

CHARITY AND THE 'MARKET': THE CASE OF HENSHAW'S BLIND ASYLUM

Peter Shapely

Henshaw's Blind Asylum is one of the region's oldest voluntary charities. Situated in Old Trafford, it was one of a large number of charitable bodies established in the nineteenth century and, like the others, was partly supported by a combination of public subscriptions and donations. The important managerial and administrative positions were also largely chosen from each charity's member subscribers and donors. Voluntary charities could provide these lay officials with an important public arena for the exercise of local power and the intensifying of social divisions.

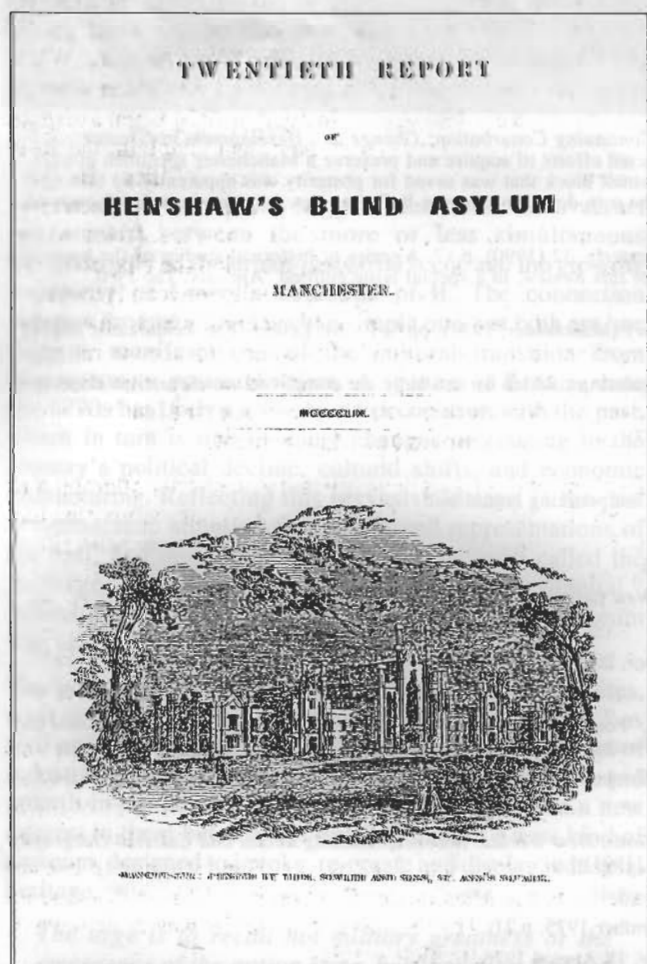
In the 1850s Henshaw's was the focus of a very public dispute over the charity's management. Initially, the decade was marked by a sectarian battle for control of the charity between local Anglicans and dissenters. By the end of the decade the Anglican group had succeeded in taking control of the Board of Management and, in 1858, the Asylum's chapel was transferred into the control of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Significantly, however, the sectarian bitterness of the dispute was dissipated through a public campaign against the Anglican dominated Board not on sectarian grounds but upon charges of corruption, incompetence and an ineffective treatment programme for

the blind inmates. This campaign was directed at potential subscribers and the general public as a whole, rather than the dissenting community alone. Besides the purloining of the Asylum's chapel, both the dismissal of a blind music teacher and the apparent pauperisation of inmates were cited as further evidence of the Board's unsuitability to govern the charity. Each of these were issues that were meant to be of concern to the subscribers and potential donors. This article will suggest how important this group were in finally determining the fate of Henshaw's. As such, it will also suggest their importance in the development of Manchester's voluntary charities throughout the nineteenth century.

Voluntary charities played an important and prominent role in society throughout the nineteenth century. In Manchester their numbers increased substantially from the beginning of the century. This increase in their numbers is reflected in Table I, which lists those charities with known foundation dates in chronological order. This suggests that between 1752 and 1850, at least 49 voluntary charities were established. Only two of these predated 1785. At least a further 71 charities were established between 1850 and 1914. These charities provided an extensive network of welfare provision. This network included a range of hospitals, dispensaries, schools, orphanages and child welfare agencies, missions and shelters, temperance agencies, asylums and reformatories for women and children, charities for the handicapped and a number of relief agencies. The provision they offered covered a range of mental, physical and spiritual needs.

