Idle Hands

The Experience of Unemployment, 1790–1990

John Burnett
Idle Hands is the first major social history of unemployment in Britain during the period of its industrialization from the late eighteenth century to the present. Unemployment has been an outstanding problem of modern society and, at times, the overwhelming concern of domestic politics. Although many economists have attempted to analyse its causes, no historian has previously written a history of unemployment which focuses on the experiences of people without work. That is the present aim—not to produce further explanations or remedies, but to recover, from direct evidence, the impact of unemployment on ordinary lives. *Idle Hands* asks how unemployment happened to individuals, how they and their families reacted and coped with it, what steps they took to find work and what remedies were available to them if they failed. And because life is not only about physical survival, how did people feel about their unemployment and what were its psychological effects?

The distinctive feature of this book, and the main source of evidence, is the use of autobiographies and memoirs of working people who experienced and described periods of unemployment as part of their wider life histories. Such writings are a unique historical source, almost unknown until recently. More than 200 autobiographies have been used in the present book, covering a range of occupations from agricultural labourers to skilled workers: they provide moving personal accounts, supplemented by extensive use of other contemporary documents, Parliamentary Papers and secondary sources.

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INTRODUCTION

Unemployment has been an outstanding problem of modern Britain, and, at times, the overwhelming concern of domestic policy, overshadowing all other economic and social issues. Not surprisingly, many economists have attempted to analyse and explain its causes, and many politicians, past and present, have offered remedies for one of the most disturbing features of the modern state. No historian, however, has written a history of unemployment which focuses on the experience of people without work. That is the present aim—not to propose further explanations or social policies, but to recover, so far as possible from direct evidence, the impact of unemployment on ordinary lives. Familiarity has led to treating unemployment almost as a ‘numbers game’; whether the current rate is two, three or four million becomes a statistical exercise, sanitized and dehumanized, though with powerful political overtones. The concern of this book is the reverse of that—to ask how unemployment happened to individual people, how they and their families reacted to and coped with it, what steps they took to find work and what remedies were available to them if they failed. And, because life is not only about physical survival, what was it like to be without work, and what did one feel about it? ‘The real, central theme of History’, wrote G.M.Young, ‘is not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening’. Inner lives, thoughts and emotions may be particularly difficult to recreate, but that, too, is part of the aim of this book.

Three main types of contemporary evidence are used in order to try to answer these questions. The principal source is the autobiographies of working people who experienced and described periods of unemployment as part of their wider life histories. Such writings are a unique historical source, almost ignored until recently, but providing direct, firsthand accounts of ordinary lives, filtered by memory and the passage of time so that they record the most significant events and the sharpest emotions. Recent research has now uncovered more than two
thousand such autobiographies, published and unpublished, written by working people whose lives covered the years 1790 to 1945. Though varying in quantity between occupations and regions, and in the quality of detail provided, they cover the whole range of working-class experience. At least 200 autobiographers suffered and described periods of unemployment, and their testimonies constitute the core of primary material in the following chapters. For more recent years the written accounts are supplemented by oral testimonies of witnesses whose experiences were recorded by others, sometimes in response to a set of directed questions. Autobiographical history and oral history are thus different but complementary approaches to reconstructing the past, and both are used here.

A second contemporary source of evidence about unemployment lies buried in Parliamentary Papers—the vast accumulation of ‘Blue Books’, Reports of Royal Commissions, Parliamentary Committees, government and departmental enquiries in which Britain is especially rich. A thirst for social enquiry became a characteristic of the nineteenth century, and as the problems of an industrializing, urbanizing society increased, almost every aspect of life fell under public scrutiny as experts in administration, law, medicine and other disciplines were called to give evidence on, and propose remedies for, contemporary ills. These enquiries therefore tend to represent the other side of the coin from autobiographies, reflecting ‘official’ opinion and attitudes and more rarely calling for the views of those directly affected. Although only a few Parliamentary Papers were primarily concerned with unemployment, many dealt with poverty and poor relief, with industries in decline, depressions in trade and labour conditions, and these necessarily included discussion of those without work.

