill, Cunningham and Stewart, were preferred. For many years the 19 trustees outnumbered the students (15). The trustees were to 'bind the boys as apprentices, or otherwise let them out to businesses as they shall judge best'. The number of students later increased to 24.

In 1832 the school left Preston House, moving to a new building nearby, designed by William Burn. The school closed in 1881, a few years after the 1872 Education Act made parish schools a legal necessity.

Schaw's funds (£100 pa in 1883[34]) continued to aid poor parish families in the form of bursaries for a number of years, and this and Stiell's fund meant that children were taught Latin and French[35] in order that they might be eligible for the bursaries on offer. From an account of the bequest in the *Haddingtonshire Courier* 14 January 1898, it is clear that the provision of funds to pay for higher education was not without strings, as a special report was to be provided on *'conduct … attendance and progress'*. In 1916, Schaw's Bequest gave out 275 grants, 115 of which were for evening continuation classes. In 1921 £12–12s was granted to the County Education Authority for the purchase of lantern slides for the public school. In 1925 the trustees granted £90 towards a playing field for Preston Lodge School, and £40 for the same purpose at Prestonpans Public School. It seems that the funds were incorporated into the county's education fund sometime during the 1930s.

3.2 Increasing concern about the conditions of the poor

By the middle of the 19th century, the scale of the problem of the poor – able bodied included – generated a need to find alternative solutions, not primarily through concern for the poor themselves, but more due to concern over social order. In 1840, Dr William Pulteney Alison produced a report condemning the way the Scottish poor law was working in the urban areas, highlighting the health problems posed by urban living, claiming that poor health was the result of low wages, and that low incomes and periods of unemployment created a poverty trap. He argued his case in 1840/41 against the ideas of William Chalmers, who had long held that there was no need for poor relief from the authorities and that family, community or philanthropy could provide the needs of the poor.[36]

In 1842, the Chadwick Report on the condition of the labouring poor of Great Britain focused on the poverty and squalor in which they lived – and pointed out that it was largely unseen/ignored by the middle and upper classes. It was this concern that led to the emergence of the ragged schools of the 1840s; Edinburgh's Thomas Guthrie was an important figure in this, and support was forthcoming from Charles Dickens and Lord Shaftsbury. Gradually the social issues of health, housing, education and the needs of the poor rose up the middle class agenda:[37] it was increasingly seen that poverty and immorality were not necessarily one and the same, and that the poor needed more help to escape their fate.

From the 1730s onwards, when dissenting voices began to be heard, the established church no longer had control over the whole population; this had implications for the administration of poor relief. The truly destitute could also seek help from local charitable foundations, although it was usually only orphans who could claim. So ineffective was the old Scottish poor law once the pace of urbanisation increased, that the whole system was revised in 1845; the new poor law lasted until the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948.

For the able-bodied poor, judgement was most censorious; it was only when periods of economic depression threw increasing numbers of unemployed people onto the streets that it was acknowledged that some action had to be taken. By the early 20th century, the state had begun to intervene with legislation.

The situation was not helped when the body that managed the funds for the care of the needy and destitute – the kirk session of the established church – was beset by problems of its own. The Disruption of 1843, when breakaway members of the Church of Scotland formed the Free Church of Scotland, coincided by chance with the culmination of some 20+ years of argument over the rights and wrongs of the Scottish poor law. The recession of the 1840s decided the matter once and for all; there was no way that the old system could cope, and the report and evidence gathered by the Royal Commission on the Scottish Poor Law 1844 proved the point further. The result was the Poor Law (Scotland) Act 1845, and responsibility for the poor became a matter for the state not the church.

3.3 Poor relief 1845–94: the Board of Supervision

Under the new laws, membership of the parochial boards was based on a property qualification; in towns this generally

meant a change in personnel, but in places such as Prestonpans membership of the kirk session and the board were virtually the same. Minimum standards were drawn up (and they were *very* minimal) and claimants subjected to testing; parochial inspectors were appointed – in 1887, the Inspector of the Poor was Mr G Hunter. As a result there was a rise in the number of eligible poor, which was matched by an increase in expenditure on poor relief. It became necessary for each parish to raise money to support the poor and, although widely variable across the country, by 1894, 95% of parishes had decided to levy compulsory rates in the form of a tax; control of the finances remained within the locality. The able-bodied poor were still left out of the equation, but parishes made their own decisions on these 'occasional poor'. Many wandered the roads, seeking work where they could, as they had in previous years.