One of the most prominent of these charities to be established during the first half of the century was the Henshaw's Blind Asylum. It was opened in 1837 and was to be the second asylum of its kind in the country, the first being the Royal School for the Blind established in Liverpool in 1791.¹ The charity was originally founded by the will of Thomas Henshaw, a wealthy Oldham hatter who had also been responsible for establishing his home town's Blue Coat School. Henshaw died in 1810 bequeathing a total of £20,000 for the purpose of establishing an institution for the blind. His will was contested by members of his family. The dispute lasted for twenty-five years. Eventually the Court of Chancery gave its verdict in favour of the scheme. The money for buildings and furnishings was provided by public donations. When the Asylum was opened in 1837 the endowment fund had also increased to £50,000.² The fund was designed to maintain the indigent blind with accommodation and provisions and to help provide them with job training which would eventually allow some of them the opportunity to provide for themselves.

Importantly, not only were its buildings purchased and its endowment fund boosted by public subscriptions but, like the majority of voluntary charities, it was also partly dependent upon annual contributions from subscribers and donors. Table II identifies the amounts raised from public sources between 1840 and 1873. It suggests that the charity relied on a regular amount of between £100-£143 from subscriptions during 1856-1872. Other sources of income



The Annual Report is a major source for the historian of Victorian charity.

not listed included money raised from investments and from items produced by the inmates and sold by the charity. Also, the large increase in the amount of income available in the later 1860s was partly due to loans raised for building work.

While the proportion raised by subscriptions was much less significant than the amounts derived from the Trust fund, the very fact that Henshaw's attempted to maximise its income through such public sources meant it had to compete for resources alongside the other voluntary charities in the town.

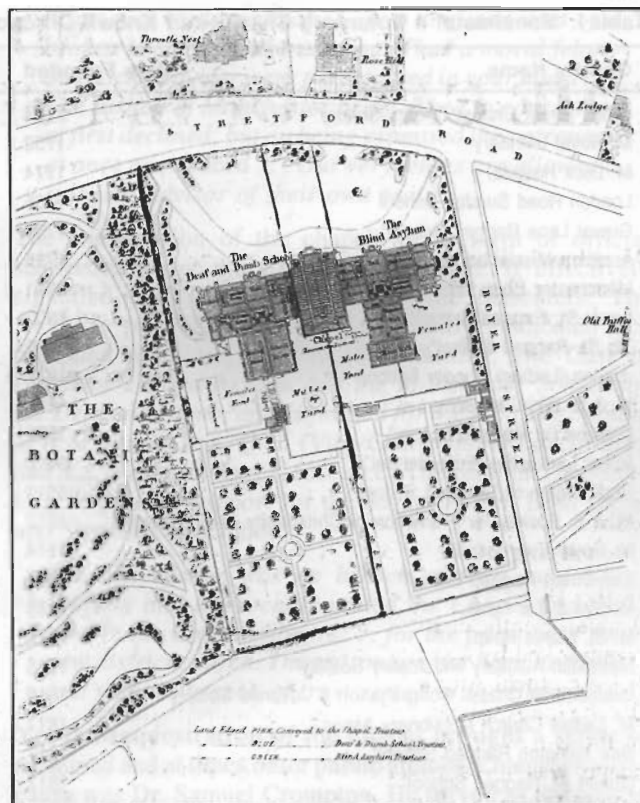
Moreover, as with many of these charities, this reliance on subscriptions meant that the charity had to sell control of its affairs through a type of 'share issue'. By payment of a fixed subscription or donation any individual could become a member of the charity and, as such, could take an active role in the management of the charity's affairs. This was stressed in Rule VI of Henshaw's constitution:

*All subscribers of two guineas or upwards, and Donors in any one year of twenty guineas or upwards shall form a Board of Management, to whom the whole direction and control of the Institution shall be entrusted.*³

All effective power lay with the member subscribers and their elected officials. Even the charity's lands, buildings and furniture were placed under the jurisdiction of thirteen Trustees, who were also constituted a Board of Governors, and who were elected by and from the member subscribers and donors.⁴ Significantly, this need for money coupled with the subsequent sale of shares in each charity was a vital factor in the development of voluntary charities throughout the nineteenth century. It was a need that placed charities under the force of a subscriber 'market'. The restrictions and requirements of this 'market' helped to determine the progression of each charity. This was important in at least two basic respects. Firstly, most voluntary charities could only operate within the financial limitations partly placed upon it by the 'market'. If it could secure a large enough share of charitable funds then it could expand its operations. Conversely, failure to do so could mean a subsequent limitation in what it could achieve. As a result each charity had to be sensitive to the needs and demands of the subscriber and potential subscriber. They had to procure and maintain a favourable public image. People would be less likely to give money to a charity that was not performing a useful task, was not well managed or was thought to pursue unfavourable policies. Secondly, the realities of the 'market' were such as to deliver power and control into the hands of subscribers.