A third major source of contemporary evidence is the social investigations undertaken by concerned individuals, groups and societies. Again, Britain has a long history of such enquiries, ranging from the pioneering studies of David Davies and Sir Frederic Eden in the 1790s to Henry Mayhew’s survey of London labour in the 1850s—‘the first attempt to publish the history of a people from the lips of the people themselves’—and the researches into poverty of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree at the end of the century. The onset of unprecedented levels of unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s produced a flood of enquiry, including for the first time studies of its psychological impact, while its return in the 1970s and 1980s has prompted similar investigations, aided now by tape-recording and television as well as the written word.

In total, then, we have a mass of documentary material, some of it central, some more tangential to the social impact of unemployment. To be meaningful as history, the experience of individuals has to be set in the wider context of the social, economic and occupational changes of the
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period, and this book therefore also draws on the work of other historians, principally specialists in the history of labour, poverty and poorrelief. The changing attitudes of the state towards unemployment, and the remedies—or lack of them—which it undertook, form an essential part of the contextual background against which the experiences of individuals are discussed.

A recent author on the economics of unemployment has commented:

Unemployment is like an elephant: easier to recognize than to define. Definitions abound. Practices differ between countries. They are apt to change within countries, too; politicians beset by a sharp rise in unemployment on a given definition sometimes yield to the temptation to redefine their problem away.3

Fortunately, we do not need to penetrate far into this technical jungle, since it is not too difficult to arrive at a commonsense meaning of the term which carries general acceptance.

‘Unemployment’ was not honoured by inclusion in the Oxford English Dictionary until 1888, significantly during the so-called Great Depression, though both ‘unemployment’ and ‘unemployed’ were used occasionally in official reports of the 1830s, if not earlier. In the early nineteenth century more descriptive expressions such as ‘want of employment’ and ‘out of employ’ were generally used, as were phrases such as the ‘surplus’ or ‘superfluity of labour’. The meaning, nevertheless, was clear: that there were people who normally worked but who, for various reasons, were unable to find work. Certain categories immediately became excluded from the definition. A slave could not be unemployed as he was bound to work for life: so too was another unfree, dependent worker, the medieval villein or serf. At the other extreme, people of wholly independent means who do not need to work in order to live—members of the ‘leisured class’—cannot be said to be unemployed in the ordinary sense, though they may be idle. Independent workers such as writers or artists cannot strictly be unemployed as long as they have the tools of their trades, though they may be poor, and neither can owners of businesses, shopkeepers or farmers unless prevented from working by legal process. ‘Unemployment’ refers essentially to those who have to sell their labour in return for a wage or salary. They are not technically dependent, because they can withdraw their labour, but neither are they protected, because they can normally be dismissed by their employer. Unemployment is therefore a characteristic of a free labour market which, in turn, is a feature of a capitalist economy.

Within this broad definition there are clearly some groups which have to be excluded. People may be too young or too old to work, though in
the two centuries covered by this book there were no generally applicable age requirements for either group. In the early nineteenth century some children from the age of five or six upwards worked in certain occupations until legislation setting minimum ages of eight to ten years was gradually extended to factories, mines, workshops and agriculture between 1833 and 1867: after 1880, when attendance at school to the age of ten became compulsory, this, in theory at least, established a minimum age for fulltime employment. At the other end of the scale, there was no general retirement age outside the public services such as the civil service, local government, teachers, police and postmen: in the later nineteenth century larger industrial employers set their own retirement ages, though there was nothing covering agriculture or the host of casual trades. Before the introduction of old age pensions for those over the age of seventy in 1909, most workers worked as long as they were able, sometimes on reduced wages in their declining years. Given the lower expectation of life, retirement was not an option for many people: as late as 1901 less than 8 per cent of the UK population was aged sixty or more, compared with 20 per cent in 1985.4

