THE MANUSCRIPT; BEATRICE AND ELLA; EARLY MANAGEMENT OF THE BUILDINGS

The Katharine Buildings Manuscript

In 1885 Miss Ella Pycroft and Miss Beatrice Potter (now better known as Mrs Beatrice Webb) became lady rent-collectors for Katharine Buildings, a newly erected block of workmen's dwellings in Whitechapel. Beatrice stayed for almost one year, Ella for five. During this time they made their rent book, which might have consisted of the barest account of tenancies, room exchanges, rents and arrears, the repository of a great dealof personal information about the characters, customs and lives of their tenants - information which they collected in accordance with a more or less systematic plan ~~(which will~~ be outlined later). This is the Katharine Buildings "rent book", as it can be called, though it is clearly much more than this, which in an edited form is now ~~being~~ prepared for publication.

This forms the bulk of the text which follows. But with it is combined some other material which belongs to the same context. This comprises a series of letters (or extracts of letters) mainly on the subject of Katharine Buildings which Ella wrote to Beatrice in 1886, two letters from Ella to the chairman of the society which built and owned Katherarine Buildings, each giving a year's summarised history, and a letter from a tenant to a Beatrice about the lay-out of the buildings. In addition there is a body of material relating to the present day Katharine Buildings, which consists partly of an analysis of the 1951 census returns for this block, partly of the results of a survey of the current tenants ~~of the buildings~~ undertake in 1958.

There is more than one reason for publishing this material and different reasons for publishing different parts of it. But the main reason for publishing the bulk of it is is for the value of its contribution to the study of social conditions of the time. Within this context the material is important on several scores: it furnishes us for instance with evidence as drunkenness, population movements into and out of London, extreme destitution, and a question of voluntary or unvoluntary unemployment. In as much as this is ground which Booth also covered (for he covered all the ground) and which moreover he covered at the same date, the manuscript almost demands to be seen by the side of his Survey of London life and labour. To some extent indeed it is permissible to view the material as complementary to Booth's work - adding to the illustrations and examples with which he interlarded his tabulations, putting more flesh on his statistical skeleton~~*~~ ~~xxx~~ But this is only a part of its value. For, from

another point of view, the rent book gives quite another sort of life in the late Victorian era than Booth's, or any other contemporary source, provides - it gives us a dynamic picture. This is true anyway of the more substantial accounts, recording vicissitudes in the lives of tenants over several years, especially when taken in conjunction with any further insights Ella's letters may add. For then we do begin to form an idea of the way in which life moved for many of these people - the changes and shifts in their circumstances, the impact of events on them, the results of any plans they made, the crises of their life. The sense of realism which imbues the descriptions is the greater for the absence of any original intention of publication; the lack of emphasis particular details, the almost casual mention among a series of mundane facts of a career ruined by drink, a family verging on starvation - though all this lacks elegance and proportion and has faults which the reader will find out for himself, yet it does induce a sense of actuality; it awakens our sense of what life in these conditions and at this time actually felt like. In a sense it can be said - the exaggeration is pardonable - that by contrast to the lantern slide glimpses of working class life in the last decades of last century which other commentators provide, the K.B. rent book with Ella's letters give us a moving picture of the times - and, in as much as the tenants are frequently quoted verbatim, a talking picture, too.

But, still within the field of social history, there is another powerful reason for presenting this material to the public; the building of this particular block was an experiment of great significance in the history of working class housing: it represented, in brief, a novel attempt to house the very poorest people. The history of the experiment will be traced later in the Introduction. Suffice it to say here that without a comprehensive knowledge of the habits and characters of the tenants involved in the experiment any account of it would lack all meaning and realism.

Ella's letters to Beatrice help, as we have seen, to bring the tenants to life. But they are also an account, freshly, vigourously, and often amusingly written, of the feelings, reactions, and experiences, of a lady rent collector attempting to follow the scheme of housing management laid down by Octavia Hill; and as such they merit study in their own right. Much as this method has been discussed, and important as its position has been in the history of housing (v.i.), noone has yet indicated what actually, day by day, it meant to be a "lady rent collector", what sort of routine it entailed, what difficulties and

problems, what pleasures and diversions it held. Octavia Hill laid down indeed certain of the working practices which ought ideally to be followed and by way of illustration referred often to her own experiences, many of them quite highly coloured. But such accounts are usually in terms of the tenants reactions to the policies followed by the rent collector. Ella shows us by contrast what were the reactions of the collector to the tenants, and indicates generally what it felt like in human terms to manage a block of working class flats. By so doing she has increased our knowledge and understanding of the Octavia Hill method of housing manggement. Her letters have some other features of interest too: they throw one or two sidelights on people - the Barnetts, Octavia Hill, perhaps Beatrice herself - usually seen from other angles; and in reference to such questions as relief works, and the ~~xxxxx~~ notorious Mansion House Fund of 1885-86 they show us for once, not what enlightened philanthropists thought, but what the very poor themselves felt.

The modern, mainly statistical, material ~~xxxxxx~~ which we present has an obvious comparative function. It enables us to indicate briefly some of the major changes in the way of life and standard of living ~~xxx~~ of the poorer working class of London which have taken place over the past three-quarters of a century.

Finally, we must not omit to mention the simple basic human interest which much of this material holds for us. It is a fact that somehow by the sheer passage of time and the processes of history documents from the past are endowed with a charm and interest which comparable documents of the present day do not possess. The Katharine Buildings rent book is also subject to the workings of this law. How strange for instance to come upon the home and the mother (Katharine O'Connor) of a would-be assassin of Queen Victoria. One knows with one's side of one mind that even regicides have mothers, fathers, families; to come across such a family is nevertheless a curiosity. Or take the enormously disreputable Mrs Barndon, who claimed that she has scarred her face by living too much in dark places. Her outrageous handling of the truth has an appeal that survives seventy-five or so years. One finds oneself wondering whether she brought out this monumental falsehood with gravity and an expectation of belief, or whether she used it as a desperate last resort, recognisably futile even as, the eyes in her battered old visage half-twinkling, she uttered it. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

Beatrice and Ella

It is time to make the characters of Beatrice and Ella a little more substantial in the eyes of the reader than they (the latter at any rate) may yet be. After a brief resume of the career of each we shall consider what the episode of rent collecting meant to each of them, and what significant facets of their character it revealed.

Ella's life history, partly from its comparative uneventfulness, partly from the absence of complete information about it, is quickly dealt with. In fact almost all that is known about her career is contained in two references made by Beatrice. The first, a diary entry of January 1885, says "Miss Pycroft spent three days with me. Daughter of country doctor and one of two families; stepmother died. Plain, very strong looking, and unattractive except for sincerity of expression. Free thinking - has somewhat similar life to ours, isolated from other country neighbours by opinions. Decided business capacity and strong will and placid temper. Devoted to her father, with whom she has the same intimate companionable relationship as we have, and fond of her stepsisters. Evidently suffered from feeling herself unattractive in comparison to a pretty sister. Very anxious to work and indifferent to life. We shall get on! and are anxious to have no other workers in the block". The second reference is a footnote in "My apprenticeship" which records of this "lifelong friend", that in 1890 "turning to educational work, after a year at the Cambridge Training College for Teachers, and after adding to the qualification she had already held, she became, in 1893, Chief Organiser of Domestic Economy subjects under the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, from which post she retired in 1904. This is the sum of what we know of Ella's career; the manuscript entry (p.) adds nothing substantial. Indeed we do not even know how or why she came to take up rent collecting in the East End.

Nor do we know what working on the block meant to her - what influence it had on her career or views; whether it realised or disappointed her original expectations about rent collecting; or whether, like Beatrice, she regarded her own part in the housing experiment as futile, a failure. We know only that she left Katharine Buildings for other work in 1890, and this is a change for which there may be several explanations.