Problems arose in many parishes, especially those under pressure from the rapid urbanisation that marks this period; demand often exceeded the supply of funds. The fostering of urban children to rural families was one solution, and this provided the foster family with a welcome source of income, as well as removing children from the influence of their 'unfit' parents.

In Scotland, 'outdoor relief' was generally preferred to the more expensive option of the provision of accommodation in a poorhouse (a very different solution to that adopted in England). The limited poorhouse provision was seen as an effective deterrent to abuse of the system, while providing a catch-all option for the very poor. The Scottish view of poor relief was moralistic; it was a necessity to counter the destitution that was a result of improvidence and fecklessness. What's more, *'social inequality was seen as divinely programmed'*.[38]

Nonetheless, the system provoked comment from all levels: in cold weather *'the paupers grumble at their allowance and think it too little, while the ratepayers grumble at the rate of assessment and think it too great. But surely the latter ought to pocket their grievance with the best grace they can, when they allow a man who is earning above 20 shillings weekly to receive every Monday morning 5/– from the Parochial Board'*.[39] In 1868, almost one person in every 10 was in receipt of relief in Prestonpans parish,[40] and in an East Lothian context, Prestonpans had fewer poor people to maintain than the rural parishes.

While the local papers,[41] said that those 'below the grade of the working class' being in a state of *'such a mass of vice,*

ignorance and poverty' they also commented that it was *' … better that we should know it than remain unaquainted with its existence…'*. Within the locality there was an understanding that poorer people benefited from help from other sources. In 1900 collections were made to raise funds for 'the poors' coal' and the coal companies 'promised liberal terms'. At a more basic level during the 1920s, potted hough would be made and left on the outside windowsill, and collected by the needy; after the next payday, a penny would be left to pay the debt.[42]

The Inveresk Combination Poorhouse – 1861–1995

Proposed in October 1853, by 1861 Wedderburn House was built to the south of Inveresk (then in the county of Midlothian), near Musselburgh. Designed by Peddie & Kinnear,[43] it sports crow-stepped gables, skewputts and finials. The term 'combination' refers to the combination of parishes that shared the cost of the poorhouse and which had a right to send residents there. These parishes were Duddingston (in Edinburgh), Inveresk (Midlothian) and the western parishes of East Lothian: Gladsmuir, Haddington, Humbie, Ormiston, Pencaitland, Saltoun, Tranent and Prestonpans. It was never a workhouse, which was a term more used in England than in Scotland, but its residents were reluctant nonetheless. They slept in separate male/female dormitories, and there was no provision to accommodate couples. Prestonpans' share was eight places. The original 1853 Peddie & Kinnear drawings declared Wedderburn to be 'the building for the idiots',[44] leaving us in no doubt how the residents were regarded at that time. In 1863 there were three Prestonpans paupers – John McLeod, D Brown and Ann Lauder – who refused the offer of the comforts of the poorhouse; Ann Lauder had previously been there for 12 weeks and refused to return.[45] At least one *Courier* correspondent understood their desire to remain in their own homes, poor though they were (in the lengthy correspondence over the issue). In 1881, the staff comprised a governor, his wife (the matron), a children's nurse, three servants and a cook.

In 1883, a printed letter from the Board of Supervision[46] to the Inspectors of the Poor – commonly referred to as the poorhouse test – encouraged the withdrawal of outdoor relief from some paupers, which was to be substituted with relief in the poorhouse; the accompanying appendix gives no East Lothian examples of any resultant reduction in pauperism

(perhaps implying that the county already had a tight rein on its poor, or that the county's residents already did as much as possible to avoid incarceration). The letter indicates that the poor sought maintenance from *'relatives legally or morally liable for their support'* before they applied to the parish. Further it indicates that the poorhouse was to be used for two particular classes of the poor; those who could not care for themselves (both mentally and physically), and *'all persons of idle, immoral or disported habits… who would squander their allowances in drunkenness and debauchery or otherwise misapply them'*.