Henry Mayhew subtitled the fourth volume of his study of London labour and the London poor, ‘Those That Will Not Work’. There were always some who, though poor, chose not to work, preferring the life of a tramp or beggar, perhaps combined with some occasional work or criminal activity. This was a sizeable group in the nineteenth century, many perhaps unable or unwilling to adapt to the new requirements of town life and factory work, but since they chose, at least in some sense, not to be part of the labour force, they excluded themselves from the possibility of employment. ‘Tramping’ was not, however, necessarily an indication of unwillingness to work: on the contrary, as subsequent chapters will show, it was often a genuine search for work organized by craft unions for their workless members, and as such occupies an important place in the social history of unemployment. The activities of professional criminals—thieves, burglars, swindlers and the like—can hardly be regarded as ‘work’ in the normal sense of the word, even if their illegality does not place them outside the definition. Although Mayhew’s investigations into the poor were highly innovative, he was sufficiently bound by the morality of his time to include the estimated 80,000 London prostitutes among ‘Those Who Will Not Work’ (though he devoted over a hundred pages to their various categories and haunts): his view hardly seems justifiable, particularly since prostitution was officially sanctioned and licensed at certain times and places during the Victorian period.

Finally, one must exclude from the unemployed those unable to work through physical or mental disability. Many of the more serious cases could be treated as indigent poor, and maintained in public institutions such as workhouses and lunatic asylums, though the less afflicted would
often be supported by their families and might even do occasional, casual work: the borderline of ‘unemployability’ is a narrow one. But regularly employed workers suffered from periodic illnesses or accidents, many of the latter arising directly out of their work in mines, factories or on the land, and involuntary unemployment of this kind clearly comes within the usual meaning of the term.

Enough has been said to indicate some of the definitional difficulties. The discussion may be summarized by saying that a person is unemployed when he or she is of an age to work, is fit and available for work, needs and wishes to work, is seeking it but is unable to find it. This inelegant definition is the one that will be used.

Unemployment has many causes and takes many forms, and economists have distinguished a number of different types. At the simplest level, people changing jobs, either voluntarily or involuntarily, may be unemployed for a brief period, perhaps only for a few days or a week or two. This is frictional unemployment, an inevitable consequence of mobility of labour and of changes in the demand for it. Indeed, William Beveridge in his classic study, *Unemployment: A Problem of Industry* (1909), believed that an expanding economy required some small degree of unemployment, an ‘irreducible minimum’ which he put at about 2 per cent for skilled trades and rather more for unskilled. There could never be zero unemployment because demands for labour were always fluctuating, people were always changing jobs, and there always appeared to be ‘a general and normal excess of the supply of labour over the demand’.5

Beveridge believed that there must also always be some underemployment—that is, people who work fairly regularly throughout the year in the sense of doing some work each week but rarely, if ever, are able to put in a full week. Underemployment applied particularly to the casual trades which required little more than strength—general labouring, portering, navvy ing, dockwork, carting, roadwork and the like for men; laundrywork, cleaning and sweated domestic trades for women. In Charles Booth’s monumental survey of *London Life and Labour* (1889–1902) casual labourers were located in the two lowest classes, A and B. Class A consisted of occasional labourers, loafers, street-sellers and semi-criminals: ‘Their life is the life of savages…. They degrade whatever they touch…. It is now hereditary to a very considerable extent’. Class B were dock-workers and other casual labourers: most worked less than three days a week, and Booth thought it doubtful whether many could work full time. They were ‘inevitably poor’ from shiftlessness, helplessness, idleness and drink, and could not stand the dullness and regularity of modern industrial life. Booth saw this group as a permanent sub-stratum or ‘residuum’ of society, the only remedy for which was removal to some form of labour colonies.
Underemployment and frictional employment are distinguishable from a third category, seasonal unemployment, though all share the characteristic of irregularity. Seasonal unemployment takes two main forms—climatic and social. Agriculture, the largest occupation of the British people in the first half of the nineteenth century, was especially subject to variations in demand for labour at different times of the year, heaviest in hay and corn harvest from June to September, least in winter months from December to March. Farmers met this difficulty by keeping small numbers of permanent men for specialist work all the year round, and employing day labourers as needed for the busier seasons. This often meant unemployment or underemployment for labourers during several months in the year. Many other occupations besides farming also had regular alternations of busy and slack seasons, normally showing a trend from slackness in winter to activity in spring and summer: this was especially true of outdoor constructional work, building, bricklaying, painting and trades which depended on building activity such as furnishing. The reverse applied to coal-miners, iron- and steel-workers and gasworkers, who were busiest in winter and slackest in summer, following seasonal demands. Here were cases where unemployment could not be laid at the door of shiftless workers, and for whom the only remedy seemed to lie in a system of insurance against the slack times.

