THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Lesson Two:

What can 'pauper voices' reveal about attitudes towards punishments in the workhouse?

Key Stage 5 | 19th Century

Resource Pack

Introduction

This lesson is part two of a two lesson sequence focussed on punishment of the poor in Victorian Britain. The first lesson explores punishments given to children while the second lesson examines pauper attitudes to punishments for the general population.

It was created as part of the Teaching the Voices of the Victorian Poor Teacher Scholar Programme.

Suitable for:

KS5

Time period:

19th Century Britain

Connections to the Curriculum:

Edexcel A Level History 34: Poverty, Poor Law and the State in Britain, c1780-1939.

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Teacher’s Notes

To put the lesson into context, students should have an awareness of what the 1834 Amendment said about workhouse punishments for inmates.

Look at the background anaylsis on page 5. an extract from Carter, James and King, “Punishing Paupers” What does this tell us about:

- The punishments inmates were likely to receive in the workhouse?
- What paupers might do if they disagree with the punishments they have been given?

Turning now to the each source, students should answer each of the following questions:

- What punishments do paupers receive in the workhouse?
- What does the evidence suggest about the local workhouse authorities?
- What does the nature of the evidence reveal about the agency of the paupers?

A table is provided to record this information. This could be completed in paired/group work or as a carousel activity.

To extend their work, students could look at the accompanying notes/ comments/ annotations from the Poor Law Commission (CIRCUMTEXT) and discuss what this reveals about the attitudes of those responsible for poor relief.

Using this knowledge, students could then write a practice exam answer using the following question:

Choose a document you have studied today.
Assess the value of the source for revealing attitudes towards punishments in the workhouse.
Explain your answer, using the source, the information given about its origin and your own knowledge about the historical context.

Name:

	Document 1	Document 2	Document 3	Document 4	Document 5
What punishment(s) does the pauper receive in the workhouse?					
What does the evidence suggest about workhouse authorities?					
What does the nature of the evidence reveal about pauper agency?					
What do the accompanying notes and annotations (circumtext) reveal about the attitudes of those responsible for poor relief?					

Background

The workhouse: an intended place of punishment

From the very beginning, the Poor Law Commission (PLC) was conscious that there would be a need for the systematic disciplining of paupers within the workhouse and that the local workhouse authorities must have the right to inflict punishment upon inmates who broke those rules designed for good governance. In the first of their annual reports, the Commissioners set out a host of rules under the general title of ‘Discipline and Diet’, the breaking of any of which would signify the pauper as ‘disorderly’. Such rules included making a noise when silence was ordered, using obscene or profane language or insulting a fellow inmate. The classification of disorderly might result in the pauper 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’. Any pauper who then repeated, within a week, an act that would have deemed them as disorderly, or who committed two disorderly acts, or who insulted the master or matron, or who was drunk or acted indecently, would be classed as ‘refractory’. The refractory pauper could expect a greater period of confinement and greater alteration to their diets than that of the disorderly pauper. However, the confinement was limited to twenty-four hours or such time when the individual could be taken before a magistrate to be dealt with under the criminal justice system should their transgression warrant.

Punishment in the name of order was a feature of nineteenth-century institutions, and the workhouse was no exception. In the first decades of the New Poor Law, it is clear that weak central controls and a fragile administrative reach at the local level led to instances of egregious, not to say brutal, treatment of some paupers. Codification (and watering down) of the centrally directed punishment framework from the 1840s stifled the systematic physical chastisement and concentrated on the removal of privileges as a means of confronting disorder, but it was still a punishment framework.

Selective punishment also has important implications for the way that the inmate poor understood and experienced workhouse life and how those at risk of workhouse admission viewed the institution… The fact is, however, that injustices were often confronted by paupers, inspectors and newspaper commentators.

Taken from P. Carter, J. James and S. King, ‘Punishing Paupers? Control, discipline and mental health in the Southwell workhouse (1836-71), Rural History (2019), 30, pp. 161-180

Tasks

For each piece of evidence, look at the accompanying notes and annotations from the Poor Law Commission (circumtext) ink about what they reveal about the attitudes of those responsible for poor relief?

Use this knowledge to explain how far you would agree with the statement:
“Workhouses were intended as places of punishment.”