Henshaw's constitution made it clear that all elected officials had to be member subscribers or donors. These lay officials determined the 'direction and control of the Institution'. They made the policy decisions and appointed the full-time staff members such as the Governor, Master and Matron. However, Henshaw's elected officials, like those for most other charities, could not ignore the needs of the potential subscribers from whom they sought to continue raising money. Each charity was a type of business and, as such, it had to be aware of tangibles like trust and goodwill. Adverse publicity could result in declining income levels. As such, the needs of the subscribers, their concerns and prejudices, had to be a central concern.

Notions of good management were important. Yet this did not preclude the possibility of tensions arising within a charity based on wider existing fractures within the community. These could be based on religious or political



Plan of Henshaw's and the adjacent Deaf and Dumb School, showing the chapel as 'episcopally licensed'.

divisions. Such tensions could also occasionally become a battle for the effective control of a charity. Disputes of this kind were not apparently commonplace in nineteenth-century Manchester. However, one of the most public conflicts that did emerge was at the Blind Asylum. While there were no obvious divisions in the first fifteen years of the charity's existence, this changed in 1854 when a dispute broke out involving the then Anglican chaplain, the Rev. Thomas Buckley, and the Governor, William Hughes. Hughes, who was also Buckley's part-time secretary, attempted to block payment of the choir's salaries on the grounds that Buckley had barely attended the chapel during the previous year. The Chapel was built between Henshaw's and the adjacent Deaf and Dumb School, which shared this facility, and was originally designed to secure religious provision for the inmates. No individual denomination was ever specifically appointed to the chapel in Henshaw's will or by the early Boards of Management.

Buckley and his Anglican allies in the charity attempted to have Hughes removed from his post. A sub-committee had to be appointed from the charity's own member subscribers to examine the issue. The chairman was J.C. Harter a leading local Tory who served as a Board member from 1844 and who was also involved with a range of other local charities such as the Manchester Royal Infirmary as well as serving as a J.P. in Salford, while the Vice-Chairman was the prominent Liberal and Unitarian merchant Sir John Potter, who was also distinguished as an Alderman and former Mayor of Manchester and who was also to serve as M.P. for the city between 1857 and 1859. A total of thirty meetings were held at the end of which Hughes was completely exonerated. However, Hughes claimed later in a letter to the *Manchester Examiner and Times* that despite being vindicated by the sub-committee he was, nevertheless, victimised by Buckley's allies:

One of the first acts of Mr. Buckley's friends . . . was to dismiss me from the secretaryship and to put in my

Table I: Manchester's Voluntary Charities in Known Chronological Order 1734-1907¹