So far, the types of unemployment considered were traditional in the sense that they had existed, though in less acute form, before the vast economic and industrial changes which gathered speed from the late eighteenth century onwards. Other, more ‘modern’ types of unemployment—technological, cyclical and structural—were principally associated with the new forces of production, the mechanization of industry and the expansion of world markets as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Rapid technological change has been a characteristic of British industry for the last two hundred years; automation, micro-processors and information technology are only the most recent stages in a continuum of innovation. The question which has greatly concerned workers ever since the earliest days is whether mechanization destroys jobs. Almost without exception, economists have argued that in the long run mechanization actually increases employment by expanding demand and by creating new types of skilled personnel, but most have acknowledged that in the short term some workers might not be immediately absorbed and some might not or could not ever adapt to new techniques. Issues of this kind were especially prominent in the early stages of industrialization, when ‘Luddite’ framework-knitters rose in revolt, agricultural labourers destroyed threshing-machines, and handloom-weavers suffered an agonized death at the hands of the new power-looms, but technological unemployment has continued into
modern times, albeit masked by euphemisms of ‘redundancy’ and ‘early retirement’.

The progress of the new industrial system was by no means regular, however, but subject to cycles of booms and slumps, identified from at least as early as the 1790s. The new machines could increase output almost infinitely, but their owners could not predict the demand for their products nearly so well, especially when overseas markets were disrupted by wars, revolutions and financial crises. But once production had been geared up it was difficult to slow down quickly: unsold goods therefore glutted the market in the down-swing of the trade cycle, machines were idle and workers unemployed until the surpluses were sold and trade revived. On at least thirteen occasions between 1815 and 1914 slumps threw thousands out of work, presenting poor law administrators and charitable organizations with the unpalatable problem of men and women who desperately wanted to work and for whom a deterrent workhouse was a totally inappropriate remedy.

Fluctuations in the trade cycle were still a major cause of the exceptionally high rates of unemployment between the two world wars. Between 1921 and 1939 the average unemployment rate of insured workers was 14 per cent: it was never less than 10 per cent, and at the worst, in 1932, it reached 22 per cent or 2,828,000 workers. Britain’s problems were part of the world depression which affected virtually every country, whether industrialized or not, but Britain, as a trading nation, was among the worst hit: markets for our staple products, coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding and cotton textiles declined steeply, partly because of lack of demand at home and abroad, partly due to intense competition from more recently industrialized nations like America and Japan. Cyclical movements were violent, but relatively short term, and most of the unemployed were likely to be out of work for less than six months at a time, though that might be a recurrent disaster. But what was new in the 1930s was that even in the best years there remained a hard core of ‘out-of-works’ of around 10 per cent, and much more in the old staple industries centred in the ‘distressed areas’: this was structural unemployment, the consequence of a permanent decline in demand for iron and steel, coal, ships and textiles—the very commodities on which Britain’s Victorian prosperity had been built. By then long-term unemployment of more than a year had emerged as a new phenomenon, affecting around a quarter of the jobless total, consigning tens of thousands of men in middle life to lengthy, even permanent, unemployment.