But what we do know, and that in detail, is what sort of a woman she was. Her letters richly reveal this; and on the whole they bear out Beatrice's judgement. One would only wish to add in substance and in detail to Beatrice's appraisal here. Thus the "placid temper"

she speaks of is more than simply an equanimity that survives panicks and crises well: it amounts, as shown in action on Katharine Buildings, to a good humoured and tolerant acceptance of people for what they are with all their quirks and weaknesses - "it is too delightfully ignorant of the Director, Parsons, to expect that out of about 200 tenants there would be ten or twenty tipsy on Saturday nights"; of Maurice Paul, who preached hard principles but practised charity "I have been laughing at him in my sleeve but not openly, for if I did he would argue the point for an hour"!; and of Mrs Patrick Sullivan, strongly suspected of malversating alone, "it strikes me she has spent it mostly otherwise; she has been ill, so it is a great temptation." In fact, more than tolerant acceptance, there is here, often genuine compassion for the suffering of the poor East-enders living under Ella's supervision. Time after time occurs some phrase such as "I can't tell you all the sad stories of K.B. in one letter: it is too depressing", or, "I have been sad for my K.B. people", and more particularly, "I was really alarmed about Downes" or "the Haggerty's are distressing me now". Ella's "sincerity of expression" showed itself as much in her words as in her looks; we cannot doubt the realness of her sympathy. True compassion for another person is perhaps always the consequence of real insight into and understanding of his feelings. Ella gives the impression of having been well equipped with such human understanding. It shows itself for instance in the apology we have noted for Mrs Sullivan's lapse - "it is a great temptation"; and emerges more clearly still in this (p.): "Weren't you amused with the proposals someone made in the social economic section at the British Association for housing East End needlewomen in a big hall with sleeping berths? Do they think anyone would go there? Any woman would rather starve on a pinch of tea in her own teapot ... ". And what delicacy of understanding and of action is revealed in the incident recorded in p. of the letters: "One by one the three mutineers of last time have sent up their names and propose the sing to help me out, if I'd allow them. We had to go on past half past ten so as not to hurt their feelings by refusing one of them. All this is well in keeping with the general altruistic bent of her nature, which emerges explicitly in, for instance, this extract: "thinking of the troubles of the world without being able to try at any rate to help some of the people through theirs, would make me too miserable"; and which is further exemplified in her extreme

repugnance (p.) for the theory/that the calamities which appears to have held and misfortunes of one set of people serve the function of keeping the feelings of charity active and alive in another set of people.

Again, she was "anxious for work" far beyond what could reasonably be expected: here we see her spending part of her weekend in taking the tenants on a charabanc trip to her cousin's house at Reigate, here using some of her evenings learning wood-carving to teach the boys' club, here, on one memorable occasion, caught up in a frantic canvass of all of her East End acquaintances who might help in finding concert performers; and in general we have the impression at one point confirmed that she spent her days away from the Buildings "chiefly in keeping the promises made on the days/ when she was/ there". Or again, the free thinking element in her nature extended beyond the field of theology (where on account of mans "vile suffering" she was an atheist) into that of politics. Here she will be found remarking "I should like to think socialism possible but I can't manage it"; and it appears from her references to socialist literature that she had been no happier than Beatrice in her early encounters with the exponents of left wing thought. (The Fabian Facts for Socialists, be it noted, did not appear until the year following the date of this letter, Fabian Essays in Socialism not until three years later).

But there are other facets of Ella's personality not so far mentioned, but which will strike the reader as he makes his way through the text. A certain amount of courage was undoubtedly called for, I think, from all those who undertook the ~~jxx~~ job of rent collecting in the East End. The sort of unnerving experience which was likely to overtake the rent collector is described by Ella is described on p. where she tells of the outcome of her attempt to give notice to the Fisher family. The reader will readily grant that Ella had the moral force for this work, and among other instances will note (p.) her pertinacity in insisting in Court of Law on her right to affirm rather than swear on oath. There is modesty too, both a modesty in comparing herself with Beatrice (who may, incidentally, have reminded her of the pretty sister to whom she once felt inferior), and and absolute modesty (e.g. p. "I was very ignorant when I came to town"). One finds also a plain unvarnished humour in the way she tells her stories, the sort of humour that is liable to be distilled when someone writes naturally about events they feel fully and spontaneously.

Thus her remarks about Miss Aicheson, the rent collector whom the Barnetts effectually forced on her - "imagine my horror at finding a prim old maid, old enough to be my mother. I should say she must be the descendent of many generations of single women - or at least that's what I should say if I believed in miracles".

Generally speaking, however, the further knowledge of Ella we gain of Ella from the rent book and from her letters only reinforces the impression, created by Beatrice's short sketch of a plain, strong, competent, likeable person. And on the whole Ella emerges as a sort of foil to Beatrice. "Penny plain, twopence coloured" - this sharpens up the contrast between the two women rather too strongly, and yet the fascinating, and many facetted, the beautiful and wise Beatrice Potter was in many ways the reverse side of the coin from Ella Pycroft.

But Beatrice has yet to be dealt with. But Beatrice how different is the state of knowledge concerning her than that concerning ~~her~~ Ella. From the embarrassing richness of information we shall however take only the salient facts in Beatrice's career immediately before and immediately after ~~the~~ her experiences on Katharine Buildings. Until 1885, in which year she became 27, Beatrice had lived the typical life of a young woman in high society, and perhaps been more deeply involved in it than most since the death of her mother in 1882 had forced upon her the role of society hostess. Her formal education had been as slight as was then usual for girls, but her reading very extensive; and from Herbert Spencer who was a friend of her parents and with whom she was always, while he lived very intimate, she had acquired what she called a "training in reasoning". Always drawn towards the study of society, although supposing at one time that she had "no aptitude for sociology", she seems to have developed in the early ~~1880's~~ 1880's a special interest in some of the pressing social questions of her day, largely through her contact with her cousins, the Charles Booths. So that when her sister Catherine, trained in housing management by Octavia Hill, and already a rent collector of eight year standing in Whitechapel, gave up her commitment to supervise the East End Dwellings ~~Co~~ Company's projected new block, Beatrice "seized the opportunity" of helping Ella Pycroft take her place.* The employment created by this opportunity lasted until November 1885 when the collapse of her father's health removed Beatrice from Katharine Buildings - permanently as it turned out apart from a month's locum undertaken for Ella in the following winter. When Beatrice returned to the East End, which she did in 1886, on her father's partial recovery of health, it was an investigator in Booth's survey. For his work she undertook chapters on the dock trade, on tailoring, and on the Jewish community - chapters which, when printed in the Life and Labour, became her first ~~j~~ major publications. She was now fully launched on the career

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* Kate gave up her obligation ~~on~~ marrying Leonard Courtney in 1883. The new block was named in her honour.

of scholarship and research which she had chosen for herself; in 1891 appeared her first independent book, though a small one, "The Co-operative Movement". We may terminate our account of her history with a note of her marriage in 1892 (also the year of her father's death) to Sidney Webb; her later career is increasingly common knowledge.

Now what did the experience of working on Katharine Buildings mean for Beatrice? In a word, it acquainted her with life amongst the lowest and poorest strata of English society. According to her diary she "first became aware of the meaning of the poverty of the poor" while she was staying in London with her sister Kate, then collecting rents in Whitechapel. But from all the signs this was a second-hand sort of experience: managing Katharine Buildings was one of the four experiences in Beatrice's life which brought her into intimate communication with working-class people. The other were: visiting for a C.O.S. District Committee in Soho, staying with her cotton-weaving cousins in Bacup and working in East End sweat shops as part of her preparation for the paper on the tailoring trade she contributed to the Life and Labour. Her C.O.S. and sweat shop experiences were far too short-lived however to allow of any substantial contact with the poor. It was at Bacup and in Katharine Buildings that Beatrice got the true savour and atmosphere of working-class life.

These were fascinatingly distinct experiences both in themselves and in the different effects the produced on her. At Bacup she came into contact with the true representatives of the working-class, the respectable artisans and mechanics who formed by far the largest groups in the population. In Boothian terms they would be classified as Groups E and F, and these in London constituted % of the population. In Whitechapel she stepped down below the poverty line, mixed with Booth's classes, B, C and D, and approached the very lowest levels of society.

