Sanitation, Modernisation, Identity, and the 1851 Great Exhibition – The emergence and downfall of the St Giles Rookery.

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Abstract

Irish migration, modernisation, sanitation, and politics of identity, all overlap in the microhistory of St Giles. The St Giles Rookery was known as an Irish slum in central London. This thesis tracks the origins of the slum in the 1700s to the supposed "end of the Rookery" in the 1850s. By doing so, it provides a looking glass into the forgotten community of fifty-five thousand labourers who lived within the area. These people occupied the outskirts of London society, excluded from Britishness, many retaining their Irishness. Previously, historians on the slum have not put enough emphasis on the links between the rise of British public health, infrastructure projects, and the desire to quash slum living. By utilising firsthand accounts of St Giles, correspondence from within the Ministry of Health, and contemporary press articles, it is possible to draw new conclusions. This thesis posits that the slum was intrinsically linked with cholera and typhus pandemics and was marked for demolition by the construction of New Oxford Street in 1847. It argues against the narrative that the Rookery was dismantled within the 1850s, as other historians have, underlining evidence from contemporaries who continued to lament the state of the area until 1872. Instead, it points to the arrival of the 1851 Great Exhibition as an accelerationist event that forced the slum to be superficially reformed to hide it from the view of visitors. With the extension of Oxford Street cutting the slum into two, Londoners could go through St Giles on the new boulevard and not suspect the ongoing misery behind these new buildings. Behind this façade, the St Giles Rookery faded into obscurity over several painful decades.

Résumé

L'immigration irlandaise, la modernisation, l'assainissement, et l'identité nationale, font partie de la microhistoire de St Giles. La Rookerie de St Giles était était connu comme un bidonville irlandais au centre de Londres. Cette thèse retrace les origines du bidonville du début du XVIIIème siecle jusqu'à sa fin présumée, au milieu du XIX- ème. À travers ces travaux, elle donne la vision d'une communauté oubliée de cinquante cinq mille ouvriers qui vivaient dans ce quartier. Ces personnes occupaient les faubourgs de la société londonienne, exclues de la britannicité, plusieurs conservent leur identité irlandaise. Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, les historiens sur le bidonville ont peu exploré les liens entre le developpement de la santé publique britannique, les projets d'infrastructures, et la volonté d'eliminer les bidonvilles. En utilisant des rapports au sujet de St Giles, la correspondance interne du ministère de la santé et des articles de presse de l'époque, il est possible de présenter de nouvelles conclusions. Cette thèse établit que ce bidonville a été intimement lié au choléra et au typhus, et qu'il a été décidé de le détruire en construisant New Oxford Street en 1847. Elle remet en cause l'idée que la rookerie a été détruite dans les années 1850, comme le prétendent d'autres historiens, en s'appuyant sur les plaintes des contemporains qui ont duré jusqu'à 1872. A l'inverse, elle présente l'arrivée de l'Exposition universelle de 1851 comme un événement accélérateur qui a forcé le bidonville à être réformé superficiellement pour le cacher aux visiteurs. Avec l'extension d'Oxford Street, qui a divisé le bidonville en deux, les Londoniens pouvaient se déplacer à travers St Giles sur ce nouveau boulevard sans soupçonner la misère qui perdurait derrière ces nouveaux immeubles. Il fallut encore plusieurs décennies douloureuses pour que derrière ces façades trompeuses disparaisse le bidonville de St Giles.

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Acknowledgements:

Dédié à mes parents, qui m'ont toujours soutenu.

At the end of secondary school, after a gruelling two years of History A-level, I swore never to study history academically again. By August 2017, I was enrolled in a Political Science major at McGill and well on my way to escaping the world of history. While registering for classes, I spotted an intriguing history class that was full. I saw that there were some seats retained for history majors only. On a whim, I signed up for the class and a history major. Five years later, I am finishing a thesis on a small slum in London which 18-year-old me did not even know existed. The irony is not lost on me that the module I despised the most in my teenage years was British history in the 19th century. I particularly loathed Chartism. Unsurprisingly, Chartism has found its way into this thesis. I am, above all else, grateful to have had the opportunity to work on this project.

This thesis would not have been possible without my two supervisors, Professor Brian Lewis, and Professor Elizabeth Elbourne. Professor Lewis's ability to immediately spot weaker areas of my research, that I was desperately attempting to hide, has resulted in far stronger writing. Professor Elbourne always had a unique angle with which to view the sources, bringing interesting ideas to every meeting. They have been a dynamic duo which has, without fail, helped me improve week after week. They were not alone in their aid. Jessica Ward, Graduate Studies Coordinator for History, was at all times ready to clarify administrative points concerning the MA. This was exceedingly helpful during stressful times, surrounding deadlines.

As I began, I am eternally grateful to my parents. They have supported me in every and any way they could over the last five years. I would not have successfully made it through my BA without them, let alone an MA. They have kept me company through weekly calls, over 5,000km away. Hopefully, the effort I have put into this thesis reflects my gratitude. I am also thankful for my partner, who has read an endless blur of history papers over the last four years. Similarly, my brother has more than once been a much needed second pair of eyes.

To all the friends I have met in Montreal over the last five years, I appreciate you all. You have all made my days brighter, and my path easier.

Lastly, I want to thank London for being a wonderful city and an endless source of inspiration. I look forward to walking its streets again.

Introduction:

"Rookeries are bad, but what are they to Irish rookeries?" [1] – Montague Gore, 1851.[2]

Gore's brutal assessment of the Irish in Britain, in the very year of the Great Exhibition, neatly encapsulates the prejudice faced by many Irish labourers in London. By 1851, the parish of St Giles was synonymous with the largely Irish rookery within its borders. In 1860, John Camden Hotten defined a 'rookery' as, "a low neighbourhood inhabited by dirty Irish and thieves – as St Giles' Rookery," in his dictionary of slang.[3] Despite the word's negative connotations, it dominates the contemporary and secondary sources. As a consequence, this thesis will follow suit and often refer to the area simply as "the Rookery." Between 1700 and 1850, it gained a reputation as being one of the vilest places in the city. Flora Tristan, a Franco-Peruvian socialist writer known for her work on *The Worker's Union*, documented her journey into St Giles in 1840. She proclaimed, "it is impossible to imagine such squalid indigence, such utter debasement, nor a more total degradation of the human creature."[4]

This thesis seeks first to outline how the Rookery established itself in St Giles, and how Irish migrants began to live in the area. Through an analysis of identity politics, the alienation of the St Giles residents is highlighted. Then, it will focus on the significant factors that led to St Giles's demise in the nineteenth century. These included modernisation projects, such as urban

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[1] Montague Gore, *On the Dwellings of the Poor and the Means of Improving Them*, 2nd ed. (London: James Ridgway, 1851), xiv.
[2] Montague Gore was a British politician and author (1800-1864). He famously published *Thoughts on the Present State of Ireland* in 1848.
[3] John Camden Hotten, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, Dictionary of Modern Slang. (London: John Camden Hotten, 1860), 201.
[4] Roger. Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2002), 40.

planning and road construction. Enormous new boulevards such as New Oxford Street would come to transect the densely packed rookery. Fears of pandemics brought attention to the area, as British interest in public health grew. This meant that sewers began to be constructed and housing was increasingly regulated. These reforms had limited immediate effect, and the Rookery slowly crumbled into the late nineteenth century. In 1851, the Great Exhibition presented an opportunity for the British to secure international prestige in the heart of their empire. As a result, the Rookery was superficially reformed to minimise the hindrance to these goals. The Rookery established itself in the 1720s, remained largely autonomous from London for a century, and began to decline in the 1840s with sanitation reform, which was further accelerated by the 1851 exhibition, until the slum disappeared in the late nineteenth century.

St Giles's wretchedness was immortalised in Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, following the author's residence in England between 1842 and 1844. While the book largely focused on Manchester, where Engels was living, the Rookery featured in the chapter on "The Great Towns." In it he stated, "here lived the poorest of the poor, the worst paid workers with thieves and the victims of prostitution indiscriminately huddled together, the majority Irish."[5] Herein lies the power of the St Giles Rookery: it was arguably London's worst slum. Peter Ackroyd's popular history of London, *London: The Biography*, posited that very idea. Ackroyd believes that the Rookery "embodied the worst living conditions in all of London's history."[6] While this may or may not be accurate, it is telling of the terrible conditions inside the Rookery and of the powerful imagery the name conveyed in popular culture.

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[5] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London: Electric Book Co., 2001), 84, http://site.ebrary.com/id/2001797.
[6] Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, 1st ed. (New York: Nan A. Talese, 2000), 138.

This begs the question, what is a slum? H.J. Dyos, doyen of British urban historians, posed himself that question at the beginning of his renowned "The Slums of Victorian London" article (1967). Dyos presents Robert Williams's 1893 attempt to give a comprehensive definition, "it generally is a cluster of houses, or of blocks of dwellings, not necessarily dilapidated, or badly drained, or old, but usually all this and small-roomed, and, further, so hemmed in by other houses, so wanting in light and air, and therefore cleanliness, as to be wholly unfit for human habitation."[7] The key takeaway of this definition is the final phrase, "wholly unfit for human habitation." This is an adequate description of the Rookery in the period this thesis seeks to cover. Dyos points out that slum became a synonym for "rookery", an older term for the same kind of downtrodden area, in the mid nineteenth century.[8]

Identity, language, and religion are all crucial themes when discussing the place of Irish labourers within the Metropole. The vast majority of Irish Londoners in the Rookery were Catholic, Irish speaking, and largely illiterate. This means that they were mostly alienated from the world around them. This puts them in a different position from the Welsh and Scottish, most of whom at least shared Protestant ties with the English. The Irish alienation is best encapsulated by their large presence in London jails. Kevin O'Connor, a historian specialising on the Irish in Britain, argues that it is hardly surprising that the Irish grouped together in slums, "wherein they retained some semblance of their culture, spoke Irish and brewed drink."[9] The Irish of St Giles could not readily form part of a cohesive 'Londoner' identity as it was too competitive between long term residents and new arrivals. Therefore, they retained their Irishness above all else.

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[7] Robert Williams, *London Rookeries and Colliers' Slums: A Plea for More Breathing Room, and for Amending the Building Laws Generally ...* (London: W. Reeves, 1893), 13.
[8] H. J. Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', *Victorian Studies* 11, no. 1 (1967): 8.
[9] Kevin O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain.* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), 12.

Previous writers have often posited the end of the St Giles Rookery as being rather

sudden, in the 1850s. Richard Kirkland, a professor of Irish Literature, argues that by 1855 the

Rookery "had nearly disappeared." [10] He supports his claim with first-hand testimony from a

certain John Timbs. Kirkland points to the end of the Rookery as being a "staggered demolition

in the early 1850s."[11] Adam Crymble, another writer on St Giles history, insinuated 1851 as

being the critical date for St Giles as this was the year the land was "put up for redevelopment."[12]

Crymble does not elaborate further on how the Rookery came to be dismantled. Firsthand

testimony will dismantle the established view that the Rookery faded away during the 1850s.

Letters from local residents will show that infrastructure works, such as sewers, took years to be

established in the area. Moreover, writers and painters from the latter half of the nineteenth

century will continue to paint a picture of overcrowding and vile conditions in St Giles. These

sources will help to counter narratives spread by writers such as Timbs. This author claimed, in

1855, that St Giles had been replaced with "model houses for families, with perfect ventilation

and drainage, and rents lower than average […] of the old Rookery."[13] This is a vast

exaggeration compared to other accounts of a similar or later period.

A wide variety of primary sources support the idea that the St Giles Rookery's

dismantling was a slow process. Many of these sources come from the General Board of Health's

correspondence on the state of St Giles. This includes firsthand accounts of the Rookery in the

late 1840s and early 1850s. The London press also helps to paint a picture of the area in these

[10] Richard Kirkland, 'Reading the Rookery: The Social Meaning of an Irish Slum in Nineteenth-Century London', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 16, no. 1 (2012): 17.
[11] Kirkland, 17.
[12] Adam Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', *Urban History*, 2021, 18.
[13] John Timbs, *Curiosities of London: Exhibiting the Most Rare and Remarkable Objects of Interest in the Metropolis* (London: D. Bogue, 1855), 331.

pivotal years, particularly the *Times*. One of the largest obstacles this paper has to tackle is that the St Giles population was largely Irish speaking or unable to write in English. As a result, the primary sources utilised will necessarily come from English writers. This weakness is not cataclysmic for the thesis as it focuses on English perceptions of the Irish and, in turn, why the Rookery began to decline during this period. The Irish residents are, of course, essential to the history of St Giles. Their silence in the sources is a result of their place in the vast underclass of the London poor. The first two chapters attempt to counter this silence by establishing the origins of the Rookery and its residents, as well as the unjust conditions in which they lived. In the latter two chapters, the thesis will posit that public health and the Great Exhibition accelerated the fall of the Rookery.

The first chapter will lay crucial foundations, explaining how the area became associated with the Irish. This will begin with a description of the Rookery's borders, and their fluidity over time. Population statistics will be placed alongside the Rookery's dimensions to highlight the poor living conditions. In turn, this will necessitate a look into how the leases in St Giles allowed for the rise of this slum over time. The thesis will expand on the claim made by Roger Swift's, a historian of Irish migration to Britain, that St Giles was unique within the Irish settlements of London, in its criminality and diversity. The type of labour carried out by Irish migrants, both seasonal and permanent, will be evaluated as to how they pertain to the Rookery's position in London. Gender factors into the labour discussion, as Irish women from the Rookery contributed significantly to the local labour force. The imagery surrounding the Rookery in popular culture exerted an immense influence on external perceptions of St Giles. This imagery was propelled abroad by foreign writers visiting Britain, such as Engels.

The second chapter focuses on a culture of anti-Irishness that was prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This sentiment centered around stereotypical formulations such as the 'Paddy' and all the negative connotations contained therein. The Rookery will be shown to be a double-edged sword, that protected and entrapped the inhabitants. Additionally, the Irish will be compared to the Welsh and Scottish to flesh out the former's unjust conditions. This will be done using the statistics from the Old Bailey trials, to understand the structural injustice against Irish residents. One of the driving forces behind this unequal treatment was the continued use of the Irish language by migrants, which made courts susceptible to ignoring their testimony. As such, the Irish of London will be shown as an 'underclass,' following Jacqueline Turton's analysis of Victorian journalist Mayhew.[14] Identity is then discussed, to ascertain where the London Irish belonged in the metropole, and Britain at large. It must be remembered that during the 1840s, the Irish famine caused mass migration from Ireland towards Britain and America. As a consequence, overcrowding in the St Giles Rookery was worse than ever. The Chartist movement, which was attempting to reduce inequality in Britain in the 1840s, reached out to the London Irish for solidarity. The General Board of Health, a body tasked with limiting the spread of illness, began to be concerned with the newly arrived Irish. They wondered if they would be seasonal workers or permanent residents of the metropole. It becomes clear that seasonal labour was ending, and permanent migration was the new norm.

The third chapter will put forward first-hand testimony of the conditions of the Rookery to illustrate the direness of the situation. Most prominently, a letter from some of the inhabitants of Church Lane and Carrier Street, in St Giles, was published by the *Times*, *A Sanitary*

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[14] Jacqueline Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', in *The Irish in Victorian Britain : The Local Dimension*, by Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1999), 154.

Remonstrance (1849). The residents wrote, "we are sur [sic], as it may be, livin [sic] in a Wilderniss [sic], so far as the rest of London knows anything of us, or as the rich and great people care about. We live in muck and filth."[15] This plea for help, and the associated press surrounding the Rookery in the 1840s, leads to discussing the rise of public health in London. The General Board of Health's (GBH) correspondence illuminates decisions surrounding the fate of the Rookery. By comparing the Rookery to other areas of Britain, commonalities and differences are identified. A constant commonality is the association made by British lawmakers of filth and degradation with Irish migrants. It is doubly salient to consider the public health discourses, as the 1840s were in the middle of the third cholera pandemic. Said pandemic was ravaging the Rookery, as well as creating doubts as to whether Britain should host the Great Exhibition or not. The rise of the Metropolitan Sanitation Association (MSA) symbolises the fractured response to the ongoing health crises in London. Charles Dickens was a strong advocate for the MSA, and his negative views of the Rookery begin to seep into this narrative. No single organising body was in charge of containing pandemics, and the result was confusion. Moreover, the correspondence from within the GBH shows a 'buck-passing' mentality as every association attempted to recuse themselves from improving the Rookery. The arrival of New Oxford Street, cutting the Rookery in two after 1847, forced a more direct confrontation between the rich and the Rookery residents. In 1853 sewers were laid in Church Lane and Carrier Street. As such, one of the major demands of the residents there was fulfilled.

The fourth, and final, chapter outlines the potential threat the Rookery posed to British international goals. The Rookery is contrasted with the emerging 1851 Great Exhibition, which was meant to place Britain at the top of the world hierarchy. Charles Purton Cooper, a barrister,

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[15] John Scott et al., 'A Sanitary Remonstrance', *The Times*, 5 July 1849, The Times Digital Archive.

wrote to Sir George Grey, the Secretary of State for the Home Department that, "without your intervention, it [St Giles] will, I greatly fear, remain unaltered when the Exhibition of next year opens."[16] Cooper reported to Grey that foreigners were already inquiring into the state of St Giles. In Britain's eyes, the exhibition would place London as the focus of the world's attention. Therefore, the continued deprivation in the Rookery needed to be covered up sufficiently for visitors to not notice. Therefore, it can be said that the Exhibition accelerated the demise of the Rookery. On the other hand, this chapter will also point out that the Rookery took many decades to fade. The governmental efforts to improve the Rookery in the 1850s were largely surface level. One of the biggest problems was the positionality of the Rookery, as being extremely central within the metropole. Anyone attempting to get from the city of London to Hyde Park (the location of the Exhibition) would likely go on Oxford Street, through St Giles. As Thomas Beames pointed out in 1851, "through this part of the parish runs the New Oxford Street, and they are thus the remains of the famous Rookery – the still standing plague-spots of that colony."[17] The Rookery remained alien to most British people, as alien as the foreigners coming for the exhibition. Both the residents of the Rookery and the foreigners brought the threat of disease and of foreign manners. The Victorian fear of the stranger resonates within these two contrasting communities which stood at odds in the eyes of the British government.

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[16] Charles Purton Cooper and George Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey … from Charles Purton Cooper …: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.* (London: William Pickering : James Newman, 1850), 5.
[17] Gore, *On the Dwellings of the Poor and the Means of Improving Them*, vii.

Chapter One: The emergence of an 'Irish' Rookery:

"We will now enter among those new scenes, and, in order to give a correct view of the ways and doings of this strange life, will at once introduce the reader to the head-quarters of the cadgers – St Giles's."[18] – *A Peep into the Holy Land*, 1831.

This phrase from the book, *A Peep into the Holy Land*, presents St Giles as the locus of London's beggary. A cadger is defined in Hotten's dictionary as "a mean or vulgar fellow; a beggar; one who would rather live on other people than work for himself."[19] In 1831, when the former book was being written, St Giles was mostly known for its wickedness and poverty. It is important to note that St Giles was not always synonymous with "the Rookery." The area had previously been outside the city limits of both London and the city of Westminster. As Adam Crymble points out, "in the medieval era, St Giles was home to a leper hospital considered a safe distance from both [cities]."[20] Therefore, before St Giles's integration into 'Greater London,' it held the position of 'dumping ground' for the poor and sickly. This dynamic held true until the mid-nineteenth century. Over time, the hospital then turned into streets and homes. It is possible to track the development of these buildings, through Crymble's research of contemporary maps.[21] The list below is a simplified version as it removes conflicting reports.[22]

- 1611: Buildings appear along High Street and Tottenham Court Road
- 1660: Buildings shown along High Street and first construction in streets behind
- 1682: Buildings shown on most streets, but still substantial fields
- 1690: Buildings shown on all major roads in Rookery

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[18] *A Peep into the Holy Land, or, Sinks of London Laid Open!* (London: John Duncombe and Co., 1831), 16–17.
[19] Hotten, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, 110.
[20] Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', 9.
[21] Crymble, 10.
[22] Different mapmakers appear to provide contradictory reports on the development of the St Giles Rookery. For example, the 1682 map by W. Morgan showed buildings on most streets, versus the 1689 by V.M. Coronelli which showed buildings only on the High Street and Tottenham Court Road. These inconsistencies have faded by the early eighteenth century.