In post-1945 years it became customary for economists following John Maynard Keynes to explain the ‘Great Depression’ as a result of a lack of effective demand, and to believe that any recurrence could be avoided by expansionary financial policies. For almost thirty years after the war
unemployment in Britain averaged a mere 2.2 per cent: it began to rise, however, from the early 1970s, averaging 5 per cent over the period 1974–8, and 9.8 per cent over 1979–84. In the year ending mid-1986 unemployed claimants in the UK totalled 3,294,000, higher than in 1932 although representing a somewhat lower rate because of an increased total workforce; the long-term unemployed in July 1986 were 41 per cent of all claimants, the highest proportion ever. Business cycles, of which there were eight between 1945 and 1985, continued to influence unemployment rates, though of shorter duration and less amplitude than formerly. Some observers have blamed the return of mass unemployment on an over-valued exchange rate and the adverse effects of this on Britain’s competitiveness in export markets; other economists and politicians have argued excessive wage and price inflation, while others again have seen unemployment as partly benefit-induced, claiming that over-generous welfare systems reduce the need and incentive to work. The debate continues over the causes of recent unemployment, as well as over the real numbers of the unemployed.

This book surveys the changing nature, extent and experience of unemployment in modern Britain over the last two hundred years. From around the late eighteenth century a series of revolutionary changes became evident which were to change profoundly the whole character of British economy and society, creating new occupations and classes, new problems and, ultimately, new remedies. A demographic revolution resulted in a trebling of the population of England and Wales from a mere six million in 1750 to eighteen million by 1850. Although the causes of this ‘population explosion’ are still a subject of debate, it was in some way associated with the economic changes of the industrial and agrarian revolutions: by the end of the eighteenth century industrialization was an irreversible process, the exploitation of machines, land and human beings for profit having been universally accepted as the road to wealth and power in the modern world. In 1801 almost four out of five people lived in rural areas, most of them working on the land or deriving their livelihoods from it: by 1911 four out of five people lived in towns and cities, the majority of them industrial wage earners. Thus, the nineteenth century witnessed an economic and social transformation of unparalleled speed and scale which changed the life of the worker in almost every way. In the new philosophy of laissez-faire there was no real place for unemployment. Poverty there would always be: it was natural and inherent in society, and the ‘iron law of wages’ dictated that there must always be many living on the edge of subsistence, but work would always be found in an expanding economy for those who searched hard enough. A poor law which supported—indeed, some believed, encouraged—the idle and shiftless had no place in the new climate of competitive individualism,
and from the 1790s onwards it faced a mounting attack from the growing converts to political economy.