Of the two experiences it is quite clear to the most superficial reader of the autobiography that the visits to Bacup, brief by comparison as they were compared to the time spent in Katherine Buildings were far more important to Beatrice than her rent-collecting experiences. It was at Bacup for one thing that she found the opportunity which she tells us in My Apprenticeship that she had been seeking-"the opportunity of watching day by day, in their homes and in their workshops, a sufficient number of <u>normal</u> manual working families to enable me to visualize the class as a whole". And it was there too that she found the answers to some of the questions which, according to the same account had been troubling her: "Were the manual workers what I was accustomed to call civilized? What were their aspirations, what was their degree of education, what their capacity for self government?" But of still greater significance than these

chances of observation which the Bacup episode provided was the "decisive term to ... self development" it gave; for according to the account Beatrice gives it seems to have played powerfully on her decision "to become an investigator of social institutions". In so much as this was one of the most profound and far-reaching decisions Beatrice ever took (My Apprenticeship, not a true autobiography, is really about this decision, what led up to it and what came out of it) the Bacup experience has claims to be seen as among the crucial episodes of her life. No such personal significance can be pretended for the Katharine Buildings interlude. Nor as we have implied above did it have as much sociological significance for Beatrice as Bacup. The part it did play as an influence upon her was this: firstly, it held her in fairly close intimacy with the poor for almost a year, the longest period in her life of continuous acquaintanceship with the working class; secondly it introduced her to lower strata of society than she had yet encountered, and in fact, except in class A (though some of these too she met on Katharine Buildings), to the lowest possible levels of the society of that day. The effect, taken in conjunction with her previous knowledge and experience, was to equip her with a sound, empirically based, understanding of all levels of the British social structure. Belonging by birth to the upper classes, acquainted through friends and acquaintances (e.g. Ella Pycroft, the Barnetts) with the middle and professional classes, made familiar at Bacup with the main body of the working-class, in Whitechapel Beatrice learnt to know the "poorest of the poor" - the destitute, the less respectable brethren of the working class.* As a student of British society she was "finished" in Katharine Buildings. The one respect in which Whitechapel probably counted for more in Beatrice's life than Bacup was in her political development. Writing "reminiscences" for the St. Martin's Review in 1928 she said "If I had to answer in half a dozen words why I became a Socialist I should say 'because I discovered the Co-operative Movement'". This suggests once again the pre-eminent influence of Bacup, where co-operation was strong and where Beatrice first encountered it but in fact the Co-operative Movement does not seem to have held any great political significance

* The one gap that is perhaps left here was sealed up a few years after Katharine Buildings by her marriage to the lower middle class Sidney Webb.

for Beatrice at this time - except in so far as she probably viewed it, along with Local Government and the self-ruling dissenting chapels, all of which forced working men to consider political and other questions realistically, "as one of the best preventives of the socialistic tendency of the coming democracy". Co-operation made its political impact on her later when she studied it in detail, and wrote about it, "and discussed it with Sidney Webb". But what first turned Beatrice Webb's thought towards seeking alternative forms of government to that then existing was her first-hand experience of the conditions the capitalist system had produced amongst the working-class: "this system had," she writes in My Apprenticeship, "thrust hundreds of thousands of families into the physical horrors and moral debasements of chronic destitution in crowded tenements in the midst of mean streets". It was her knowledge of these horrors which, if we are to follow her own account of "why she became a socialist", provided her with her political motive power. Most of what she knew in detail of conditions of life amongst the very poor she learnt while collecting rents in Cartwright Street.

It is not surprising when so much of the text consists of Ella's letters that it displays Ella's character more than Beatrice's. It is interesting in fact to note that our glimpses of Beatrice, unlike those of Ella, are glimpses, not of actions and undertakings, but of opinions, theories, and attitudes - expressed to Ella, or the tenants, or the press; this recalls a note in the rent book, "E.P. takes the lead in management, B.P. in observation". But the world already knows so much about Beatrice that the comparative lack of illumination on her character here is no great loss.

One of her attitudes, however, which she shared with Ella, is of some significance and calls for comment here. It may surprise a modern reader. Both of them appear to have adhered to what may be termed a "laissez-faire theory of social morality". This is implied by, for example, an entry in Beatrice's diary, quoted in My Apprenticeship, asking: "How can one help these people [poor East-enders] if they are not worthy of life from an economic point of view" but it most clearly emerges of the opening sentences of Ella's eighth letter - "Do you remember telling me when I first knew you how you would help to bring about the death of an opium eater in Soho?" Then the lines which follow What is surprising is not so much the theory itself, as the extreme in which these two and presumably others held it. For late 19th century and especially C.O.S.-influenced philanthropy held roughly the view that the social system should be left to run itself without outside interference,

and that charity's proper function was, by once for all aid, to put back on his feet someone who had experienced temporary misfortune. That this view was by at least a few people held rigourously to the point where aid was withheld from those unfortunates for whom there was no hope of economic independence will come as a novelty and a shock to many people. Perhaps nothing shows so effectively the grip of laissez-faire principles on nineteenth century thought as this particular manifestation of it.

The reader may make uphis own mind as to what the holding of this view implies for the characters of Ella and Beatrice but one or two comments must be made. In the first place Ella seems to have been a reluctant convert to the theory, and certainly did not practice it; for, as she admits, "in individual cases it is so hard to act up to one's knowledge". In fact when she talks (p.) of the actual case to which she found the theoretical axims of charity to apply, she reminds one very strongly of "Huckleberry Finn". In the passages of that novel which describe Huckleberry Finn's feelings about helping the runaway slave Jim to escape Twain, with telling irony, shows the conflict between the conventional canons of morality on the one hand, and on the other a man's natural sense of justice and right. As the outcome of the conflict, Huck does the right thing "helps him to escape" but feels guilty about it. This is Ella's case exactly: "I half feel as if I were doing wrong to help her, and yet I couldn't help it". (It seems to have been Maurice Paul's case too v. p.)

In the second place it is not odd to find Beatrice advocating (and if we are to believe the truth about the opium eater also practising) this theory. There are two things to say about Beatrice here: firstly she was not then a socialist (on the contrary, v. p), or, perhaps more to the point, she had not then accepted "'guaranteeism' ... the policy of securing to every individual as the very basis of his life and work, a prescribed national minimum of the requisities for efficient parenthood and citizenship." (My Apprenticeship, p220). Instead she still adhered to those views of the C.O.S., which accepted the existing system and believed in concentrating attention on the "deserving poor". Secondly - and we must remember that she was not led into the homes of the poor by the spirit of charity but by eagerness for observation/ - she held very strongly the belief that hard cases make bad law. H.W. Nevinson met Beatrice in 1887 in her East End days and writing in his diary afterwards, remarked of her general attitude towards the poor "I am afraid there is something a little hard about it all". Thirty years or so later Beatrice confirmed this judgement in her autobiography as "singularly apt";

but she defended her attitude on the grounds that it is better to find the facts which will enable one to alleviate the distress of a whole class of people, than to render individual assistance to a mere handful of people. One incidental result of this discussion is to clear up an interesting question raised on p. of Ella's letters. Plainly Maurice Paul was right to suppose that, in the context of philanthropy in action, Beatrice was capable of being much more intransigent than Ella.

So these two women for eight months or so managed the buildings alone, apart from the help of Roadnight, the caretaker, and the occasional services of a broker. When the block was first opened in January 1885 they began to interview applicants for the 281 rooms and undertook "long trudges through Whitechapel" following up references. From March onwards when all rooms were occupied they went their daily rounds of the block collecting rents, noting repairs needed, suppressing as far as they could dirt and disorder, discouraging overcrowding, and giving notice where necessary. They seemed to have divided the tenants equally between themselves; they also practised a division of function which the rent book describes in these words: " E.P. takes the lead in management, B.P. in observation." What this means is that Ella took main responsibility for the accounts, and the more formal side of business matters (correspondence etc.), while Beatrice began the rent book - or rather began to turn the rent book into a comprehensive account of t the tenants.