The accompanying notes and annotations (circumtext) are unique and interesting additions to the evidence, as these notes show how the Poor Law Commission responded to each letter, petition, witness statement etc. This means that even though we don’t necessarily have copies of all of the full replies, we are given a clear insight into how they viewed each pauper’s complaint. Some letters/ petitions/ statements are passed to more than 1 individual, as if there is a consultation or discussion required. Some are given the “usual reply”/ “reply accordingly” and some are raised separately with the Guardians.

From this collection of evidence, the accompanying notes and annotations (circumtext) reveal (mostly) that those responsible for poor relief wanted to prevent paupers from challenging the legitimacy and authority of the poor law itself. The responses of the PLC show us that “while pauper agency was significant, it should not be overstated, given the disparity in power between inmates and workhouse officials” - S. Williams, ‘Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse, Journal of British Studies 59 (October 2020), pp. 764-792.

Document 1 – Letter. Anonymous letter from the “Respectful Friends of Humanety inhabatance of the Parish of Bethnal Green”. Describes and alleged beating of James Bates, one of the pauper inmates, by Mr Tarent, the Superintendent of Labour.

a) What punishments does the pauper receive? James Bates was punched in the eye by the superintendent. He was then put in a prison cell with only a little water.
b) What does the evidence suggest about workhouse staff? Use violence against paupers.
c) What does the nature of the evidence reveal about the paupers? This is a letter sent on behalf of multiple paupers – shows you that they understand what is right and wrong with punishments and want to challenge wrongdoings. They are probably aware of the rules as rules were often displayed in the workhouse. They are prepared to write to the Guardians to challenge their treatment. However, they are writing anonymously, possibly because they fear further punishments (this links to Evidence 5, where a pauper claims he is punished further for issuing a complaint against workhouse staff).

Tasks

Document 2 – Letter. George H. Hancock complains that he is being informally punished (this would not feature in the punishment book) by being "deprived of the liberty of going out on Sunday after the Church Service, which I had previously enjoyed, for no other reason, than having stayed out for a day to see your Board" (in other word he had complained earlier directly to the Poor Law Board.)

a) What punishments does the pauper receive? He is not allowed to go out after Church on a Sunday. This is an informal punishment which is unlikely to be recorded in the punishment book but it is not an uncommon punishment at this time – that's because after 1840 (when many physical punishments were chastised), the removal of privileges was commonplace instead.
b) What does the evidence suggest about workhouse staff? The workhouse staff are covering up poor conditions etc at the time of inspections. The staff are issuing informal punishments.
c) What does the nature of the evidence reveal about the paupers? The pauper has knowledge and awareness about what is and isn't allowed to happen in the workhouse. Letter – the pauper is prepared to raise their case to the Union.

Document 3 – Letter. Advocate letter from James Peacock on an alleged assault on an inmate by William Hill, relieving officer. The writer refers to a witness (an inmate) who would need to be treated with care as she has said "she is a fraid of ill usage" from Hill if it was discovered she provided evidence against him.

a) What punishments does the pauper receive? A pauper in the workhouse was dragged down the stairs on his bed sheet, where his head hit the floor. The pauper was then dragged to the yard and cold water was thrown onto him.
b) What does the evidence suggest about workhouse staff? Carry out informal punishments that are not recorded in punishment books.
c) What does the nature of the evidence reveal about the paupers? Letter – the pauper is prepared to raise their case to the Union. Representing other paupers. Some witnesses are afraid of giving evidence, however.

Document 4 – Petition. From the male inmates of the Bethnal Green workhouse stating that they are being punished for a labour task which is beyond them to undertake.

a) What punishments does the pauper receive? Not clear – but they are being punished for not breaking the correct amount of stones. In the last part of the letter, there is the suggestion that their diet is being restricted and also that they are denied writing materials. "Alteration of diet was the most common punishment and, since workhouse food was neither plentiful nor appealing, additional restrictions on meals would have been unwelcome to disorderly and refractory inmates" - S. Williams, 'Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse, Journal of British Studies 59 (October 2020), pp. 764-792.
b) What does the evidence suggest about workhouse staff? The staff are prepared to punish paupers for not meeting a work 'quota'. The master of the workhouse believes he is entitled to this.
c) What does the nature of the evidence reveal about the paupers? The paupers are aware that there are rules in the workhouse that must be adhered to – and they are prepared to challenge that. Some are illiterate (X next to name).