The first four chapters of the book follow the changing fortunes of major occupations in the period 1790–1870—agriculture, the largest occupation of the people in the early nineteenth century (Chapter 1), but thereafter experiencing a long-term erosion in employment as Britain ceased to provide her own basic foods (Chapter 4); handloom weaving, the classic example of technological decline in the face of the new machines (Chapter 2); and the skilled trades which suffered a loss of craft status and increasing irregularity of work due to pressure of numbers and changing consumer demands (Chapter 3). By the closing decades of the nineteenth century unemployment was becoming both more widespread and more recognized as a problem in its own right, distinct from that of poverty: these new trends, and the emergence of unemployment on to the political agenda, are the subject of Chapter 5, ‘The Discovery of Unemployment’. In the periods of mass unemployment between the two world wars and since the 1970s, when the effects of depression were not limited to particular groups, the method in Chapters 6 and 7 is to treat the phenomenon as a whole, the shorter time-scales and greater availability of data allowing more detailed consideration both of the nature of recent unemployment and its human consequences. Finally, the Conclusion evaluates the changing responses to unemployment over the period, tests some of the psychological theories about its personal impact against the historical record, and raises some questions about the future of work and employment in post-industrial Britain.
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72 Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom. Second Report, 1827, (237), 4.
73 Murray, op. cit., 55.
74 Bythell, op. cit., 56.
75 ibid., 123.
77 Edward Baines Jnr., *An Address to the Unemployed Workmen of Yorkshire and Lancashire on the Present Distress and on Machinery*, James Ridgway and Edward Baines, 1826, 7–8.
81 ibid., 97–8.
82 It was reported that in 1823 there had been a total of 568 emigrants: 182 men, 143 women, fifty-seven boys between fourteen and eighteen and 186 children. *Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom*, 1826, (404), 6.
83 ibid., 3.
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93 Smelser, op. cit., 207, footnote 1.
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96 Robert Stewart, Breaking the Fetters. The Memoirs of Bob Stewart, Lawrence and Wishart, 1967, 7. (Stewart was born in 1877.)
98 Edward Baines estimated that in 1833 a power-loom weaver aged fifteen to twenty, assisted by a twelve-year-old girl, and attending four looms could weave nine to ten times the quantity of an adult handloom weaver.
99 Smelser, op. cit., 148.
103 ibid. ‘Manufacture of Cotton, of Woollen and of Silk’, Table opposite 31.
104 Clapham, op. cit., 552–4. (The wage statistics were collected in 1838–9.)
105 Maxwell, op. cit, 31.
106 Murray, op. cit, 56–7.
107 Report from the Select Committee on Hand-Loom Weavers’ Petitions, with Minutes of Evidence, 1834, (556), X. Evidence of John Lennon, Qs. 6,256.
108 ibid. Evidence of William Longson, Qs 7,080.
110 ibid., 1835, (341), XIII. Report, XIII.
113 Thom, op. cit., 13–31. Thom was rescued from extreme poverty (and, possibly, insanity—there are close parallels with the life of John Clare) by having some of his poems published and becoming a protégé of Mr Gordon of Knockespock. His Rhymes and Recollections of a Handloom Weaver was published in 1844 and he was briefly lionized in London before returning to the handloom in Aberdeen. His early death in 1848 at the age of forty-nine was hastened by heavy drinking.
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117 Royal Commission on Hand-Loom Weavers: Assistant Commissioners Reports: Scotland by J.C.Symons (159), XLII, 1839, 8.

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120 ibid., 55.

121 ibid., 232–3.

122 ibid., 291.

123 ibid., 305.

124 ibid., 429.

125 ibid., 436.

126 ibid., 531.

127 Ben Brierley, Home Memories, and Recollections of a Life (Abel Heywood & Son, 1886). Brierley was born at Failsworth near Rochdale in 1825 and died in 1891.

128 Thomas Wood, Autobiography, 1822–1880, offprint from serialized version in the Keighley News, 3 March-14 April 1956, 16. Wood was born at Bingley, Yorkshire, in 1822: in later years ill-health obliged him to give up engineering, and he became a school attendance officer.


131 Farish, op. cit.


133 Charles F.Forshaw, ed., The Poets of Keighley, Bingley, Haworth and District, Thornton and Pearson, 1891. Includes the Autobiography of Abraham Holroyd, born at Clayton near Bradford in 1815, died in 1888 at Saltaire, where Titus Salt had been a patron.


136 Royal Commission, op. cit, Assistant Commissioners Reports, Part III, (43II), 1840, 590.

137 Karel Williams, From Pauperism to Poverty, Routledge, 1981, 47–8.

138 David Ashforth, ‘The Urban Poor Law’, Ch. 6 in Derek Fraser, ed., The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, Macmillan, 1976, 133.

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143 Adshead, op. cit. Report by Dr H.Baron Howard, Princess St., Manchester, Jan. 1842, 52.

3 UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG SKILLED WORKERS, 1815–70


9 Alexander, op. cit., 36.

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13 ibid., 290.


15 Thompson and Yeo, op. cit., 222–3.


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18 ibid., 231.