But although originally, "anxious to have no other workers on the block" they welcomed the advent in September 1885 Maurice Paul, then a medical student at the London Hospital. He straight away started a boys' club, took over the management of the reading room, and transmuted the two women into what Beatrice in her dd diary calls a "working trio". Mrs Margaret Nevinson who also came in 1885 (the exact date cannot be ascertained but it cannot be later than), and who stayed until October of the next year, was another who provided regular and therefore valuable help, though not in amount large. Otherwise both here and in Lolesworth Buildings, another E.E.D.C. block which she took over on its completion in 1886, Ella had only the most irregular assistance on which the rely. During the period

covered by her letters to Beatrice she had a constantly changing stream of helpers - Miss Grogan, Miss Napier, Miss Cole, etc.

THE HOUSING EXPERIMENT

Within this context KB had special significance. The building of this block represented an experiment, an attempt to take philanthropy a stage further in the housing field than it had yet reached. But until we have briefly indicated the general state of housing for the poor, and elucidated a little the special question of accommodation in model dwellings, the full meaning of the experiment will remain unclear.

The general state of working class housing is too large a subject to be dealt with fully here. But all that is relevant to our purpose may be very briefly stated.

The main point to be made about the accommodation provided by the model dwellings was that it catered overwhelmingly for the comfortable, well-to-do, working class, much less for the poor and hardly at all for the very poor. Booth's statistics for the distribution of the classes within model dwellings show this clearly -

Class	A Very poor and semi-criminal	B Very poor (in chronic want)	C & D Poor (Struggling for existence)	E & F Comfortable working class	G & H Middle class	Total
No. of persons	500	17,141	55,123	115,455	899	189,108
Percentage of persons:	.3	9.1	29.1	61.0	.5.	100
Percentage of persons for all London:						*

The distribution of the classes within blocks owned by philanthropic societies, where the better building tended to be concentrated was weighted even more heavily against the poor (only 3.9% of Class B, and 19.4% of Classes C (3.4%) and D (16%)).** And what made this seem to many observers particularly unjust was that the model blocks were often created on sites from which Class B had been ejected by slum clearance. So that when this happened, as it did many times throughout the whole of London, a homeless population of the poorest people found itself excluded from the buildings for the sake of which they had been made homeless.

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* The model dwellings tenant responsible for "A sketch of life in buildings" in 'Life and Labour' adds a valuable piece of contemporary evidence on this point. Describing a street quarrel witnessed from her tenement balcony, she remarks "The parties to the quarrel are a man and his wife in a distinctly lower walk of life (like all the inhabitants of the houses in the street) than any of the tenants of the Buildings".

** 'Life and Labour' - "It is only in the worst blocks that the poor are accommodated".

room (in a court) at 2s. 9d. and two rooms (in a model block) at 4s. and so would of course take the single room in the court: what weighed in his mind was not relative, but absolute, cheapness. Or if he tried for one of the few single rooms (at, say, 2s.) in the model block, then he would almost certainly find that the regulations against overcrowding precluded his acceptance. Nor in the course of this explanation must we forget that in practice what often happened was simply that, where applications exceeded vacancies, the directors of the property took the more respectable, the "safer" applicants, and so indirectly eliminated the very poor.

But supposing the absence of every difficulty we have so far described, there would still, according to Octavia Hill, have remained a great obstacle to housing the poorest people in tenement blocks - "the very poor ... have not the courage to face the larger cleaner places unless somebody known them and introduces them".* Why? Octavia Hill answered in this way: mainly because they are "afraid of what they call their bits of things coming among people who would scorn them". We may add it was also because they were repelled by the strict regulations, some of them harsh and interfering, which most societies enforced. In Octavia Hill's view the only possible remedy was to accept a large number of poor people into a block at one time.

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* Question 3412, before the Select Committee. - Field, a who also gave evidence before thecommittee, offered independently the view that poor people were intimidated by the new blocks, and kept clear of them.

Against this setting Katherine Buildings must be seen. The novelty of the block was this: it was intended to accommodate precisely those poorer elements of the working class "the poorest of the poor" as Beatrice described them, or Booth's Class B, to give them another name, who were excluded from most of the model dwellings. The Metropolitan Board of Works had prepared the way for this experiment as in their first major redevelopment scheme under the Cross Acts they had cleared a considerable area (once reckoned to be the most densely populated part of Europe) in south west Stepney, and in so doing displayed many very poor people, including a great number of casual dock labourers.* Here then, ready to hand, lay a site for building, whilst a homeless population of the very poorest class sought re-accommodation. Moreover the site, located as it was in close proximity to St. Jude's Parish fell conveniently within the orbit of Barnett's vicarage and of Toynbee Hall. In fact the location was wholly suitable for the experiment.

But how to draw the very poor into model dwellings from which till then they had been conspicuously absent? A comprehensive definition of the methods of attraction used by the
is possible in the brief statement that the recommendations (implicit or explicit) of Barnett and of Octavia Hill before the 1882 Select Committee were adopted wholesale: the obstacles which

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* Described in the "Life and Labour" as a 'district crowded with a low Irish population.

they claimed, prevented the poor from entering model blocks were removed; their positive proposals were taken up. (Nor was this strange, since both of them helped to found the new company). Thus, regulations on the new block were, compared to those imposed on the buildings of the older companies, absolutely minimal; especially important omissions were the generalising restrictions which forbade crowding, and required regular employment. Moreover, in the hope of overcoming the psychological objection to model dwellings a deliberate attempt was made to encourage many poor people to enter the buildings simultaneously. But in its concentration on single-room tenements (263 out of 281) built in "nests" of five, four large rooms and one small, lay the really unique features of the block. This novelty represented the practical realisation of Octavia Hill's scheme of "elastic accommodation " which she had outlined before the Committee of 1882, and which she took up again a year later in her second Preface to "Homes of the London Poor". Her recommendation was that the philanthropic societies "instead of building (their tenements) in suites, build them, as it is very easy to do, opening from a little lobby from which four rooms enter ... ; and they can let either one, two, three, or four rooms as the people require; and whenever the standard of working people is raised higher they can take more room." (Question 3002, 1882 Select Committee). This idea the new block embodied in

almost exactly the form advocated. The reader will note of course that the absence of a ban on overcrowding was a necessary corollary to this plan.

But attracting the very poor into model dwellings was only part of the problem. It was equally important to retain them there, once admitted, and then to "improve" them. The former task is obvious, the latter, to modern eyes, less so: to the sponsors it seemed equally necessary, to reform the standards and manners and customs of the poor tenants. "The people's homes are bad, partly because they are badly built and arranged; they are tenfold worse because the tenants' habits and lives are what they are. Transplant them tomorrow to healthy and commodious homes and they would pollute and destroy them" (First Preface to "Homes of the London Poor"). This point of view, expressed here by Octavia Hill in perhaps an exaggerated form, was that held by the authors of the new departure.

The experiment was therefore a social, just as much as a housing experiment: it aimed on the one hand to provide accommodation for the very poor, on the other to raise their standards, and manner of life. And the two parts of the experiment were interdependent, for unless Class B could be changed for the better, they could not continue to be accommodated in model blocks - rents would fail, interior structure would rapidly deteriorate, pandemonium would reign.

But how were the people to be improved? They were to be improved by the efforts of the rent-collectors, following the methods pioneered,

advocated, and taught by Octavia Hill. That this was the intention we know from what was said at the time by the sponsors of KB and others. It is more difficult however to say what exactly Octavia Hill's methods were since they were never coherently or consistently described at the time - partly because they "were not theoretical ... but (were) worked out in the course of practical dealings with individual cases", and so were presumably in constant course of modification. Nor has anyone attempted a comprehensive account of them since. This is really a subject requiring special treatment of its own. However the broad principle underlying the methods (not surprisingly reminiscent of the C.O.S. approach) emerges quite clearly from Octavia Hill's own account of her works and experiences: the aim was to encourage a poor tenant to live decently and cope self-reliantly with the world. Much of this encouragement was to be given by the presence and example of the lady rent-collector. Further, the tenant's fulfilment of his duties (e.g. payment of rent) and material aid was to be (as far as possible) abandoned in favour of sympathy, guidance, friendship ("charity is not alms but a friend"). Amongst the hints about the form of this guidance are the following: the rent-collector should seek "to suggest in time the inevitable result of certain habits; to urge such measures as shall secure the education of the children and their establishment in life; to keep alive the germs of energy; to waken the gentler thought; ... to cherish the smallest lingering gleam of self-respect."