Between 1700 and 1725, according to Crymble, the Rookery was fully built. This thesis focuses on the Rookery after 1725, when the narrow streets and overcrowded homes have become the norm. This begs the question, where is the Rookery?
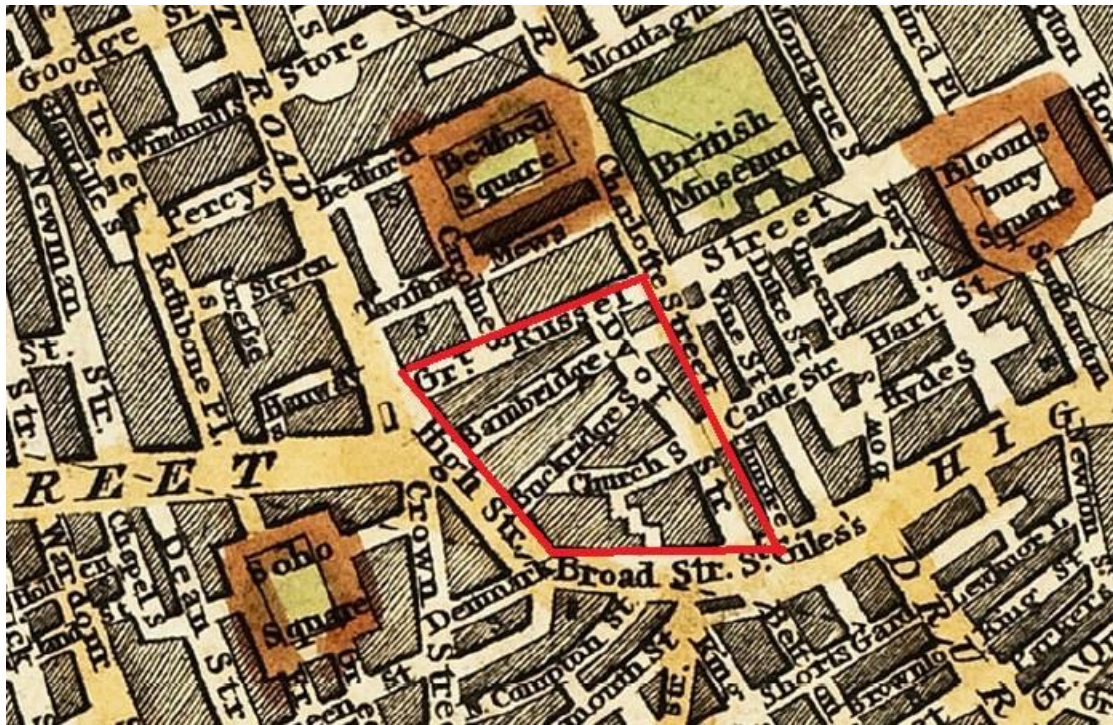
Figure 1: Rookery borders overlaid on 1821 map of London. Source: John Luffman, The Metropolis Displayed (London, 1821)

Location of the Rookery:

Charles Knight, a writer in 1842, claimed that "we shall not be far from the mark if we describe it as the triangular space bounded by Bainbridge Street, George Street, and High Street."[23] John Archer Jackson, a historian of the Irish in Britain, has put forward a slightly larger area, "between Charlottes Street, Great Russell Street, Tottenham Court Road and Broad Street."[24] This seems to be generally agreed upon in the secondary literature, with Adam

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[23] Charles Knight, *London.*, vol. 3, 6 v. ([London]: Charles Knight & Co., 1842), 267.
[24] J. A. (John Archer) Jackson, *The Irish in Britain.* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1963), 43.

Crymble proposing a similar area.[25] While the use of roads as markers tends to make the Rookery sound large, this area is actually miniscule relative to the residing population. Richard Kirkland posits that the Rookery was "about eight acres," thus approximately $0.03km^2$ or $32,000m^2$. If St Giles was perfectly square, rather than the odd rhombus shape of Jackson's definition, it would be around 179 metres by 179 metres.[26] Mayhew, author of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), estimated that the population of St Giles was fifty-four thousand in the late 1840s.[27] Even if every resident had a space of 2 metres by 1 metre, the maximum number of residents that could live in that area would be sixteen thousand. These were dire conditions. Furthermore, the estimated area of $32,000m^2$ includes the space covered by road, meaning that there most likely would have been even less liveable space than initially apparent.

On the other hand, these estimations have weaknesses. For example, the estimated area above only considers the Rookery in two-dimensions. It does not account for homes with several floors or basements. The latter of these two is critical as many first-hand accounts places an emphasis on the quantity of Rookery dwellers living in basements. In Charles Dickens's 1851 visit of St Giles, he wrote, "the cellar is full of company, chiefly very young men in various conditions of dirt and raggedness. Some are eating supper. There are no girls or women present. Welcome to Rats' Castle, gentlemen, and to this company of noted thieves!"[28] The Rats' Castle

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[25] The main problem with Knight's approximation of the Rookery is two-fold. Using Bainbridge Street as the northern cut-off point for the Rookery means that homes between Bainbridge Street and Great Russel Street would not be part of the Rookery. Moreover, it is hard to define this area using "George Street" as an indicator as this does not feature on period maps. Meanwhile, Jackson's definition can be traced onto maps of the Rookery dating from the early 1820s.

[26] It is important to clarify that Kirkland's definition of eight acres has a margin for error. Therefore, 179m by 179m may be too small, or even too large.

[27] Henry Mayhew and William Tuckniss, *London Labour and the London Poor; a Cyclopædia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, vol. 2 (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861), 395.

[28] Charles 1812-1870. Dickens, 'On Duty with Inspector Field (1851)', in *American Notes ; and Reprinted Pieces* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1868), 257, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/719972245.html.

was a particular bastion of criminality in the Rookery, though Dickens was most likely using the name for dramatic effect. Contemporary records by Hunt and Mayhew posit that it was demolished in 1845, revealing the "massive foundations of a hospital," from the 12th century.[29] This leper hospital, as previously mentioned by Crymble, was directly below the emerging slum. The key takeaway is the importance of the subterranean in the Rookery. Kellow Chesney, a specialist in the Victorian underworld, proposed that "in places cellar had been connected with cellar so that a fugitive could pass under a series of houses and emerge in another part of the Rookery."[30] Not only did the basements represent the wretched conditions of the poor residents, but they were also a crucial element in the criminality of the area. They cannot be ignored when attempting to estimate the occupied spaces within St Giles.

Figure 2: A 'typical' basement in the Rookery. Source: John Wykeham Archer, 'A Cellar in the Rookery, St Giles' (London, 1844), British Museum.

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[29] Henry Mayhew and William Tuckniss, *London Labour and the London Poor; a Cyclopædia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1862), 301.
[30] Kellow. Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, Pelican Books (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 110.

Another counterpoint to these calculations is that they assume firm boundaries. Knight argued that "its [the Rookery's] limits are not very precisely defined, its squalor fades into the cleanness of the more civilised districts in its vicinity."[31] This flexible border meant that some more wealthy individuals did end up living alongside the predominantly poor Irish in St Giles. Sian Anthony's archaeological digs in 2011 revealed the presence of luxury glassware fragments within the slum.[32] This can largely be explained through parish structures. St Giles was a parish first and foremost. Its official name was St Giles in the Fields, presumably due to its positionality as outside of the City of London. Due to the Rookery's infamousness, St Giles was often conflated with the slum in nineteenth century sources. Contrary to this conflation, the St Giles parish had larger borders than simply the Rookery. The parish of St Giles also predated the emergence of the Rookery in the early eighteenth century. It dates back to the twelfth century, approximately when the hospital was built. Therefore, the parish church was several roads outside of the slum and was still in the parish of St Giles in the Fields. This confusion does not, however, change the positionality of this mostly indigent neighbourhood. As Crymble comments, "on all four sides, the Rookery looked into wealthy communities."[33]

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[31] Knight, *London.*, 3:267.

[32] Sian. Anthony, *Medieval Settlement to 18th-/19th-Century Rookery : Excavations at Central Saint Giles, London Borough of Camden, 2006-8*, MOLA Archaeology Studies Series ; 23 ([London]: Museum of London Archaeology, 2011), 58.

[33] Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', 7.
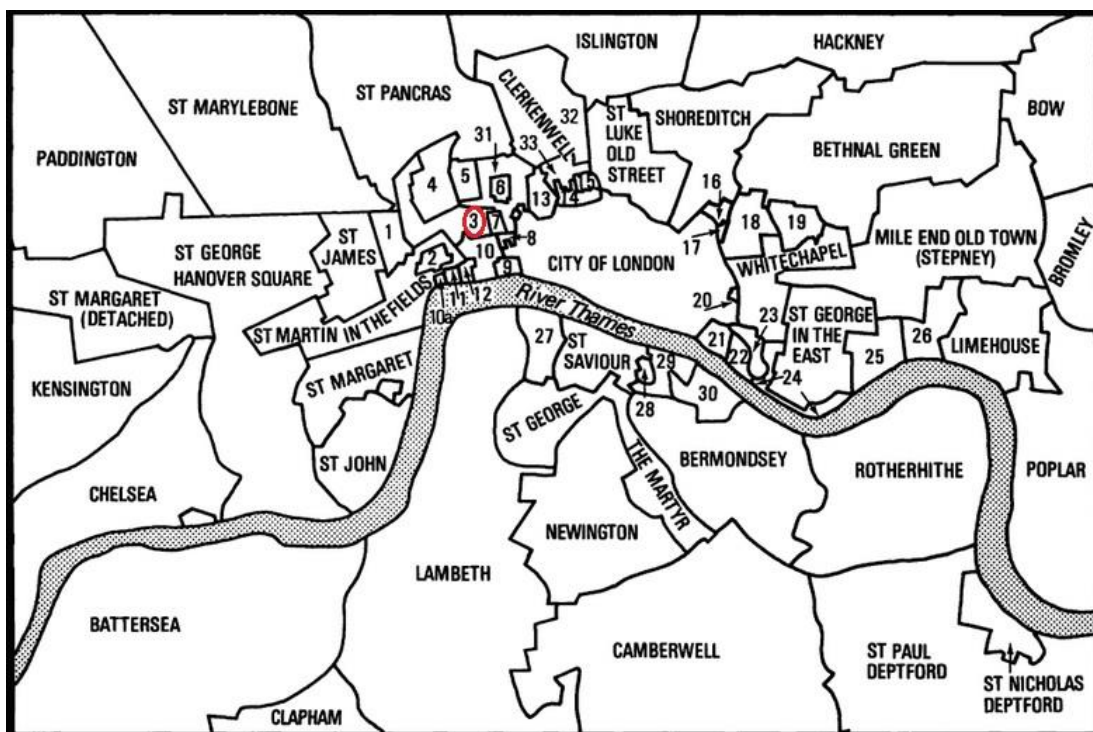
Figure 3: 1711 Parish map with St Giles circled in red. Source: M.H. Port, The Commissions for Building Fifty New Churches, (London, 1986)

The St Giles Rookery's centrality in nineteenth century London is noteworthy, prompting the question, how did this cycle of deprivation come to pass? Crymble points to the influence of the plague and English Civil War (1642-1651) in the slowing down of London's growth, leaving St Giles just on the edge of the metropolis.[34] In turn, "the national road network put the Rookery at the end of three of the most important routes into London," one from north and two from west.[35] The western road brought in migrants from the south of Ireland and Wales. In 1850 Thomas Beames, a preacher and chronicler of Victorian poverty, pointed to the Statistical Society report that estimated that "about one half of the inhabitants [of St Giles] are Irish, chiefly natives of Cork."[36] The Oxford Road, which culminated in Oxford Street on the Rookery's

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[34] Crymble, 9.
[35] Crymble, 10–11.
[36] Thomas Beames, *The Rookeries of London Past, Present, and Prospective.* (London: T. Bosworth, 1850), 50.

western border in 1847, brought in Irish migrants from Holyhead. The Holyhead-London route was the result of the Welsh town being the fastest Irish Sea crossing possible. As Gareth Huws describes, "the Holyhead of the nineteenth century did not produce or manufacture a single commodity but its entire economy was wholly dependent on its role as a link in the transport chain running from London to Dublin."[37] Through this positioning of St Giles as the extremity of London for centuries, and the subsequent road system which brought many new arrivals, the presence of a predominantly poor Irish Rookery is more understandable.

Short term housing and cycles of deprivation:

While these details help to explain the rise in migrant populations in St Giles, they do raise the question, how did this area become so downtrodden? Crymble posits that the transience of St Giles pushed the landowners to capitalise on "the short-term accommodation business that may not have been as viable in other parts of the city."[38] One immediate consequence was overcrowding, as a 'short-term housing' model seeks to have the lowest price per night with the most amount of people. This is how 'lodging houses' compete with each other, while worsening the conditions for the residents. A lodging house was the name given to these short-term homes that became infamous for their overcrowding in the Rookery.[39] One example of these lodging houses comes from 1848, when the Statistical Society of London did a "Report on the state of the inhabitants and their Dwellings in Church Lane, St Giles." Herein, they proceed house by house down Church Lane to present the status of the road.

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[37] Gareth Huws, '"The Ceaseless Labour of Your Life": Occupations and Wages in Holyhead, 1841-81', *The Welsh History Review / Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru* 29, no. 4 (2019): 579.
[38] Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', 12.
[39] Lodging houses were not the only form of housing in St Giles. There were also dwelling houses and tenements, both of which offered longer term leases. Primary sources on the Rookery tend to focus on lodging houses as they housed the poorest residents, usually Irish.

In house number two, of Church Lane, they write:

> "Size of room, 14ft. long, 13ft. broad, 6ft. high ; size of window, 5 ft. 3in. by 5ft. ; rent paid, 8s. weekly for two rooms ; under-rent paid, 3d. per night for each adult ; time occupied, 28 years by landlady. Number of families, 3; consisting of 8 males above 20, 5 females above 20, 4 males under 20, 5 females under 20 ; total 22 souls."[40]

This one extract tells the reader a multitude of facts surrounding the lodging houses in St Giles. Firstly, the room is incredibly small. Using conversions, the dimensions are roughly 4.3m by 4m by 1.8m. This is a volume of $30.96m^3$, or as the report estimated "1,092 cubic feet of air."[41] Secondly, there are twenty-two people living on the ground floor of this home, over three families. This is immensely overcrowded. Lastly, the text reveals that there is a system of rents and under-rents. A landlady is paying eight shillings for both rooms per week and then adult residents paid three pence per night. The more residents per night, the more profit the landlady made over her weekly rent costs. This is only one of many examples, unfortunately, of poor lodging house conditions. For example, another common practice in slums of nineteenth century London, was to block windows to avoid tax.[42] A 'window tax' was implemented in 1696 in England and repealed in 1851. The principle was that poorer people lived in smaller homes; therefore, this tax would be proportional to wealth. As the British Parliament website puts it, "this principle generally worked when applied to the rural poor but failed to alleviate the tax burden on the urban poor."[43] Urban landlords, who were trying to maximise profits, would board up the windows to save on tax. Worse still, the rise of basement dwellings in places like St Giles was most likely linked to this taxation system. This meant that ventilation in the Rookery was

[40] William Henry Sykes et al., *Report of a Committee of the Council of the Statistical Society of London, Consisting of Lieut.-Colonel W.H. Sykes, V.P.R.S., Dr. Guy, and F.G.P. Neison, Esq., to Investigate the State of the Inhabitants and Their Dwellings in Church Lane, St. Giles's* (London: Statistical Society of London, 1848), 2.

[41] Sykes et al., 3.

[42] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain.*, 44.

[43] 'Window Tax', accessed 14 July 2022, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/towncountry/towns/tyne-and-wear-case-study/about-the-group/housing/window-tax/.

often poor. As John Jackson posits, "wherever the Irish congregated in numbers they found themselves driven to the poorest lodgings," with "little chance to escape."[44]

Crymble tracked down some of the original landowners of the Rookery. He shows that things began to take shape post-Civil war when St Giles was largely owned by Henry Bainbridge.[45] In the wake of the monarchical restoration, the Bainbridge family "began laying a network of streets, naming one after themselves and others after their three sons-in-law (Maynard, Buckridge and Dyott)."[46] Upon William Bainbridge's death, St Giles was split into three plots and long-leases were given to developers to provide steady, passive income to his three daughters. This set off a chain of events that resulted in rents and under-rents. Linda Clarke, writing on the origins of capitalism, has posited a framework to explain this rental hierarchy. After a house was built by the developer "a direct relation continued to be maintained between the landowner, the developer, the subsequent lessees and the tenants renting from them and perhaps in turn subletting."[47] Using this framework, the landlady of house number two was most likely a lessee renting to a mixture of tenants and subletters. The need to recuperate costs and maximise profits resulted in drawn-out lease and sublease situations. By the time subleases reached the residents of the Rookery, they were paying pennies per night. All of this resulted in developmental stagnation as short-term housing was utilised to turn weekly profits. As Crymble concludes, "The presence of long leases with few conditions regarding upkeep requirements limited opportunities to overhaul the area."[48] Instead, certain individuals began to accumulate large number of leases. During the 1840s, only a dozen men were renting out the properties of St

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[44] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain.*, 44.
[45] Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', 14.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Linda Clarke, *Building Capitalism (Routledge Revivals) : Historical Change and the Labour Process in the Production of Built Environment.* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 264.
[48] Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', 15.

Giles, led by Charles Innis who had sixty holdings.[49] By the nineteenth century, the only traces of the Bainbridge family were the enduring street names. A renowned pamphleteer, Henry Lazarus, concluded in 1892, "absentee-landlordism, subleases, rack-rents […] here is the trinity of England's land curse."[50]
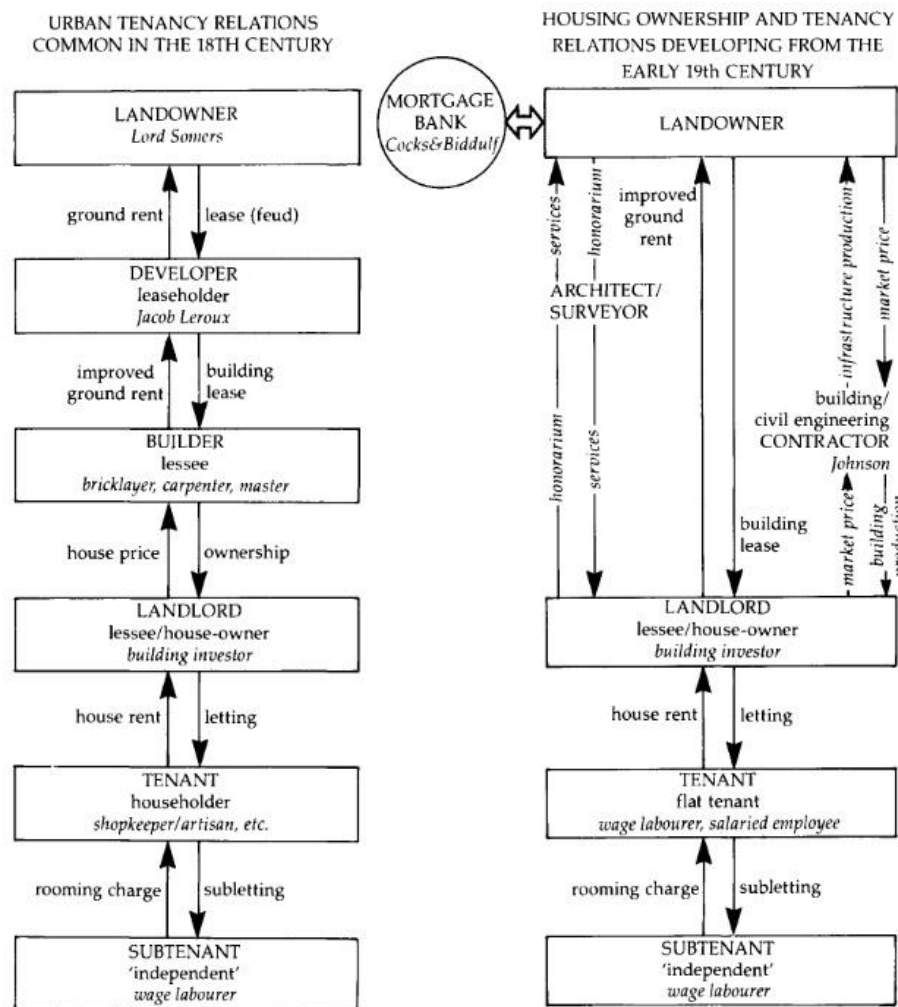
Figure 5 The change in tenancy relations at the turn of the eighteenth century

Figure 4: A diagram illustrating the structure of leasing and subleasing in this period. Source: Linda Clarke, Building Capitalism, (London, 2011)

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[49] David R. Green and Alan G. Parton, 'Slums and Slum Life in Victorian England', in *Slums*, ed. S Martin Gaskell (Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1990), 68.

[50] Henry. Lazarus, *Landlordism An Illustration of the Rise and Spread of Slumland as Evinced on the Great Estates of the Great Ground Landlords of London* (London: The General Publishing Co, 1892), 46.

Within these streets was a large population of Irish migrants, some permanent and others seasonal, an enduring reality of the Rookery's transient state. The Rookery was simultaneously known for its criminality, as pointed out earlier. It is important to specify that these are not one and the same thing, as many Victorian writers posited due to prejudice against the Irish. Roger Swift argues that "St Giles was not inhabited exclusively by the Irish poor and was, as a criminal rookery, atypical of Irish districts in London."[51] Swift is right to clarify that the situation in St Giles was unique, though the Rookery certainly shared commonalities with other Irish settlements in the city. The main two deviations were diversity, and criminality. The Irish migrants made up the majority of the population, though they were joined by other minority groups. In the late 18th century, especially following the British loss in the American Revolution, there was a growing Black population in London. Black beggars were often nicknamed, "St Giles' Blackbirds."[52] Billy Waters was a famous black busker in London during the early nineteenth century. He was an example of a St Giles blackbird as "he resided with his family in the house of Mrs. Fitzgerald, Church Street, St. Giles's."[53] This diversity is made more abundantly clear when viewing the statistics of the house number two inspection of Church Lane. Sykes and his fellow inspectors found that out of the twenty-two inhabitants, there were fifteen Irish and seven English.[54] This remains a high proportion of Irish, particularly considering their total population in the metropole. On the other hand, it helps to combat the Victorian belief that the entirety of the St Giles criminal population was Irish.

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[51] Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History*, 30.
[52] Jerry 1949- White, *London in the Eighteenth Century : A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: Vintage Books, 2013), 133.
[53] Thomas Busby, 'Billy Waters - Soldier, Actor and Musician', in *Costume of the Lower Orders of London.* (London: Messrs. Baldwin and Co., 1820), https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O70019/scrapbook-unknown/.
[54] Sykes et al., *Report of a Committee of the Council of the Statistical Society of London, Consisting of Lieut.-Colonel W.H. Sykes, V.P.R.S., Dr. Guy, and F.G.P. Neison, Esq., to Investigate the State of the Inhabitants and Their Dwellings in Church Lane, St. Giles's*, 2.

The notorious Black Billy "At Home" to a London Street Party.

Figure 5: Bill Waters busking in central London. Source: Billy Waters, (London, 1822), Wellcome Collection

The labour of the St Giles Irish:

To further expand on the quotidian dealings of the St Giles Irish, it is essential to explore the types of labour performed by these migrants. One of the main contemporary sources that sought to understand the London poor, particularly the Irish, was Henry Mayhew. Through Mayhew's writings, it is possible to pinpoint a variety of professions that were preferred by the London Irish. For example, "the number of Irish street-sellers in the metropolis has increased greatly of late years."[55] Street-sellers were better known as "costermongers," at the time.