Charity Name	Date Founded	Charity Name	Date Founded
Cross Street Chapel Charity School*	1734	U.K. Alliance*	1855
M. Royal Infirmary	1752	M. Clinical Hosp. For Women & Children	1856
M. Lock Hospital	1774	M. Ear Hosp.	1856
London Road Sunday School	1785	M. & S. Reformatory for Juvenile Criminals	1857
Gravel Lane Ragged School*	1790	Great Bridgewater St. Sunday Ragged School	1858
Auxiliary Missionary Society*	1795	M. & S. Ragged School Union	1858
Manchester Soup Kitchen*	1801	M. Juvenile Refuge	1858
Lever St. Ragged School*	1803	The Female Refuge	1858
Tib St. Ragged School*	1806	Charter St. Day & Sunday Ragged Schools	1860
Jubilee (Ladies) Charity School	1810	M. & S. Refuge for Females	1860
M. & S. Bible Society	1810	M. & S. District Temperance Union	1861
Ormond St. Ragged School*	1810	Dark Lane Ragged School & Mission Hall	1863
Royal Lancashire Free School*	1810	Ardwick & Ancoats Kitchen for the Sick	1864
Back Britain St. Ragged School*	1811	St. Mary's Home, House of Refuge & Penitentiary	1865
M. & S. Society for Promotion of Christianity Among Jews	1812	Central Assoc. for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquor	1866
M. Royal Eye Hospital	1814	M. & S. Discharged Prisoners Aid Society	1866
Elm Street Ragged School*	1815	M. South Hosp. for Women & Children	1866
M. Eye & Ear Hosp.	1815	Orphanage & Training School for Destitute Girls	1866
M. St. Marys Hosp.	1815	Destitute Children's Dinner Society	1867
Methodist Auxiliary Missionary Society*	1815	Old Garrat Ragged School	1867
Independent Chapel Congregation & Juvenile Society	1816	M. & S. Branch R.S.P.C.A.	1868
M. Ladies Church Missionary Assoc.*	1817	New Jerusalem Church & Sunday School	1868
New Islington Ragged School*	1817	Home & Day Nursery for Children of Widows	1869
Queen St. Ragged School*	1817	Hulme Dispensary	1870
M. & S. Lock Hosp	1818	M. & S. Boys & Girls Refuges & Homes & Childrens Aid Society	1870
David St. Ragged School	1819	M. & S. Street Children's Mission	1870
M. & S. Asylum for Female Penitents	1823	M. Medical Mission & Dispensary	1870
M. Mechanics Institute*	1824	Fowler Square Ragged School & Mission Hall	1871
Oxford St. Ragged School*	1824	Free Templars of St. John*	1871
Samaritan Society*	1824	M. Girls Institute	1871
Chorlton-On-Medlock Dispensary	1825	Northern Counties Hosp. for Incurables	1871
Ardwick & Ancoats Dispensary	1828	The Girls Home	1872
Royal M. Childrens Hospital	1828	Hosp. for Consumption & Diseases of Throat	1875
M. & S. District Provident Society	1832	M. & S. Womens Christian Temp. Assoc. & Police Court Mission	1875
Ministry to the Poor	1833	M. Diocesan C of E Temperance Society	1875
M. City Mission	1837	Mission Refuge	1875
M. Night Asylum	1838	The Business Young Ladies Assoc. of M.	1877
Henshaw's Blind Asylum	1839	Victoria Station Lodging House	1877
St. Bridget's R.C. Female Orphan Asylum	1839	M. Ladies Assoc. for the Protection of Girls and Women	1881
Soc for Providing the Destitute Poor with Clothing & Bedding	1840	Band Of Kindness & Children's Help Society	1882
Wesleyan Methodist Assoc. of Sunday Schools	1841	M. Sick Poor & Private Nursing Institute	1882
M. Homeopathic Hospital & Dispensary	1842	Victoria St. Society for the Protection of Animals Vivisection	1883
M. Homeopathic Institution	1842	M. & S. Hosp. for Skin Diseases	1884
M. District Sunday School Association	1845	Star Hall Mission*	1884
M. Y.M.C.A.	1846	Victoria Dental Hosp.	1884
M. & S. Benevolent Adult Deaf & Dumb Assoc.	1846	St. Margaret's Orphanage	1885
M. Juvenile Refuge & School of Industry	1846	S. Dock Mission	1886
Society for the Relief of Really Deserving Distressed Foreigners	1847	Wesleyan Methodist Mission	1886
M. & S. Temperance Society	1850	Hulme Day Nursery	1890
M. Adult Deaf & Dumb Institute	1850	M. & S. Branch N.S.P.C.C.	1891
M. Servants Home	1850	Cancer Pavilion & Home	1892
M. & S. Assoc. for the Better Regulation of Public Houses etc	1851	M. Surgical Aid Society	1897
Temperance Hall & Mechanics Institution	1851	Lancs. & Chesh. Society for the Permanent Care of Feeble Minded	1898
M. & S. Sanitary Assoc.	1852	M. & S. Blind Aid Society	1900
M. & S. Total Abstinence Societies	1852	M. Indian Famine Fund	1900
St. Ann's , Queen St. Ragged School*	1853	M. Industrial School Boys Home	1900
St. Ann's Sunday Evening Ragged School	1853	Police Aided Clothing Assoc.	1902
German Evangelical Church & Day School	1854	M. City League of Help	1907
M. & S. Homeopathic Dispensary	1854		
S. Ragged & Industrial School	1854		
Gun St. Ragged School	1855		
M. Warehousemen & Clerks Orphan Schools	1855		
Poland St. Ragged School	1855		

Key: Soc Society S Salford
M Manchester

* Denotes Charities without known annual reports

¹ This table is comprised of charities with known foundations dates only.
It is not intended to be a comprehensive list.

Table II: Henshaw's Blind Asylum: Major sources of income (£), 1840-73

Year	Trust Fund	Subscription	Donation	Total*
1840	1020	45	0	2706
1842	1275	70	50	2835
1844	1294	71	52	2835
1846	1294	101	29	3935
1848	1294	97	37	2953
1850	1294	85	144	3294
1852	1294	100	101	3682
1854	1275	144	6	3874
1856	1294	132	527	5871
1858	1299	140	0	6696
1859	1294	143	0	6386
1860	1281	129	38	5801
1861	1297	124	96	5542
1862	1294	122	107	3316
1863	1299	135	185	2380
1864	1295	127	157	2324
1865	1267	127	30	4243
1866	1272	141	101	6200
1867	1273	130	69	6341
1868	1262	135	9	5914
1869	1264	124	27	1264
1870	1294	120	185	8445
1872	1294	112	101	9159
1873	1294	98	67	9540

* Includes all sources of income, including investments

stead Mr. G.F. a member of Mr. Buckley's congregation who resigned on the day but one after he and his friends had got hold of the Chapel.⁵

The secretary of the sub-committee, R.A. Barlow, later recalled how the decision had galvanised opinions. In a letter to the *Examiner and Times* in 1863 he claimed that feelings were running so high that he was threatened with violence:

The chapel party were highly exasperated, expecting to have accomplished his [Hughes] dismissal. No exertions were spared by them to further their nefarious project. Two members of the Board, including myself, received various anonymous threats of personal violence because we manfully defended what we believed to be right. The language used at the meetings was of so violent a nature that gentlemen retired in disgust.⁶

The tensions reflected in the dispute led to a power struggle between the two sides. Barlow continued to recall how by the end of the decade the Anglicans had succeeded in gaining control. Importantly, he also described how the Anglican dominated Board had also transferred the chapel from the charity's hands into those of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. He claimed:

The chapel party each succeeding year increased their strength on the Board. The great and avowed object was to drive dissenters off the Board... Sir John Potter resigned the treasurership in disgust... At length after some years fighting, a Board properly packed, was obtained, and the confiscation of the chapel was decreed... Mr. Hughes the governor was hounded to his grave, having received every

insult that could be heaped upon him, and died of a broken heart from ill treatment. Thus a moral felony and social murder were perpetuated in your midst... The Bishop of Manchester being asked to consecrate at first declined; but on being promised the patronage at once acquiesced... Our very felons are allowed a spiritual advisor of their own sect.⁷

The consecration of the chapel was a form of official sequestration by the Church of England. It effectively signalled an important defeat for the dissenters. The Anglican party's actions were apparently vindicated in a pamphlet published in May 1863 entitled, *The Case of Henshaw's Blind Asylum and the Manchester School for the Deaf and Dumb, and submitted for the separate opinion of W.M. James, Esq., Q.C., (Vice-Chancellor of Lancashire), and A.J. Stephens, Esq., L.L.D., Q.C.* The pamphlet appeared to give judicial support for the sequestration. Both James and Stephens concluded:

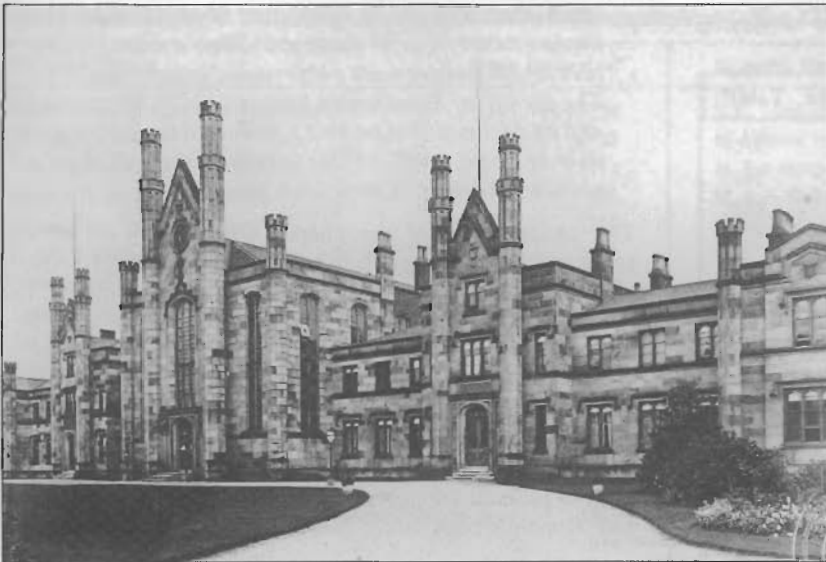
The conveyance was no breach of trust, and has lawfully and irrevocably vested the Chapel and the land in the Commissioners... for the purpose of the new district church. The patronage has been lawfully and without breach of trust vested in the Bishop.⁸

Yet the sequestration of the chapel brought a series of sustained and at times bitter public attacks. Champion of the cause was Dr. Samuel Crompton. He served as Surgeon in Ordinary for the Asylum between 1840-1859. Almost singly handedly, Crompton took it on himself to expose the Board's apparent corruption. Between 1858-68 he published a number of articles and letters on the issue. These constituted a public campaign to bring down the Board. Significantly, however, he did not wage this crusade along sectarian lines. Rather, he deliberately avoided sectarian issues and concentrated on the corruption and inability of the Board. Initially, the crux of his campaign focused on the basic issues of the chapel and the failure of its chaplain to provide adequate spiritual care. The main target for his attacks was the Bishop of Manchester, James Prince Lee. In a letter to the Bishop published in 1862 Crompton detailed the original purpose of both the chapel and its incumbent the Rev. Thomas Buckley. He pointed out that the inscription on the foundation stone stated that the chapel was for the benefit of the charity and that the clergyman was to be the servant of the charity. Crompton also claimed that the chaplain was to receive a certain portion of the pew rents for his salary and the charity was to receive towards its support the contribution made at the doors by the congregation.⁹