The letter continues

> *'The experience of the administrators of the Poor Law since 1850 is that it is hurtful in practice to grant relief otherwise than in the poorhouse to:*
>
> > *mothers with illegitimate children and widows with legitimate families who may fall into immoral habits*
> > *deserted wives*
> > *persons having grown up families either settled in this country or abroad*
> > *persons having collateral relations in comfortable circumstances*
> > *wives of persons sentenced to terms of imprisonment or penal servitude*
> > *generally all persons of idle, immoral or dissipated habits'*

It concludes that:

> *'Judicious but firm and vigilant use of the poorhouse test has had:*
>
> > *A marked effect on diminishing pauperism.*
> > *That it is not attended with any evil consequences such as the increase of crime or vagrancy*
> > *That the great majority of paupers by whom an offer of the poorhouse has been refused have become self-supporting or are supported by their relatives'*

The letter comments that it was regrettable that some parochial boards had again offered outdoor relief after poorhouse relief had been refused. The accommodation at Inveresk was extended in 1897.

Janet Naysmith's recollection serves as a reminder that attitudes during the early 20th century were very different from those of today:

> *'During the [first world] war, many a girl was put to shame for being too trusting and a few were put into mental care. The registrar took care of administrative costs, still most of these young healthy women had to work hard for their keep. One, whom I knew very well, escaped from such an institution in Haddington and managed to keep her movements secret for six months. As she had been able to maintain herself for that time she was set free from the institution and later married, she was one of the lucky ones'.*[47]

Minute books of the poorhouse board are mostly concerned with the day to day running of Wedderburn. They do, however, reveal a few other items of interest, in particular referring to the treatment of children. In July 1922,[48] there is reference to a child from Prestonpans *'that had been the cause of much trouble'*. While the preference was for the home parish to board out children, this child was to be returned to Wedderburn as he *'was of unsatisfactory habits'*. The board decided that this child was to be sent to an institution (other than Wedderburn) as the poorhouse was not appropriate, and no permanent carer could be found in Prestonpans. Where they intended to send this child is not given, and the health board too had no idea what could be done. By April 1923, the child was still at Wedderburn and so were a number of other children (many from Inveresk parish), a situation that the board felt was untenable, as there were no facilities for children. This was then a change of approach as initially it was seen appropriate that mothers and children would be accommodated in the poorhouse – generally these were unmarried mothers. An entry on 25 October 1923 indicates that efforts were again made to board out the Prestonpans child in the parish; he is not mentioned again. One child from Inveresk had, by 31 October 1929, spent some two years at Wedderburn. From 12 June 1930,[49] the home was under the management of the East Lothian County Council Midlothian County Council and the City of Edinburgh Council. The general policy was of no children, but they continued to be accommodated, with 12 resident there in October 1932.

Wedderburn became a home for the aged and infirm, providing both residential care downstairs for the local

authority (Midlothian County Council) and nursing care upstairs for the National Health Service from 1948 until it closed in 1976. There is one reference[50] to it being where 'people without resources' could be sent by the Local Government Office. Oral evidence points to the fear in which a stay at Wedderburn was regarded: seemingly, the general view was that if you were put in the lift and taken upstairs, then the next stop was the mortuary.[51]

Affleck[52] has commented on the role of the Inspectors of the Poor:

> *'In 1945, the front-line welfare service was provided by local government officers acting as Inspectors of the Poor… Some were still in post in 1970 such as Mr Lowe in his ground floor office in an adapted council house in Prestonpans …They also operated as registrars, managed the local county council office and dealt with welfare assistance, including issues of school attendance and the need for care in the two poor law institutions run by the county councils for Midlothian [Wedderburn] and East Lothian [Prestonkirk]. They had a wealth of local knowledge but by 1948, their duties had started to decline, with central government dealing with the need for National Assistance from 1948.'*

After 1976, Lothian Regional Council used Wedderburn as a day centre for adults with a learning disability, and the social work service used it as a 16-bed hostel. From 1990 onwards it was managed by ELCAP,[53] but by 1995 institutional care had finally ended, and all residents had been rehoused in the community. The Church of Scotland used Wedderburn until it finally closed in 1998. In 2001 it was sold for housing development. Thus ended over a century of 'care' for the old, the sick and the needy at Wedderburn.