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[55] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor; a Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, vol. 1 (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861), 104.

Costermongers were defined by Hotten (1860) as, "street sellers of fish, fruit, vegetables […]

they form a distinct class, occupying whole neighbourhoods, and are cut off from the rest of

metropolitan society by their low habits."[56] Mayhew gauged that around 30,000 people worked

as costermongers in London, and that "upwards of 10,000" were Irish.[57] This was a large amount

relative to the Irish London population in the mid nineteenth century. Lynn Hollen Lees places

the Irish population percentages as 3.9% in 1841, and 4.6% in 1851.[58] Mayhew's *London Labour*

was published over the course of the 1840s and grouped into the first three volumes in 1851.

These costermonger figures are from the first volume; therefore, we can lean towards the 1841

number. The London population in 1841, according to that year's census, was almost

1,900,000.[59] Therefore, the London Irish population in 1841 was approximately 74,000.[60] There

are some faults with these calculations, however, they help to visualise the proportional sway of

the Irish labourers within the costermonger profession.[61] Mayhew elaborates that 75% of these

Irish costermongers only sold fruit, "more especially nuts and oranges; indeed, the orange-season

is called the 'Irishman's harvest.'"[62]

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[56] Hotten, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, 122.

[57] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1:104.

[58] Lynn Hollen. Lees, *Exiles of Erin Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 47.

[59] GB Historical GIS and University of Portsmouth, 'Inner London through Time: Population Statistics.', A Vision of Britain through Time., 1841,
https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/data_cube_page.jsp?data_theme=T_POP&data_cube=N_TOT_POP&u_id=10076845&c_id=10001043&add=N.

[60] (1,899,241/100)*3.9=74,070

[61] The calculations are going to be inherently flawed for a number of reasons. Firstly, the percentage of the Irish population is an estimate. While, the London population figure is from the 1841 census, which would not have been 100% accurate. This means the percentage error is potentially huge. Secondly, the risk of second-generation Irish Londoners not being included is high. For example, the children of Irish labourers in St Giles would probably not be included in these figures as Lynn Hollen proposed her percentage estimates based on London population born in Ireland. Thirdly, reaching a number as precise as 74,070 inevitably raises the question of accuracy. It is nigh impossible to secure a population figure accurate to the last individual dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Particularly so when discussing minority groups who often slipped through the cracks of history.

[62] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1:104.

One characteristic of the Irish costermongers was the notable presence of women within this labour force. According to Mayhew, these women, "depend almost entirely on that mode of traffic for their subsistence."[63] In other words, Irish women who worked in London were largely linked to produce sales. This does not necessarily mean that they were costermongers. Jacqueline Turton points out that Mayhew also wrote about the exclusively female Irish porters in Covent Garden.[64] These predominantly Irish speaking women helped carry produce to and from the market. Within this group of Irish women, there are examples directly from St Giles. A sixty-six-year-old Irish woman, resident of St Giles, "went hop-picking each autumn to earn money to provide for the winter months."[65] It is intriguing that this is a form of seasonal labour, therefore, it is difficult to say whether this St Giles woman would be a permanent or temporary resident of the Rookery. The other profession St Giles women were often associated with, by outsiders to the Rookery, was prostitution. In 1852 Thomas Beames criticized the "loose sexual morality" in St Giles.[66] Flora Tristan, when she toured St Giles in 1840, questioned "how do these people earn their living?" and concluded, "By prostitution and theft."[67] These two options seemed to have been gendered such that the women were all generalised as prostitutes and the men as thieves. In 1817, the beadle of St Giles espoused similar thoughts, "in the slums of the parish the boys were brought up as thieves and the girls as prostitutes."[68] These generalisations are revelatory of the English perceptions of the Irish rather than the actual labour of most Irish Londoners. All of this

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 126.
[65] Turton, 131.
[66] Turton, 145.
[67] Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History*, 40.
[68] M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, The History of Civilization. [Modern History] (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner;, 1925), 122.

helps to understand the kind of labour performed by the London Irish, and the St Giles residents in particular.

THE IRISH STREET-SELLER.

Figure 6: A female Irish Costermonger. Source: Henry Mayhew,
London Labour, (London, 1851)

Seasonal labour allowed for an ebb and flow of population in St Giles, making it even more difficult to garner reliable population statistics. This is best encapsulated by comparing Beames's 1850 estimate that half of the St Giles population was Irish versus Montague Gore claiming that "nine-tenths of the inhabitants are Irish," in 1851.[69] The only takeaway possible is that it was certainly a majority, though the exact number cannot be determined. Temporality was part and parcel of the Irish migrant experience in St Giles, as seen through the lodging house model. Green and Parton estimate that, in the 1840s, around a third of the inhabitants had been in the Rookery for less than a year.[70] It must be pointed out, however, that these figures are particularly high due to the Irish potato famine which forced migration to England. In 1862, Joseph Oppenheimer posited that half the population changed per month.[71] This constant ebb and flow of migrants added to the lack of desire to renovate the area, with many labourers living in the Rookery for a relatively short stint. The existing structures of aid in England were such that parish aid could be used to deport Irish migrants back to Ireland. The 1854 case of Timothy Keife, a tailor, saw the removal of Timothy and his family from St Sepulchre Church. The Keife family was asked "to come into the workhouse, to be passed to Ireland."[72] Removals such as Keife's became part of the seasonal migration routes back to Ireland. M. Dorothy George, a British historian writing in the early twentieth history, claims that "at the end of their English season the Irish in particular frequently applied to be shipped back to Ireland as vagrants, either concealing their money or sending it over by a friend in order to escape paying for a passage."[73] In this way, they could make the largest profit possible from their seasonal work.

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[69] Gore, *On the Dwellings of the Poor and the Means of Improving Them*, 13.
[70] Green and Parton, 'Slums and Slum Life in Victorian England', 74–79.
[71] Green and Parton, 76.
[72] Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History*, 84.
[73] George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, 152.

The location of St Giles is logical, given the context of these produce-based professions, as it was only a few roads away from the Covent Garden market. Moreover, Irish chairmen operated out of Covent Garden according to Simon Jarrett.[74] This locus of Irish labour in central London provides a normative setting for continued Irish presence within St Giles. These forms of labour, however, were not stable. Mayhew argued in 1861 that costermongers could be split into two, the permanent and the itinerant.[75] He positioned the majority of the Irish in the second category, largely because they were not generational street-sellers like their English counterparts. As Mayhew put it, "one-half of the entire class are costermongers proper, that is to say, the calling with them is hereditary."[76] Indeed, it seems he believed that street-selling was the last resort of many Irish migrants, "when unable to obtain employment [the Irish] without scruple became street-sellers," because they would undersell anyone.[77] On the other hand, letters from 1849 reveal that street-selling was also a way to have a slightly better life in the Rookery. In the *Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St Giles in the Fields*, it is revealed that, "many of the better class of the residents [of St Giles] live by hawking cabbages, onions, and other ordinary vegetables."[78] This may be linked to the uniqueness of St Giles as being particularly impoverished. Alternatively, Mayhew's belief that street-selling was a last resort may have been misguided and prejudiced.

Despite their prevalence amongst the street-sellers, the Irish also performed a variety of other labours within London in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century. Mayhew posited that many

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[74] Simon Jarrett, ''A Welshman Coming to London and Seeing a Jackanapes' : How Jokes and Slang Differentiated Eighteenth-Century Londoners from the Rest of Britain', *London Journal, The* 43, no. 2 (2018): 132.

[75] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1:7.

[76] Mayhew, 1:7.

[77] Mayhew and Tuckniss, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1861, 2:117–19.

[78] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 24.

Irish artisans became shoemakers and tailors in the East-end. The ex-agricultural labourers

turned to manual labour in the metropole, e.g., bricklayers, dock labourers, excavators, wood

choppers, etc.[79] The main themes that hold together all these jobs is that they are generally low-

skill and demand manual labour. Mayhew's list is not extensive, therefore, presented below are

two lists of typical Irish professions, from two different historians. It is important, however, to

note that John Archer Jackson lists M. Dorothy George as a source in their bibliography.

Therefore, Jackson's list is likely based on George's initial research.

M. Dorothy George (1925)[80]	John Archer Jackson (1963)[81]
• Labourers • Chairmen • Porters • Coal-heavers • Milk-sellers • Costermongers	• Soldiers • Coal-heavers • Builders • Porters • Milk-sellers • Chairmen • Tailors • Tanners • Weavers • Priests • Publicans • Lodging house keepers • Highwaymen • Passers of base coin

Both lists fit the profile of being low skill and generally laborious, with Jackson's

proposing a larger selection of professions. It is notable that "Lodging housekeeper" is presented

as a profession by Jackson, as it ties into the history of tenants subleasing for profit within the

Rookery. The last two on Jackson's list delves into the criminality elements. Highwaymen were

thieves who specialised on attacking travelers on the "high roads" outside cities. This is logical

given Crymble's portrayal of St Giles as being extremely well connected to the British road

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[79] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1:104.
[80] George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, 113.
[81] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain.*, 81.

system. The "passers of base coin" are counterfeiters. The connection between the Irish and criminality is further explored in Chapter Two, when the Irish experience in the justice system is discussed.

<u>The St Giles Rookery in popular culture:</u>

It is crucial to investigate the imagery of St Giles in English contemporary popular culture. The first major representation of St Giles in the English popular culture begins with William Hogarth. In 1751, St Giles found itself at the epicentre of what was then known as the 'Gin Craze.' There was a fear that the English people were becoming addicted to gin and that it would lead to the downfall of the kingdom. In support of the Gin Act of 1751, which curtailed the 'gin epidemic,' Hogarth published two prints. On the one hand, he presented "Gin Lane" as a wretched and morally corrupt place. On the other, he idealised "Beer Street" as a haven of good manners and industrious peoples. As the Royal Academy details, "Hogarth's nightmarish scene is set in the slum known as the Ruins of St Giles."[82] Hogarth was using the reputation St Giles had to promote his moral ideas concerning the evils of gin.[83] The language chosen by the Royal Academy itself reveals the enduring negative connotations within the English psyche surrounding St Giles. They use the word "ruins" despite the reality that the Rookery population was only just beginning to grow during this period. Perhaps they are describing the parish as being in ruins.

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[82] William Hogarth, 'Gin Lane', Royal Academy of Arts, accessed 15 July 2022, https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/gin-lane-1.
[83] Hogarth also used St Giles as a setting in his previous work, *Four Times of the Day* (1738), though not necessarily in a negative sense. The St Giles church steeple is seen in the background of the *Noon* section of the engravings.

Figure 7: Gin Lane's chaos. Source: William Hogarth, Gin Lane, (London 1751), MET Museum.

Figure 8: Beer Street's utopia. Source: William Hogarth, Beer Street, (London 1751), MET Museum.

The anonymous author of *A dissertation on Mr Hogarth's six prints lately publish'd* (1751) claimed that gin is, "a plague of such a pestilent nature that is spreads far and wide."[84] Gin Lane is reflective of such claims, with chaos consuming the scene. A mother drops her child in a drunken stupor and undertakers load bodies into coffins in the background.[85] By contrast, Beer Street is a quaint image of healthy-looking labourers enjoying their tankards of ale.[86] The *dissertation* author claims that "this proceeds from the healthy Liquor they drink, which has no very bad Effects even in the Excess of it, provided they work hard."[87] This establishes the basic dichotomy of the period. Reformers were trying to make people, mainly poor workers, consume beer to avoid the depravity depicted in Gin Lane. This depravity was then equated with the setting, St Giles, worsening the public image of the emerging Rookery.

Gin Lane invokes an almost eternally deep alleyway due to the use of one-point perspective, with detail getting blurrier the further the object.[88] This is reflective of the confusing layout of St Giles, with a network of narrow and interlocking streets with courtyards. Meanwhile, Beer Street uses two-point perspective which allows the details to remain closer to the viewer and keep their clarity.[89] Moreover, Gin Lane's negative connotations are further emphasised through the downward movements in the piece. Bricks are dropping from the sky, the baby is falling, and a man is hanging. As Ethan McBee argues, Beer Street shows a world on the up-and-up, with the ladder leading to painting, scaffolding showcasing industry, and a large barrel moving up

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[84] *A Dissertation on Mr. Hogarth's Six Prints Lately Publish'd : Viz. Gin-Lane, Beer-Street, and the Four Stages of Cruelty.* (London: Printed for B. Dickinson, on Ludgate-Hill, 1751), 24.
[85] Hogarth, 'Gin Lane'.
[86] William Hogarth, 'Beer Street', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed 5 October 2021, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/399845.
[87] *A Dissertation on Mr. Hogarth's Six Prints Lately Publish'd : Viz. Gin-Lane, Beer-Street, and the Four Stages of Cruelty.*, 30.
[88] Ethan McBee, 'What Hogarth's Famous Engravings Can Teach Us About Rhetoric', OXFORD COMMA, accessed 5 October 2021, https://exploringoxfordcomma.weebly.com/oxfordcommablog-114630.html.
[89] Ibid.

towards the workers.[90] The pawnbroker's shop is the only exception to this rule, with the shop being in disarray on Beer Street and in perfect condition on Gin Lane. This is reflective of contemporary fears that people would sell all their possessions for drams of gin.[91]

Hogarth's attempts to exploit the Rookery's poor reputation would certainly not be the last, and the image of Gin Lane lasted well into the nineteenth century. In 1820, Pierce Egan wrote a book named *Life in London*, in which two men named Tom and Jerry would go on a series of adventures. H.J. Dyos posits that Egan was the first writer to popularise the term "back slums" in this book.[92] By 1840, fellow writer Charles Dickens used the term in a letter to Daniel Maclise, underlining the widespread use of the term. W.T. Moncrieff turned *Life in London* into a play, in 1822, starring the two protagonists. In it, they made a point to visit St Giles. The play reveals the large quantity of slang concerning the Rookery and its residents. This vocabulary is often derisive and at the expense of the St Giles's inhabitants. Firstly, they refer to St Giles as "the Holy Land" ironically.[93] Rather confusingly, the definition of "Holy Land" in Hotten's dictionary is "Seven Dials – where the St Giles' Greek is spoken."[94] It is important to note that in the early nineteenth century, Seven Dials was also an Irish settlement. Due to their proximity, and the porous borders of the Rookery, it is probable that Londoners did not separate St Giles from Seven Dials. Conceptualising a 'Londoner' identity may seem like projecting into the past; however, Mayhew used the term to denote the "metropolitan population" in 1851.[95]

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[90] Ibid.

[91] *A Dissertation on Mr. Hogarth's Six Prints Lately Publish'd : Viz. Gin-Lane, Beer-Street, and the Four Stages of Cruelty.*, 12.

[92] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 8.

[93] W.T. Moncrieff, 'Tom and Jerry, or Life in London' (John Dicks, 1822), 5, THM/234/1/26/7, Victoria and Albert Museum, http://www.eighteenthcenturydrama.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/Details/VA_THM_234_1_26_7#Snippits.

[94] Hotten, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, 155.

[95] Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank, *1851, or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family : Who Came up to London to 'Enjoy Themselves,' and to See the Great Exhibition* (London: David Bogue, 1851), 102.

The alleged origin of "Holy Land" as a name for the Rookery stems from a mix of Irish Catholicism and poverty, as Saint Giles is the patron saint of beggars.[96] In Moncrieff's play, Jerry exclaims, "Saint Giles's Greek; that is a language, doctor, with which I am totally unacquainted."[97] Logic, a character in the play, replies "Flash, my young friend, or slang, as others call it, is the classical language of the Holy Land; in other words, St Giles' Greek."[98] Hotten's definition of Greeks is "the low Irish. St Giles' Greek, slang or cant language,"[99] All these terms reveal the derision faced by the Irish inhabitants of the Rookery. Tom and Jerry's entrance into the Rookery is telling of their prejudice. They declare, "let's have a dive among the cadgers in the Back Slums, in the Holy Land […] why among the beggars in Dyot Street, St Giles's."[100] Here we encounter yet another nickname for the area, "back slums." The word cadger is similarly negative. This is the perception of Tom and Jerry of the inhabitants. Therefore, it can be assumed that the audience of the 1822 play would hold similar views of St Giles. The jovial tone of the play helps to keep the majority of the writing satirical rather than outwardly aggressive. One element that helps to draw the line between this play and Hogarth's print is the participation of some St Giles residents within the play. The National Archives reveal that Billy Waters performed as himself in *Life in London* at the Adelphi Theatre.[101] Having a 'real' Saint Giles' Blackbird, playing himself, helps to show that there was less outward animosity between Montcrieff and the Rookery-dwellers.

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[96] *The Man of Pleasure's Illustrated Pocket-Book for 1850: Displaying at One Glance the Varied Attractions of This Great Metropolis* (London: Wm. Ward's Bachelor's Repository of Arts, 1850), 90.
[97] Moncrieff, 'Tom and Jerry, or Life in London', 5.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Hotten, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, 150.
[100] Moncrieff, 'Tom and Jerry, or Life in London', 16.
[101] The National Archives, 'Black Presence: Culture - The Theatre', The National Archives, accessed 15 July 2022, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210803184155/https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/culture/theatre.htm.

St Giles also exerted a morbid fascination for Londoners, which propelled the slum into contemporary popular culture. This is already illustrated with the number of slang words used, and authors who wrote slang dictionaries. For instance, Francis Grose published his *Classical dictionary* in 1784 after having "toured the back slums and drinking dens of St Giles."[102] Even Charles Dickens was said to have a "profound attraction of repulsion to St Giles's."[103] The term 'attraction of repulsion' is perfect to group the numerous authors of the period who wrote about the Rookery. This fascination is best encapsulated with *A Peep into the Holy Land*. This book was a guide for people curious about the less savoury areas of London. An entire chapter dedicated was to St Giles. It begins by recounting the rise of a Scottish man's fortunes after he "commenced giving shelter to the wild and profligate."[104] It appears that this man was running a large-scale Lodging House. Running out of number 13 of a redacted street name, "it contains no less than eight houses."[105] This story is extremely valuable as it is a contemporary example of the theoretical frameworks proposed by Crymble and Clarke. By claiming the lease on one house, getting tenants, turning profits, and repeating, this landlord is part of the elite few who held many property leases in St Giles. The street name was redacted, as the property owner did not want to have his name publicly associated with the location. This must be linked to the author's conclusion, "this place, besides being a common lodging house, adds to it that now very necessary convenience – a brothel."[106] The manner in which this fact is presented leads the reader

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[102] Jarrett, ''A Welshman Coming to London and Seeing a Jackanapes' : How Jokes and Slang Differentiated Eighteenth-Century Londoners from the Rest of Britain', 125.
[103] John Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens.*, vol. 1, The Works of Charles Dickens (New York: Hearst's International Library Co., 1916), 16.
[104] *A Peep into the Holy Land, or, Sinks of London Laid Open!*, 18.
[105] *A Peep into the Holy Land, or, Sinks of London Laid Open!*, 17.
[106] *A Peep into the Holy Land, or, Sinks of London Laid Open!*, 21.

to believe that this guidebook into London's slums may be leading men to go into the Rookery for morally dubious experiences.

On the other hand, the authors keep their desire to condemn the location visible. During their journey to the brothel, they write, "we directed our steps to that well-known spot of this mighty part of the world – the Rookery, the appropriate title given to that modern Sodom, St Giles's."[107] This sentence divulges more information than originally intended. Firstly, the author juxtaposes the infamousness of the Rookery with London's title, "mighty." This is important as it discloses a potential dichotomy between London's role as the heart of empire, versus the lived experience of London slums. Secondly, they call St Giles "Sodom," referring to the biblical city that was destroyed because of its evils, alongside Gomorrah. This last point is a reminder that religious language surrounded the Rookery, presumably due to the predominantly Irish Catholic population. To emphasise the nature of the neighbourhood, the authors state, "a large black mark, in the shape of a half-moon, appeared to have been strongly indented by hard knuckles, below the left visual organ, - ornaments that are frequently to be seen upon the inhabitants of St Giles's, as rings are upon the visitors of St James's."[108] In short, an inhabitant of the Rookery is as likely to have as many bruises as an inhabitant of St James's would have rings. In many ways, this helps to reinforce the idea that St Giles was 'otherworldly' compared to the affluent neighbourhoods. Contemporary author and journalist Douglas Jerrold expressed this disparity in his novel *St Giles and St James*. He proclaimed, "on the dunghill of poverty […] how great is the distinction between the layers of straw."[109] St Giles was the lowest one could go in London, and St James represented a peak, an eternity away. While there may be a morbid fascination, and

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[107] *A Peep into the Holy Land, or, Sinks of London Laid Open!*, 22.
[108] *A Peep into the Holy Land, or, Sinks of London Laid Open!*, 58.
[109] Douglas William Jerrold, *St. Giles and St. James.* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1851), 16.

certainly some wealthier men must have indulged in the vices offered by St Giles, there was always the warning that the Rookery was dangerous.