The reader begins perhaps to see the aims and methods of "Octavia Hillism". He may still wonder a little what the principles would entail in concrete application. Some of the lines of acting acutally followed by Octavia Hill in her own houses may, therefore, quickly be detailed: as landlady she kept the parts of the tenements for which she was responsible (staircases, passages, etc.) scrupulously clean; she insisted on the cleanliness of her tenant's rooms, visiting first at appointed times, then irregularly, in an effort to ensure that the tenant was clean at all times; she ejected "immoral" tenants; temporarily unemployed men she attempted to employ in work on her houses, white-washing, painting etc., whilst she sometimes managed to find permanent situations for those who had lost their jobs altogether; she ran a savings club; she built a playground for the children of the tenements, and held a sewing club for their mothers; etc., etc. One further point may be noted: one of the advantages claimed for rent-collectors as agents of social betterment was that the relationship between them and the poor people could, when once the desired changes had been effected, relapse naturally into normal friendship.

This then was the experiment: an attempt to offer to the poorest of society the same housing advantages (economic, sanitary) as the upper strata of the working class enjoyed, and at the same time to make the poor fitted to accept them. Initially the experiment was successful for the buildings did succeed, despite the forebodings Octavia Hill had expressed to the Select Committee, in attracting the very poorest people.

"The aborigines of the East End" - so Beatrice chacacterised the tenants in one diary entry; in another she describes them as "a drift population of all classes and races; a constantly decomposing mass of human beings; few arising out of it, but many dropping down dead, pressed out of existence by the struggle". So the company had proved that it was possible, under the right conditions, to draw the lowest class of society into model dwellings. Could it go on to prove that it was possible to retain this class in model blocks, and to improve their way of life?

The answer to this is "No"; and it is an answer given by several commentators. Beatrice's verdict on the experiment, recorded when she returned to the block for a month, after a year's absence, was quite decisive: "These buildings are to my mind an utter failure. In spite of Ella Pycroft's efforts, they are not an influence for good". Parsons, a director, spoke more euphemistically of the "difficulties" experienced in KB (and in Lolesworth Buildings as well) but his meaning is plain. Llewellyn Smith* referring to KB (without identifying them) remarked in the "Life and Labour": 'An attempt was made, with a success at first alarming to its promoters, to draw into the buildings the very poor of the neighbourhood. Since then the inevitable regulations have resulted in the voluntary or compulsory removal of many members of Class B."

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* One of Booth's assistants on the "Life and Labour" and so for a short time a colleague of Beatrice's.

The failure consisted in the inability of the supervisors of the buildings to cope with the way of life of Class B. These very poor people showed themselves, at least in these particular circumstances, to be immune to the permeating influence for right and purity throughout a block which a lady rent-collector represented. They were on the whole as wild and unmanageable in KB as in the courts from which they came. So, then, the housing experiment in its first stage (attracting Class B into the buildings) worked, but the social experiment collapsed - and with it the experiment as a whole. The consequence was, as Llewellyn Smith notes, that after the earliest years Class B began to leave the Buildings. Since this is in a sense the criterion of the block's failure, it is worth substantiating here from the evidence offered by the manuscript.

But we must ask the reasons for the failure in KB of the system of housing management which Octavia Hill had laid down, which was widely preached in philanthropic literature in the last quarter of the 19th and the first quarter of this century, and which was extensively imitated in Europe and elsewhere. The reasons are not far to seek.

Beatrice's diary entry recording failure goes on in fact to strike to the root of the matter: "the free intercourse", she laments, "has here, as elsewhere in this dismal mass a demoralising effect. The bad and indifferent, the drunken, mean and lowering elements overwhelm the effect of higher motive and noble example". "What can one do", she asks, "in face of this collective brutality heaped up together in infectious contact, adding to each other's dirt, physical and moral?". Parsons, again reinforcing Beatrice's judgement, points to the same cause of failure: "The greater the publicity (today we should no doubt say the less the privacy), the more do the acts and defaults of the less civilised affect the comfort of all. It is difficult for the tenants of these large blocks to rise above a certain standard unless all are well behaved". These words make things quite plain. To put it briefly, it was a mistake in the first place to put many very poor people together in one building and then it was a second mistake to place them together with too little privacy. The respectable people were

bound to be overwhelmed by, if nothing else, the sheer numbers of the wilder tenants - and these numbers be it noted were in themselves a formidable enough obstacle to the efforts of the rent-collectors; but, further, the free and easy, almost enforced intercourse, between the tenants in a building where life was at times as public as in an institution aggravated a natural tendency to disorder.

This almost compulsory intimacy between tenants was in part the result of the sheer aggregation of many people in one building;, but it was also partly the consequence of the particular way this block was built. Here the authors of the experiment were clearly at fault.

We acknowledge the fact that life in the blocks, as was clearly recognised at the time (v. sketch of daily life in model dwellings in the "Life and Labour") was not and could not be as private as life in cottages, or even in houses converted for tenement living: thin walls, the sharing of facilities, simply the close physical proximity to many others, sufficiently accounted for this. We admit, too, that it was a necessary part of the theory of elastic accommodation that rooms should be easily accessible from other rooms (and room doors, therefore, close to each other) - so that tenants could naturally and conveniently add to their accommodation when they wanted to. But the directors of the E.E.D.C. made two further mistakes: in the first place they chose the balcony, rather than the staircase, system for laying out their dwellings* One can apply a crude type of numerical comparison here, and say that, as applied in KB, balconies meant that on each floor 54 rooms, and therefore about 50 families were, without use of stairs, in easy reach of each other; whilst the staircase system, supposing six single rooms per floor and five floors, would have given six rooms easily accessible to each other per landing, and thirty on the whole staircase. This is a curious error to have made in as much as "staircase building" most notably exemplified in the Waterlow dwellings, was already to be found over all London. It is true that

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*

balconies have advantages in the supply of light and air; but the staircase layout has a clearly overwhelming advantage in supplying privacy; and for the experiment which the E.E.D.C. were undertaking privacy was clearly of fundamental importance. This error of policy was in effect admitted when, after Lolesworth Buildings, and having absorbed its experiences, the Company turned to staircase building.

In the second place, the Company chose to accommodate the latrines in a way which made them focal points of disturbance on the dwellings.

In effect they installed them in the most public situation possible - on the landings by the staircases, where all must pass by, and where alone at night time light was provided. So Beatrice was able to record - "The meeting-places, there is something grotesquely coarse in this, are the water-closets! Boys and girls crowd on these landings - they are the only lighted places in the buildings - to gamble and flirt!" The reader will note in going through the manuscript "low behaviour of boys by latrines" is a recurring reason for the departure of the more respectable tenants. Whilst the indecencies which went on within the inadequately separated water-closets (v. Aaron's letter, p.) were another potent source of disgust to the respectable occupants, and drove many away. This arrangement was such a palpable mistake that the latrines in Lolesworth Buildings, erected shortly after KB, were accommodated more privately.

Another feature which distressed many tenants and drove them from the block was the bareness of the accommodation provided, the complete absence from the rooms of the most basic facilities. We have already seen Beatrice's reference to "these uniform, cell-like apartments (without) labour-saving appliances"; but to know what this meant in real terms of discomfort and frustration to the inhabitants of the block we must turn to Aaron's letter. There he complains bitterly that

So the experiment failed. But the failure would not have deserved treatment at such length if it were not that with it it carried several general lessons. In fact the episode is really significant because of the illumination it throws on several important problems of philanthropy and social work, which were much discussed in the 19th century.

The first of these is what may be called the conflict between benevolence and economy. The early history of KB illustrates this conflict classically. We know that there was a fairly head-on clash in the planning of the buildings between the proponent's of the different schools of thought. A. G. Crowder as a director appears to have been particularly strong on cheapness in building*; we can guess that Bond inclined in the opposite direction. In the event Crowder won the day, and the Company followed the policy advanced by Octavia Hill before the Royal Commission on the housing of the working classes viz. " where you remove the very lowest class of dwelling, and wish to re-accommodate the same people, you must adopt the very simplest manner of building". Hence the sparseness of the material provision, the communal water supply and shared closet system, the bleakness in fact of the whole building.

