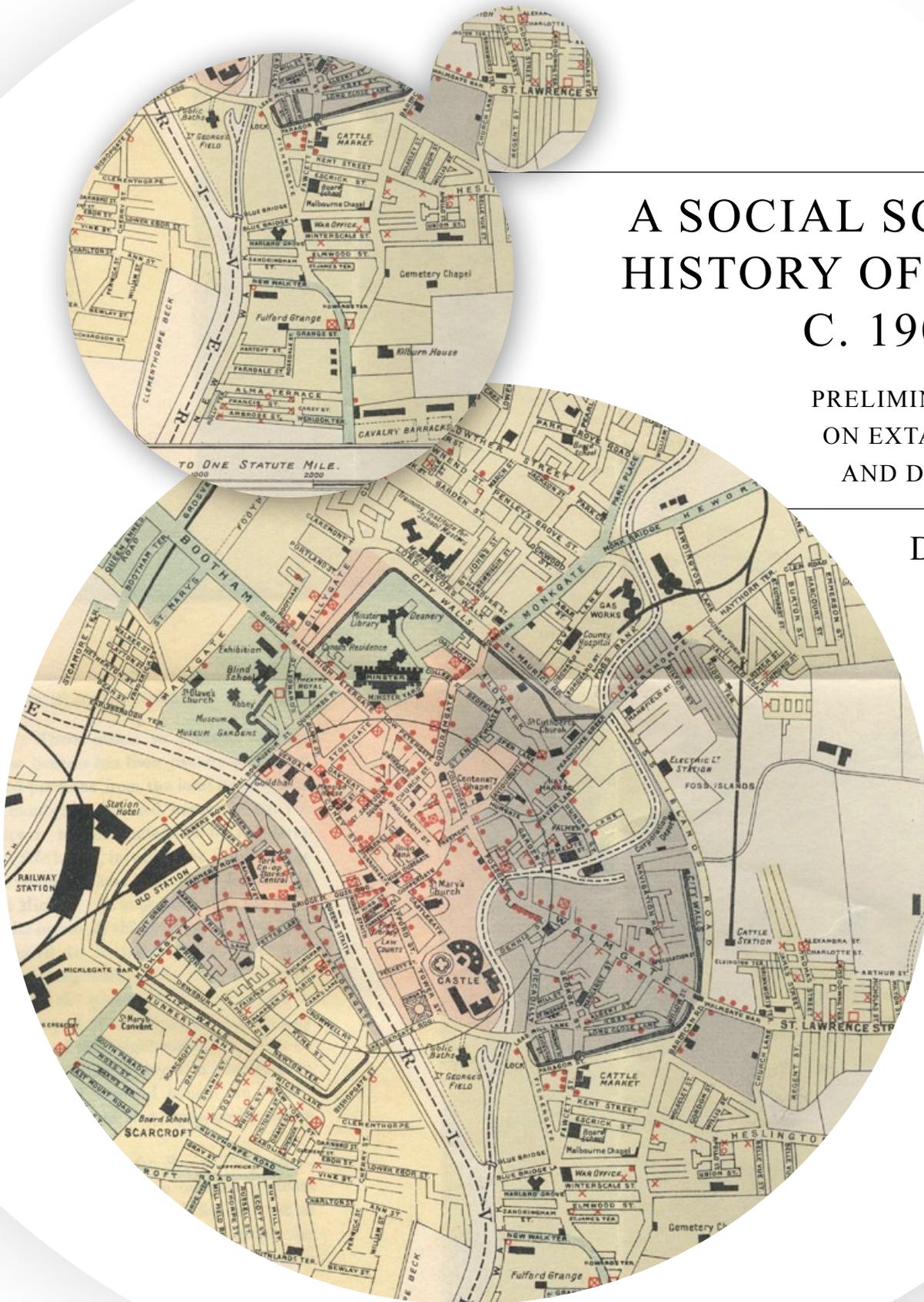


A SOCIAL SCIENCE HISTORY OF YORK, C. 1900-2000

PRELIMINARY REPORT
ON EXTANT SOURCES
AND DATA LINKAGE

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INTRODUCTION

This scoping study began with the assumption that York's twentieth century history of social research would allow scholars to analyse social, cultural and economic change at a local level in particular and unusual depth. This assumption has been borne out by subsequent investigation of the kinds of data available and the possibilities of linking sources for the same addresses and in some instances the same families over periods of c.115 and c.65 years respectively. The best opportunities for analysing socio-economic change over the twentieth century lie in matching the extant schedules from Rowntree's poverty surveys (Rowntree, 1901, 1941; Rowntree and Lavers, 1951) with census data and material from the York City Archives. This can be supplemented with local oral histories collected since the 1990s, trade union and labour history sources from the early part of the century held at the National Archives, the Modern Records Centre at Warwick and locally, and data from follow up poverty surveys conducted in York by Atkinson et al in the 1970s and Huby et al in the late 1990s. Asa Briggs interviewed a number of B. S. Rowntree's colleagues for his 1961 study and inquiries are being made as to their whereabouts (see Briggs, 1961; 2000). We argue that there are good grounds for conducting a large-scale re-study, or a number of smaller-scale surveys using quantitative and qualitative methods, which would allow for the changing composition of particular households and shifting class characteristics of particular streets and neighbourhoods to be traced over a c.115 year period. The nature of the data demands the application of varied forms of analysis by scholars expert in sociological, geographical, historical and archaeological skills and methods. Furthermore, the international significance of Rowntree's original investigations, combined with the proposed approaches for re-analysis and restudy mean that this research offers significant scope for collaboration with local and national archives, scholars from a range of disciplines and institutions and the opportunity to engage members of the public and specific user communities in a range of out-reach projects and indeed in the co-production of the research itself. In what follows we outline the key archival holdings and other sources which can be utilised before making specific proposals about how extant data might be digitised and further material generated in order to allow the kinds of analyses we have in mind.

Major studies and related archival sources