Moreover, Crompton alleged that the incumbent had given no spiritual instruction for three years and yet was, 'claiming a revenue of about £100 from the chapel'. Even this was overshadowed by the fact that the chapel itself had been taken from the charity. He claimed:

The chapel, which cost nearly £5,000, is as perfectly lost to the charity as if it had been put up for auction... But there is this difference, that the charity, though just as completely stripped of its property as if it had been sold, has not received one farthing in payment.¹⁰

In effect, Crompton was accusing the Board, and especially its former President, the Bishop, of both theft and a failure to fulfil their duty in providing adequate religious instruction. As such, the implication was they were unfit to govern. Significantly, despite the obvious religious divisions and antagonism which underpinned this dispute, Crompton portrayed this as a management and not a sectarian issue.



Henshaw's Blind Asylum.

Indeed, Crompton actually claimed that he had attempted to diffuse the sectarian feelings that were growing amongst dissenters.

If you will examine the correspondence between your Lordship and myself, you will find that I stood forward between Dissenters and Churchmen to prevent this question being made a party struggle, which would inevitably bring the greatest scandal on the Church . . . You are aware that the Rev. Dr. McKerrow had alluded to the subject at a public meeting in a manner which provoked cries of 'Shame, Shame'. I have entailed on myself an enormous amount of anxious labour by not permitting the matter to pass into the hands of the Dissenters at once. This I prevented by saying that no men were more ashamed of the transaction than Churchmen themselves, and by promising that I would continue the inquiry.¹¹

In a supplement to the letter he explained how he had been approached by a group of dissenters who intended to take up the matter themselves. Crompton claimed that he had dissuaded them from taking action and that in doing so he had prevented a serious sectarian dispute from escalating:

I was appealed to by a leading Dissenter who, with his friends, intended to take up the matter! I begged that they would leave the matter in my hands and on pledging myself to proceed, I saved the scandal which must have followed the conversion of the affair into a dispute between Dissenters and Churchmen!¹²

During Henshaw's Annual General Meeting of 1860 Crompton had made it clear that he was laying his case before the subscribers, irrespective of their religious views. He claimed that, 'it would be for them to decide what should be done'.¹³ As such, this was an implicit recognition of the importance of the subscribers. This sense of awareness was highlighted in his supplement to the letter he wrote to the Bishop. In it he claimed that if he gave full details of the crimes committed against Henshaw's then it would create such bitterness in the community as to seriously affect the income of both the Asylum and its neighbour the Deaf and Dumb School:

I contend that his Lordship alienated this chapel in violation of the plain and manifest law of the land; but I am prepared to show, if necessary, that he did

so under circumstances which are a grave addition to the question of illegality and which would arouse much bitter feeling. But I suppress them all. I will not bring a scandal on Christianity, nor run the risk of damaging the revenue of the charities.¹⁴

Crompton's early attempts to bring down the Board failed. The chapel was not reconveyed to the Trustees until January 1867.¹⁵ The sectarian spirit upon which events were played seemed to arouse little interest among subscribers. As Table III suggests, although there was a large turnover in the number of subscribers during the mid-1850s, when the Anglican side were gaining control, the late 1850s and early 1860s, the main period of Crompton's early attacks, witnessed a relatively small turnover in their numbers.

The sectarian background against which the dispute developed did not in itself damage the position of the Board. Their legitimacy rested on the principles of a subscriber-democracy through which member subscribers and donors voted for the Board of Management. The fact that there had been a large increase in the number of new subscribers in 1854 (a possible reason underpinning the Anglican takeover) was largely irrelevant. The principles had not been ignored. They had gained their position through legitimate means. Moreover, as the charity was Anglican dominated the apparent sequestration of the chapel could not have appeared as a serious issue.

Despite Crompton's initial failures he was to persist in his campaign over the ensuing year's. Management issues were again his primary focus. In 1863 he raised the issue of the sacking of a blind music teacher, Miss Eliza Taylor. According to the charity's officials she had been dismissed because she refused to play the organ at the chapel – now ordained St. Thomas' – on Sundays. Importantly, this could not be construed in any way as a sectarian issue. Her father, a local Anglican minister, gave her his full support. The Board claimed that in not attending she had broken one of their rules and failed to fulfil her official duties. Crompton countered that they were not only being harsh and unjust but also hypocritical. In a pamphlet entitled *Some Particulars on the Threatened Expulsion from Henshaw's Blind Asylum of the Blind Assistant Teacher of Music*, he claimed:

Observe, Miss Taylor may not have the regulation relaxed though such relaxation be attended with no neglect to her devotions; but the chaplain, to whom the spiritual supervision of the Asylum is confided, may it seems do as he pleases . . . The patronage of the chapel has been taken by the Bishop, the President of the charity, while poor Miss Taylor after 13 years residence, having won her way to the highest distinction by her ability and exalted conduct, is to be made a beggar.¹⁶