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* v. Beatrice's recording attendance with her sister Kate at one of the earliest of the directors' meetings.

EDITING THE MANUSCRIPT

A General

The editor of an original text will always presumably have two principal objectives: one fidelity to the original, the other comprehensibility and clarity in the edited version. The former will deter him from intervening unnecessarily between the reader and what was written or spoken at first-hand in the past; the latter will require him to remove needless obscurities, ambiguities, and inconsistencies from the text, and so ~~to~~ give readers the opportunity of drawing the maximum of meaning and so of value from the original. In the preparation of many original documents (memoranda, reports, a high proportion of letters and diaries, especially those near in time) these principles never come into conflict; and editing them consists largely in the explanation of allusions. The KB manuscript does not belong to this category. It certainly was never intended to be read by outsiders: rather it was compiled as a private reference-book for Beatrice and Ella, indicating in the first place the purely formal details of room occupancy, state of arrears, and so forth, and in the second place those special facts which ~~Beatrice and Ella~~ between them they had decided to collect. Moreover much of it was written not in the calm of the study but under the hurries and pressures of day-to-day ~~rent~~ rent collecting, with all this implies of compression, omission, and inconsistency. Consequently the original form of the text is, for long stretches almost unreadable - especially does the repeating of formal details of rent, room movements etc., become cumulatively indigestible.

In short, then, the KB manuscript called for more editing than is often required. But none of the amendments made represented in fact very significant changes: the types of amendment may be characterised under four heads.

(a) Re-arrangement. The text as edited presents tenants alphabetically. The original presented rooms in numerical order, noting for each the sequence of its tenants; thus, since few tenants lived in the block without changing their rooms at least once, the original usually scattered the information about any given family over several room entries. It was clearly in the interests of readers to bring this information together to one place, and to present it as a whole.

(b) Summarising of formal material. On the grounds that they have no intrinsic significance, all references to room numbers have been excised from the text, and so usually have the actual dates of entering and of leaving the buildings. Instead, in a condensed form at the head of each entry, ~~was recorded~~ the type of room(s) (large, small, etc.) that is recorded, together with his the tenant occupied, rent, and total length of tenancy. Changes of room have only been noted here, where either the type of room or the rent altered; moves between rooms of the same type, rented at the same price, have been ignored. Amounts of outstanding arrears are noted frequently in the original, but we have eliminated almost all of them.

(c) Selection. The original document contains entries for tenants, the edited version entries for Some of the

absentees are tenants for whom either there is very little text, or (a few) no text at all. These were necessarily excluded. But even after they had been removed from the complete list of tenants, the remainder were still too many for inclusion in a necessarily limited amount of space. In selecting amongst them we chose all those for whom there is substantial information (- words or more) plus all those who may be considered, for what they were or did or said, in some way striking, significant, or amusing. The edited manuscript contains approximately of the material contained in the original.

(d) Punctuation. The original punctuation which, apart from a due allowance of full stops consisted almost entirely of dashes and commas, many of them distributed quite haphazardly, has been made fuller and more consistent.

B) Annotation. To reduce the number of footnotes per page, individuals, employers, and social agencies mentioned frequently in the text are treated in (three) separate appendices. The two maps of south west Stepney, one for the early 1870's, the other for the late 1880's, allow the reader to fit KB into its geographical context, and also enable him to pick up most of the references to churches, schools, streets, courts, blocks of buildings etc. Place-references not identifiable on the maps are explained in footnotes.

C) Guide to the text. The facts about each tenant which Beatrice (who, as we have seen, intended once to write the whole manuscript) wished to obtain are listed and numbered on a scrap of notepaper enclosed in the rent book

(they are also described in her diaries and letters); they are -

1. Number of family: alive, dead.
2. Occupation of each member. Permanent. Casual.
3. Income: from work, charity, savings.
4. Race. English born? Foreign?
5. (London born? London stock?
6. (Reason for Immigration
7. (Previous residence in neighbourhood
8. (On Site of Katharine Buildings?
9. (Religion?
10. (Attendance at place of worship

Previous history and present characteristics

Cause of leaving or ejectment

In the event Beatrice only managed to describe the earliest (1885) tenants of the three lower floors, and these in varying degrees of comprehensiveness. All entries for the third and fourth floors, and later entries for the lower floors are by Ella. But Ella tended to follow, though less rigorously, the pattern Beatrice had laid down (especially in noting the items listed first - family size, occupation, income - which anyway are obviously useful facts for a rent-collector to have). The list above may therefore be used throughout the text as a fairly reliable guide to the disposition of the information.

It is not known under the influence of what particular theories or hypotheses Beatrice drew up her list, or what use she intended for the completed data. A diary entry (October 1885) noting, "My special aim is to understand the condition of the working class in the way of housing", is too vague to be helpful. Much of the information bears however on the question of population movements in and out of London, and in discussing this question in the "Life and Labour" Llewellyn Smith did in fact make use of the N.B. statistics on birth places. ( ). Otherise the material appears to have lain dormant until now.

KATHERINE BUILDINGS 1962

AN old woman pushes her feet along the open balcony. She looks cold and the wind blows against her thin hair. "Can't put your coat on every time you go to the sink." She has a colander in one hand, an opened tin of peas in the other. The communal sink in the dark recess is shallow, brown, even older than her. She strains the peas and goes slowly back home against the wind. She passes a man, straight and old as a Boer War soldier, marching with a kettle in one hand, a careful pail in the other. He puts down his kettle near the sink and takes the pail on to the lavatory beyond. They do not speak as they pass. There are too many of them and the journeys are countless. To empty the teapot, to fetch the water to wash the potatoes, to pour away the dirty water, to get water in the saucepan to cook the potatoes, to strain the potatoes, to fill the kettle to wash up, to throw the washing-up water away. "When my husband was alive it was easier. We always had a bucket of clean water and one for dirty, but I can't carry a bucket. So I do all these little walks instead. It is all right when you feel all right."

Once a young husband left this place for a council flat and he tied a big white ribbon bow on all the taps because he had never had a tap before, not even with the baby and all that washing. Nothing stops the washing. Young mothers and old grandmothers manage somehow with their pails and their zinc baths, sending some things to the bagwash or occasionally pushing a pramload to the laundrette. But there is always washing here, pegged to lines that stretch out like rigging from the balconies. Occasionally a shy old man brings out of his privacy the poor washing of his tired pants and nightshirt, khaki against the whiter-than-white washing of all the busy women.

Beyond the high wall that bounds the yard the noisy machinery of the Royal Mint makes nonstop money. Bonny, beautiful children play round refuse containers. Tired, wonderful mothers bump pushchairs down dark caverns of stone staircases to get their babies into the light and air.

About half the flats now have the glory of taps indoors. But not those at the front. "They say it would cost too much." Someone has leant a broken bedstead against the long wall of the buildings where about five hundred people live their space-age lives, a few yards outside the boundary of the City of London itself.

1885-1962. No slum-clearance programme touches Katherine Buildings. It is not recognised as unfit within the meaning of the Act. It is what the officials call "not representable." So are about ninety other tenement blocks in Stepney alone. Like Blackwall Buildings: communal water supply, communal lavatories for 158 "flats"; College Buildings: communal water supply, communal lavatories. And Lolesworth Buildings, Great Eastern Buildings. About six thousand tenement homes make up the non-slum total of disgrace in this one borough of East London alone. Over two thousand others are on the long, slow list of what even officialdom accepts as slum. The borough council has tried to get compulsory purchase orders on three blocks of about five hundred homes. But the owners want to keep them. There must still be money to be made out of these places. Sadism alone could not be sufficient explanation.