The **Borthwick Institute** at the University of York hold most of the documentation relating to Rowntree's poverty surveys, his other work on unemployment and other aspects of social policy, some of his correspondence and holdings relating to his company in its various incarnations. While none of the schedules from the first 1899 survey survive, of particular value are the extant schedules from Rowntree's second (1935-7) survey of York and approximately 1,353 schedules from his final survey in 1950 (out of 2,053). It is unclear how many of the 16,000 schedules survive from the 1935-7 survey however it seems that significantly more have been deposited with the archive since Freeman and Bliss carried out their research in the late 1990s using 1,366 schedules from 1,361 households (see Freeman and Bliss, 2001). There is a small amount of contextual material (e.g. some weekly family budgets from the mid-1930s, some photographs and correspondence) which may be of some use. The 1950 material has been the subject of two reanalyses since and it is worth briefly outlining the findings of those who did so.

A. B. Atkinson, J. Corlyon, A. K. Maynard, H. Sutherland and C. G. Trinder, in 'Poverty in York: A Re-Analysis of Rowntree's 1950 Survey', *Bulletin of Economic Research*, 33 (1981), looked at the extant schedules and concluded that there were some errors in sampling and that in certain respects inaccurate data had been collected. They reworked Rowntree's data by employing the National Assistance scale of income calculation and further measures of poverty based on this scale (NA plus 20% and plus 40%) employed by Abel-Smith and Townsend in their seminal *Poor and Poorest* (1965). They concluded that if Rowntree had applied the NA criterion he would have found 5-10% of *all families* below the poverty line, 'rather than the 2.8% of *all households* in poverty recorded in *Poverty and the Welfare State* (4.64% from table 1 multiplied by 0.6 to give a percentage of all households).' (Atkinson et al., 1981: 70).

An even more comprehensive reanalysis was carried out by Timothy J. Hatton and Roy E. Bailey in their 'Seebohm Rowntree and the postwar poverty puzzle', *Economic History Review*, LIII, 3, (2000). They argued that Rowntree had made significant errors in over estimating the value of items such as school milk and under-recorded housing costs (e.g. mortgages were not recorded) and generally over-estimated the impact of welfare policies in reducing poverty. They concluded that Rowntree and Lavers should have found 11.8% of working class households in poverty in 1950

rather than 4.6% - and a fall in poverty since 1936 of 19.3, rather than 26.5 percentage points. Further, Rowntree and Lavers claimed that welfare reforms caused the proportion of households in poverty to decline 20%, more than two thirds of the total decline in poverty since 1936, whereas in fact welfare reforms had accounted for a fall of 9.8%. Prof. Hatton has been contacted and informs us that while some digital data exists it is not re-usable, thus all extant schedules will need to be digitised and databased.