Janet Naysmith commented:

> *'I was delighted when the town had its first lady Provost, a Mrs Mary Polick. I remember one meeting of the Woman's Guild when Mrs Polick was the speaker and I asked her what had happened to old folks' pension rises and to mentally retarded people who were in homes such as Wedderburn … As she was on the health committee, she … went out to visit these places for themselves. She was furious at the nutrition supplied to the patients and*

fought the health board to ensure that they were given a cooked meal every day. Later she invited me along to observe how the patients' disposition had improved. I very much appreciated this and found that they were very well cared for apart from the incontinent patients, of course hygiene has greatly advanced since those days'.

3.4 Hospitals and other funds

Mary Murray Trust & Institute 1883–1930s[54]

Mary Murray left a bequest to found *'an hospital for the training of female children of poor but respectable parents as domestic servants'*. As a result, her trustees leased the (new) Schaw's Hospital building, and brought her rather particular requirements into play, opening on 2 February 1883. These included a preference for girls with the surname Murray; acceptance of entrants aged six to eight, who remained at the institute until aged 14, when they would then be placed in domestic service. They were trained accordingly, and religion featured prominently in their education. Initially 26 students were enrolled, increasing later to 68.

Ex-pupils met up at annual reunions, and they were eligible for other payments (on achieving a certain age, or on marriage); they could even return to live at the institute after they were 60 (under a range of provisos). The role of the institute declined during the 20th century, and by 1939 the building was being used as a community centre. It became a day nursery during the war, reverting to community use afterwards. In the 1950s, demand for school accommodation from Preston School returned part of the building back to education.

During the early 1970s, the site was earmarked for development of a new day centre, but this did not proceed past the feasibility study phase as much of the site was deemed unstable. The building was finally demolished in 1979; the new community centre on the site was completed in 1984.[55]

George Stiell's Hospital Trust 1821–84[56]

Prestonpans fell under the aegis of the George Stiell's Hospital Trust (Scheme No 12), which also covered Tranent, Gladsmuir and Pencaitland. This was an educational endowment scheme that was set up on the death of Tranent native George Stiell, builder and smith. Stiell left property earning £900 pa for the

education of a few boys and girls as inmates and also a free day school, which was run in a rather austere looking building at Meadowmill, designed by William Burn in 1821. The school provided 140 children with an education, and lunchtime bread and milk. Change came with the Endowed Institutions (Scotland) Act 1878, and in 1883 it was proposed that the school should close;[57] funds (£20pa) were to be administered by Tranent parish. Supported by Free Church minister Mackay, his fellow Prestonpans representative on the Stiell's Hospital board, John Fowler Hislop was in there fighting for his Prestonpans community to retain its claim on Stiell's funds: *'The parish is small and its inhabitants belong chiefly to the mining and fishing classes whose occupations are hazardous and emoluments precarious'*.[58] The parochial school board used their share of the Stiell money to pay the fees of 68 children in standards V and VI upwards (ie beyond the age at which schooling was compulsory). The board also assisted 71 children by paying 2d a week of their 5d a week school fees, and paid the fees of 32 children *'whose cases are most necessitous'*. Nearly £10 was used for books *'the price of these being a serious obstacle to many'*. If Prestonpans lost this funding the impact on the children of the parish would be considerable; the public school had 490 children on the roll, and an average attendance of 360, so nearly 50% of these were in receipt of some sort of support from the funds.