Finally, key actors in the dissemination of St Giles's reputation were foreign visitors to London who produced books concerning their stays. The most famous of these is likely to be Engels with his discussion of the *Condition of the Working Class in England*. Engels wrote his book between 1842 and 1844, seeing the Rookery very little time before it began its decline. He foreshadowed this himself, stating, "in London the famous rookery of St Giles which is now, at last, about to be penetrated by a couple of broad streets."[110] In this, Engels refers to New Oxford Street which reached the border of St Giles in 1847, before piercing through the slum.[111] Engels's main focus in his book was poverty in Manchester. There too, he noted that many of the most impoverished were Irish. Engels puts an emphasis on the proximity of the indigent and the aristocrats. For example, "in the immediate neighbourhood of Drury Lane Theatre, the second in London, are some of the worst streets of the whole metropolis, Charles, King, and Park Streets, in which the houses are inhabited from cellar to garret exclusively by poor families."[112] When consulting an 1821 map, the same utilised to show the borders of the Rookery, the Drury Lane Theatre was extremely close to the Rookery. This is telling as it was established that the borders of the Rookery were not as fixed as they may seem when defined by streets. King Street in particular looks to be around two hundred metres from the Charlotte Street border of the Rookery. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find that there was spillover from the Rookery, and the

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[110] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 83.
[111] The construction of New Oxford Street is part of the modernisation projects that begin the fall of the Rookery. As such, it will be developed upon in Chapter 3 and 4 as part of the modernisation and sanitation themes this thesis seeks to flesh out.
[112] Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 85.

nearby Seven Dials, into the nice streets surrounding the theatre. The contrast between the rich

and the impoverished was apparent to the visiting Engels.
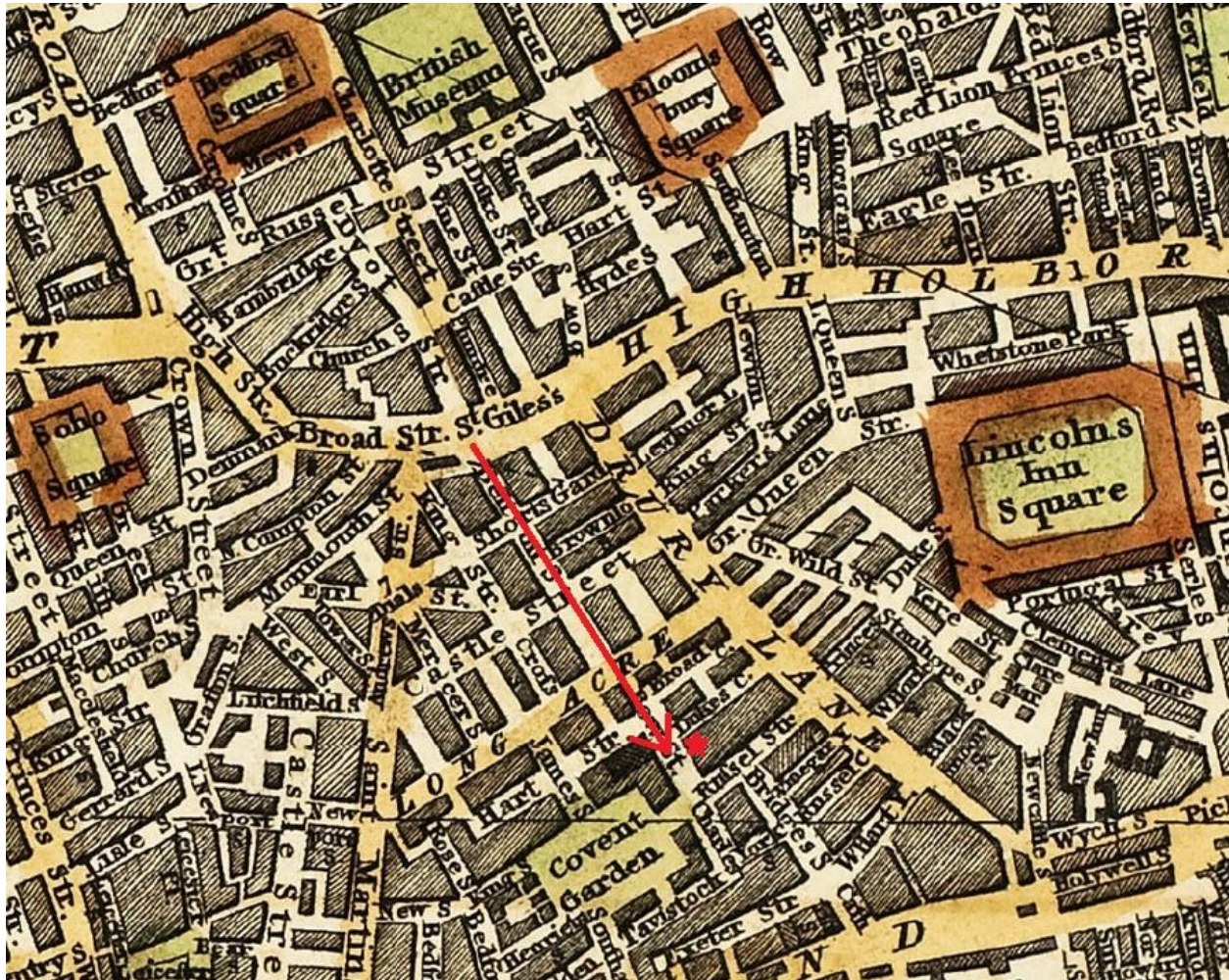
Figure 9: Fastest route between Rookery and Drury Lane Theatre. Source: Source: John Luffman, The Metropolis Displayed (London, 1821)

Engels was not the only visiting European who was left shocked by the deprivation in

London, mere metres away from immense wealth. This had happened before, in previous Irish

settlements. Between 1810 and 1811, a French merchant called Louis Simond wrote about his

experience in Great Britain. His section on Irish labourers details his experience in Marylebone.

He recounts seeing "a colony of Irish labourers" who "give each other battle every Saturday

night."[113] This shocked the author as he was residing in Portman Square, "which is one of the finest parts of the town."[114] Nonetheless, Portman Square is relatively far away from the St Giles area, it is just north-east of Hyde Park, the future site of the 1851 Great Exhibition. It also serves as a reminder that there were a multitude of Irish settlements all across London. There were potential political motivations to portray London in a negative light during this period, as Simond's visit intersected with the Napoleonic wars. On the other hand, Simond's description seems entirely plausible considering the normalisation of the Rookery's wretchedness. Moreover, he specifically points to the Irish as being the culprits of these disturbances. This revealing of the constant prejudice towards Irish labourers in nineteenth century London.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to outline the key themes surrounding the origins of the Rookery. Firstly, St Giles itself was presented as the edge of London for centuries allowing for newly arriving Irish and Welsh migrants to find lodging. Quickly, due to a series of lease decisions made by the Bainbridge family, lodging houses became the norm for the area. With developmental stagnation setting in, the Rookery was bound to become increasingly downtrodden as more people arrived. The types of labour performed by the St Giles Irish were explained to better understand the living conditions and positionality of the Rookery. Lastly, the popular imagery surrounding St Giles was explored, starting with the *Gin Lane* print by Hogarth in 1751 and culminating with Engels's criticisms of the same area almost a century later. This was the rise of arguably London's worst slum.

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[113] L. Simond, *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain: During the Years 1810 and 1811, by a French Traveller. With Remarks on the Country, Its Arts, Literature, and Politics, and on the Manners and Customs of Its Inhabitants ...*, 1815, 259, https://books.google.ca/books?id=5u5FAQAAIAAJ.
[114] Simond, 259.

Chapter Two: Irish Londoners and their quotidian experience

"The crowds are little aware of the fearful mass of wretchedness and misery which is to be found behind the wealth of those gay streets – in the abodes of the poor."[115] – Bishop of London, 1844.

It is now time to turn to the Irish London experience, and focus on what historian Donald M. MacRaild termed, "A culture of anti-Irishness."[116] Without considering identity, language, and the rise of Irish immigration during the famine, it would be difficult to understand why Irish settlements emerged, and why they declined. Constant alienation from their English counterparts forced the Irish migrants arriving in London to rely on their fellow Irish. As Jacqueline Turton posits, "Irish workers generally were dependent upon contacts within the immigrant community for obtaining work."[117] It was earlier established that Irish labourers were often forced into low-skill and manual industries. While this is true, the prejudice faced by the Irish seeking employment was not illustrated. In an 1850 advert for servants, in the *Times*, the job posting specified that "No Irish need apply."[118] The timing of this advert must not be overlooked, as it is following the mass emigration from Ireland due to the famine. This form of segregation showcases that Irish labourers struggled to find jobs during this period.

The Rookery as a haven and a hovel:

It should come as no surprise then that there were approximately 5,000 Irish beggars in 1815 London. According to John Jackson, out of the roughly fifteen thousand beggars, "one third

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[115] 'Active Steps Are Being Taken in the Metropolis for Improving the Sanatory Condition of the Poor', *The Illustrated London News*, 19 October 1844, The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003.
[116] Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, 2nd ed., Social History in Perspective (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 161.
[117] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 134.
[118] 'WANTED, in the Millinery and Dressmaking', *The Times*, 6 March 1850, The Times Digital Archive.

were found to be Irish."[119] MacRaild notes the importance of "the much-despised Paddy, a Victorian image of deeply historical formulation."[120] A "Paddy" was a derogatory term for an Irishman and often served to remind them that they were foreigners in England. The imagery of the Paddy was highly problematic, based on the "widely held perception that Irish peasant society was inherently brutal, demonstrating a fundamental weakness of the Irish national character."[121] One of these preconceptions was that the Irish were drinkers. This prejudice was not aided by social reformers such as Hogarth putting an emphasis on St Giles, a predominantly Irish area, as a locus of alcoholism and deviancy in London. Henry Fielding, Hogarth's compatriot in their war against gin in 1751, blamed the criminality of the Irish on cheap living of the St Giles lodging houses. There, the beds were "at twopence a night and gin sold at a penny a quartern."[122] In Fielding's eyes, the result was "the destruction of all morality, decency and modesty," and the rise of "swearing, whoredom and drunkenness."[123] Reality was not as simple as these reformers claimed. Elizabeth Malcolm, researching the history of temperance, posits that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "Irish people, both Catholic and Protestant, subscribed to teetotalism in remarkably large numbers."[124] St Giles epitomised this difficult relationship between the English and the Irish in London. In 1817, the beadle of St Giles argued that "if they [the Irish] are in labour and they come home on the Saturday night with their wages, those wages are spent on the Saturday night or Sunday morning."[125] He attempted to blame the poverty of the Irish in the Rookery entirely on their drinking habits. As Malcom has clarified, the

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[119] Jackson, *The Irish in Britain.*, 73.
[120] MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, 161.
[121] Roger Swift, 'Heroes or Villains?: The Irish, Crime, and Disorder in Victorian England', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 29, no. 3 (1997): 409.
[122] George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, 120.
[123] George, 120.
[124] Elizabeth. Malcolm, *'Ireland Sober, Ireland Free' : Drink and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin ; Gill and Macmillan, 1986), 331.
[125] George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, 122.

'drinking problem' of the London Irish was exaggerated due to prejudice. On the other hand, this community was often in the very worst conditions in the Metropole. Therefore, it is not unsurprising that some of its members would turn to drink, and criminality. This minority was then exaggerated, due to this culture of anti-Irishness, to affect all Irish-Londoners. The Rookery was by no means the only Irish settlement in London. Turton, basing herself on Mayhew's research, points to the following areas as having a strong Irish presence: Whitechapel, Drury Lane, Saffron Hill, and St Giles.[126]

These other Irish settlements were by no means small relative to the Rookery, with Whitechapel's Rosemary Lane gaining the title "Little Ireland."[127] By gathering in semi-closed communities, the Irish were able to help friends and family emigrate. Moreover, inside these communities, the Irish could somewhat protect themselves from English attempts to persecute them. George bluntly summarises the state of affairs, "the Irish in London were a police problem, a sanitary problem, a poor-law problem and an industrial problem."[128] George's account, written in 1925, continues to retain anti-Irish tone even when writing historically. On the other hand, the comment helps to understand the extent to which the Irish were looked down upon in this period. It also contextualises Thomas Beames's dichotomous presentation of Rookeries, which Kirkland labelled as "both entrapment and protection."[129] Beames's account of St Giles highlights a quasi-agency of the Irish residents. He claimed that as with most Rookeries, there were "colonies of Irish who seem particularly given to courts in which the only egress is a narrow alley. Many a cul-de-sac is there in this district, which the sons of Erin have chosen as their own."[130] The

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[126] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 130.
[127] O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain.*, 10.
[128] George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, 119.
[129] Kirkland, 'Reading the Rookery: The Social Meaning of an Irish Slum in Nineteenth-Century London', 24.
[130] Beames, *The Rookeries of London Past, Present, and Prospective.*, 54.

language chosen is striking. He calls the Irish settlements, "colonies" and says that the Irish chose these "areas as their own." The notion of purposeful settlement gives the St Giles Irish far more agency than other Victorian authors. Beames does seem to underestimate the network of tunnels connecting basements to one another in the Rookery, as he thinks the narrow alleyways are the only entrances to the courtyards. His account does, nonetheless, reflect the advantages of Irish group-settlement.

Rookeries such as St Giles and Whitechapel were a uniquely Irish phenomenon within London, and Britain at large. The Welsh and Scottish, the other non-English migrants of the British Isles, did not congregate in the same manner. Emrys Jones, in his monograph *The Welsh in London 1500-2000*, explained that Welsh migrants had no enclaves yet preferred areas such as Lambeth.[131] Indeed, the 1851 census revealed that the Welsh were spread throughout London with a presence "in the richer western residential areas where there was an increasing demand for servants."[132] Immediately, the contrast with the Irish is clear as the Welsh are being welcomed as servants in well-to-do areas. Meanwhile, in 1815, evidence presented to a parliamentary committee revealed the disparity between English perceptions of the Scottish versus Irish. When asked what was the "most prominent causes of the instances of wretchedness," Edward Wakefield replied, "decidedly the Irish […] who are habitually living in a state of want, dirt, and ignorance."[133] Earlier testimony by Matthew Martin compared the desire of Irish women versus Scottish women to return home, with Martin concluding "the Scotch women would be more willing to return than the Irish women, for they think it more easy to pass to Scotland than to

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[131] Emrys Jones, *The Welsh in London, 1500-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press on behalf of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 2001), 92.
[132] Jones, 97.
[133] Parliamentary Papers (hereafter P.P.), 1814–15, volume iii (473), 20.

Ireland; and they are industrious people."[134] Therefore, the Irish are presented as being the cause of wretchedness in the Rookeries and also of being indolent.

The Irish experience in English courts:

The injustice faced by the Irish in London stretched far beyond these unfair comments, and into the innerworkings of the criminal justice system at the Old Bailey. In these courts, the Irish were structurally targeted, disadvantaged, and their lives undervalued. If one looks at the number of murder trials in the Old Bailey, they make up around 1% of all trials. Meanwhile, almost a quarter (24%) of Irish trials concerned murder.[135] This likely has more to do with English prejudice than actual criminality of the Irish. MacRaild argues that "there was also a certain association between the Irish and many outrageous crimes."[136] Presumably, this association led to more convictions by the English jurors who arrived at the trials with preconceived notions of Irishness. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, it is not unreasonable to expect a disadvantaged community such as the London Irish to have more murderers per capita. On the other side of the court, Irish victims were far less likely to get their aggressor convicted. For example, someone who killed an Irishman was three times less likely to go to the gallows than someone killing an Englishman.[137] This points to the lack of value placed on Irish lives within the English courts.

The Old Bailey trials reveal an enormous bias against all non-English migrants from the British Isles, particularly the Irish. Using Peter King's research on judicial discrimination, the average of all criminals represented committing a violent crime was 3.7% versus the Irish at

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[134] P.P., 1814–15, volume iii (473) 9
[135] Peter King, 'Ethnicity, Prejudice, and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750-1825', *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2 (2013): 396.
[136] MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, 167.
[137] King, 'Ethnicity, Prejudice, and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750-1825', 397.

7.2%.[138] While the Irish have an average conviction rate overall, there is an anti-Irish bias in violent crime conviction. The average conviction rate for violent crimes was 42%, while the Irish rate was 52%.[139] Additionally, the Irish were more likely to be sentenced to death for murder than all other groups represented in the Old Bailey trials.[140] It is crucial to point out that King's research focuses on cases between 1750 and 1825. This means that the information he presents, though extremely valuable, does not cover the "end of the Rookery." On the other hand, it does outline a structural bias against the Irish in the judicial system. This bias remains prevalent for the rest of the nineteenth century. Roger Swift points to data from 1861, showing the Irish were still "five times as likely to be committed to prison than the English."[141] King's work relies on proportional relativity rather than total cases. This means that despite the Irish being the largest migrant group in England as of the late 1700s, they are still overrepresented relative to their total number in population. King proposed that between 1791-1805, the Irish make up 2 to 3% of the London population. In this same period, 10.4% of the accused in the Old Bailey were Irish born. By 1828, 14.3% of prisoners in London were Irish.[142] It is telling to contrast these numbers with some of the data concerning the Welsh and Scottish. Types of labour carried out by the various national groups affected the proceedings. The Welsh and Scottish migrants often worked as live-in-servants, leading to charges of stealing from the owners.[143] Welsh defendants had the highest conviction rate, 59.3%, and lowest acquittal rate. The main difference is that the Welsh were

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[138] Peter King, 'Immigrant Communities, the Police and the Courts in Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century London', *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 56.
[139] King, 63.
[140] King, 65.
[141] Swift, 'Heroes or Villains?: The Irish, Crime, and Disorder in Victorian England', 402.
[142] King, 'Ethnicity, Prejudice, and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750-1825', 400.
[143] King, 'Immigrant Communities, the Police and the Courts in Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century London', 56.

often being accused of larceny rather than a more serious crime, unlike the Irish. The overall Irish conviction rate was 50.9%, almost nine percent lower than the Welsh. [144]

A key difference between the Irish and the Welsh was language, as many Irish defendants retained Irish as their mother tongue, and many did not speak English. King claims that "misgivings about the reliability of Irish testimony seems to have been particularly widespread."[145] The inability to speak English would hinder court proceedings heavily. In 1852, the occupants of a small house on Church Lane, St Giles were brought to court for running a lodging house. Their overcrowded rooms violated the act for the Improvement of Common Lodging Houses, passed in 1851.[146] The first defendant of the group, Michael Sullivan, had housed twenty-two people in his room of the house. Sullivan "had an interpreter with him to explain what he said in Irish," as he did not speak English.[147] A *Times* article dating April 5th, 1852, reported that one of Sullivan's lodgers would interpret for him. Unfortunately for the court, "she talked so continuously, both in English and Irish, that the Court was obliged to dispense with her assistance and try another case."[148] Effectively, Sullivan's inability to speak English made him invulnerable to the English courts. This reminds one of Beames's representation of the Rookery as both protection and entrapment. Kirkland argues that since "much of the Rookery's discontent was articulated in Irish […] it maintained a degree of autonomy despite its location."[149]

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[144] King, 61.
[145] King, 'Ethnicity, Prejudice, and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750-1825', 395.
[146] 'Police', *The Times*, 5 April 1852, The Times Digital Archive.
[147] 'Police'.
[148] 'Police'.
[149] Kirkland, 'Reading the Rookery: The Social Meaning of an Irish Slum in Nineteenth-Century London', 22.

The Scottish and Welsh often spoke English before arriving in London as migrants, meaning they integrated into the city more easily. The Cymmrodorion society in London feared the loss of Welsh back home, creating writing competitions to encourage the use of the language. In December 1821, in *The Cambro-Briton*, the society "proposed medals to the grammar-schools in Wales for the best Welsh essay on the Love of Country."[150] Within this offer, they reproached Welsh grammar schools (particularly of North Wales) of discouraging the Welsh language. They claimed that "the Welsh language has been, for many years, not only not encouraged, but absolutely discountenanced by severe penalties."[151] In their January 1822 edition, the Cambro-Briton writers announced that only six essays were submitted. They did, however, note that North Wales produced two of these essays.[152] This reveals the disparity between Welsh and Irish migrants to London, as the former were most likely already bilingual.

Meanwhile, as Crymble noted with three major roads leading into St Giles, many migrants to the Rookery were from southern Ireland where Irish was still the primary language in the mid-nineteenth century. This distinction, on the point of language, did provide freedom from some prosecution. On the other hand, many Irish migrants were trapped in London with not enough funds to return home. This was illustrated by Timothy Keife's repatriation to Erin through parish aid, mentioned earlier. An undated poem named "Irish Stranger," was allegedly published in St Giles. It laments the fate of an Irishman stuck in England. "O pity the fate of a poor wretched stranger, one that has wander'd thus far from his home, […] I ne'er shall return to Hibernia's green bowers, where tyranny has trampled our sweet flowers […] I once had a home, Farewell – now a stranger in England I roam, Oh! Give me my freedom, or give me my tomb."[153]

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[150] 'Cymmrodorion in London', *The Cambro-Briton* 3, no. 24 (1821): 125.
[151] 'Cymmrodorion in London', 125.
[152] 'Cymmrodorion in London', *The Cambro-Briton* 3, no. 25 (1822): 187.
[153] H. Disley, 'Irish Stranger. Old Dog Tray', n.d., The Lilly Library, Indiana University.

It is evident that the Irish Londoners were stuck between the English tyranny in Ireland and their unjust treatment in England.

Mayhew proposed that the Irish were part of a wider "underclass" in London, amongst the poorest and most wretched.[154] His investigations into the costermongers of London reveal that he saw them as "a distinct race – perhaps, originally, of Irish extraction."[155] The segregation of the costermongers along racial lines does highlight the need to determine the English identity by what is not English. Simon Jarrett, writing on identity in London, discusses the importance of in-groups and out-groups concerning the arrival of Welsh and Irish migrants in London. Jarrett explains, "as the city [London] expanded and old affiliations to parish and neighbourhood reduced, the question of identity became problematic for those who lived in the Metropolis."[156] The question of identity has already reared its head, when attempting to calculate the Irish population of London in 1841. Lynn Hollen's statistics were only attempting to estimate the number of "Irish born" residents there were in London.[157] In Irish settlements such as St Giles, there were second-generation children who would not be represented in the statistics. Nonetheless, these Irish Londoners would most likely continue to live in Irish settlements, work 'typical' Irish labours, and be viewed as non-English. Mayhew does attempt to be fair to the Irish poor he interviews, claiming that "we believe, not that the Irish are more criminal than our own race, but simply that they are poorer."[158] It is, however, difficult to believe that Mayhew truly believed the only difference between the Irish and himself was poverty. The constant use of

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[154] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 154.
[155] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1:6.
[156] Jarrett, ''A Welshman Coming to London and Seeing a Jackanapes' : How Jokes and Slang Differentiated Eighteenth-Century Londoners from the Rest of Britain', 120.
[157] Lees, *Exiles of Erin Irish Migrants in Victorian London*, 47.
[158] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 144.