19 ibid., 527–3.

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21 ibid., 405–21.

22 ibid., 430.

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27 ibid., 196.
29 Baxter, op. cit, 42–7.
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45 ibid., Evidence of Mr Mackness, para. 383, 83.
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89 *Report upon the Condition of the Town of Leeds and of its Inhabitants*, by a Statistical Committee of the Town Council, October 1839, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, Vol. II, Charles Knight and Co., 1839, 422. (The survey was conducted over the previous eleven months.)
90 Fairbairn, op. cit., 85, 91.
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97 ibid., 163.
98 Smith, op. cit., 19.
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104 Place, op. cit., 115.
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139 ibid., 224–5.
141 Leeson, op. cit, 184.
142 Erikson, op. cit, 264. Table and footnote 4.
143 Leeson, op. cit, 185.
145 Place, op. cit, 115–17.
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147 Powell, op. cit, 13, 34.
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150 Smith, op. cit, 20.
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34 ibid., 385.
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64 For a first-hand account of women tramps and their treatment, see Julia Varley, ‘Life in the Casual Ward. Experiences of an ex-Bradford Guardian “On the Road” and in the Workhouses’, (Varley Papers, Brynmor Jones Library, Hull University). Julia Varley, a trade union activist and member of Bradford Board of Guardians, posed as a tramp in Yorkshire and Lancashire and published her experiences in a local newspaper. No source or date is given, but probably c. 1910.
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88 Rowntree and Lasker, op. cit., 132.
89 Mrs Y earn. ‘A Public Spirited Rebel’, in Life as We Have Known It, by Cooperative Working Women, Margaret Llewellyn Davies, ed., Virago, 1977, 103, 1st edn Hogarth Press, 1931.
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93 Thorne, op. cit., 36.
94 Jones, op. cit, 44.
96 Aubrey S. Darby, A View from the Alley, Borough of Luton Museum and Art Gallery, 1974, 12. The author was born in Luton in 1905 and began part-time work for a butcher at the age of eight.
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110 ibid., 138–9.


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114 Frances Hicks, in Frank W. Galton, ed., *Workers on their Industries*, Swan Sonnenschein, 1895, 17–18.


116 ibid., Appendix C, Tabulated Cases, 214 et seq.


118 Alfred Ireson, *Reminiscences*, TS. Brunel University Archive, 77. Ireson was born in 1856 at Whittelsea, near Oundle.

119 ibid., 92.


121 Rowntree and Lasker, op. cit, 149.

122 Chapman and Hallsworth, op. cit., Table, 42.


124 ibid., 27–8.

125 ibid., 33. Stewart was elected to Dundee Town Council in 1908: in 1921 he became Scottish organizer for the British Communist Party and was an unsuccessful Parliamentary candidate.

126 Hannington, op. cit., 25.

127 Beveridge, op. cit. (1930), 39, 432.

128 Chapman and Hallsworth, op. cit., Graph, 36, and 38.

129 Beveridge, op. cit. (1909), Table XIII, 73. The statistics relate to the Manchester and Leeds Districts of the ASE.


131 George N. Barnes, *From Workshop to War Cabinet*, Herbert Jenkins, 1924, 8.

132 ibid., 24–6. Barnes became General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (1896–1908), MP for Blackfriars, Glasgow (1906–22), Chairman

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of the Labour Party (1910) and Minister of Pensions in the War Cabinet (1916–18).


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140 ibid., 145.


142 George Rowles, *Chaps Among the Caps*, TS. Brunel University Archive, 37.

143 ibid., 66. Rowles became an editorial proof-reader, a freelance journalist and writer of short stories.

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153 Lord Williams of Barnburgh (Thomas Williams), *Digging for Britain*, Hutchinson, 1965, 22. Williams became Labour MP for Don Valley, 1922–59, was Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Labour, 1929–31, Privy Councillor in 1941 and Minister of Agriculture in 1945.