The problem seemed to lie with the role of Tranent minister Dr Caesar; he even lacked support amongst his own Tranent school board. Dr Caesar was accused of being in an *'iniquitous position'* with the Earl of Wemyss and Fred Pitman WS, both of whom were members of the Stiell board, but not resident within any of the four parishes. All three were opposed to the *'disembursement of free school fees by school boards'*. By October 1883, the Prestonpans school board had written to the Education Endowment Commission regarding the *'large sums of money squandered'* and were pleading for the parish to receive a greater share of the funds because of the greater increase of population compared to that in the other three parishes. When it was proposed that selection for funding was to be by competitive examination, the response from Prestonpans was typical. The school board considered that *'a child's poverty is its greatest claim to free elementary education under this trust deed'*. Competitive examination was acceptable for pupils of the sixth grade upwards, and the sum provided for evening classes should be increased. The

building was sold and the funds put to use as two-year bursaries for children going into higher education from state aided schools in the four parishes. Evening class funding was also increased. In 1890, Thomas Tulloch was awarded a bursary of £60 over three years and Joseph Hunter £40 over two. From 1892, secondary education also became free.

The building became St Joseph's Industrial School in 1888, a Roman Catholic school for young offenders under the East Lothian Educational Endowment Trust; it was run from 1914 by the de la Salle Brothers, with the Passionists of Drummohr (see 6.2.3. below) looking after the boys' spiritual welfare. St Joseph's closed in 1998.

Prestonpans Rev. John Davidson's Mortification (Scheme No 307) 1882–89[59]

This was an educational trust scheme funded by an endowment left by John Davidson (c1549–1604) minister of Prestonpans, who organised the building of (and who provided much of the money for) the present church in 1596. This flamboyant character left funds to provide for the teaching of Latin, Hebrew and Greek. Under the Education Endowments (Scotland) Act 1882 these funds were to be transferred to the School Board of the parish. By 1889, the funds had still not been transferred.

The Infant School Fund dispute[60]

The records provide evidence of the power struggle that continued between adherents of the different churches. In his role as chairman of Prestonpans School Board in 1884 Free Church member John Fowler Hislop of Castle Park, wrote to the Education Endowment Commission regarding the sum of £80, which had been collected c1845 towards the erection of an infant school in the burgh. Originally it was lodged with the Established Church minister Struthers, and after the 1872 education changes, Hislop wanted to know where that money was. Struthers *'dissents from the present application'* – ie would not respond; just before his death later that year, he had suggested that the money should be used to erect a hall near the established church. Hislop pursued the matter with the kirk session, suggesting that the fund should be relinquished to the school board.

The kirk session took the view that, now that education was provided free, the funds could not be re-allocated to be used to

assist the children of the poorest families. However they released some funds to pay for clothes and books for these same children.

3.5 After 1894

In 1894, the Local Government (Scotland) Act set up the Local Government Board, which took over responsibility for the operation of the Poor Law. Although legislation was gradually introduced during the early 1900s, aimed at improving provision for the poor and destitute, many of the poorest in society remained so. Only gradually did their rights improve, and many continued to resist claiming the benefits to which they were entitled. The degradation associated with 'going into the poorhouse'[61] lingered on into the 20th century.

3.6 Children

Wherever possible children – whether orphans or from families unable to cope – were boarded out. This was cheaper than placing them in Wedderburn House (see 3.2.2. above) and the like. Nonetheless, there were instances where some children did end up at Wedderburn, probably either because they were difficult to place in the community, or because they were too young to be separated from their mothers who were also there, or because the family's stay at Wedderburn was to be for a short while only.

The people who accommodated boarded-out children were paid a welcome pension to cover their costs. One orphaned pair of sisters (their mother had died in the 'flu epidemic of 1919) was given a home in Morrison's Haven by their paternal aunt, who already had 12 children of her own. During the General Strike of 1926, the family's sole income was the children's money from the welfare agencies.[62]

Wartime saw the emergence of various charitable societies. A shilling fund was begun in 1899 for the widows and orphans of soldiers who died in the Boer war (Charles Belfield was the treasurer). In 1900 a collection for the War Relief Fund raised £24/14s.

By 1901 a general UK-wide concern[63] was being expressed in the newspapers that children were working before and after school, and that in agricultural districts their school holidays were taken during the peak times in agriculture. Prestonpans was not specifically mentioned, but as a prime market

gardening area, it seems likely that children were expected to work.