Tasks

Document 5 – Letter. Thomas Swingler makes a complaint about being punished for a labour task it is beyond him (physically) to undertake. As a result the meat in his diet has been stopped (as per the central instructions on pauper punishment). He also claims that in trying to complain about his treatment he was further punished.

a) What punishments does the pauper receive? Being refused meat and placed on a restricted diet. Also placed in the tramp ward for one night and taken clothes. Letters have been kept from him. The pauper also suggests that there have been other punishments, which he would like to tell the Board about in person.
b) What does the evidence suggest about workhouse staff? Workhouse staff did not want the paupers to complain – the letter implies that he was further punished for raising a complaint.
c) What does the nature of the evidence reveal about the paupers? Thomas Swingler is seemingly not put off from complaining! He is angry at the ‘system’ rather than one individual.

All these letters seek to show us that injustices were often confronted by paupers! – “Individually and collectively, inmates protested when they or their friends and peers experienced medical neglect, when diet or clothing was inadequate, when people were disciplined unjustly and where relief decisions were taken or not by staff and workhouse masters and mistresses” – S. King, ‘Thinking and Rethinking the New Poor Law’, Local Population Studies 99, no 1 (2017), pp. 5-19, at 16

“The workhouse punishment books [and letters] reveal simmering underlying tensions, with different motives, perceptions, and expectations between and within each groups in the hierarchy of authority: inmates, workhouse staff (master, matron, chaplain, schoolmaster and schoolmistress, medical officer, taskmaster, and any domestic staff), Board of Guardians, Poor Law inspectors, magistrates and the Poor Law Commission (later the Poor Law Board)” - S. Williams, ‘Paupers Behaving Badly: Punishment in the Victorian Workhouse, Journal of British Studies 59 (October 2020), pp. 764-792.

Plenary:
Using your knowledge gained by this session – do you think the responses to each would be broadly sympathetic or not.

Homework or in-class exam practice:
Choose a document from the lesson.
Assess the value of the source for revealing attitudes towards punishments in the workhouse.
Explain your answer, using the source, the information given about its origin and your own knowledge about the historical context.

Document 1

Catalogue Ref: MH 12/6845

Document 1 - Transcript

ARCHIVAL AND OTHER REFERENCES
Archive and reference: MH 12/6845
Original reference: 3353/1847
Date of letter: 23 February 1847
Poor Law Union number: 430
Poor Law Union: Bethnal Green Poor Law Union
Union counties: Middlesex

CIRCUMTEXT:

It might be well to inform the Gndss that the Commrs. have heard, by an anonymous commcn. which being anonymous they attach but little weight that James Bates an inmate of the W.H. Has been improperly punished by, or at the instigation, of the Superintendent of Labour, and that they will be glad to receive any statement of recent misconduct or punishment of the sd James Bates that the Gns. may after Inquiry, make to them.
BH 1st March /47

TEXT:

London Feby 23 1847

Gent
We the Under sined have Eard to Day a Curcamstance of Brutal usage Comited in Bethnal Green Poor house on James Bates by the superintendance on Saturday the 13th of this month the Cais is as follows the superintendance Mr Tarent Came into the Steam Room to Order som of the able Boded Men to the Pump and seeing James Bates before Him said you Laysey Scoundral I am no Scoundral I am the Father of 8 Children Mr Tarant in <Public> said Can i put up with such Insolance a [****]you have but one Eye and I will shuve that out and he seazed hould of Bates and with his Staff Thrust it in Baites Eye wich Blacken^ed^ it wich as Remained Black Ever since and with in half an hour after Came and put him ^in^ to thir Prison and gave thim som Warter and at 8 Oclock lett him out of Prison now Gentlemen if this man had done Wrong he ought to have been taken before a Majstrait and thir Delt with as the Magstrait thought Proper and not to be beat by the superentendant Wich the Law do not alowe now Gentlemen we hope and trust you will take this Case in to your most seirous Consideration and Exersise your Power to put a stop ^to^ such Pettey thing unless you do We In tend to Put it in to the Times and Dispatch Newspapers as We do think such a Brute as the superintendant is not a fitt and Proper Felow to hold that sitavation turn over

So no more at Presant but Remain your Most Respectful Friends of

Humanety inhabatance of the Parish of Bethnal Green

Document 2

Catalogue Ref: MH 12/6991

Document 2 - Transcript

Archive and reference: The National Archives MH 12/6991.
Date of letter: 22 August 1853
Poor Law Union: Chelsea Poor Law Union