"race" to create a distance between himself and his Irish counterparts is revealing of formation of a British identity, extending beyond English, by creating 'out-groups.'

National, regional, and urban identity:

This raises the important point of who could claim 'rightful' place in London during early-to-mid nineteenth century. Benedict Anderson's seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, called a nation an "imagined political community."[159] By this he means that a group of people that feel a shared sense of political identity with people they have never met, and put themselves under an 'umbrella' term such as 'British' for the English, Welsh, and Scottish. Ernest Gellner, in *Nations and Nationalism*, explains that the primary modern critique of nationalism is that it "imposes homogeneity."[160] Gellner, in contrast, posits that the need for homogeneity pushes nationalism forward.[161] All these concepts must be kept in mind when attempting to decipher whether the Irish of St Giles belong under the umbrella of British, or Londoner, or neither. Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the nation*, attempts to explain the emergence of 'Britishness.' Her argument is that the Irish are not covered by this "imagined community." She argues that "the invention of Britishness was so closely bound up with Protestantism" and that "Ireland was cut off Great Britain by the sea; but it was cut off still more effectively by the prejudices of the English, Welsh, and Scots."[162] Colley's argument rests largely on religion and the distance created by the Irish Sea. Moreover, the "culture of anti-Irishness" being cultivated in Britain at the time helps to explain the exclusion of the Irish. One additional point of separation, which was

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[159] Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition. (London ; Verso, 2006), 6.
[160] Ernest. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, New Perspectives on the Past (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 46.
[161] Gellner, 46.
[162] Linda. Colley, *Britons : Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, Rev. ed., with new introductory essay. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 8.

illustrated by Sullivan's court case, is language. Irish speakers were incredibly alienated in nineteenth century London. Moreover, Turton posits that "most Irish Catholics in London were illiterate."[163] This is significant as those who had poor or non-existent spoken-English, were unable to communicate outside their community. The exclusion of the Irish from the 'British' identity is also a result of the English attitude towards the former, with MacRaild claiming that it "was colonial; the Irish were weaker brethren."[164] Such language is in-line with Mayhew's emphasis on 'racial' differences between himself and the Irish poor.

The Irish of St Giles could count themselves part of their own "imagined political community," with their own language and separation from other neighbourhoods. In the case of Michael Sullivan, his bilingual subletter may have wasted the courts time to get the case dismissed. It is hard to gauge the agency of the St Giles Irish through the Old Bailey records, as they were written by in English, by outsiders. On the other hand, perhaps these Irish migrants could be viewed as Londoners rather than British. A visiting American journalist wrote of London, in 1867, "in Liverpool and Manchester he [the foreigner] feels that he is on Englishmen's ground, in Glasgow and Edinburgh on Scotchmen's, but in London on his own."[165] Their contemporary estimate placed the population in 1851 at 2.36 million residents, growing fast.[166] Mayhew boasts that this population makes London "the most densely-populated city in all the world."[167] As a result of these statistics, London was incredibly diverse. This extended beyond just the non-English British migrants and the Irish, and into international migration.

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[163] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 151.
[164] MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, 166.
[165] 'London', *Circular (1851-1870)*, 22 July 1867, 151.
[166] 'London', 151.
[167] Henry Mayhew, *The Great World of London* ([London]: [s.n.], 1856), 4.

Woefully, as with the definition of Britishness, for someone to be a Londoner others must not be. Simon Jarrett, writing on identity in London, argues, "an important part of this construction of an identity through a negative characterisation of outsiders was to mock and laugh at non-metropolitans."[168] Therefore, the Irish in London could become more settled by mocking new arrivals. Popular pranks were played on the newly arrived migrants to establish them as the 'outsiders' and the pranker as the 'Londoner.' For example, one recurring joke was that an Irishman visiting London for the first time would want to ride a sedan chair. In this case, the operators of the chair have a special chair "where the floor has been sawn out," and "the visitor gets in, but his feet are of course on the ground."[169] The visitor is then forced to walk within the chair to their destination. Through such an ordeal, the visitor can be portrayed as naïve and not ready for life in the metropole. Jarret points out that "many of the chairmen were themselves Irish."[170]

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[168] Jarrett, ''A Welshman Coming to London and Seeing a Jackanapes' : How Jokes and Slang Differentiated Eighteenth-Century Londoners from the Rest of Britain', 122.
[169] Jarrett, 130.
[170] Jarrett, 132.

Figure 10: Sedan chair prank. Source: Isaac Cruikshank, Paddy Whack's First Ride In A Sedan, (London, 1800), Yale Library.

This competition affected solidarity between Irish labourers. Mayhew warned, in 1849, of "sweaters" who used tricks to "entrap inexperienced country and Irish hands into their service."[171] The example provided Mayhew's *The Morning Chronicle* article was of two poor tailors in Kerry brought over to London by an Irishman in London with promises of high wages. Once arrived in London, the two tailors end up being paid five shillings per week rather than the promised thirty-six.[172] They were forced to live on two meals a day, with three people sleeping in

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[171] Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History*, 57.
[172] Swift, 57.

one bed. Eventually they ran away, and the "sweater" attempted to coerce them back into work with the help of the police. Fortunately, the work contract was found unenforceable.[173] This is a prime example of the lack of solidarity that could be found amongst the Irish migrants, trying to survive in London. It must be noted that the two poor tailors from Kerry migrated in the late 1840s, during the Irish famine.

The Irish famine and the zenith of Chartism:

It is nigh impossible to discuss Irish migrants in London during the nineteenth century without discussing the Irish famine, the largest exodus of Irish migrants in history. The Irish famine doubled the number of Irish migrants in London, between 1845 and 1852.[174] Considering the dire conditions of the Rookery previous to 1845, this only contributed to more overcrowding. H.J. Dyos describes how "in the 1840s they [the Irish] were swarming on the cheapest and therefore worst and most overcrowded districts."[175] The two poor tailors from Kerry, willing to leave their country in hopes of survival, are a good example of the prevailing desperation due to the famine. An element that gains more significance with the rise of famine migration, is the presence of monolingual Irish speakers in the metropole. These people were completely alienated in London unless they found other Irish speakers. This is best shown by the Old Bailey failing to find a translator from Irish to English. As a consequence, many found their ways to St Giles or Whitechapel. On July 9th, 1849, the *Times* published "Our Sanitary Remonstrants," in which the writer explored St Giles's living conditions. The journalist focused on Church Lane and Carrier Street in particular.

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[173] Swift, 58.
[174] Swift, 58.
[175] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 28.

"In a corner, with only a few rags to support her head, in her day dress, and with a sack thrown loosely over her, lay a woman, whose features indicated the rapid approach of death. She was unable to speak English, and on being questioned by the residents in the Irish language, she said that she was a stranger – a poor widow with one child. She had applied to the inhabitants of the room for shelter on the previous night. They said that she had "not long to live by the looks of her; but they could not refuse her.""[176]

It is hard to know for certain the background of this woman on Carrier Street. She may have come over to London in the late 1840s due to the famine in Ireland, which would explain her health and inability to speak English. It is crucial to note that the residents of this room showed solidarity with the helpless woman. This counters the 'survival of the fittest' scenery which is presented by the sweaters. The Irish Londoners of this Carrier Street home took in a stranger due to their shared language and heritage, for they still had their "imagined political community" of Irishness. Due to the general culture of anti-Irishness, they had to look after each other.

There was some solidarity between the English and the Irish within London, during the Irish famine. The 1840s was the decade in which the Chartists peaked in popularity, and soon faded away. Chartism was a political movement that centered around "The People's Charter." This charter called for the following six reforms.[177]

1. Universal Suffrage (for men above 21 years of age)
2. No property qualification (for potential members of Parliament)
3. Annual Parliaments
4. Equal representation (population of equal sizes in electoral districts)
5. Payment of members (of Parliament)
6. Vote by secret ballot

All of these reforms were intended to breach the gap between the rich and poor, which had been widening throughout the nineteenth century and the industrial revolution. In 1848, Chartists

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[176] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants', *The Times*, 9 July 1849, The Times Digital Archive.
[177] Working Men's Association, 'The People's Charter', 1838, https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/people-charter.

held what ended-up being their final large-scale protest at Kennington Common. Despite the momentum gained by Chartists in the decade between 1838 and 1848, it is usually argued that their movement ground to a halt after disappointing support in 1848. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, writing on the importance of 1851 in British history, proposes "it was generally accepted that the great Chartist demonstration held on 10 April 1848 at Kennington Common, just across the river from the Houses of Parliament, had been something of a damp squib, with only 20,000 of the expected 200,000 demonstrators assembling in the rain to call for universal suffrage."[178]

On the other hand, David Goodway's *London Chartism 1838-1848* presents a different picture of 1848. Goodway acknowledges that London Chartism had a slow beginning, with only 15,000 people attending the meeting to elect Chartist representatives in 1838.[179] By April 1841, there were fifteen Chartist localities in the metropole, increasing from a mere five in 1840.[180] When the Chartists carried a national petition listing their grievances, in May 1842, it was accompanied by around 100-150,000 people.[181] Most interestingly, the petition was carried to the House of Commons "via Holborn, Great Russell Street, Oxford Street …"[182] This would have taken the protestors along the top border of the Rookery. This potentially may have made Chartists aware of the Rookery's plight and vice-versa. Concerning Kennington Common, held on April 10th, 1848, Goodway counters common assumptions by positing that approximately 150,000 people attended.[183] In his opinion, the narrative surrounding the "failure of Chartism" was largely manufactured by the government and the press. Conservative press were the first to

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[178] Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2021), 24.
[179] Goodway, *London Chartism, 1838-1848*, 24.
[180] Goodway, 44.
[181] Goodway, 50.
[182] Goodway, 50.
[183] Goodway, 76.

present numbers as low as 30 or 40,000.[184] He writes, "at the time they [Chartists] were not

dispirited by the events."[185] It must be noted that Goodway's research dates from 1982, whilst

Douglas-Fairhurst published his book in 2021. The failure for the secondary literature to

establish a clear image of Kennington Common tends to support Goodway's argument that the

narrative of "Chartist failure" was manipulated, manufactured, and maintained over time. The

threat the Kennington protest posed to the British establishment is made evident when noting that

Queen Victoria, and her family, left for the Isle of Wight on April 8th.[186] Despite this, it is clear

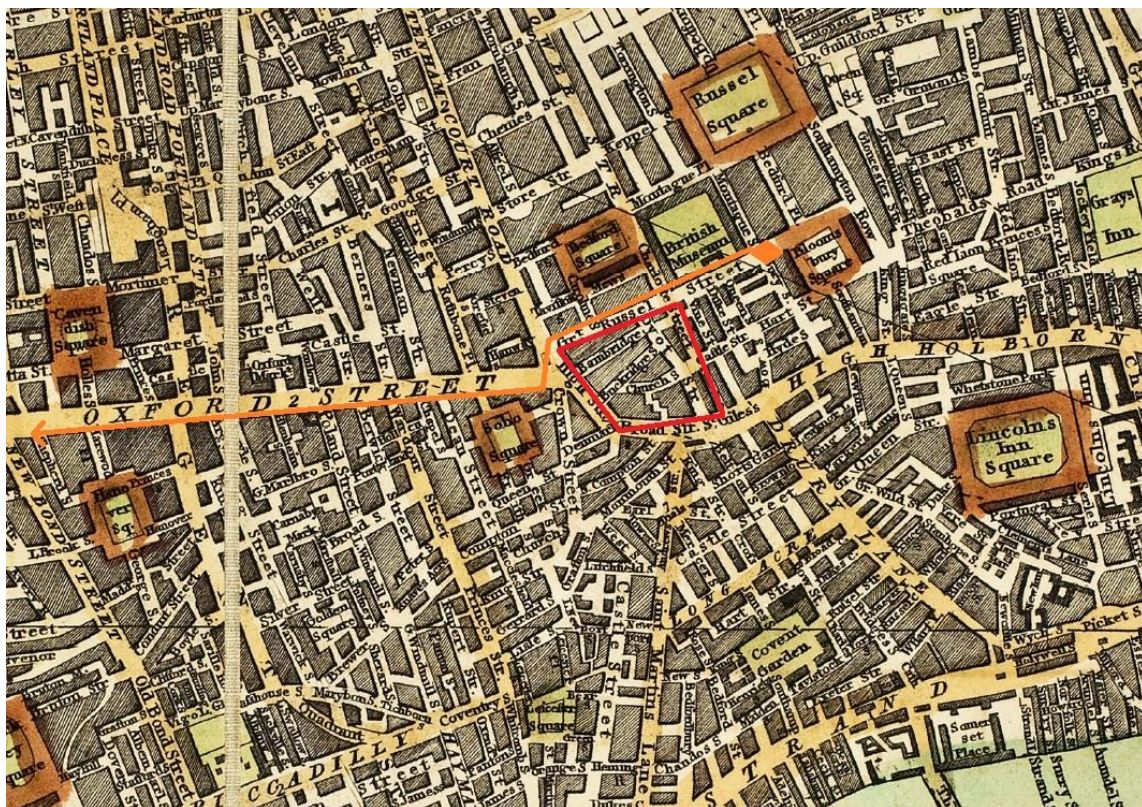that Chartism failed to wield influence in the wake of Kennington.

Figure 11: Chartist protest route (orange) next to Rookery (red). Source: John Luffman,
The Metropolis Displayed (London, 1821)

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[184] Goodway, 136.
[185] Goodway, 79.
[186] John Saville, *1848 : The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 105.

Before Kennington Common, the Chartists had made overtures to the Irish Londoners to join in their class struggle. On a placard, written the 5th of April 1848, the Chartist appealed for Irish solidarity. This document was named, "Chartist Appeal to the London Irish." They wrote, "Look to your fatherland, the most degraded in the scale of nations. Behold it bleeding at every pore under the horrible lashings of cruel misrule."[187] The Chartists knew that the Irish famine was a result of English rule and felt that the London Irish had a common enemy with their cause. This reflects the general "underclass" that Mayhew had delineated, in which the English and Irish poor were grouped. L.I. Golman, a communist historian, points out that Engels "advocated close bonds between the Chartists and the Irish liberation movement as early as in the 1840s."[188] Therefore, it was clear to contemporaries that there was a potential alliance to be had between the Chartists and the Irish. Certainly, the Chartists saw this link. The placard continues, "Irishmen, if you love your country, if you detest these monstrous atrocities, unite in heart and soul with those who will struggle with you to exterminate the hell-engendered cause of your country's degradation – beggary and slavery."[189] The root cause of Ireland's suffering, identified by the Chartists, find resonance with the quotidian experience of the St Giles labourer. A large number of St Giles residents relied on begging and working at such a low rate that it constituted wage-slavery. By April 10th, 1848, the London Chartists had formed a union with Irish Confederates. The Irish Confederation was "the official organisation of Young Ireland," and agitated for a national parliament in Ireland.[190] As a result of this alliance, thousands of Irishman were present for the Kennington Common protest.[191] Kevin O'Connor, best summarises it, "the

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[187] Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History*, 163.
[188] Karl Marx et al., *Ireland and the Irish Question*, [1st ed.]., New World Paperbacks (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 36.
[189] Swift, *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914 : A Documentary History*, 163.
[190] T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 38.
[191] Goodway, *London Chartism, 1838-1848*, 67.

Britain of the early-to-middle 1800s lumbered into the cauldron of iron and steel revolution on gross human inequalities."[192] The Chartists, victims of the same elite-led tyranny, showed the Irish solidarity at a time when there was a predominantly anti-Irish sentiment in England. They underlined the potential power of their union by finishing their placard with the following, "the eyes of Europe are fixed upon you."[193]

The arrivals of thousands of Irish famine migrants in the 1840s was noted by the British officials, many of whom were concerned. On the 5th of August 1850, following a report on overcrowding in the Whitechapel lodging houses the General Board of Health (hereafter GBH) got involved. They queried the parish, "the Board would be glad to know if the lodgers referred to in this report were Irish and whether, if so, the overcrowding was temporary, caused by the influx of Irish for the purpose of hop-picking, or permanent."[194] This was the effect of the famine in Ireland, the well-established migration links of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century were disrupted. Seasonal workers were now becoming permanent. Certainly, the fear of the GBH were confirmed when W.J. Rudge from the parish of St Mary, Whitechapel sent a reply on the 9th of August. Rudge claimed that that the new arrivals were "all Irish poor, a considerable influx of whom has taken place within the last three months."[195] Moreover, "the trustees are led to believe that many of those who have lately arrived are not merely temporary sojourners for like purpose of working at harvest and hop-picking but that they intend to become permanent residents."[196]

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[192] O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain.*, 11.
[193] Saville, *1848 : The British State and the Chartist Movement*, 104.
[194] The National Archives of the UK (TNA): MH 13/268/111
[195] (TNA): MH 13/268/117
[196] Ibid.

The Irish famine broke the norms of Irish presence in London, by ending most seasonal labour and creating long-term housing needs in areas that previously profited from the transience of day-to-day lodging houses. It also coincided with the third cholera epidemic, which lasted from 1846 to 1860. The arrival of the Irish migrants, the overcrowding of Irish neighbourhoods, and sanitation were all linked. On May 31st, 1850, Reverend John Lyons from Whitechapel warned that the lodging houses there were "becoming dangerously crowded with Irish immigrants."[197] These houses had been the locus of a cholera outbreak in the preceding years and Lyons believed that while the "same elements of evil" were present, another outbreak was imminent.[198] Similar overcrowding was present in St Giles, with the same potential threat of illness. James Grant wrote in 1842 that "whole families mess together as if they were so many pigs [in St Giles]."[199] By comparing the inhabitants to pigs, he alludes to the terrible conditions they are living in and reduces the suffering humans to animals. This reinforced the term "rookery," which originally meant a colony of breeding animals.

This chapter has attempted to showcase the quotidian Irish experience by placing emphasis on the injustice faced by Irish Londoners. This was largely illustrated through court cases. As Peter King puts it, after the Napoleonic Wars, English society began to "demonise both the Irish poor and Irishness itself."[200] The histories of the Welsh and Scottish in London were utilised to contrast the ordeals of the Irish. This comparison suggests that the Irish were often mistreated. The Rookery was found to be unique, whilst maintaining some shared experiences with other Irish settlements. There was a focus on the Irish lodging house experience shared between St Giles and Whitechapel. Identity was a key theme, focusing on Britishness and

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[197] (TNA): MH 13/268/71
[198] Ibid.
[199] James Grant, *Lights and Shadows of London Life*, vol. 1 (London: Saunders and Otley, 1842), 163.
[200] King, 'Ethnicity, Prejudice, and Justice: The Treatment of the Irish at the Old Bailey, 1750-1825', 410.

London self-identification. It was found that Irishness remained the key identifier for the London Irish of St Giles. In keeping with this conclusion, links between Chartism and the London Irish were explored to outline networks of solidarity available during this period. Finally, the links between St Giles, Irish migration, and sanitation were established to move forward with chapter three in which sanitation is the crux of the argument.

Chapter 3: Sanitising St Giles with no power to interfere

"I, in common with the friends of common decency, feel myself infinitely indebted to you for your perseverance in improving the Rookery; it is perfectly impossible to describe the immorality, filth, and wretchedness existing in this locality."[201] – Frederick Sanders, 1850.

Sanitation, modernisation, and St Giles all collided in 1840s London, resulting in the Rookery being slowly but surely dismantled. The General Board of Health (GBH) began documenting poor living conditions all over Britain, in efforts to deal with the various pandemics spreading throughout Europe. They were particularly concerned with cholera and typhus, the latter gaining the name "Irish fever."[202] Douglas Fairhurst points out that in the 1840s, one million Irish died of famine, and three-hundred and fifty thousand died of typhus. An additional million emigrated, largely to Britain and America.[203] Due to the insalubrious conditions of the Rookery, it was a breeding ground for all illnesses. Beames claimed that the conditions of the Rookeries of London "should still remind us of what London was once to all – what it still is to the poor."[204] In this way, he is acknowledging the duality of London-living and the alienation felt by the Irish of St Giles. By exploring the firsthand testimony of the GBH, journalists, and writers, this chapter seeks to illustrate the linkages between disease, modernisation, and the decline of the Rookery.

Despite genuine ameliorations to St Giles, it should not be believed that the Rookery simply ceased to exist in the 1850s. The Rookery faded over time, with the first major inroads

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[201] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 30.
[202] Beames, *The Rookeries of London Past, Present, and Prospective.*, 12.
[203] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 27.
[204] Beames, *The Rookeries of London Past, Present, and Prospective.*, 12.

taking place between 1847 and 1853. The opening quotation from Frederick Sanders, who

worked alongside the GBH, highlights the animosity that had built up towards St Giles by the

mid-nineteenth century. A mix of propaganda pieces, like Hogarth's work, and lived realities of

the Rookery resulted in disdain for the area. Sanders, an undertaker, begins by thanking Sir

George Grey (Secretary of State for the Home Department) for improving the Rookery. By the

end of his letter, Sanders concluded, "you may at all times command my services to assist in

getting this dreadful place removed."[205] Within the letter, the idea of improving St Giles is

thrown out and the idea of levelling the Rookery is introduced. Sanders's process reflects a

bigger and longer-term picture, in which the Rookery no longer poses a threat to Londoners.

The London press and the General Board of Health:

      The importance of the London press in triggering GBH internal correspondence cannot

be underestimated. After the *Times* published two articles on the poor conditions of the Rookery,

GBH discussions surrounding St Giles began in earnest. On July 5th, 1849, the *Times* published

what they claimed to be a letter from the residents of Church Lane and Carrier Street, in St Giles.