155 Frederick Parkin, *Autobiography of a Pottery Trade Unionist. Reminiscences of 45 Years*, MS. Horace Barks Reference Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, 29. Parkin was born c. 1884 and became Secretary of the local branch of the ILP and was on the management committee of the Burslem Co-operative Society.

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167 Charity Organisation Society, 18th Annual Report (1884), 36.
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169 Quoted Harris, op. cit., 36, ref. 5.
170 Belchem, op. cit, 183.
171 Frederick Charles Wynne, Old Pompey and Other Places, TS. Brunel University Archive, 8.
172 E.Robinson, I Remember, Brunel University Archive, 11–12.
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176 Harry McShane, op. cit, 24–5.
177 For a full discussion of unemployment policies in the period, see the excellent account by Jose Harris, Unemployment and Politics, A Study in English Social Policy, 1886–1914, Oxford, 1972: only a brief review is necessary in the present volume.
178 Beveridge, op. cit (1909), 157–62.
181 General Booth, In Darkest England, op. cit, 91 et seq.
182 Harris, op. cit, Table 4, 376.
183 Treble, op. cit, 141–2.
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186 Alden and Hayward, op. cit., 8.
187 Harris, op. cit, 76.
189 Beveridge, op. cit (1930), Table XXXVI, 448–9.
190 Beveridge, op. cit (1909), 162–91, provides a full and critical commentary on the 1905 Act.
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33 Ministry of Labour Reports, Investigations into the Industrial Conditions in certain Depressed Areas, Cmnd. 4728, 1934.
36 Investigations into...Depressed Areas (Ministry of Labour), op. cit., 71–6.
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38 ibid., 130–48.
39 ibid., 201–18.
41 ibid., 7–10. The total numbers of long-term unemployed fell from 480,000 in July 1933 to 265,000 in August 1937, but the proportion rose from 25 to 27 per cent.
42 ibid., Table II, 13.
43 ibid., 26.
44 ibid., 24.
45 Rowntree, op. cit., 46. These periods of unemployment do not include occasional odd weeks of casual or relief work.
46 Wilkinson, op. cit., 262.
47 Rowntree, op. cit., 44.
49 ibid., 2–3.
50 ibid., 10.
51 Almost all working-class autobiographers of this period make mention of unemployment: some 200 of these have been consulted, many of which are cited in the following sections.
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59 ibid., 32.
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65 Armitage, op. cit., 200. He lost his job at the Airedale Foundry in Leeds, at seventeen.
67 Donald Kear, ‘Forest of Dean’, in Gray, op. cit., 163.
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69 Harry Fletcher, A Life on the Humber: Keeling to Shipbuilding, Faber & Faber, 1975, 112.
75 Mick Burke, Ancoats Lad: The Recollections of Mick Burke, Neil Richardson, 1985, 41.
80 Harry McShane (and Joan Smith), No Mean Fighter, Pluto Press, 1978, 113.
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85 ibid., 128.
86 ibid., 134–7.
89 ibid., 174.
93 Kay Garrett, Untitled TS. Brunel University Archive, 3–4. In 1945 Kay Garrett became ‘Mary Brown’, the well-known columnist of the *Daily Mirror*, a post she held for seventeen years.
100 Joe Loftus, ‘Lee Side’, TS. Brunel University Archive, 149.
104 Armitage, op. cit., 211 et seq.
106 John Brown, *I Was A Tramp*, Selwyn and Blount Ltd., London, 1934, 183. In 1932 Brown won a TUC scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford, where he gained a Diploma in Economics and Political Science: his later career was as a journalist and political organizer.
108 Halliday, op. cit., 90, 131.
110 Hodgkinson, op. cit., 75.
111 Brown, op. cit., 179.
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131 Terence Monaghan, in Armstrong and Beynon, eds, op. cit., 11.
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152 ‘A Young Electrician’, ibid., 253.
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174 Loftus, op. cit., 152–3.
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CONCLUSION

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