4 SELF-HELP

Self-help was something of a tradition in East Lothian. Haddington man Samuel Smiles had published the widely acknowledged *Self-Help* in 1859 and *Thrift* in 1875, and the Co-op movement had self-reliance as a core quality.

4.1 Mutual and friendly societies

In the burghs, the mediaeval guilds looked after their own and vigorously excluded non-members, operating a closed shop. In a small industrial settlement like Prestonpans – which was a burgh of barony for three centuries – groups of workers operated friendly societies that provided a safety net of financial support for the sick and for the families of the dead. Like modern insurance policies, money was paid into the fund by members when they were healthy and able, and paid out when they were sick. A death fund ensured that the family was able to at least pay for the funeral. Acknowledged problems of these societies included fraudulent claims and membership of more than one society; rules were put in place to try to prevent this.

The requirements of the craft organisations also stated rules on apprenticeships – many lasted seven years. In burghs like Edinburgh, it was necessary to be a freeman of the city and to pay a burgess fee before being permitted to employ anyone.[64] In burghs of barony like Prestonpans, it was unlikely that such rules were enforced; indeed one of Edinburgh's problems was the amount of competition that came from settlements outwith the city.

Most friendly societies used rather arcane language – of lodges, tents, brother, warden, master etc – and followed particular rituals; some were trade incorporations, and involved members of higher social groups, while others were solidly based in working communities. These last groups of workers also came together for social events, when banners and parades brought a little relief to their lives; they often lived in close proximity to each other and formed tight-knit communities of their own, relying on the informal bonds of family and work for support.

Some of the ministers of the established churches felt great concern about the situation that was developing in the increasingly urban parishes. In 1827 the Rev Adam Thomson[65] delivered an address proposing the formation of 'The Coldstream Congregational Friendly Society', being open to all members of the congregation – male and female, young and old (but only if they joined during the first year, thereafter those over 40 were excluded) – and that it would mean a payment of 1d a week out of an income of 8d a day from a bondager, for five shillings a week in case of inability to work. There would be a delay of five years before the fund would become effective. There was a proviso that payment of five shillings a week was payable 'provided the funds allow it'. Without further research it is unclear whether the venture succeeded, and whether Thomson's true aim was to save the heritors money. The destitute would of course still be excluded.

Prestonpans' friendly societies

The numbers of societies changed over time, with some closing down and re-opening later. Many processed through the town on the traditional fair day of the first Wednesday in June. In 1835 one author[66] stated:

> *'At one period, this parish had more than enough of such institutions. The only survivors now are the Carters', Gardeners', several yearly societies, and the Sailors' Incorporation.'*

He considered that only the latter and the yearly societies managed their funds well enough to ensure their survival.

The oldest recorded of these societies in Prestonpans is the *Masonic Lodge of Aitchison's Haven*, with unique extant records from January 1598 to 1764.[67] The signatories were George Aitoun, John Fender (warden of the lodge) and Thomas Petticruiff. The lodge membership was evidently drawn from a large area – with meetings held as far away as Dalkeith and Musselburgh. The lodge ceased in 1862.

In 1886,[68] there is mention of the self-help lodge of *Good Templars* – the Guiding Star Lodge No 312, Cuthill – which met at the Mission Hall, Cuthill. There was also a juvenile lodge. The following year, reference is made to the lodge's 17th anniversary, indicating it was formed in 1870. It is also

noted that the Temperance Society and the Good Templars fought against the common foe – strong drink – and not against each other.

The *Thorntree Masonic Lodge* No 1038 was formed on 2 February 1908; by 1946 the lodge was meeting twice monthly in the Church of Scotland hall. In May 1909, the Free Church kirk session recorded that a request was made by the freemasons for permission to hold special service in the church in connection with their lodge; permission was given – but that the lodge was to get a United Free church minister to hold service. Lodge tenets remain brotherly love, relief and trust.

Some Prestonpans residents maintained membership in other lodges. On 12 August 1898 the *Haddingtonshire Courier* reported the death of a Prestonpans butcher who was a member of the Dunbar Castle Lodge of Freemasons.