The residents agonised, "We aint [sic] got no priviz [sic], no dust bins, no drains, no water-splies

[sic], and no drain or suer [sic] in the hole [sic] place. The Suer [sic] Company, in Greek St.,

Soho Square, all great, rich and powerful men, take no notice watsomedever [sic] of our

cumplaints [sic]."[206] It is possible that the *Times* editor fabricated this letter to bring attention to

the plight of the Rookery-dwellers. On the other hand, it may be the genuine attempts of the

residents to reach out for help. The one element to consider is the poor written English. This may

be a result of the lack of education afforded to the St Giles residents. The letter continues, "we all

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[205] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 30.
[206] Scott et al., 'A Sanitary Remonstrance'.

of us suffur [sic], and numbers are ill, and if the Colera [sic] comes Lord help us."[207] Thus, the residents of Church Lane and Carrier Street were well aware of the dangers they faced from pandemics. Cholera, in its third wave during this period, was weighing heavily on everyone's mind in London. The letter proceeds to explain how some men came to the Rookery complaining of the "noosance [sic] and stenchs [sic] our lanes and corts [sic] was to them in New Oxforde [sic] Street."[208] The cohabitation of the ultra-wealthy and the downtrodden was wearing thin by 1849. As a matter of fact, Charles Dickens espoused a similar complaint in an 1851 speech on sanitary reform. He stated that "the air from Gin Lane will be carried by an easterly wind into Mayfair."[209] It is telling that Dickens referred to St Giles through Hogarth's constructed imagery. The vileness of the Gin Lane print continued to haunt discourses around St Giles and the Rookery.

Nonetheless, by the residents own confession, the conditions on Church Lane and Carrier Street were intolerable. The men who came to complain about the stench of the Rookery were "surprized [sic] to see the seller [sic] in No.12 Carrier St., in our lane, where a child was dyin [sic] from fever, and would not beleave [sic] that Sixty persons sleep in it every night."[210] The fever may have been either typhus or cholera, most likely typhus considering the writers feared cholera would soon strike. Moreover, the overcrowded lodging houses appear to be fuller than ever. 'A Sanitary Remonstrance' finishes with the hopes that the publication of the letter would "make these landlords of our houses and these [sewer] comishoners [sic] (the freinds [sic] we spose [sic] of the landlord) make our houses decent for Christions [sic] to live in."[211] This last

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[207] Scott et al.
[208] Scott et al.
[209] Charles Dickens, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. Richard Herne Shepherd (London: Chatto and Windus, 1884), 127.
[210] Scott et al., 'A Sanitary Remonstrance'.
[211] Scott et al.

line is an excellent reminder that the leases on these houses were owned by 'slumlords' who had little incentive to improve the living conditions. There is also the insinuation that the sewer commissioners must be in league with these landlords, for conditions to remain so poor. Lastly, the residents reached out as fellow Christians to be helped. Their use of Christian is presumably an attempt to breach the gap between the Protestant English and the predominantly Catholic Irish residents.

On July 9th, 1849, the *Times* editor followed up the residents' complaints with an investigative article titled, "Our Sanitary Remonstrants." The writer points out that Church Lane and Carrier Street are "within 20 yards of the handsome buildings recently erected in New Oxford-street."[212] This helps to contextualise the interaction between the residents and the well-to-do men who presented their objections to the smell. The *Times* elaborates on their methodology for procuring their testimony. It claims that "the inhabitants being of the very lowest order" St Giles was too dangerous to visit alone. Therefore, "our reporter, having secured the assistance of a police sergeant well acquainted with the street" went room to room to describe the state of affairs.[213] These details are crucial as they highlight the limits of sympathy towards the St Giles Irish. Firstly, they confirm Mayhew's assessment of the London Irish as part of an underclass, "the very lowest." Secondly, they brought police with them to tour the area. It was clarified earlier that the Irish were unfairly targeted by the criminal justice system, so police may have changed the testimony of those interviewed. Mayhew, who conducted similar forays into the Rookery, had commented on this phenomenon. He wrote, "[A] poor Irishman […] will far more frequently shape his reply to what he thinks will please his querist and induce a trifle for

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[212] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants'.
[213] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants'.

himself."[214] Evidently, Mayhew resented that his interviewees would bend their answers to best suit the situation. On the other hand, it is understandable that these impecunious Irishmen would endeavour to maximise the benefits of interacting with these journalists.

The *Times* journalist began his meanderings into St Giles, with the goal of verifying whether the July 5th letter was truthful in its accusations of filth and suffering. Before entering a single house, the writer explained to the reader, "these houses are let by the owners to men and women, who again let out the rooms singly and by twos, and these rooms are again sublet by the occupants to those outcasts and trampers who are in want of a night's shelter."[215] This contemporary description is reminiscent of Linda Clarke's diagram, shown in Chapter One.[216] This short-term housing model was to blame for the lack of renovations to these homes. The writer first entered number 3 on Church-street.[217] They reported, "all the inmates joined in condemning the atmosphere as "enough to poison anybody" and in a hearty wish that something might be done to alleviate their sufferings."[218] The choice of words here is important, as the writer chose to switch from "resident" to "inmate" after having seen the conditions of the Rookery. There was such a lack of space within these homes that the author believed it was more akin to a prison. This echoes Beames's portrayal of Rookeries as protection and entrapment. As

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[214] Turton, 'Mayhew's Irish: The Irish Poor in Mid Nineteenth-Century London', 125.
[215] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants'.
[216] It also shares similarities with land subletting in Ireland. See Cynthia E. Smith's "*The Land Tenure System in Ireland: A Fatal Regime,*" (1993) for more information.
[217] There appears to be some discrepancy between Church Lane and Church Street. It is safe to assume that they are one and the same. The journalist was visiting the two areas mentioned in the July 5th article. Between 1750 and 1850, the road names in St Giles are somewhat unclear. It is clear that Bainbridge Street, named after the previous landowners, remains unchanged over time. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, Charles Knight's description of the Rookery borders contains "George Street" which does not appear on an 1821 map of London. Seeing as Knight's writing dates from 1842, it is unlikely the road appeared in that period. Therefore, there are two plausible answers. The first, the maps of London did not accurately show the borders of the Rookery due to lack of information. The second, certain streets in the Rookery had two or more names. Both explanations could coexist, as one does not negate the other. In this case, it appears that "George Street" as shown on a map in 1851 overlaps exactly with the previous "Dyot Street." Therefore, it is a case of the street name changing over time.
[218] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants'.

the journalist moved through Church-street, he encountered house number 7. Here, "the soil underneath [the wooden floor] coxed up through the boards, saturating the earth with fetid matter. In one of the back rooms several Irish families lived."[219] It is difficult to imagine how terrible this room would have been, with low ceilings and toxins seeping in from the floor. Furthermore, as multiple families had to share a single backroom, the conditions were exacerbated. Due to these harsh realities, the journalist posited that, "Carrier Street contains about 20 homes, and is perhaps the most disgustingly filthy spot that exists anywhere in London."[220] Allegedly, Carrier Street was the most downtrodden road, in London's worst slum, and it was now for anyone to read about in the London press.

In four days, with two articles, the *Times* had shone a spotlight on the forgotten corners of the Rookery for all to see.[221] Contradictorily, government officials were already aware of the status of the Rookery. A letter to Sir George Grey, dated November 11th, 1850, mentions that "the state of things [in St Giles], to which it seems your notice was drawn in May last, remains unaltered."[222] While Grey may have been aware of the sanitation crisis, the *Times* articles made the public more attentive. This newfound pressure on the government officials is obvious. Joseph Banks Durham, a seller of cutlery whose shop lay on New Oxford Street, went into the Rookery to assess the verity of the *Times* articles. He then reported his findings to Cooper, stating "I have no hesitation in saying that it is as substantially true of them now as it was then."[223] In fact, Durham's report goes on to showcase the area as far worse than the *Times* article. On the south

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[219] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants'.
[220] 'Our Sanitary Remonstrants'.
[221] One caveat is that not everyone was literate. Therefore, it is tough to say how much of the wider London community was able to read these Times articles. Another is that not everyone read the Times. Overall, however, it would have reached a relatively wide audience.
[222] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 5.
[223] Cooper and Grey, 9.

side of Church Lane, "the Report is much too favourable […] in a room, thirteen feet square and seven feet high […] I have seen at midnight thirty human beings sleeping on straw."[224] This description tells us much in very few words. Firstly, Durham inspected the area around midnight giving him the best chance to see the lodgings at max capacity. Secondly, thirty people in any room would be an enormous amount, however, the given description is impossibly small. The room would be around 2 foot by 6.5 foot to be 13 feet[2], at which point thirty people would have lain on top of each other in an almost coffin-shaped room.[225] Thirdly, they were sleeping on straw rather than furniture. This last point is both a reflection of the poverty omnipresent in the Rookery, as well as they high risk of pandemic spread due to the floors being either dirt or wooden planks on dirt.

Durham's account then moved onto Kennedy's Court, at the back of Church Lane. It was his belief that it must "have been overlooked by the *Times* reporter, it being ten times more vile and disgusting than Carrier Street, and, as might have been expected, not a single house in it escaped the cholera."[226] In the year between the letter from the residents and the inspection, cholera had moved into the Rookery. More precisely, internal correspondence shows that by August 1849, the General Board of Health was monitoring a cholera outbreak in St Giles. Alex Bain from the GBH wrote to Durham, to acknowledge the latter's concern of "the condition of Church Lane, Oxford Street, which is at present affected with Cholera."[227] It is curious to note

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[224] Cooper and Grey, 9.
[225] This is simplifying the matter slightly, as there are many different shapes the room could take. If it was a perfect square, it would be 3.6 feet by 3.6 feet. The most likely scenario is what is presented above, with the room being a rectangle of some manner. In any scenario, this room would be small for one person let alone thirty. The International Committee of the Red Cross recommends a modern shared prison cell should allow for 37 square feet per person. See *Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Habitat in Prisons* by the International Committee of the Red Cross (2012).
[226] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 10.
[227] Cooper and Grey, 13.

that in this instance, Church Lane was referenced alongside Oxford Street rather than St Giles or

the Rookery. Perhaps Bain believed the use of Oxford Street would create urgency surrounding

the situation. Bain had reported on August 8th, around three weeks before the cholera outbreak,

that management of cesspools in St Giles had prompted a complaint by residents. He assured

Durham that "measures are in preparation by the Metropolitan Sewers Commission, for the

improvement of the locality in question."[228] Despite these assurances, cholera hit the Rookery.

Unfortunately, Durham noticed that most rooms in the Rookery have stockpiles of "vegetables,

fruit, or shellfish, according to the season of the year" which provided another "ready means for

disseminating the infectious disorders so frequent in these places."[229] In keeping with the earlier

assessment that most St Giles residents would have largely made a living as costermongers, their

homes held their produce when they were not working. According to the CDC, cholera is

propagated by cholera bacteria in water or food.[230] As a consequence, St Giles was probably

contributing to the spread of cholera within London rather than internally in the Rookery.

While Durham was theoretically aware of the potential threat of the St Giles produce, the

notion of germ theory was still just around a decade away. In 1861 Louis Pasteur first published

his germ theory which posited that bacteria were responsible for illnesses. Closer to home, the

third cholera pandemic was immortalised in London with the 1854 Broad Street pump outbreak.

John Snow realised that a cesspool in Soho had contaminated the Broad Street well from which

many residents sourced their water.[231] Snow resolved the crisis by mapping out every case of

cholera in the area and linking them to the Broad Street water supply. In the end, he managed to

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[228] Cooper and Grey, 13.
[229] Cooper and Grey, 11.
[230] CDC, 'General Information: Cholera', Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 13 April 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/cholera/general/index.html.
[231] Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map : The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic--and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), 145.

stop the outbreak by removing the handle of the pump to stop people from using the water.

Notably, both these ground-breaking events occurred after the concern with St Giles began. As a consequence, the GBH had difficulties containing the crisis as public health knowledge was limited. Although, the government responses to cholera and typhus were also hampered by a 'passing the buck' mentality, stemming from lacking legislation for sanitary reform. This held true for all cholera outbreaks they were tracking, not just St Giles.

Comparing St Giles to other pandemic outbreaks:

In December of 1852, the General Board of Health issued a *Report on the Sanitary state of Tynemouth and especially of the districts visited by the epidemic Cholera of 1849*, which underlines many of the shared issues in tackling pandemics in this period. On the first page of the report, they outlined that only the Nuisances and Disease Prevention Acts provided frameworks for sanitary reform. Their conclusion was that neither gave "power for effecting the more essential ameliorations demanded by the public health – efficient drainage, water supply, flagging, paving."[232] Charles Dickens, a year earlier, had similarly commented "we timorously make our Nuisance Bills and Boards of Health, nonentities, and think to keep away the wolves of crime and filth."[233] Interestingly, lack of drainage and water supply had been two of the main complaints of the Church Lane and Carrier Street residents. Dyos explains that such was the reality of Victorian housing. He posits, "the history of building regulations is an unsatisfactory and badly told tale of the regulators never quite catching up with the builders."[234] Through the firsthand testimony of St Giles, it is easy to see Dyos's argument. The absentee landlordism

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[232] (TNA): MH 13/189/229. P.1
[233] Dickens, 'On Duty with Inspector Field (1851)', 258.
[234] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 26.

present in St Giles allowed for housing conditions to degrade faster than the government could enforce regulations.

A document from the Treasury Solicitor and HM Procurator General, written in early 1852, claimed that "no definition of the word Common Lodging House is given in the Common Lodging Houses Act 1837."[235] This does illuminate the situation in St Giles, given that in the same year Michael Sullivan had his case dismissed despite breaking the 1851 Lodging House Act. Since the government was proceeding without a definition, how could it properly target any of the problem spots? Therefore, the conclusion of the Treasury Solicitor was that the current legislation was lacking. The very same conclusion reached by the GBH in Tynemouth and Dickens in London. The correspondence of the GBH is far more logical considering the limited abilities of the acts passed by parliament. A major issue, beyond that of definition, was the system of leasing and subleasing which made it difficult to decide who was to be punished.[236] This was assuming that the 1851 Lodging House Act even covered the potential Lodging House in question.

Contrastingly, Richard Dugard Grainger does commend the GBH for their work in Tynemouth by stating, "your committee have also checked that all the cesspools, and gulley-holes in the streets and courts, be effectually trapped."[237] The same could not be said of Church Lane, in which poorly closed cesspools were infecting houses. The report on Tynemouth was written Grainger, Superintending Medical Inspector, Highgate [Middlesex]. This detail is important to view the interconnectivity between the suffering of the St Giles residents and the rise of public health narratives. R.D. Grainger, an inspector for the GBH in this period, was a

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[235] TS 25/575. Page 2.
[236] TS 25/575. Page 2.
[237] MH 13/189/229. P.10

physician himself. In 1850, he had produced the *Cholera Report* for the GBH. Within this report,

he had compiled a map of cholera cases in London. Despite the overwhelming outbreak in

Lambeth, and the majority of the cases being concentrated south of the Thames, there is still a

dark spot on the location of the Rookery. This dot is isolated, with no cases on either side of it.

Once again, the Rookery stood alone and surrounded by wealth.

Figure 12: Rookery continues to spread cholera (11b). Source: Richard Grainger, Cholera
Report, (London, 1850), College of Physicians of Philadelphia Library.

The similarities and mutual concerns do not end there, as fears of lodging houses and

Irish migrants were raised by Grainger. In December 1852, twenty-seven Lodging Houses "kept

by Irish persons," had not been registered and were reported as "being unfit to be used."[238] By registering, Grainger was referring to the 1851 Common Lodging House Act in which local authorities were allowed to regulate Lodging Houses, an extension of the 1848 Public Health Act which had given those powers to local boards of health.[239] These Acts were theoretically good, but they were nigh impossible to enforce. One of the terms of the acts was to fix limits on how many lodgers could stay per night. As previously illustrated, the lodging houses were egregiously filled to the brim. Random inspections had little chance of rectifying the situation. The court case of Michael Sullivan, mentioned earlier, fizzled out due to his inability to speak English despite multiple violations of the 1851 Common Lodging House Act. An additional visit to Church Lane and Carrier Street by Durham in February 1852, revealed that "the houses are filled with many more than the allotted number in many cases."[240] As a consequence, Durham called the 1851 Act a "dead letter."[241] The failure of the Act meant that illness could continue to spread rampantly within Irish slums, such as the Rookery. Even with the rock-bottom prices of lodging houses, many of the Rookery residents struggled with money. These financial struggles often forced family members to keep their dead in the lodging houses until a subscription could be raised to pay for a funeral. This period between death and burial was pejoratively named an "Irish wake." M. Dorothy George points to the case of Mrs Sullivan, in Saffron hill 1817, who raised three subscriptions to pay for her daughter's burial and spent them all on drink. The delay of burial led to the daughter's corpse spreading a fever in the home, killing six other residents. [242]

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[238] MH 13/189/229. P.27

[239] UK Parliament, 'Lodging Houses', accessed 11 August 2022, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/towncountry/towns/tyne-and-wear-case-study/about-the-group/housing/lodging-houses/.

[240] MH 13/269/16. P. 27

[241] Ibid.

[242] George, *London Life in the Xviiith Century*, 124.

Grainger, on these unregistered houses in Tynemouth, claimed that "the houses occupied by the Irish are in an equally bad, if not worse condition."[243] He used his 1851 visit to Gray's Inn Lane, in which he found a house "overcrowded with Irish lodgers," in which "in 2 months, 20 cases of fever had occurred."[244] Irish communities around Britain, due to the poor conditions they largely found themselves in, were more likely to fall victim to cholera. In fact, Grainger came to a similar conclusion at this end of the report. While talking to the local doctor, it was discovered that "he had attended in 3 months, 50 Irish and 51 English paupers, although the population of the former is only a fraction of the latter."[245] Unsurprisingly, Grainger then surmised that the Irish must be more susceptible to cholera than the English. This is logical as the English believed the Irish were of a weaker constitution, as highlighted by MacRaild.

Given the context of the Tynemouth report, it should come as no surprise that the letters exchanged in the *Papers respecting the sanitary state of part of the parish of St Giles in the Fields* largely resulted in dead-ends. On July 3rd, 1849, the GBH replied that the Durham report was acknowledged and forwarded to the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers (MCS).[246] The first passing of the buck. On August 8th, 1849, the GBH replied to Durham's concerns about how "the Cesspools there [Rookery] are being emptied." Alex Bain of the GBH told Durham that the MCS were working on measures, and "the Board have no power to interfere with the method which has been adopted by the Landlords of emptying Cesspools."[247] The phrase "the Board have no power" recurs throughout the letters. Upon the outbreak of cholera in St Giles, late

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[243] MH 13/189/229. P.28
[244] Ibid.
[245] MH 13/189/229. P.29
[246] There are two terms to refer to the same agency. The Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers and the Metropolitan Sewer Commission are the same group. The former are the individual commissioners who assessed the needs of each parish. The latter is the larger group that these commissioners make up, the commission.
[247] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 13.

August 1849, Durham contacted the GBH again. He was assured that "the Guardians of the Union are required […] to take steps for cleansing the neighbourhood and arresting the spread of Cholera."[248] Once more, it is not the role of the GBH to interfere. Contrastingly, Bain remarked that "from the absence of a Common Sewer, and the state of the houses generally, nothing less than a very extraordinary amount of labour can maintain the place in wholesome condition."[249]

The Rookery was in such terrible condition that it was effectively deemed impossible to keep healthy by the GBH. By February 1850, Alex Bain reached out to Durham to tell him that a long-term plan to establish proper drainage and water supply to the Rookery existed within the MCS. It took around six months for the GBH to communicate that the MCS was working on the sewers of St Giles. This slow pace of reform is indicative of the general pace with which the Rookery would be reformed in the coming years. Almost a year after the *Times* article, in June 1850, the GBH reiterated its stance. Despite "the evils arising from the over-crowding of the Irish trampers in the ill-ventilated lodging houses which abound there […] the Board have no power to interfere."[250] In this particular remark, the GBH appears to be singling out the Irish as being the root of the problems. This may be because the number of poor Irish migrants in London was increasing exponentially as the famine continued in Erin.

A split response to crisis:

While the GBH wrangled with the herculean task of managing the Rookery and bringing Lodging Houses to a certain standard of living, the Metropolitan Sanitary Association (MSA) was forming in London due to the increasing concern that the impoverished could not embrace

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[248] Cooper and Grey, 13.
[249] Cooper and Grey, 14.
[250] Cooper and Grey, 16.

Christianity in their current condition. The Lord Bishop of London led the association as President and Chairman, putting religion front-and-centre within the MSA. Their stated objective was, "to obtain through legislative enactments remedies for the evils which result from the present imperfect sanitary condition of the Metropolis, more particularly those arising from the condition of the dwellings of the laboring population."[251] At prima facie, this appears more to do with the unhealthy conditions of the Rookeries rather than religion. For example, they specified that they were seeking legislative solutions to these issues, and it was made clear by the GBH that missing legislation was preventing from bettering the lot of the St Giles residents.

Nonetheless, the objectives of the association become clearer as their pamphlet continues. It claimed that the MSA, "seeks permanently to improve the physical circumstances which surround the dwellings of the Poor and of the Labouring Population, and thus to raise their moral condition; so that while they become more useful members of the Community, they may also more readily appreciate social obligations and Christian virtues."[252] Therefore, the MSA's desire to sanitise is not just relating to the literal filth that plagues the poor. It also refers to the moral decay, in the eyes of well-to-do Christians, of the poor in London. Moreover, the wording allegedly refers to all Christians. This could allow the Irish Catholics, becoming more omnipresent in Britain due to the famine, to also identify with this mission. Regrettably, that may be an overly optimistic reading of the phrasing. Charles Dickens argued in 1846 that Protestantism was a progressive religion of "neatness; cheerfulness; industry; education; continual aspiration," whereas Catholicism was characterised by "dirt, disease, ignorance, squalor, and misery."[253] Dickens was a champion of Sanitary Reform and was intimately

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[251] MH 13/268/11
[252] Ibid.
[253] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 53.

involved with the MSA. Moreover, the MSA was led by the Bishop of London, an influential figure within the Church of England. Therefore, Christians in this sense presumably meant Protestant, or even Anglican.