Crompton was attempting to win enough support amongst the subscribers for his campaign. He portrayed the Board as not only unjust but also failing to help and accommodate the very objects for which the charity existed. Further, he accused the Board of callously manipulating the inmates for their own purposes. In the pamphlet he claimed that the reason for Eliza Taylor's Sunday absence lay in the fact that both she and the choir had been subjected to an enforced cut in their performance fee from £40 to £30. He stated:

Table III: Henshaw's Subscribers 1841-1873

Year	New Subscribers	Total No. Subscribers
1848	5	54
1849	4	54
1850	4	51
1851	6	51
1852	3	56
1853	3	58
1854	23	81
1855	9	81
1856	3	81
1857	7	79
1858	6	78
1859	4	81
1860	0	79
1861	4	73
1862	5	70
1863	10	74
1864	6	70
1865	7	70
1866	6	65
1867	14	71
1868	11	72
1869	4	65
1870	5	64
1871	0	60
1872	0	55

*The singers were never consulted as to the equity of this decision. It was never said by the Board that henceforth the sum paid to them should be £30 a year; but good care was taken that they did receive only that amount . . . This created great discontent.*¹⁷

Crompton viewed this as symptomatic of a deeper problem: that the Board were ill-treating the inmates and were employing draconian measures to enforce discipline:

*I feel sure that a radical change is required in the administration of the affairs of the charity. The inmates complain that they are under something very closely resembling workhouse regulations. The new master has been taken from a workhouse to superintend the charity. I will give an example of the severity of the government. A girl, one of the singers, saved part of her beer given to her at dinner, and was seen putting it into a bottle. She intended it to sustain her during two hours choral singing that afternoon. It was taken from her; she was taken into the office of the governor to be searched, and very properly. Surely such a proceeding as this should not be tolerated.*¹⁸

Five years later Crompton widened this attack to include accusations of incompetence regarding the ineffectiveness of the treatment and rehabilitation offered to inmates. He claimed that their job training, which included the production of knitwear, door mats and baskets, was unsuccessful in helping inmates care for themselves in the community. As this sometimes resulted in the pauperisation of the former inmate, it involved a waste of resources for both the charity's subscribers and the local ratepayers. Consequently, Crompton attempted to involve the Poor Law Guardians in an official investigation into the charity's affairs. In a letter to the Manchester Board of Guardians, published in the *Manchester Guardian* on 13 March 1868, he identified the

purpose of the charity according to its own rules was: 'to maintain and afford such instruction to the indigent blind of both sexes capable of employment as will enable them to provide for their own subsistence.'¹⁹

In practice, he claimed, the Asylum was responsible for actually pauperising its inmates. Crompton called for the Manchester Board of Guardians:

*in the interest of the blind, and in the interest of the parishioners and of humanity to appoint a sub-committee to make a full inquiry into all the past payments to Henshaw's Blind Asylum by the parish of Manchester, and the result of the education received there, in enabling the blind to maintain themselves. There are in the workhouse receiving parochial relief now many who have been educated there.*²⁰

In a move designed to finally resolve the issue the Trustees decided to invite the Charity Commissioners to investigate all matters and accusations. The Commissioners, however, declined. Their powers had been constituted under the 1860 Charitable Trusts Act, through which they had could removed or appoint trustees, establish schemes for administration of Trusts and authorise a range of financial transactions. However, as Henshaw's was partly supported by subscriptions, and as its building land and the majority of its Trust fund had been purchased through public subscriptions and donations, most of its operations lay outside their jurisdiction. Yet, despite the apparent immunity of the Board, they finally decided to resign in September

FOR THEY THAT CARRIED US AWAY CAPTIVE REQUIRED OF US A SONG: AND THEY THAT WASTED US REQUIRED OF US MIRTH, SAYING, SING US ONE OF THE SONGS OF ZION. PSALM CXXXVII. 3.

SOME PARTICULARS

OF THE

THREATENED EXPULSION

FROM

HENSHAW'S BLIND ASYLUM,

OF THE

BLIND ASSISTANT TEACHER OF MUSIC:

WITH

DISCLOSURES OF THE REMARKABLE DEALINGS OF THE PATRON, RECTOR, AND PARISHIONERS OF ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH WITH THE BLIND INMATES OF THE ABOVE CHARITY.

[By Dr Samuel Crompton]

"Henshaw's Asylum is becoming a prey to St. Thomas's Church."

Dr. Crompton's Letter to the Bishop of Manchester, Nov. 1862.

MANCHESTER:

ALEX. IRELAND AND CO., PRINTERS, 1, PALL MALL COURT.