Extant records of the *Prestonpans Incorporation of Seamen* run from 1668–1747, and then from 1798–1801, being still extant in 1824.[69] It seems to decline thereafter, but the group evidently revived as it was running in 1835 (see above). By 1898, the *Sailors' Walk* (held on a Friday in September) was an event of some note in the parish; the walk progressed through 'the village' and on to Prestongrange, calling also on Cockenzie, raising £4 and 8 shillings for Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The procession was headed by Newtongrange Band, and model ships were held high. 'As the day advanced they were joined by a large number of girls and young women'; street dancing followed later. In 1902, the walk was led by the Gilmerton Band.

The potters' society was erected on 26 March 1766[70] – as the *Society of the Potters' Box Meeting.* No members over 30 years old were admitted, or anyone who was involved in any other business; no benefits were paid until three years of membership. Initial joining fees were 5/–. Meeting day was early June (2 June in 1775). It seems that members attended meetings wearing white aprons; they were fined for non-attendance at meetings, and for uttering oaths during meetings. A potter's mortcloth was available. By 1775, it was clear that membership came from outwith practising potters, with members listed as a labourer, a spirit dealer, a pilot, a thatcher, and a watchmaker. It seems that the potters' society ceased sometime in the first decade of the 19th century.

The Statistical Account of 1793 provides information about the *travelling chapmen*, who were 'itinerant sellers of wares'; this was a wealthy group which paid money to needy

members, or to members' families. One source suggests the meetings at Prestonpans began in 1530.[71] They met annually at Preston Cross (from 1636) and from 1732–52 at Prestonpans on the second Thursday of July, drawing their membership from across the Lothians. By 1793, it was estimated that there were fewer than six chapmen in the county, and only 24 in all; the declining numbers was attributed to the increase in town-based shopping. Martine (1890) deemed the group extinct, commenting that 'many years ago' the cross was 'rescued' by the Bannatyne Club (1817–67), which revived the guild and 'made gentlemen chapmen – including Sir Walter Scott … after the manner of antiquarian good fellows'.[72]

On 29 May 1829, the *Prestonpans United Society of Carters*[73] was instituted. From 22 December 1876 the society's registered office was at Cuthill, moving later to Moat House, and from 17 June 1905 to 16 Kirk Street, where George Thomson lived. Members included potters, labourers and gardeners. In 1844, procession day was the third Wednesday in June, from 9am; there were to be no drunks, and the horses to be run were workhorses. The Riding of the Marches would take place, and the cost to members (for music) would be 6d each. In 1893, they gathered at the Black Bull, and the boxmaster, the holder of the Farrier's Cap, and the standard bearer led a small procession. In 1897 'my lord' William Fraser was mounted on a 'gaily caparisoned horse'. In 1900, the procession was preceded by 'my lord' Peter Dudgeon, and an equerry on horseback. Penston Band marched in support, and the event ended with a dance. The popularity of this society waned with declining numbers between 1889 and 1901; in 1901 'for the first time in half a century' their procession did not take place. Until the society applied for dissolution on 21 February 1912 (awarded on 28 March 1912) it had a good record for paying out as necessary on sickness and death.

On the same Wednesday in both 1897 (74 members) and 1900, the *Cuthill Benevolent Friendly Society* also had its annual procession; in 1900, 40 marchers, wearing silk tartan sashes, and with banners and flags were preceded by two officers with drawn swords, and Gilmerton Brass Band. They visited Provost McEwan's home, then went on to Cockenzie. The day ended with a dance.[74] The group was still meeting in 1901, but further references have not been located.

Records[75] are extant for the *Prestonpans Caledonian Lodge of Free Gardeners* from c1820; in 1872 and 1873, they

marched on the same day as the carters. Support evidently waxed and waned over the years, and the society actually closed in 1884 as funds ran out.[76] It evidently drifted on as there are references to there being no procession in the 1890s. The naming of Alexander Gradison as the secretary in 1897 indicates the society remained active. In 1925, it was suggested that there were 80 members. In July 1925, the annual walk took place. Members (and many from other lodges) met at the town hall and, preceded by the Newhaven Silver Band, marched to Cockenzie; there they visited their property at Gardener's Close. Returning to Prestonpans, there was dancing in the town hall.