CIRCUMTEXT:
Mr Hall
[**]
23 22 Augt 53
See my former Minutes. Inform the Complainant that the [*] [*] Bd. have no power to interfere with the discretion of the Gdns. as to allowing temporary leave of absence from the W. H.
[RH] 23 Aug. /53
[Immediate]
Write accordingly
[RH]
24. Augt 53

TEXT:

Chelsea Workhouse 22nd August 1853

Gentlemen

I took the liberty of addressing a letter to you on the 8th inst. complaining of several matters which I though called for your interference, and as I have never heard of any inquiry respecting them, again beg leave to call upon Kind attention to them; more especially as I am being punished, by being deprived of the liberty of going out on Sunday after the Church Service, which I had previously enjoyed, for no other reason, than having stayed out for a day to see your Board, but being advised that a letter was the more proper way to address you I adopted it.

With respect to the complaints I made no enquiry has been made by the Board of Guardians and I have received no explanation, why I have been prevented seeing them, after making five applications; and as regards the state of the Room I mentioned, although your Inspector Mr. Hall, was here on Thursday the 11th inst., he did not see the Room, which was then as I described it; but on Saturday 13th Mr. Sutton the Master caused the Beds and Bedding to be removed, and the Bed Clothes were sent to the Laundry to be washed, but the state of them was so filthy that the women refused to wash them and they were removed altogether, - the [Flock] the Beds was put into clean Covers, (filthy and dirty as it was) and in all probability is now used for sleeping on.

As it does not appear that a thing will be done without some authority will interpose, and as I believe your honourable Board are the proper authority, and can [protect] the Pauper from the injustice that may be attempted I earnestly request your aid in my Case, and as delay is injurious to me, and as the Board of Guardians sit here on Wednesday, I trust I may hear something by that time, and I shall [be] grateful for anything you may do.

I am, Gentlemen.

Your most Obedient Servant

Geo. H. Hancock

Document 3

Catalogue Ref: MH 12/145889

Document 3 - Transcript

Archive and reference: The National Archives MH 12/145889
Date of letter: 23 May 1854
Poor Law Union: Reeth Poor Law Union
Union counties: Yorkshire North Riding

CIRCUMTEXT: Reeth Union Charge agst [****] of the WH to be awaiting [****] in July [****] to my reply

Reeth Union

Charge agd M of the WH to be investigated in July [****] to my reply

Reeth Union

Mr Peacock

If you will wait, until my return to RU I will take an early opportunity of paying a visit to Reeth & inquire with the matters to which you refer, previously giving you official notice

TEXT

Honle Lords

I think it my Duty to inform You of the Cruel act done by William Hill Relieving Officer at Reeth Union a poor old Man an Inmate belonging to Reeth Union three week gon Saturday his Body Braak & he Spoiled the Bed William Hill came into the Old Man Room took him by some of the Bed Clothes & trailed him out of the Bed crost the Room down the stairs from the Top to the Bottom & his Head met ----- the steps all they way to the bottom of the stairs, then he dragged him into the Open Yard, ordered the men to take his shirt of him which they did so, one man held him up till a nother man threu pail full of could water upon the Old man naked Body, this was done in the Open Yard visible to all the inmates in the Union & his own Family likewise, there is a Woman in the Union her name is Ann Peacock she told me that she was present when all this was done if you wish to enter into the matter Please to be very careful in examining her as she is a fraid of ill usage from William Hill afterwards, this Ann Peacock told Thomas Tate Porter of the Union as well as me & said is she was called on she would speak the Truth, Mrs Hill told Ann Peacock is she speaks so she would be counted as bad as the Master, this old Man only lived six Days after this ill usage [suj] I have been the Union Barber ever since the Union began, I was shaving at the Union the same Day it took place & the old man he told me all about it, how William Hill had ill uesed him, & he said to me you have shaved me the last time a live & it was so

I Remain

Sir,

Your most Obet Servant,

James Peacock

Document 4

Catalogue Ref: MH 12/6850

My Lords and Gentlemen Nov. 11th 1863

RECEIVED P.L.B. NOV 12 1863

41723/63 259/1

We the undersigned being inmates of Bethnal Green Workhouse humble bring forward to your notice the following complaint

You may be probably aware that the labour allotted to the class of men termed able bodied consists of breaking stones but we do not think you are aware that we have to break any certain quantity neither do we think that it specifies in your code of laws that we are to be punished in the event of us not breaking that certain quantity Wizt 5 Bushels the master says you are but we cannot think so and we write this so as to be enabled know from you direct if it is so we must bow to your decision if it is not so we should be highly gratified