A. B. Atkinson, A. K. Maynard and C. G. Trinder, *Parents and Children: Incomes in two generations*, (London, 1983).

This survey sought to trace the children of respondents to Rowntree's final poverty survey in 1950 in order to assess the generational transmission of incomes, educational advantages, occupations etc. Fieldwork was carried out 1975-1978 and remarkably perhaps Atkinson and his team were able to trace 75% of the children from the Rowntree survey. In the event most were surveyed in their own homes whilst others were sent questionnaires which asked for detailed information on incomes, occupation, household composition, housing, rents etc. Interviewers were also required to write up their general impressions. If this material remains intact it could in itself enable valuable comparisons with the qualitative, impressionistic remarks made by investigators from the earlier Rowntree surveys and with other similar pieces of post-war research such as the *Affluent Worker* study (Goldthorpe et al., 1969; Savage, 2010). Since figures were grossed up for a 'hard to reach' section of the sample the numbers involved are sometimes unclear however it seems that 1,020 complete responses and a total of 1,107 partial or complete responses were obtained. Figures 1.1-1.15 show one example questionnaire taken at random from those extant. As will be seen the data obtained on incomes, expenditure, occupations etc is extremely rich. Significantly, Atkinson et al obtained information not just from the children of those surveyed by Rowntree in 1950 but from all members of the households in which they were resident. Professor Tony Atkinson has copies of these questionnaires and copies of the extant 1950 survey questionnaires in the basement of the Mews at **Nuffield College, Oxford**. We have visited Prof. Atkinson and he has agreed to their reuse subject to us obtaining permission from the co-authors of the study Chris Trinder and Alan Maynard. The data offers an outstanding opportunity to follow up the children of the Rowntree children in the present allowing for the analysis of the transmission of incomes, occupations and identities over three generations.

Huby, M., Bradshaw, J., and Corden, A., *A Study of Town Life: Living Standards in the City of York 100 years after Rowntree*, (York, 1999).

Two measures of poverty were used in this JRF sponsored survey. The Breadline Britain indicators were developed by Mack and Lansley (1985) from an original study by Townsend (1979). They were used by Gordon and Pantazis (1997) in which respondents were presented with a list of 44 consumer items and were asked which items they thought were necessary and which they thought were desirable but not necessary. Thirty-two items were identified as necessities by at least 50% of respondents and were used as the basis for determining a poverty threshold. Those who lacked three or more were perceived to be 'poor'. 750 York residents were surveyed via York Council's 'Talkabout' panel. Nationally (1990) 21% lacked three or more items and 8% at least seven items. In York (1998) figures were 20% and 6% respectively. Given the general improvement in living standards, the authors argued that this could indicate that poverty in York may well be above national average.

The same panel were also asked questions to determine their perceptions of 'absolute' and 'overall' poverty. These responses were compared to national figures obtained by Townsend et al. (1997). People in York put the threshold for absolute poverty at £150 per week, £25 lower than the national average. About 16% of people put their incomes a little or a lot below this level, compared with 20% nationally. With regard to the question of how much weekly income was necessary to keep households out of overall poverty, York respondents put the figure at £192, while nationally the figure was £239. Here 25% said they were below this level, compared with 28% nationally. (See Huby et al., 1999: 47).

York City Archives, Library, Museum Street (for access). The archivist currently has a £1.4 million HLF bid in order to move the archive from Exhibition Square to Museum Street by 2013. In the meantime access to the material is limited to Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings. Much of the material that would be relevant is either not catalogued or very poorly catalogued under three overlapping but inadequate systems. There is a further bid in process to re-catalogue the civic archives up to 1976 the results of which should be known in the next few days. If successful this would be of tremendous benefit to our proposed research. An archivist would be in post April next (2012) with a brief to complete within 15 months (July 2013). **North Yorkshire County Records Office** hold material relating to York for the period 1976-1996 when the County Council took over many functions of the City. At

the latter date York became a unitary authority. York City Council will be moving their offices in 2012/13 – lots of material will be generated and moved to the archive. This said the records so far identified are of outstanding quality (for example house-to-house surveys of working class districts in 1906-7 (see figure 2.1) and slum clearance surveys 1930s-1970s) which allow for the detailed reconstruction of property ownership, household occupation and housing conditions in areas of the city subject to slum clearance in the twentieth century. Examples of some of these can be found in the appendix. Figures 2.4-2.5 show a map of the Walmgate area prior to clearance and a letter from a landlord objecting to the compulsory purchase of his property. Figures 2.2-2.3 show the very detailed survey which was made of each dwelling subject to compulsory purchase during clearance schemes in the 1930s. Besides painting an incredibly rich picture of the physical condition of the building, also recorded are the ages, occupations (and as with this example) incomes of occupants, the rent and rateable value of the property and the names and address of the landlord. These are particularly useful as they can be triangulated with data from the Rowntree archive, the censuses of 1901 and 1911 and information on property ownership and occupation from title deeds and probate records. The photographic holdings from the borough engineer's department are excellent with multiple photographs of most of York's streets taken at various dates throughout the twentieth century. There are a number of holdings such as workhouse records, board of guardian records and records relating to political parties, the Trades Council and trade unions which should also be of use.