A few references[77] are found to the *Hammermen of Prestonpans* with a fair day in June. It seems that they were active before the 19th century and are listed in the 1821 East Lothian Register. It may be that they were an adjunct to the hammermen of either Haddington or Musselburgh. Hammermen incorporated the craft groups of blacksmiths, pewterers, locksmiths, saddlers and armourers.

Similarly a single reference in 1897 hints at the existence of a *Mechanics' Friendly Society* in Prestonpans.

Other groups, too, emerged in Prestonpans, among them those societies keen to promote temperance. The *Rechabite Friendly Society* was founded in 1835 in Salford, by a group of teetotallers for people of like mind to provide for them in time of sickness or to cover funeral arrangements. The name of the order was taken from Jeremiah 35. There were two tents in Prestonpans (district 35) – Preston Tower and John Davidson, which began in 1893 with a membership of 10; it held its annual social gathering of the 75 members in March 1901 in the United Free Church hall, where Provost McEwan presided over the songs and recitations provided by the ladies. The groups had both senior and junior lodges; it was open to men and women, and peaked in the 1930s and 1940s, by which time they were using the Church of Scotland hall for meetings. Local meetings were still held at least to c1950. In the 1970s there was a change of social habits and the Rechabites faced a decline in membership as the original membership died off; new teetotallers were few and far between. Tents merged, and groups were consolidated into districts and then into regions; by 2000 the society had centralised at Salford. In 1995 the board decided a change of approach was essential and so the society modernised its slant, being now for those with a healthy lifestyle, and was renamed Healthy Investment – a non-profit making mutual friendly society.[78]

In 1887 a Prestonpans branch of the *Scottish Legal Life Assurance Society* (Haddington district) appears.

Registered under the Friendly Society Acts 1896 and 1908 on 4 April 1911, the *St Andrew's Catholic Total Abstinence and Benefit Society, Branch 'Father John Hughes' Branch No 36, Prestonpans*[79] held its meetings in Cuthill Hall on alternate Sundays at 5pm. Members within three miles were fined for non-attendance, 'courtesy and respect' being desired virtues. Both sexes were eligible, as long as they were abstainers from 'intoxicating liquors' as well as 'practical Catholics'. Junior members were covered for funeral benefit. The registered office was at Easter Road, Broxburn. Trustees of the branch were all miners: John McKenna, 36 Middle Street; Cornelius Lafferty, 83 Back Street; and Thomas Banks, 26 Summerlee Street, all Cuthill, Prestonpans. The 'Father John Hughes' branch ceased to exist when all members 'withdrew from the membership' by 30 April 1912; it briefly revived in April 1914, and finally closed by June 1914.

The other 'big' temperance presence in Prestonpans was of course the *Gothenburg*; between its building in 1908 and its decline in the 1960s it provided a gathering and eating place for ordinary people, and their families, of Prestonpans. Following the lead of the Industrial and Providential Societies Act 1893, any profits above 5% return on capital were recycled into the local community 'to provide civic amenity'. The aim was to provide alternative leisure activities to drunkenness,[80] credit was prohibited, as were gambling games. [It re-opened in 2004 once again true to its original principles, spurred on by a visit from Jorgen Linder, Lord Mayor of Gothenburg in Sweden, in July 2003.]

4.2 The Co-operative Wholesale Society[81]

Concern about the poverty of the 1830s stimulated the rise of the co-operative movement in England. The ideas of Robert Owen (later of New Lanark) were a driving force behind the development of the co-operative self-help ethos. The modern co-operative movement began with a model developed by the Rochdale pioneers in 1844. The Co-op sought to 'bring the producer and the consumer into more immediate contact, and thus enhance the profits of co-operation, by diminishing the costs of distribution'.

In 1863 the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Society was founded, being renamed the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1872. The Scottish Wholesale Co-operative Society was