We the undersigned are those that find it beyond capabilities to perform the allotted task consequently we are receiving bread and water only as our diet every other day We also have lay a complaint against the master he having refused to supply us with the necessary articles to lay before you our complaint

William Davis +
William Mills
Edwin Rayner
Sam Forecast
George Foredice x
Fredric Tuting
Henry Hopwood under 16.
Abraham Davis +

Send copy to the Gys in their answers

13 votes

Inmates of Bethnal Green Workhouse

that

Document 4 - Transcript

Archive and reference: The National Archives MH 12/6850
Date of letter: 11 November 1863
Poor Law Union: Bethnal Green Poor Law Union

CIRCUMTEXT:

Send copy to the Gns for their observns

<AH> 13 Nov ‘63

TEXT:

My Lords and Gentlemen Nov. 11th 1863

We the undersigned being inmates of Bethnal Green Workhouse humbly bring forward to your notice the following complaint.

You may be probably aware that the labour allotted to the class of men termed able-bodied in consists of breaking stones but we do not think you are aware that we have ^to^ break any certain quantity neither do we think that it specifies in your code of laws that we are to be punished in the event of us not breaking that certain quantity Viz 5 Bushels The master says you are but we cannot think so and we write this so as to be enabled know from you direct if it is so we must bow to your decision if it is not so we should be highly gratified

We the undersigned are those that find it beyond capabilities to perform the allotted task consequently we are receiving bread and water only as our diet every other day We also have lay a complaint against the master he having refused to supply us with the necessary articles to lay before you our complaint

William Davis X

William Mills

Edward Reynolds

John Forecast

George Foredice X

Frederic Tuting X

Henry Hopwood – under 16[1]

Abraham Davis X

Inmates of Bethnal

Green Workhouse

[1] “under 16” written in a different hand

Document 5

Catalogue Ref: MH 12/13311

495
3

To the
Right Honble Commissioners of Poor Laws

RECEIVED P.L.B. NOV 14 1862
RECEIVED P.L.B. NOV 11 1862
39444 62

Gentlemen

I have been a pauper inmate of the Birmingham Workhouse at intervals for the space of several years having been reduced in circumstances from which it seems at present impossible for me to overcome and being also unable to perform any very laborious work such as could be obtained in my present condition as I suffer from weakness of the loins I am at times utterly unable to avoid a residence there – but of late my treatment there and the treatment of others also has been cruel in the extreme I am by profession a mechanical Draftsman but my eyes being weak I was compelled to abandon my profession I enter the house as a thoroughly which I am but an indifferent Workman – ~~The~~ I have now left the house since last friday Novr 7th inst^t but I feel I shall be compelled to return again in a few days or starve for want of food The complaints I have to lay before you I cannot here state in full and I pray you will investigate the matter I was placed in a cats yard to break stones and was told that unless I broke sixteen cwt per day my food would in part be witheld and you are aware Gentlemen that if it is all given it is not sufficient to sustain common men in health at all now I could not break more than four or five cwt per day with all my power – and accordingly all my meat (animal food) was stopped for ten days – at the end of which time I was induced to discharge myself in the hope of recruiting my exhausted system for I was very ill through this treatment this is not the first time they have treated me so – indeed it was because I attempted to justify myself and censure such treatment before the board of Guardians in June last that I was treated in this way now I wish to know Gentlemen if Her Majesty's law provides that men shall be punished for not performing that which is impossible This is not all however of which I have to complain – I came up here last January with an order to enter the house at 8 o'clock in the afternoon and they put me to lie all night in the tramp Room between two men who had the itch and treated me in a way that I shall explain to you more fully if opportunity serves they also robbed me of the only shirt I had that was wearable and refused to return me one and since I intimated my design of writing to you they have used me still worse I am placed in a ward set apart for criminal and defamed characters but I have never dishonoured my name present – they have done all they can to induce me to break the law They have kept letters from me that was delivered at the Office of the House for me – I laid my complaints before the Board of Guardians and they entered into a sham enquiry I have had such an insight into the selfish policy of the local authorities here and their defiance of justice and even law that I must at once tell you that I repudiate any enquiry of the local authorities solely on their own facts which matter I cannot find room to explain here as it is too much I shall be compelled to enter the house again in a few days – probably – it is the local authorities I impeach and not the individual responsibility of any officer in particular – I am not yet Gentlemen to work at any door labour at this time of the year and much less to do impossibilities The Doctor has also treated me in a manner unwarrantable for any Gentleman of common honour or honesty I hope Gentlemen you will not suffer me to be unjustly punished and persecuted in this way and I should be very grateful for a speedy enquiry – since I find it of no use to appeal to the Guardians here An answer address'd to