Lena Jeger


BACHELOR
TIPPED

13. Perambulators and bicycles must not be left on the landings or at the entrances to staircases.
14. The playing of pianos or other musical instruments is not allowed after 11 p.m. without the Superintendent's permission.
15. The offering or giving of money or presents to anyone employed by the Company is forbidden.
16. Tenants to deliver up Rent Books for inspection at any time at the request of the Secretary, Superintendent, or other authorised Officer of the Company.
17. Tenants must not carry on any trade or business whatsoever on the premises or exhibit any notice thereon but must use the premises as a private dwelling only.
18. Tenants must not affix, or allow to be affixed to their premises or to the building of which they form part any wireless or television aerials.
19. Tenants to provide a suitable dustbin and to renew and maintain it as necessary.
20. Tenants to be responsible for the regular inspection and servicing by the Gas and/or Electricity Boards of any water heating apparatus in the premises.
21. Tenants to maintain and keep the front and rear gardens (if any) in a good and tidy condition and to cut, lop or top, as may be necessary, any trees now or hereafter growing upon the premises.
22. Upon the expiration or other sooner determination of the tenancy the Tenant shall deliver up the premises and landlord's fixtures and fittings in a good decorative and clean condition to the Company or their Agent and pay all rent due, together with any amount assessed by the Company in respect of any breach of these tenancy conditions. The keys of the premises must be delivered up before noon on the day on which the tenancy is determined.
23. Tenants to pay Borough Rates assessed upon or payable in respect of the premises and the Company shall pay the Water Rate for ordinary domestic supply assessed upon or payable in respect of the premises; provided that any excess of such water rates over the amount paid in respect of the premises at the date of commencement of the tenancy shall be payable by way of additional rent by the Tenant to the Company.

Summary of Sections 77, 78 and 80 of the Housing Act, 1957

1. After the first day of October, 1938, an occupier who causes or permits his dwelling to be overcrowded is liable to prosecution for an offence under the Housing Act, 1957, and if convicted, to a fine not exceeding £5. Any part of a house which is occupied by a separate family is a "dwelling".

2. A dwelling is overcrowded if the number of persons sleeping in it is more than the "permitted number", or is such that two or more of those persons, being ten years old or over, of opposite sexes (not being persons living together as husband and wife), must sleep in the same room.

3. The permitted number for the dwelling to which this book relates is..... persons. In counting the number of persons each child under ten years of age counts as half a person, and a child of less than one year is not counted at all.

4. The Act contains special provisions relating to overcrowding already existing on the above mentioned date or which is due to a child attaining the age of either one or ten years after that date, or which is due to exceptional circumstances. Full information about these special provisions and all provisions as to overcrowding can be obtained free on application to the Local Authority at the Town Hall.

The address of the Medical Officer of Health for the district is:—

THE TOWN HALL OF YOUR BOROUGH

This Rent Book remains the property of the Company

W

Head Office - 27, Chancery Lane, W.C.2.

No. ..... (DECONTROLLED)

Tenant's Name .....

Weekly Rent..... Date of Entry.....

Key Deposit..... First Week's rent due.....
for week commencing that day as shown inside this book.

Tenants are deemed to have read and must comply with the following CONDITIONS OF TENANCY:—

1. The Tenancy to be Weekly determinable by either party giving to the other four weeks' notice in writing, such notice expiring at midday on the appropriate rent day.
2. Rent to be paid on every due date for the week commencing that day; the Rent Book to be produced at the Company's Estate Office for the payment to be entered. Should the Rent Book be lost by the tenant, a new one will be issued at a charge of 1/-. This Rent Book is the property of the Company.
3. Tenants are not allowed to assign, sublet or part with the possession of the premises or any part thereof furnished or unfurnished or to take lodgers.
4. Tenants must pay a deposit of ten shillings for the door keys handed to them, which will be returned if the keys are given up, all rent is paid and the premises are left in a good decorative and clean condition at the end of the tenancy.
5. Tenants to pay the Company for all breakages, loss of keys or damage to premises of any kind not occasioned by fair usage.
6. Tenants must keep their premises, including fixtures, fittings and windows in good decorative and clean condition to the satisfaction of the Company and take such share in cleansing the common stairs, landings, balconies, passages, wash-houses and w.c.'s as may be determined by the Superintendent.
7. Tenants are not allowed to keep dogs or other animals on the premises.
8. All chimneys in use must be swept at least once a year or when required by the Superintendent.
9. Tenants are not to make any alterations or additions to the premises without the previous written consent of the Company.
10. Tenants are to replace or repay to the Company the cost of replacing windows broken in the premises during the tenancy.
11. The Company reserves the right, by their Agents or Workmen, to enter and inspect the premises at all reasonable hours and to execute any necessary repairs.
12. Children are not allowed to play football, cricket or other ball games or to roller skate or cycle in the courtyards.

Room No(s). [ ]

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR KATHARINE BUILDINGS

INTRODUCTION. Mr., Mrs., Miss M. ? My name is Mr. Townsend. You may have heard about my work from Mr. Buckle, the Superintendent. I am writing a booklet about the history of Katharine Buildings and I'm trying to find out how long people have lived here and whether their families lived here before them. Can I ask a few questions? Anything you say will be treated as confidential.

1. First of all can you tell me who lives in your household?

	Relationship to tenant	First name	Sex M F	Age	Marital Status	Occupation	Firm/place
1	Tenant						
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

YEAR WHEN FIRST HERE

2. How long have you lived in Katharine Buildings? Subject.....
or husband.....wife.....

.....Years in Buildings (or...Husband / ....Wife) ...Age when first in K.B. (...Husband / ...Wife)

How long have you lived in this (these) room(s)?

Year commencing tenancy.....

	Year to Year	No(s) of room(s)
(i) Rooms in K.B. (a)		
(b)		
(c)		
(d)		

Where did you live before you were first in K.B.?.....
(district of residence)

3.(a) How did you first come to live here?
Seek details of
(i) inheriting tenancy
(ii) mother "speaking for"
(iii) outside application to superintendent
(iv) upon marriage and growth of family
(v) wish to be near work or near other relatives.

3.(b) If lived in Buildings before marriage, how did you come to stay on here after you were married?

(c) Do you want to move? If so, why? If not, why not?

4. Do (did) your parents live in these buildings?

	Name	Room number(s)	Other district of residence if alive	Year of death, if resided in building	If alive, when last seen by subject/ spouse
Mother					
Father					
Spouse's mother					
Spouse's father					
Mother's mother					
Mother's father					
Father's mother					
Father's father					
Spouse's mother's mother					
" mother's father					
" father's mother					
" father's father					
(great grandparents?)					

5. Do (did) your parents' brothers and sisters live in these buildings?

	brother or sister	whether alive (or year of death if lived in K.B.)	Room No(s) if alive	Other district of residence if alive	Name if living or if once living in K.B.	If alive, when last seen by subject/ spouse
Mother's						
Father's						
Spouse's mother's						
Spouse's father's						

6. Have you any great-uncles or aunts living in Katharine Buildings?

(If yes, note name and room no. If any lived in K.B. prior to death note name)

.....

.....

7. Have you any brothers or sisters living in Rothmeire Buildings?

	Name	Room Number(s)	Other district of residence if alive	Year of death if resided in building	If alive, when last seen by subject/spouse
brother					
sister					
spouse's brother					
spouse's sister					
(Any step- or half-siblings)					

8. Have you any children living in Katharine Buildings?

	Name	Room Number(s)	Other district of residence if alive	Year of death if resided in building	If alive, when last seen by subject/spouse
Son daughter (Any step-children or adopted children)					
grandson grand-daughter					

9. Have you any other relative living in Katharine Buildings?

Prompt (i) a Cousin? or a distant cousin?
(ii) a nephew or niece?
(iii) a great-nephew or niece?
(iv) a step-mother or father?
(v) a brother's or a sister's widow or widower?
(vi) any other in-law?

Relationship to tenant	Name	Room Number(s)

10. GENERAL

Date of Interview Length Interview situation

INTERVIEWING IN STEPNEY

August 20th 1957

On the top floor of Katharine Buildings, Cartwright Street, Stepney, lives Mrs. . At right angles from the open balcony at the back of the block runs a short passage, in which there are four doors. I had already interviewed the families in the neighbouring rooms and had found an extraordinary network of kinship ties. Several households are related to one another and I had difficulty in keeping pace with accounts of the number of relatives living in the vicinity and their daily meetings. These families live a close life in which there is little room for others. Brothers and sisters and parents and children are continuously dropping in on each other. They are warm, gay, confidently aggressive and secure. On passing along the balcony I have on several occasions heard laughter, seen children entering and leaving and watched two or three women, two sisters and their mother, hanging out their washing. Their homes are fairly comfortably furnished and all have television sets. Hidden away among them, at the far end of the little passage, is room .