The conceptualisation of 'Christianity,' and who was a Christian, resonated during this period due to data emerging in 1851. For the first time ever, the British government performed Ecclesiastical Census Returns. This data collection was carried out separately from the population census of the same year. This meant that there was an attempt to count the number of Christians and separate them into Anglican, Non-Conformists, and Catholics. The official state religion of Britain was, and is, Anglicanism as led by the Church of England. Non-Conformists are Protestants who are not Anglicans. These details are crucial as the 1851 data revealed a far larger number of non-conformists than expected.[254] A follow-up report, published in 1854 by Horace Mann, revealed that the Church of England had only 29.7% of church sittings relative to total population. Independent Protestant churches had 6%, Particular Baptists had 3.3%, and Wesleyan Original Connexion Methodists had another 8.1%.[255] In short, the domination of the Church of England was not as solid as presumed.

The linkages between sanitation and religion continue as the GBH founded the *Journal of Public Health* in January 1850, with the intention of monthly publication and a maximum sale price of one shilling. The goal was to bring information concerning Public Health to the masses. Intriguingly, the GBH stated that "the clergy should be especially solicited to contribute to its

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[254] David M. Thompson, 'The 1851 Religious Census: Problems and Possibilities', *Victorian Studies* 11, no. 1 (1967): 87–88.
[255] Horace Mann, *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales*, Religious Worship in England and Wales., 142 p. (London: G. Routledge, 1854), 72.

pages."[256] Their reasoning was to make the journal "as popular as possible."[257] One main way the

clergy was expected to contribute was by giving regular updates on the sanitary condition of

their parish. This would link the emerging boards of health with the traditional parish structure of

governance. Parishes had been the main organisational tool for the administration of London,

and England, for centuries. Indeed, these parish structures were similarly utilised to make the

1851 ecclesiastical census returns possible. Priests reported the attendance of their local

congregations to the census takers. Unfortunately, this system meant that many non-conformist

congregations may have been overlooked, as they were not traditionally integrated into the parish

system. Therefore, many of them would not have been known by the census takers.

In 1851, Dickens addressed the MSA in a speech in which he exclaimed that, "he [the poor man]

is so surrounded by and embedded in material filth, that his soul cannot rise to the contemplation

of the great truths of religion."[258] In short, wipe away the material filth and the souls of the

indigent will rise in moral condition. Dickens is a connection between the MSA and the

Rookery, as his fascination with sanitation reform did intersect with his morbid curiosity about

St Giles. His 1851 short story, *On Duty with Inspector Field*, saw him going into the cellars in St

Giles to explore the criminality and filth of the Rookery. Much like the *Times* reporter who

preceded him, Dickens explored St Giles with the caveat of being escorted by the police, by

Inspector Field. Upon entering the Rat's Castle, Dickens exclaims, "ten, twenty, thirty – who can

count them! Men, women, children, for the most part naked, heaped upon the floor like maggots

in a cheese."[259] Throughout this story, Dickens's turn of phrase indicates a paternal patronising of

the Rookery residents. This becomes even more evident when he discovered they are all Irish.

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[256] MH 13/268/13
[257] Ibid.
[258] Dickens, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, 128.
[259] Dickens, 'On Duty with Inspector Field (1851)', 258.

He calls out, "in that dark corner yonder! Does anybody lie there? Me sir, Irish me, a widder [sic], with six children. And yonder? Me sir, Irish me, with me wife and eight poor babes."[260] His conversations paint the Irish inhabitants as somewhat grovelling and subservient. He even took the pain to write the answers of the Irish respondents in poor English. Dickens took time to make the Irish inhabitants look uneducated. Moreover, there is a large emphasis on the number of children in each family. It appears that Dickens is not trying to make the reader feel any sympathy for the Irish residents. Rather, the tone is condescending. This fits into Dickens's views on Catholicism, and the belief that once these people were brought out of poverty, they would find salvation in Protestantism. The writing continues to lead the reader to this conclusion, with comments on lodging houses. As Dickens explained, "we enter other lodging-houses, public-houses, many lairs and holes; all noisome and offensive; none so filthy and so crowded as where the Irish are."[261] By the 1850s, when Dickens was writing, the culture of anti-Irishness has reached a fever pitch. In this way, it is unsurprising that this story be written in such a way to place the blame on the Irish for their downtrodden conditions.

The arrival of New Oxford Street and sanitation:

In his inspection with Field, Dickens muses on disparity between the emerging 'modern' London and the last vestiges of the past, concentrated in the Rookery. It reflects Beames's interpretation of contemporary London being in the hands of the well-to-do, while the poorest are stuck in the past. Dickens homed in on this point, stating that "we make our New Oxford Streets, and our other new streets, never heeding, never asking, where the wretches whom we clear out, crowd."[262] Indeed, this is not the first time New Oxford Street has been juxtaposed with

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[260] Dickens, 258.
[261] Dickens, 259.
[262] Dickens, 258.

the poverty of the Rookery. As one of the major infrastructure projects of mid-nineteenth century London, New Oxford Street cut through the city centre. Adam Crymble points out that "prior to its extension in 1847, Oxford Street ended exactly at the Rookery. One simply could not miss it."[263] After 1847, however, the Rookery had been bisected by the street. This is the cause of Dickens's pondering, as it became clear that those displaced by the destruction of the homes had simply moved into the lodging houses that remained. The contemporary press, *The Illustrated London News*, similarly remarked "it has, probably, occurred to few such observers to inquire what has become of the poor persons who have become unhoused by these great changes."[264]
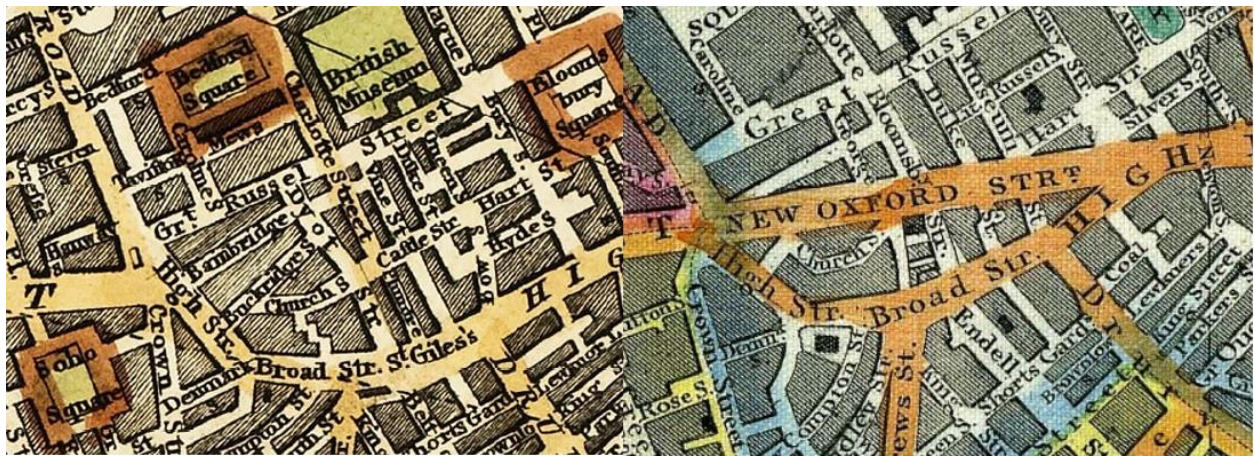
Figure 13: Rookery (1821) versus Rookery (1851). Source: John Luffman, The Metropolis Displayed (London, 1821) & J. Cross, Cross's London Guide, (London, 1851).

The extension of Oxford Street was meant to cut down on traffic issues and begin the break-up of the St Giles Rookery. In 1836, the Select Committee on Metropolis Improvement stated, "by pulling down the aforesaid district [St Giles], a great moral good will be achieved by compelling the 5,000 wretched inhabitants to resort and disperse to various parts of the

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[263] Crymble, 'The Decline and Fall of an Early Modern Slum: London's St Giles "Rookery", c . 1550–1850', 11.
[264] 'Model Lodging-Houses', *The Illustrated London News*, 11 April 1846, The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003.

metropolis and its suburbs."[265] Unfortunately, the committee did not foresee that the people they

would forcibly evict had no other choice than to immediately resort to the cheap next-door

lodging houses. Comparing a map of the area in 1851 with the previous 1821 map shows the

extent of the damage. The New Oxford Street extension has perfectly sliced the Rookery in

twain. As a result, lodging houses now border the metropole's newest boulevard on either side.

This helps to explain the complaints that the Church Lane and Carrier Street residents received in

1849. The rhetoric surrounding using infrastructure as a sanitising tool continued throughout the

1830s and 40s. In the 1837-38 report by the Select Committee, there is mention of "the formation

of a new, straight and spacious street into Holborn, suited to the wants of the heavy traffic

constantly passing ... provision would, at the same time, be made in a very great degree, for the

important objects of health and morality."[266] St Giles was not the only slum on the chopping

block of Parliamentary reform. Just to the south of Westminster Abbey stood the Devil's Acre.

Urban planners led by James Pennethorne used Victoria Street to puncture the main road, Pye

Street, in 1851.[267] Many houses were destroyed, and the area was similarly cut into two, with the

goal of dissipating the slum over time. By 1839, debates in Parliament were touching on the

subject of St Giles through the Metropolis Improvement Bill. The topic is handled more

delicately in this debate. They speak of "extending Oxford-street, in a direct line through St.

Giles's, so as to communicate with Holborn."[268] Evidently, one of the objective of the New

Oxford Street was to split the Rookery in half with the goal of putting an end to the slum.

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[265] First Report From The Select Committee on Metropolis Improvement, 1836, H.C., Reports From Committees 10, XX, 42.
[266] Second Report From the Select Committee on Metropolis Improvement 1837-8,H.C., Reports From Committees 10, XVI, vii.
[267] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 36.
[268] UK Parliament, 'Improvement Of The Metropolis (Volume 49)' (Hansard, 24 July 1839), https://hansard.parliament.uk//Commons/1839-07-24/debates/da88a092-d1f2-4e58-9784-9aae1232264c/ImprovementOfTheMetropolis.

The construction of New Oxford Street was the first major attack on the integrity of the St Giles Rookery; however, it did not cause the slum to fall. In fact, Dickens's musings in 1851 are reflective of the enduring conditions of the Rookery. It became apparent to the author, during his visit with Inspector Field, that the legislation put forward had failed to make significant changes to the state of St Giles. One of the major missing elements in the history of St Giles, is understanding the fall of the Rookery. The "end" of the slum is often associated with the building of New Oxford Street and the rise of English public health organisations which cut down on mortality rates in the area. On the contrary, the evidence shows that the St Giles Rookery managed to maintain a steady decline for years. Therefore, it begs the question, what improvements were feasibly achieved in this period for the inhabitants of St Giles?

The main demands of the Church Lane and Carrier Street residents were access to water and proper sewage systems, to avoid the spread of illnesses. Turning to the internal correspondence between the GBH and the Metropolitan Sewers Commission, it is possible to track the progress on this particular issue. A letter in this chain, written by Durham to the Home Office and latter then forwarded to the GBH, highlights some of the difficulties encountered in sanitising the Rookery. In this letter, signed May 1st, 1850, Durham exclaimed, "[I] pray your interference to cause the proper authorities to take steps for its improvement."[269] Durham had reached out to the Home Office as nothing had changed in the Rookery in a year. Unfortunately for him, the Home Office rerouted him back to the GBH. Within the letter, Durham explained that he had written to the Commissioners of Sewers and the parish authorities to no avail. He went onto elaborate that, "being an inhabitant of New Oxford […] I must earnestly pray that measures may be accepted to

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[269] MH 13/249/57. P.151.

prevent the recurrence of Cholera in those streets."[270] It seems plausible to argue that Durham's

fixation with sanitising the Rookery was in his own self-interest. By living on the extension of

Oxford Street, he would inevitably be within yards of Church Lane and Carrier Street. He spent

years acting a reporter on the issues of Church Lane and Carrier Street, leaving letters for

posterity, to attempt to curtail cholera in his neighbourhood. It was well known that cholera had

already struck the Rookery in summer of 1849. On May 8th, 1850, the GBH acknowledged the

Home Office forwarding of Durham's letter.[271] In short, the issue was ongoing and the GBH had

no ability to fix the situation quickly.

By September 1850, the powerlessness of the GBH was becoming more explicit. Following

yet another complaint by Durham, T. Taylor (an assistant for the GBH) stated,

> "The Board have no powers whatever, as you may assure yourself by reference to the
> Nuisances Removal and Disease Prevention Act and the Act amending it. The
> Commissioners of Sewers are the only body who have any power to interfere for the
> improvement of drainage and sewerage of Church Lane and Carrier Street."[272]

The main sticking point was the lack of action by the MCS meant that the conditions of the

Rookery were not likely to change. Dyos elaborates on the nature of Victorian sanitation efforts

by explaining, "the machinery for approving street plans and drainage levels took time to

evolve."[273] In late October 1850, Durham and his neighbour James Jones decided to file a

complaint to the Metropolitan Police concerning the conditions of some of the surrounding

houses. The Metropolitan Police Office replied on October 30th, claiming that "the

Commissioners have not legal authority to interfere in the matter."[274] Durham, in turn, attempted

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[270] MH 13/249/57. P.152.
[271] MH 13/249/58.
[272] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 28.
[273] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 26.
[274] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 29.

to get the Paving Committee of the relevant parishes to get involved in refurbishing the area. Robert Finnis, a clerk from the Committee responded that they "express their regret at the state in which Carrier Street has been placed by reason of the want of proper drainage, and their satisfaction at finding that the Commissioners of Sewers are now remedying this defect."[275] This is the first time in the *Papers Respecting the Sanitary State* that an active solution by the MCS is mentioned. The final letter of these *Papers* is from Durham to Cooper on November 9th, 1850. Therein, Durham reported that there has been no tangible improvement in the neighbourhood since his last letter, apart from the fact that, "[The MCS] commenced making a small sewer."[276] Durham then lamented the weakness of the Nuisance Removal and Disease Prevention Acts. His solution entailed "the licensing of such lodging houses, and placing them under the control of the police, or somebody appointed for the purpose."[277] Alas, the 1851 Common Lodging House Act attempted to carry out this plan, with lackluster success.

On February 16th, 1853, the Metropolitan Commission of Sewers wrote to the General Board of Health to announce the end of the Church Lane and Carrier Street drainage issues. The letter was forwarding reports "on pipe sewers laid down in Church Lane + other places in the parish of St Giles."[278] It is fair to assume that Carrier Street would be covered in the "other places" section of that report. This letter is a about three and a half years after the *Times* articles that brought these two streets infamousness, illustrating the government's limited ability to rebuild the Rookery. The report also did not claim that all of St Giles has been provided with sewers, meaning that certain streets would still be living with improperly maintained cesspools. Despite these reservations, this is still evidence of tangible changes to St Giles during this period and it

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[275] Cooper and Grey, 30.
[276] Cooper and Grey, 31.
[277] Cooper and Grey, 31.
[278] MH 13/269/82.

addressed a major complaint of the Rookery residents. Moreover, London as a whole was struggling with waste management during this period. This is evidenced by the publication of Robert Netherway's *Suggestions for improving the sanatory state of London*, addressed to the MCS, in 1850.[279] Netherway was attempting to propose a more holistic sewer system. By 1858, the lack of proper management resulted in "the Great Stink." During the summer of 1858, a heatwave superheated sewage and made London intolerably pungent. As a result, an amendment was made to the 1855 Metropolis Management Act, to provide funds for the construction of sewers.[280] On the other hand, the construction of sewers in St Giles does not change the fact that many residents were living in lodging houses that were poorly ventilated and maintained. Disease was still a reality in the area, despite the new sewer system. For example, the painting *Low Lodging House, St Giles's* by Sir Hubert von Herkomer dates from 1872. In it, a small room is full to the brim with people. Even two decades after the sewers were installed, overcrowding still plagued the area. While proper sewers helped to cut down cholera cases massively, typhus is spread through body lice in overcrowded spaces.[281] Therefore, without enforceable regulations and alternatives for the residents, the Rookery faded slowly.

In summary, this chapter has sought to outline the influences that drove British public health narratives and illustrate the weaknesses of public health organisations during this period. The press, Rookery residents, individuals such as Durham, and more, all contributed to the development of the GBH correspondence on St Giles. While there were credible improvements

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[279] Robert. Netherway, *Suggestions for Improving the Sanatory State of London & Its Environs : Slightly Modified from the Scheme Submitted to the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers in 1849* (London: J. Weale, 1850).
[280] UK Parliament, 'METROPOLIS LOCAL MANAGEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.—SECOND READING.' (Hansard, 19 July 1858), https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1858/jul/19/metropolis-local-management-act.
[281] CDC, 'Epidemic Typhus', Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 13 November 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/typhus/epidemic/index.html.

in the St Giles area, many issues continued to linger. The vast number of organisations involved in the betterment of St Giles created miscommunications and delays vis-à-vis any possible solutions. The GBH were mostly powerless, relying on the powers of local parish authorities or the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers. Joseph Banks Durham, a shop owner on the newly extended Oxford Street, spent years negotiating these complicated networks of authority to sanitise his neighbourhood. His success was limited, as he himself admitted. In his final letter in the *Papers* he acknowledges that any help provided by the current legislation would "merely prove a palliative for a time."[282] By installing the sewers in 1853, the MCS began to make inroads in breaking the cycle of poverty in St Giles. This was the second major hit to the Rookery since the bisection of the area by New Oxford Street. It was clear to everyone that the Rookery was coming to an end. It was not obvious, however, how long it would take to 'sanitise' the parish of St Giles.

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[282] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 31.

Chapter 4 – A slum in the heart of empire

"What about the slums still swarming with life, some of them just a few hundred yards from the Crystal Palace?"[283] – Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 2021.

There is little literature on the 'end' of the Rookery, with a general consensus that the area lost significance as a locus of criminality and filth in the mid nineteenth century. While this is correct, it overlooks the slow but steady decline of St Giles, that kept it a public health concern for decades to come. The Rookery did not suddenly cease to exist in the 1850s. There was, however, a sudden governmental desire to make that area of London 'respectable' by 1850. This desire stemmed from the convergence of many different events in the 1840s. The failed European revolutions in 1848, the faltering of the Chartist movement, the mass migration of Irish famine survivors, all point to a fragile political climate. Britain aspired to place itself at the top of this world order, and the path to such an outcome started with the 1851 Great Exhibition. By convening all nations under one roof, the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, and presenting innovations, Britain could claim the title of 'centre of civilisation.' As the *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* stated in 1851, "there is evidently a desire to look respectable in the eyes of strangers."[284] All of this pertains to St Giles, as the Rookery represented an ideological threat to such a vision of Britain. If visitors were confronted with the Rookery as it was known in the 1840s, it would contradict the narrative of the 'civilising nation.' London itself, the heart of empire, could be imagined as a micro-empire of its own. Within this micro-empire, different neighbourhoods represented different nations. This conceptualisation of London existed in

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[283] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 261.
[284] 'Things Talked of in London', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 31 May 1851, 350.

Victorian England already. Mayhew led the charge, in 1856, with his work *The Great World of London*. He began the book citing Horace Say, a French economist, who had claimed "Londres n'est plus une ville: c'est une province couverte de maisons."[285] Mayhew rejects this assessment of the metropole. He counters, "how idle, therefore, to speak of London as a mere province, when it comprises within its boundaries a greater number of people than many a kingdom!"[286] Nevertheless, in such a kingdom, the poverty of St Giles clashed with the opulence of Crystal Palace.

St Giles as an ideological threat:

The threat the Rookery posed to Britain's self-perception was revealed within the *Papers*, in the letter from Cooper to Sir George Grey that prefaces the document. On November 11th, 1850, Cooper wrote to Grey concerning the ongoing state of St Giles. He claims that the parish "is beginning to attract the notice of foreigners anxious to acquire information respecting our social position in all its parts – the bad as well as the good."[287] Cooper than goes on to explain that between September and October 1850, it was visited by some Americans and Frenchmen. Therefore, reports on the state of St Giles had the potential to appear outside of Britain. He follows up by stating, "without your [Grey's] intervention, it will, I greatly fear, remain unaltered when the Exhibition of next year opens."[288] This, for the first time, fixes the Great Exhibition as a form of deadline for 'fixing' St Giles after centuries of misrule. Chapter three made clear that the sewer system in St Giles only came to fruition in 1853, so the deadline failed to achieve significant goals before the Exhibition opened. Nowhere is that made clearer than in Dickens's

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[285] "London is no longer a city, it is a province covered in houses."
[286] Mayhew, *The Great World of London*, 3.
[287] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 5.
[288] Cooper and Grey, 5.

writings on the Rats' Castle. Before entering the cellar with Inspector Field, Dickens comments

that "Detective Sergeant, weary of speaking French all day to foreigners unpacking at the Great

Exhibition, is already here."[289] While the Exhibition is being prepared, Dickens is investigating

the wretchedness of St Giles. It was mentioned earlier that the author embellished the short story,

but it does confirm that the Rookery remained on either side of New Oxford Street. Cooper

concluded, "the curiosity of strangers with respect to the spot in question — little at the present

moment—may then grow great."[290] Such a conclusion was not without basis as, contemporary

estimates foresaw "half a million of all classes" visiting the Exhibition.[291] In his mind, Cooper

believed that the Rookery was a potential humiliation not just to London, but to all Englishmen.