Further useful visual and oral history sources may be obtained from the **Yorkshire Film Archive** and **York Oral History Society**. It is thought that both these groups could be approached at a later date with more focused requests for specific information. A quick search of the catalogue shows that the film archive holds directly relevant films such as *A Life without work* (2010) as well as documentary footage of urban streets and York factory life. Relevant digital archives include the Tang Hall, Naburn, Poppleton and Dunnington Community Archives, which although currently off-line due to their host Commanet going into liquidation in 2009 may have accessible material at a later date (see www.communityarchives.org). In the last few years the York Oral History Society has worked in conjunction with the **York Archaeological Trust** to publish

several books which focus on specific periods, places and themes in social history. Of particular interest will be interviews conducted for studies of working class districts in the centre of the city which have been transformed by slum clearance and gentrification (see Wilson, 1996a; 1996b; 2007; 2009). The interviews which perhaps number over one-hundred testimonies, recorded since the 1990s clearly represent a valuable resource. However, none of these are archived and at least some of these are at risk of decay. At present these interviews are not accessible to members of the public. As ever care needs to be taken when approaching longstanding community history groups of this kind who often have few resources and are dependent upon the commitment of perhaps a few core volunteers over a number of years. Their attitudes towards other agencies (the local authority, local archives and library services, the universities) will have been formed by past relationships and need to be handled sensitively. The same also applies to the Archaeological Trust itself whose staff have analysed archaeological and historical material to reconstruct urban life in York in the period up to the 1930s. Freeman calls attention to some extant schedules from a little known and apparently aborted survey of 'secondary poverty' commenced by Rowntree and Lavers in 1951 (see Freeman, 2011). While these relate to places other than York it would probably be worthwhile reviewing sources held by the **Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust**, The Garden House, York. The Nestle archives are also likely to contain relevant material, particularly in relation to the Rowntree workforce.

Data Linkage

Bearing in mind the data protection and ethical implications such an approach would entail, there are good grounds for using extant schedules from the 1936 and 1950 surveys which could allow us to trace the shifting occupation of particular dwellings over a c.120 year period. This would require, in the first instance the digitisation of all the 1935 survey schedules and the remaining 1950 schedules (c. 1,353). Information on the occupancy of particular addresses could be mapped backwards for 1,353 schedules, from 1950 to 1935 in a straightforward manner using matching 1935 Rowntree surveys and contemporaneous house-to-house surveys undertaken in connection with slum clearance. In turn, 1901 and 1911 census data could provide relatively accurate information about the occupancy of those addresses at the time of Rowntree's original survey. Further high quality data about the occupancy of some addresses for the period 1906-1970s can be extracted from the city archive and Atkinson's data. Finally, those same addresses, or more likely a sample thereof could be subject to contemporary restudy.

This would yield good quality data on household size, composition and occupational class for the years 1901, 1911, 1935, 1950, [possibly 1975] and 2015 (or whenever the survey takes place). While not perfect, Bowley made calculations using Rowntree's original data on wages and incomes in York (Bowley, 1902). Thus the typicality (or not) of incomes in York for the years 1901, 1935 and 1950 can be ascertained by comparison with national data from the 1904 and 1936 Ministry of Labour Surveys and the 1953 Family Expenditure Survey currently being undertaken by Prof. Gazeley and colleagues at the University of Sussex (for preliminary findings on 1904 see Gazeley and Newell, 2011; Shave, Gazeley and Newell, 2011). Comparable national data on incomes is readily available for years from 1975. Survey data on household composition, occupational class and industrial structure can be measured against macro-data on York and England from the eleven censuses between 1901 and 2011. The opportunities for multi-level historical analysis and mapping the changes and continuities in the class composition of particular neighbourhoods through GIS are excellent.

The quality of the 1950 data can be further enhanced by using Atkinson et al.'s 1975-78 follow-up study, which used all extant 1950 replies (correcting them for details regarding age, number of

children etc) to survey the incomes of the children of the Rowntree respondents. A second approach would be to investigate the children of the children of the 1950 survey – this would yield valuable intergenerational data on occupational mobility and income transmission across a sixty-five year period (1950, 1975-8, 2015). It would however probably be rather costly in terms of time and resources. A third possible approach would be to carry out a survey in those areas where extant data suggests that we are most likely to find poverty in York today. This, combined with a repeat of the kind of questions asked in 1999 would probably be less time consuming. The data therefore allows for the mapping of shifts in occupational class and poverty in several ways: in terms of space – here questions of gentrification and the spatialisation of inequality could be explored with re-studies of both Rowntree and Atkinson addresses, and with a separate survey of the York's poorer wards. Furthermore, and perhaps most excitingly, the generational transmission of income and occupation could be traced for at least three generations of the same families - arguably a unique opportunity.

ARCHIVES

Borthwick Institute, University of York

Digital community archives accessible via www.communityarchives.org

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, The Garden House, York

National Archives, Kew, London

North Yorkshire County Records Office, Northallerton

Nestle Archives, York

Nuffield College Archives, Oxford

Modern Records Archive, Warwick

York City Archive, Museum Street, York

Yorkshire Film Archive, Lord Mayor's Walk, York

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