There is no knocker and the brown paint shows 20 years wear. I knocked and the door opened almost before I had lowered my hand. Standing there, with her head cocked on one side, was a small stocky woman with a mop of reddish-brown hair splaying out from an untidy bun. A dirty bedraggled blouse was held together with at least four safety pins and below it a misshapen velvet skirt had dropped three or four inches to reveal a grey vest partly concealed by a black sash. Her face was fleshy and pallid and she kept placing stubby fingers against a cheek in thought. I explained what I was up to and asked if I could interrupt her activities for a few minutes. She rambled disconnectedly in reply, talking in one breath about washing her hair and the problems of a hydrogen-bomb world, but she motioned me inside.

The room was small and an inside door led to an even smaller room, not much bigger than a large cupboard. There was very little furniture and, except for one strip of old lino, the floor boards were bare. There was a terrible armchair, dilapidated and broken with a rope mat thrown over it, a small table in the centre, a wooden chair, a small iron bedstead, and very little else. The bedstead possessed no mattress. A dirty bit of carpet lay on the springs and there was a grey pillow and coverlet rolled up at the foot. Slung under the mantelpiece and above an old open fire-grate was a large cardboard box in which were all kinds of knick-knacks - pins, cotton-reels, bits of wool and cloth and scraps of paper. Against one wall a flat fruit-box had been placed on its side and an attempt had been made to decorate the inside. There were three or four yellowing illustrations torn out of books, and a tiny bunch of artificial flowers besides one or two small bottles and vases and some feathers. By the fireplace stood a single gas ring on top of a cylindrical tin which in turn rested on another tin. The walls were hideous and most of the blue distemper had peeled off; Years ago someone had mistakenly tried to patch them with old bills on squares of lining paper. On one wall was a magazine-illustration of an 18th century lover wooing his lady by a lake; it was clipped to a board with three clothes-pegs. In the middle of the small table I noticed a child's Dinky toy lorry in which had been placed a few tiny flowers, dahlias with the stalks nipped off.

Mrs. put a bowl of cold water on the table to wash her hair, went behind me to fetch a bar of Lifebuoy soap and later transferred some hot soapy water from a zinc tub, in which she had been washing some clothes, to the bowl on the table. These actions were spread over the half hour I was there. At first we

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were in semi-darkness and she shuffled around the room, eventually finding a small step-ladder, which she placed against the door in order to reach the gas meter and put a shilling in the slot. She left the step-ladder against the door and, momentarily alarmed, I saw her place a heavy gas fire and a flat-iron against the door. 'You're in a strange world. It ain't England at all. They say they want to put a stop to wars....but with all the bombing everyone got unsettled and we had to leave the shelters. It all started with that....It's very hard to live and perhaps you'll call tomorrow. But it's always nice to welcome friends.'

To my surprise I found direct questions made her pause and answer intelligently, but in the answering she provoked other thoughts and she mumbled sometimes, as if to herself, 'from the Young Men's Christian Association'. I think she took me for that. Maybe I should not have disturbed her but she seemed pleased to have a stranger visit her. She is 59 and separated from her husband. 'I get to thinking about it often. I wonder where he is and maybe my son knows, but I don't think so....I get to thinking that someone's touching his nose, right this minute, and.....I would like to know where he is. You're used to married life and you want a partner. You can't go down the road and have a drink unless you've got a husband.'

She has had two sons, one living in Warwickshire. 'His son goes to grammar school. I haven't seen him for years.' She kept talking of this son as if not seeing him preyed on her mind. Her other son lives in Stepney and she sees him each week. Her only daughter lives in the next street and they see each other every day. A sister too lives nearby. 'I work for one sister. I do little jobs for her, cleaning, charring-like. Sometimes I get four or five shillings for the day.' She made several mentions of worrying 'how to find a living.' If it were not for the support of her daughter and her sister - and perhaps the considerateness of her neighbours - it is reasonably certain she would be in a mental hospital.

Mrs. has lived in the block for about 8 years, and spoke of being bombed out in the war and 'coming up before the committee to get a place. But it's a strange world. It's altogether different. I'm pure English. It's dangerous around here if you're not pure English.' Every now and then she showed a discernment or a turn of phrase which revealed high innate intelligence and she answered some questions lucidly, but then trailed off abruptly into confused meanderings. Again she returned to her separation from her husband. 'You keep wondering, wondering where he is, right now. Wondering if he's with someone. They say absence makes the heart grow fonder. It's true. Your heart aches. But you've got to dismiss it.' And she began busying herself with soap and water.

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Just before I saw Mrs. I had seen a widow who remarried a few years ago. The family was rather like the Glums. The woman was very fat with untidy brown hair and she had that utter casualness about her which I have noticed about some middle-aged working-class Mums. With her fork stuck in the air and her mouth full she said, 'Come on in luv.' She took command, in a slurred, lazy voice which fitted in well with her dress and mannerisms, but her eyes were bright and behind her lazy drawl was a wit as sharp as steel. Her second husband was ten years younger; he looked tough and moronic but sat there stolidly, saying nothing and eating his sausages and potatoes. Her 18 years old daughter, also as fat as butter and with her hair in curlers, stared steadfastly at the television screen until her mother asked her to go

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and make me a cup of tea. Needless to say, I didn't leave with what I wanted until I had explained a great deal about my work and my purposes, to say nothing of all kinds of irrelevant facts about my own life.

That evening I saw an extraordinary cross-section of people. Besides the two I've mentioned was a middle-aged married man who had several relatives in the Buildings and many more in the neighbouring streets, and he and his wife seemed to be meeting dozens of them every day. There was another couple with nine brothers and sisters and 26 uncles and aunts, many of them in the immediate neighbourhood, who also led a tight family life. Then there was a young couple waiting to move out to Crawley New Town, and away from their family, and a young single woman, very good looking, who had taken a room in the next street from her home as one step towards the independence of adulthood and marriage - these two being examples of new ~~times~~ fashions. Finally there was a neurotic man living alone who was separated from his wife. He is one of the waifs and strays of our society who seem to turn up in places like Katharine Buildings in fairly large numbers. He had left his wife and family in Liverpool years ago and had had no contact with them since. He was 54, a fitter and had taken a room in the block five years previously. His room was dirty and smelt stale. He complained of 'breakdowns' at work and kept rubbing his head. Nevertheless he was intelligent and talked knowledgeable of the people in the locality who had many relatives. 'You have to be careful what you say. You'll go to a pub and you'll be talking about someone and he'll suddenly say, "He's my cousin". There's so many people related to each other in some way - it's like a little village.'

- like most of the homes of bachelors I have been into.

There are many waifs and strays in Katharine Buildings - perhaps as many as a fifth or more of the inhabitants. They are elderly bachelors and spinsters whose parents and contemporaries have died, or merchant seaman who have drifted in from the docks, or divorced or separated people whose family life has been disturbed - or they have been deserted. Then there are the few who seem to have led a hermit-like existence because of some deformity or whose past is something of a closed book. Many of them are pathetic individuals who have found cheap shelter in a place where their anonymity can be preserved, where there is a general air of sociableness but of respect for privacy, where they will be accepted with indulgence but not interfered with. 'He's a poor old soul.' 'He means well. He can't help it.' 'She acts a bit queer, but she's very quiet. I think it was the war.'

For around them is preserved the main texture of working-class society, the people whose parents lived there, whose brothers and sisters work round the corner and whose children either live there or nearby. Some two-thirds of the inhabitants (maybe three-quarters) are closely related to several people in the same block, parents, brothers or sisters, children, grandchildren, and other relatives live in the blocks nearby. Relationships ramify, and many people are aware of distant connections to other extended families in the same block and nearby. Thus part of the sense of community, of solidarity and of social restraint arises and is in fact created by the ties of kinship.