On the other hand, the Rookery's positionality in 1851 as being north and south of

Oxford Street allows the possibility of it going largely unnoticed by the crowds of tourists

heading to Hyde Park. The majority of tourists would be using Oxford Street as a viaduct

towards the west, where Hyde Park is located. The recently constructed buildings on this

extended boulevard would largely cover any sign of the Rookery hiding behind. As Cooper

suspected, the Exhibition created a boom in writing concerning London. One such account is by

William Allen Drew, an American, who travelled from Boston, through Montreal to London.[292]

He recounted his journey down Oxford Street, starting at Holborn Hill, on an omnibus to get to

Hyde Park.[293] Drew's choice of itinerary takes him from around the British museum, down

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[289] Dickens, 'On Duty with Inspector Field (1851)', 255.
[290] Cooper and Grey, *Letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey ... from Charles Purton Cooper ...: With Papers Respecting the Sanitary State of Part of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, London.*, 5.
[291] HO 45/3051. P. 10.
[292] Such a route is of particular interest as Drew notes that Montreal had a population of around 40-50,000. Mayhew, in the late 1840s, had posited St Giles had a population of around 54,000. The Rookery was no small slum to hide from visiting writers.
[293] William Allen Drew, *Glimpses and Gatherings during a Voyage and Visit to London and the Great Exhibition in the Summer of 1851.*, Nineteenth Century Collections Online: Mapping the World: Maps and Travel Literature (Augusta: Homan & Manley, 1852), 316.

Oxford Street, to the eastern side of the park. Despite passing through St Giles, as he stayed on

an omnibus, he never saw the misery of the Rookery. On the contrary, Drew was enchanted by

the metropole. The author went so far to say, "there is and can be no real suffering known in

London, which is not provided for by legal and benevolent institutions […] Begging is

forbidden."[294] The efforts to cover-up the worst excesses of St Giles were superficially

successful. New Oxford Street allowed tourists to get to Hyde Park by omnibus without seeing

the poverty of the Rookery.[295] This was crucial as, "in almost every omnibus, some two or three

foreigners were to be seen among the passengers," during the Exhibition.[296]

As far as the British were concerned, the eyes of the world were firmly fixed on Crystal

Palace in 1851. Henry Mayhew, collaborated with George Cruikshank, renowned cartoonist, to

put together a book celebrating the exhibition. The opening line read, "The Great Exhibition was

about to attract the sight-seers of all the world – the sight-seers, who make up nine-tenths of the

human family."[297] Nine-tenths reveals the high expectations the British had for their exhibition.

There was a sense of internationalism involved, although, it was smothered with an air of British

superiority. Official documents written for the Exhibition reflect this attitude. The following

passage comes from the introduction of the exhibition's official catalogue. "Great Britain offers a

hospitable invitation to all the nations of the world, to collect and display the choicest fruits of

their industry in her Capital ; and the invitation is freely accepted by every civilized people,

because the interest both of the guest and host is felt to be reciprocal."[298] The presumption was

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[294] Drew, 196.

[295] An omnibus was a horse-drawn bus or carriage which transported people in the Metropole during this period.

[296] Mayhew and Cruikshank, *1851, or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family : Who Came up to London to 'Enjoy Themselves,' and to See the Great Exhibition*, 132.

[297] Mayhew and Cruikshank, 1.

[298] Great Exhibition (1851 : London, England), *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851 …*, New ed. (London: Spicer Bros., 1851), 1, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/Sabin?af=RN&ae=CY110419526&srchtp=a&ste=14&locID=edmo74244.

that nations should be honoured to be given this opportunity and any who should decline would certainly be 'uncivilised.' The Society of Arts, under Prince Albert's presidency, pushed for the realisation of this exhibition. Albert wanted to agitate for this collection, "for the purposes of exhibition, and of competition and encouragement."[299] Again, this wording appears to reflect a British presumption that other nations needed to be prompted to compete with the emerging industrial output of Victorian Britain. The British were positioning themselves as the centre of the 'civilised world' which contrasted harshly with the continual existence of slums like the Rookery.

The reality lay behind the handsome buildings of Oxford Street, where Church Lane and Carrier Street continued to suffer from cholera and typhus. Douglas-Fairhurst summarises the situation neatly, "the gleaming surfaces of modern life could not disguise the fact that for many people life was still nasty, brutish and pathetically short."[300] This echoes the duality of London living as outlined by Thomas Beames. The Rookery represents what London used to be and still was for the impoverished. It also reflects the emerging conceptualisation of London as a micro-empire. An article from 1844, titled 'Tribes of London,' theorised London as thus, with the boroughs being more separated than nations globally. As the author posited, "for the various portions of the earth are no more distinct, as regards their aborigines, than the many quarters of London, each to each."[301] On the one hand are the "West-end patrician" equated with "the Greeks" versus the "denizens of the Rookery" who represented the "savages of the Pacific."[302] The heavily colonial and racialized language represented the divides within the metropole in the

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299 Great Exhibition (1851 : London, England), 4.
300 Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 73.
301 'Tribes of London', *The Illustrated London News*, 18 May 1844, The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003.
302 'Tribes of London'.

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1840s. These divides were intricately linked. Despite the British government's desire to put distance between the exhibition and St Giles, they both emerged from the same heritage. H.J. Dyos argued that without cheap labour, Victorian exports would not have achieved such heights. Cheap lodging is a necessary reality for cheap labour. Therefore, Dyos argues that "the slums helped to under-pin Victorian prosperity."[303]

The Victorian obsession with "the stranger" :

The Great Exhibition was an event that forced the residents of Britain to focus on their identity, to establish in-groups and out-groups. There was a growing obsession with 'the stranger,' and what they represented. With this context, it is important to understand that there were two ways to frame London as a micro-empire. On the one hand, some writers began to imagine London as a strong multi-cultural nexus for the British empire. For example, Henry Mayhew in *The Great World of London*, argued that in every thousand people in the world, "two at least are Londoners."[304] Therefore, London was impressively large, while the world remained larger still and full of strangers. This provides a rudimentary 'us versus them' framework. Kristen Pond, researching the figure of the stranger in the Victoria press, contradicts Mayhew's conceptualisation of London as this united mega-city. Pond claims that "the discourse of London as a cosmopolitan world city contradicted the class and religious tensions of the 1840s and 1850s."[305] The lived reality of the Rookery was of poverty and second-class living conditions. Moreover, the culture of anti-Irishness omnipresent in London breaks the image of a multi-cultural hub. The Irish of St Giles were discriminated against due to their faith and their socio-

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[303] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 27.
[304] Mayhew, *The Great World of London*, 4.
[305] Kristen Pond, '"A Desire to Look Respectable in the Eyes of Strangers": The Victorian Press and the Figure of the Stranger at the Great Exhibition of 1851', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 53, no. 1 (2020): 61.

economic position. Therefore, the 1844 imagination of London as an empire was more accurate. The West-end patricians saw themselves as Greeks or Romans, the founders of civilisation. This was the mantle they were trying to claim with the Great Exhibition. Meanwhile, the Rookery residents were not part of *The Great World of London*, they were viewed as "savages." The Rookery was being targeted for destruction; the New Oxford Street made this clear.

The Rookery was alien to London; they were strangers existing at the doorstep of London's most prestigious neighbourhoods. Indeed, Douglas-Fairhurst posited that "for the majority of middle-class readers […] the lives of the poor were as mysterious as those o the Exhibition's anticipated foreign visitors."[306] This is why there is an equation between foreigner and stranger in the literature surrounding the Exhibition. This is not a new sentiment, as contemporary writers were already expressing similar thoughts. Victorian author James Grant, in 1842, commented that "the great mass of the metropolitan community are as ignorant of the destitution and distress which prevail in large districts of London […] as if the wretched creatures were living in the centre of Africa."[307] This reinforces the ideal of London as a micro-empire, with the less fortunate being made into "wretched creatures." Kristen Pond argues that "the figure of the stranger appears everywhere in the Victorian press."[308]

The residents of Church Lane and Carrier Street had first gained relevance through two Times articles, framing them as paupers removed from London society. As explored in Chapter one and two, the residents of St Giles could not identify with Britishness, they remained rooted in their "imagined community" of Irishness. The continued use of Irish as the primary language

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[306] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 107.
[307] Grant, *Lights and Shadows of London Life*, 1:164–65.
[308] Pond, '"A Desire to Look Respectable in the Eyes of Strangers": The Victorian Press and the Figure of the Stranger at the Great Exhibition of 1851', 58.

of the Rookery, as well as the predominance of Catholicism, alienated St Giles. Moreover, the

area was intrinsically linked with violence and criminality. These characteristics only helped

build the image of the Rookery as being filled with "savages." The Exhibition would bring these

strangers into the spotlight, as "foreigners as well as the strangers from all parts of our country,"

would make their way to Hyde Park.[309] It is intriguing that other residents of Britain would be

labelled as "strangers." Nonetheless, it was highlighted in chapter two that Scottish, Welsh, and

Irish residents of London were discriminated against repeatedly in the criminal justice system.

The metropole was multi-cultural; however, it was not necessarily accepting of these differences.

While it is unlikely that many indigent Rookery dwellers would make their way to the

Crystal Palace, some certainly did. It is estimated that around three-quarters of all visitors to the

Exhibition were working class, from all over the country. This majority would opt for the

cheapest admission which cost a shilling. This is an expense that Douglas-Fairhurst defines as

"not an insignificant amount to someone on modest wages."[310] Beyond that, the vast number of

tourists meant that certainly some were confronted with the remaining "plague-spots." This

reminds us that the Rookery, though it had begun its collapse, was by no means gone in the

1850s. Even in 1864, a certain Charles Babbage wrote of his experience in St Giles. Babbage, a

mathematician largely believed to be the "father of the computer", explains, "I was inquiring, in

one of the most disreputable streets in London – George Street, St Giles's, long ago pulled down,

enlarged, and rebuilt […] I had been into several of the lowest lodging-houses, and into the

cellars of that nest of misery and guilt."[311] Hence, George Street had been rebuilt for the

betterment of St Giles yet, low lodging houses continued to throng the road. Furthermore, the

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[309] HO 45/3051. P. 9.
[310] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 162.
[311] Charles Babbage and Martin. Campbell-Kelly, *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 244–45.

cellars continued to house the very lowest of the area. This proves that despite inroads, and tangible improvements in the area, the Rookery faded very slowly into the nineteenth century. It must be pointed out that other slums experienced similar long-term declines. Efforts in 1855 to clean up the Wild Court, next to Drury Lane, seemed initially successful. Yet, Dyos underlines the continued indigence in the area well into the 1880s.[312] The Wild Court, only a few roads away from the St Giles Rookery, is simply another example of the resistance of these slums to governmental improvements.

Public health concerns:

One commonality between the Rookery and the Great Exhibition is the fear they both produced concerning public health. Kristen Pond points out that there were fears of contagion "both literally in the form of diseases like the plague and metaphorically as foreign manners that might influence and poison English ways."[313] The first fear concerns typhus and cholera, while the latter focuses on the delicate question of identity. The fear of disease is understandable as Britain was suffering from various outbreaks of both illnesses throughout the 1840s. The exhibition would move people who were in outbreak zones all over the world throughout the metropole, spreading disease. On the other hand, while St Giles remained sewer-less throughout 1851, the Exhibition had a popular exhibit which regulated the health risks. Over 800,000 people visited the flushing toilets, which were accessible for a penny.[314] This vastly successful exhibit stood on the shoulders of GBH correspondence which was being exchanged around the same time as that of the Church Lane and Carrier Street dilemma. On November 8th, 1850, the

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[312] Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', 15.
[313] Pond, '"A Desire to Look Respectable in the Eyes of Strangers": The Victorian Press and the Figure of the Stranger at the Great Exhibition of 1851', 57.
[314] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 161.

Commissioners of Sewers were contacted for "the establishment of Public Water-Closets and Urinals in the Metropolis."[315] The letter originated from a group of concerned citizens, headed by a John Sinclair of Kensington. They worried that these services would not be provided despite "the great influx of foreigners expected next year, before the opening of the Exhibition in May."[316] In the end, functioning toilets and urinals were provided for foreigners, as opposed to the residents of St Giles.

Herein lies the dichotomy, Britain hosted the Great Exhibition in London while the Rookery's terrible conditions endured only a few miles away. One of the most glaring contradictions of this wealth disparity was Prince Albert's 'model lodging house.' This project was personally paid for by the prince-consort and was intended to showcase what an ideal lodging house would resemble. William Henry Smith, a writer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, used the ghost of Voltaire as a medium to express his disapproval of the exhibition in August 1851. In this critique, Voltaire found that "the model lodging-houses erected by Prince Albert caught his eye."[317] This is the only positive section of the article by Henry Smith, where he calls Prince Albert "intelligent and accomplished."[318] The model lodging house had large windows, insulation, toilet, and three bedrooms. It was built in Hyde Park by the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes and attracted 250,000 visitors.[319] This new type of lodging house was being shown off to the world, including potentially residents of St Giles, while the MCS took four years to lay down pipes in two roads of the Rookery. This is the

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[315] MH 13/268/147.
[316] MH 13/268/147.
[317] William Henry Smith, 'Voltaire in the Crystal Palace', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 70 (Edinburgh; New York; London; Philadelphia: William Blackwood; T. Cadell and W. Davis; T. Foster [et al.]; W. Lewer [et al.], 1851), 152.
[318] Henry Smith, 152.
[319] Douglas-Fairhurst, *The Turning Point : A Year That Changed Dickens and the World*, 191.

weakness of the Exhibition; it did not reflect the lived reality of London. This is why John Timbs's attempt to convince readers that St Giles was full of model lodging houses in 1855 is so implausible.

This leads us to the second fear prompted by the Exhibition, that of foreign manners. The Chartists had tried to appeal to the London Irish, as mentioned earlier, before their movement faltered in 1848. Nevertheless, political tensions were still high after the many failed democratic revolutions of 1848. The fear of strangers bringing problems to London were not unfounded, as documents from the Home Office concur this was a threat. On November 4th, 1850, a letter to the Metropolitan Police argued that "there are at present […] many refugees from other countries on account of extreme democratic revolutionary principles, they are in communication with the political agitators of our own country."[320] Chartism may have faltered but, there were still chartists in London who hoped to combat the immense wealth disparity of Victorian England. The 1851 Great Exhibition served to show Britain's greatest accomplishments which, in turn, only highlighted the wealth inequality in London. This was an inequality that was not going to fade for the decades that followed.

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to outline the injustice of the Rookery conditions against the backdrop of the 1851 Great Exhibition. This was necessary to illuminate the history of the Rookery's end, and how the slum took many decades to fade away. While British innovations created marvel in Hyde Park, the residents of Carrier Street and Church Lane were spreading cholera and typhus. The notion that the Rookery faded in the 1850s is simultaneously correct and misleading. It is more accurate to say that, starting from 1847, the Rookery was slowly dismantled piecemeal. The 1847 bisection of the Rookery by New Oxford Street was the

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[320] HO 45/3051. P. 9.

beginning of the end. The 1872 Herkomer painting of a low lodging house in St Giles shows the

inadequacy of the government measures to tackle the problems of the Rookery. The laying of

sewers by the MCS in 1853 may have improved life for the Church Lane and Carrier Street

residents, however, much more needed to be done. Charles Babbage's trip down George Street in

1864 is the prime example of this failure. The road was torn away and widened, though the

lodging houses were left in their previous condition. Itinerant people, moving from a short-term

home to another were not given any help. As a result, the Rookery lasted decades longer than is

often presumed.

Conclusion:

"I have one more remark to make that is there are many of the Lodging Houses in the town overcrowded with Irish + Navies [sic] who work hard and live hard.[321] I think that for the benefit of the town at large there ought to be an officer to inspect every house once a week."[322] – J Whitehead, 1853.

This thesis has sought to track the emergence of the St Giles Rookery from the early eighteenth century, up to the beginning of its slow decline in the late 1840s, and beyond. It outlined the emergence of the St Giles Rookery through an analysis of its positionality in London, and Britain at large. It relied on Crymble's study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century maps to ascertain a "starting point," around 1720. It explained the arrival of a predominantly Irish community within the area, the types of labour in which they engaged, and the prejudice they faced. It has argued that the development of public health concerns, and British desires to gain international prestige, accelerated a superficial reform of the Rookery. Previous historiography has not fully uncovered the nuances of this superficiality, ignoring the decades of continued indigence in St Giles. This lack of coverage can largely be explained by the impressive inroads of New Oxford Street, which hide the Rookery from quotidian view of the average Londoner. The construction of the sewers in Church Lane and Carrier Street illustrate the slow and meandering reality of Rookery reform. This example combats claims by contemporaries, such as John Timbs, that St Giles was a renewed area by the mid-1850s. Whitehead's above remark, discussing a cholera outbreak in Croydon, shows the continued struggle by the GBH to

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[321] "Navies" otherwise called navvies, were labourers. Navvies worked, for example, on railways. A large proportion of navvies were either Irish or Scottish. See Roger Swift's, "*Heroes or Villains?: The Irish, Crime, and Disorder in Victorian England,*" (1997) for more information.
[322] MH 13/56/148. Page 284.

regulate Lodging Houses. It is also revealing that he posited such inspections would benefit the town at large, as fears of cholera grew in the Metropole. Babbage's visit to St Giles in the 1860s lamented the wickedness of the housing there, particularly of the basements. Herkomer's 1872 painting added to this continuity by depicting a St Giles "Low Lodging House," heavily overcrowded.

This thesis has comprehensively engaged with contemporary and secondary sources on St Giles with the intention to add to the existing literature. It focused on a small area, the Rookery, for many decades. This is known more simply as a microhistory.[323] Two recent writers on St Giles, Richard Kirkland and Adam Crymble, provided an invaluable jumping-off point into the history of the Rookery. Crymble's work on the origins of the Rookery was absolutely fundamental to the first chapter, and Kirkland's focus on criminality informed the second chapter. It was possible for this thesis to contribute to the scholarship, largely thanks to firsthand reports on the Rookery, which painted a clear picture of stagnation and frustration. The GBH correspondence with Durham points rather to incompetence than a swift new development as posited by Crymble. Kirkland's reliance on Timbs, as his only source for believing the reformation of the Rookery occurred in the 1850s, lends credence to the notion that answer is more nuanced.

Primary sources revealed the important linkages between the rise of British public health, pandemics, and slums. The construction of New Oxford Street, sanitation, and the importance of sewers in the public health debate were all facets of these interrelationships. The GBH sources, found in the UK National Archives, highlighted the split response to the cholera and typhus

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[323] Microhistory is also known as microhistoria. This is due to the field's prominence amongst Italian historians, such as Giovanni Levi.

pandemics in London. The GBH had too little power, limited by the jurisdiction of the MCS and weak parliamentary legislation. Furthermore, they faced competition from organisations such as the MSA. As a result, the letters largely focus on 'passing-the-buck' rather than attempting any solutions. While this also contributes to the argument that the Rookery took decades to fade, it also provides a new lens with which to view the St Giles Rookery. Neither Crymble nor Kirkland reference the wealth of information surrounding the St Giles's sanitation. In addition, the Cooper-Grey correspondence reveals how the sanitary state of St Giles was intimately tied to the 1851 Great Exhibition. The timing of the Oxford Street expansion, and the GBH's concern surrounding the Rookery, coincide with a desire to make London presentable. The early 1850s, just after a period of political unrest, saw Britain gathering nations in Hyde Park in the first colonial exhibition. Such an attempt to gain international prestige could be thwarted should visitors perceive London as downtrodden. The Rookery's superficial reform, being hidden behind the tall new buildings of Oxford Street, allowed for many visitors to be spared the horrific conditions of Church Lane and Carrier Street.

This brings us to the dilemma presented in chapter three. How to sanitise St Giles with no power to interfere? The answer is through piecemeal action. The first major action was clearly the construction of New Oxford Street in 1847, which cut the Rookery in half. Next, the Church Lane and Carrier Street sewers were constructed largely due to Joseph Durham's persistence and the notoriety these streets had gained through the *Times* articles. When these works were completed in 1853, the Rookery was slightly more liveable. Unfortunately, the construction of sewers on Church Lane and Carrier Street did nothing for the other residents of the Rookery, still relying on poorly constructed cesspools. London was struggling with proper sewers and ventilation city-wide. Richard Dover, attempting to get his sewerage treatment plan adopted in

1850, warned that "the Kenilworth Street Tragedy, last year, was a sufficiently strong proof of the fatal effects of sewage to life."[324] The Kenilworth Tragedy was the case of a sewer on Kenilworth Street, Pimlico, becoming so noxious that it killed four people. It was shown, through firsthand testimony, that lack of sewage systems similarly killed residents of the Rookery through the spread of typhus and cholera. The rise of sewage legislation in 1855, as discussed in chapter three, allowed for further reformation in the Rookery.

As a result, this thesis has actively sought to counter the narrative of a sudden end to the St Giles Rookery in the 1850s. After 1847, when the Rookery was split in two, life for the residents of St Giles became increasingly unpredictable. Some began to benefit from reforms, such as the construction of sewers. For others, the status quo remained unchanged. It is nigh impossible to pinpoint an exact date for the "end of the St Giles Rookery." Thanks to Herkomer's painting, it is evident that overcrowded lodging houses continued to plague the area into the 1870s. Nothing short of fully demolishing the decrepit buildings could end the legacy of the Rookery. This did eventually happen; however, it was not carried out within the early 1850s as previously claimed. The Rookery took decades to reach its zenith, and it would take decades to disappear.

The future of scholarship on the Rookery has to answer numerous questions. When did St Giles cease to be identifiably Irish? When did the area reach conditions similar to the average London household? Did visitors from the Great Exhibition encounter the Rookery? Another element that is woefully lacking is archaeological evidence. Sian Anthony's 2011 work is extremely valuable, and unfortunately unique. Further digs in St Giles, extremely unlikely due to the dense high-rises that now dominate the area, could provide evidence missing from the sources. Therein lies the

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[324] MH 13/249/61. Page 166.

double-edged sword of microhistory. The missing testimony of the St Giles residents will leave

the historiography wanting. Perhaps it was never recorded, due to the illiteracy of the residents.

Perhaps, more hopefully, testimony was noted down in one of the numerous Victorian writers on

urban poverty. Either way, the history of these 54,000 residents is being reclaimed gradually.

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