Thos Swingler
No 12 Court 1 House
Little Charles Street
Birmingham

will find me – and I shall be very happy to respond to your favour's

I am Gentlemen
Your Obd^t Servant
Thomas Swingler

Birmingham Novr 10th 1862

Mr Veale
HH
12 Nov 62

Send usual and
2 copies of this to B.G.

Note that the Board will make inquiry of the Govr respecting his complaints – Instead of "to Govr respect" Man obnoxious
AA
14 Nov 62

Document 5 - Transcript

Archive and reference: MH12/13311
Date of letter: 10 November 1862
Poor Law Union: Birmingham Incorporation

CIRCUMTEXT:

Mr Weale

[HH] 12 Nov/62

Send usual ans & copy of this to Gdns

RL 13 Nov 62

State that the Bd will make enquiry of the Gdns respecting his complaints – send a copy to Gdns & request their observations.

[HH] 14 Novemr

TEXT:

Right Hon Commissioners of Poor Laws

Gentlemen

I have been a pauper inmate of the Birmingham Workhouse at intervals for the space of several years having been reduced in circumstances from which it seems at present impossible for me to overcome and being also unable to perform any very laborious work such as could be obtained in my present condition as I suffer from weakness of the loins I am at times utterly unable to avoid a residence there – but of late my treatment there and the treatment of others also has been cruel in the extreme I am by profession a mechanical Draftsman but my eyes being weak I was compelled to abandon my profession & enter the house as a shoe[maker] in which I am an indifferent workman – The I have now left the house since last Friday Novr 7th inst but I feel I shall be compelled to return again in a few days or starve for want of food The complaints I have to lay before you I cannot here state in full and I pray you will investigate the matter I was placed in a [cold] yard to break stones and was told that unless I broke sixteen cwt per day my food would in part be withheld and you are aware Gentlemen that if it is all given it is not sufficient to sustain some men in health at all now I would not break more than four or five cwt a day with all my power – and accordingly all my meat (animal food) was stopped for ten days – at the end of which time I was induced to discharge myself in the hope of [recruiting] my exhausted system for I was very ill through this treatment this is not the first time they have treated me so – indeed it was because I attempted to justify myself and censure such treatment before the board of Guardians in June last that I was treated in this way now I wish to know Gentlemen if Her Majesty's law provides that men shall be punished for not performing that which is impossible This is not all however of which I have to complain – I came up here last January with an order to enter the house at 5 Oclock in the afternoon and they put me to be all night in the tramp room between two men who had the itch and treated me in a way that I shall explain to you more fully if opportunity serves they also robbed me of the only shirt I had that was wearable and [refused] to return me one and since I intimated my design of writing to you they have used me still worse I am placed in a ward set apart for

Document 5 - Transcript (continued)

criminal and defamed characters but I have never dishonoured my [xxx] present – they have done all they [new] to induce me to break the laws They have kept letters from me that was delivered at the office of the House for me – I laid my complaints before the Board of Guardians and they entered into a sham enquiry I have had such an insight into the selfish policy of the local authorities here and their defiance of justice and even law that I must at once tell you that I repudiate any enquiry of the local authorities solely on their own faith which matter I cannot find room to explain here as it is too much I shall be compelled to enter the house again in a few days – probably – it is the local authorities I impeech and not the individual responsibility of any officer in particular – I am not fit Gentlemen to work at out door labour at this time of the year and much less to do impossibilities The Doctor has also treated me in a manner unwarrantable for any Gentleman of common honour or honesty I hope Gentlemen you will not suffer me to be unjustly punished and persecuted in this way and I should be very grateful for a speedy enquiry – since I find it of no use to appeal to the Guardians here An answer address’d to

Thos Swingler

No 12 Court 1 House

Little Charles Street

Birmingham

will find me – and I shall be very happy to respond to your favour’s

I am Gentlem Your Obdt Servant

Thomas Swingler

Birmingham Novrr 10th 1862