1863.

One of Crompton's pamphlets.

1868. They were persuaded by the Trustees to continue until the end of the year when new officials could be chosen. The main reason for the resignation was the apparently detrimental effect that Crompton's accusations were having on the public and the charity's own inmates. At the Annual General Meeting held in February 1869 a statement from the Secretary John Duffield regretted Crompton's campaign of criticism:

The Board feel that this unrelenting spirit of contention has in many respects operated seriously to the prejudice of the welfare of the charity. The attitude assumed for some time towards the Board of Management is, in their opinion, fraught with injury to the best interests of the charity, not less by weakening public confidence in its inherent value and administrative weakness.²¹

This decline in public confidence was to a degree reflected in the fact that although there was a relatively large number of new subscribers in 1867 and 1868 there was little actual increase in the total number of subscribers. As Table III suggests, while the year 1854 had seen a total of 23 new subscribers enter the charity, the total number of subscribers had also increased from 58 to 81. In 1867 and 1868, however, although there was a total of 25 new subscribers joining the charity, the total number of subscribers increased by only seven from its 1866 figure of 65.

The charity was struggling to preserve its subscriber base. Moreover, the inmates were restless and unhappy at the revelations. The Board claimed that this had partly influenced their decision. In explaining their resignation the Annual Report of 1868 claimed that:

The Board of Guardians are aware how in May last, in consequence of the threats and attacks made from without being maintained against their authority and actions which in their opinion injuriously influenced the temper and disposition of the inmates towards the Board, they, in conjunction with the President and Vice-President, tendered their resignation.²²

Although the Board blamed 'forces from without' for adversely affecting the temper of the inmates, and claimed

that it was this which made their position impossible, the fact remains that the concerns of the inmates had never been a major influencing force in the past. When Eliza Taylor was dismissed in 1863, four of her fellow inmates along with the music master and the school-master had also left the Asylum. Furthermore, the Annual Report of 1864 described the 'unhappy spirit' of the inmates. This had had no immediate influence on the Board. More damning were Crompton's accusations of pauperisation. These presented the Board with its most serious image problem. It was implied that subscribers might be unwilling to donate money if they felt it was being wasted. One of the main purposes of a voluntary charity was to prevent pauperisation and not to cause it. The officials of Henshaw's recognised this and as a consequence were forced to resign. Crompton had finally won.

Ultimately his appeals to the subscriber 'market' had proven successful. Yet the decline in both the number of subscribers and the amounts raised through their subscriptions was a consequence of his action. These continued to decline into the early 1870s. Public confidence had been apparently damaged. Had the campaign been conducted along sectarian lines then the outcome might have been uncertain. As the figures for the 1850s indicate, a galvanising of sectarian sentiment may have still provided the charity with sufficient financial support from the Anglicans. Both sides may have stood their ground. If this had happened then little progress could have been made. In this sense Crompton was vindicated in choosing a path that appealed to all sections of the community. It was a course which relied on the force of the subscriber 'market'. Somewhat ironically, its immediate impact was to damage the charity's income. However, this, coupled with the campaign's eventual success in at least forcing the Board's resignation, served to highlight the importance of the subscribers in determining the development of Henshaw's. If this was the case with a charity such as Henshaw's, which relied on subscribers for a relatively small proportion of its total income, then the influence of the subscriber market on charities more dependent upon voluntary funds is likely to have been even more marked.

NOTES

1 M.W. Royden, *Pioneers and Perseverance* (Birkenhead, 1991), p.46.

2 *Ibid.*, p.48.

3 *Annual Report*, 1841, p.5.

4 *Annual Report*, 1841, Rule V, p.5.

5 *Manchester Examiner and Times*, 19 February, 1859.

6 *Manchester Examiner and Times*, September, 1863.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *The Case of Henshaw's and the Manchester School for the Deaf and Dumb . . .* (1863), p.35.

9 *Letter to Rev. Prince Lee, Bishop of Manchester, on the Alienation of the Chapel of the Deaf and Dumb School and of the Henshaw's Blind Asylum*, (Manchester, 1862), p.iv.

10 *Ibid.*, p.iii.

11 *Ibid.*, p.4.

12 *Ibid.*, p.45.

13 *Manchester Examiner and Times*, 10 February 1860.

14 *Letter to Prince Lee*, p.44.

15 *Henshaw's Institution for the Blind, Centenary Souvenir*, (Manchester, 1937), p.16.

16 *Some Particulars on the Threatened Expulsion from Henshaw's Blind Asylum of the Blind Assistant Teacher of Music* (Manchester, 1863).

17 *Ibid.*, p.9.

18 *Ibid.*, p.20.

19 *Manchester Guardian*, 13 March 1868.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Annual Report*, 1869, p.8.