

Growing Old in Common Lodgings

A SURVEY OF ELDERLY MEN AND THEIR
LIVING CONDITIONS IN
BELFAST COMMON LODGING HOUSES

BY

E. MIRIAM SARGAISON, A.M.I.A.

Senior Almoner, Belfast City Hospital

The Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust

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FOREWORD

by ERIC ASHBY

*(President and Vice-Chancellor, The Queen's University, Belfast and
Chairman, Northern Ireland Committee, Nuffield Provincial Hospital Trust)*

TO most readers of this book life in a common lodging house is as unfamiliar as life in a West African village. Yet in any large industrial city in Britain every day thousands of people pass lodging houses. They do not see the strange population behind the walls; a population of men who have been driven in by adversity or who have taken to a lodging-house life from choice.

These lodging houses are within easy reach of observation, yet to most people they are virtually inaccessible. They are occasionally drawn into publicity by social reformers or politicians, but rarely by professional observers who have no axe to grind.

The merit of Miss Sargaison's survey is that it is objective and not tendentious, sympathetic and not sentimental, the work of an expert who is nevertheless happily innocent of the cumbersome jargon of modern sociology. She records her observations without comment and she offers the reader a clear picture from which he can draw his own conclusions. One conclusion is evident: it is that many old men desire to work, not for remuneration, but just for the sake of working. It is a pity that modern industrial society denies them such a simple satisfaction.

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I would like to express my appreciation to the South Belfast Hospital Management Committee and the Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority for permission to carry out the inquiry as a part-time diversion from my routine work. The survey would not have been possible without the co-operation of the wardens and owners who, for the most part, willingly gave what information they could on the problems of lodging-house life and arranged the interviews with individual residents. I am especially grateful to the old men themselves amongst whom I have made some very charming acquaintances. Their courtesy and forbearance is all the more appreciated in view of the personal nature of some of the questions asked.

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I

Introduction

I. NEED FOR THE SURVEY

LITTLE published information is available about the common lodging houses of Belfast. Reference is made to the statutory provisions for lodging houses by Vanston (1913) and Birmingham (1905). The annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health of the County Borough of Belfast during 1906-45 give an account of the amenities and accommodation in the various lodging houses and the regulations concerning their supervision and maintenance. Meyers (1929) describes Carrick House lodging house, and clippings from the *Belfast Newsletter* in 1902 and 1933 tell of the opening of Carrick House and the new wing.

In these sources of information, however, there is little reference to the living conditions in the lodging houses or to the individual characteristics of that section of the community who lived in them. In the past, lodging houses were primarily designed to accommodate the younger labourers and artisans who had come into the towns from rural areas to find work, and were unable to travel to and from their own homes, or were homeless, but in more recent times the population of lodging houses (according to the statements of those wardens who have been connected with lodging houses for more than twenty-five years) has tended to include an increasing proportion of older men, particularly pensioners with or without homes elsewhere. This may perhaps be related to modern population trends and to social problems inherent in them, and it must have effected a change in the character of the lodging houses themselves. For example, following the introduction of the Health and Welfare Acts in 1948 many old men were discharged from the 'Infirm' department of the workhouse and took up residence in the lodging houses in Belfast. These changes do not appear to have attracted any attention and I have been unable to trace any comment on them in the records I have consulted.

My attention was drawn to these questions while I was working

as Almoner to the Geriatric Unit of the Belfast City Hospital where, in the past four years, I have met many old men from lodging houses whose reasons for admission to hospital appeared to arise more from difficult social circumstances, such as insecurity and boredom, than from a specific medical cause. Judging from the comments of these elderly patients from lodging houses in hospital, it seemed that the independence of lodging house life is the main attraction and the relatively cheap price of accommodation. But against this, the old men find they cannot provide adequate meals for themselves even where gas-rings and cooking utensils are provided or cannot afford to pay full board in the one lodging house which supplies all meals. Some lodging houses are closed during the daytime and the elderly men find it difficult to discover a warm corner for occupation somewhere in the centre of the city until the lodging houses open again at 6 o'clock in the evening. Many of these old men are infirm or have defective eyesight and in the cold weather it is impossible for them to walk sufficiently quickly to keep warm.

There appeared to be an unexplored field of inquiry into the social background of the many elderly men living in lodging houses for to the best of my knowledge no inquiry such as this has been carried out anywhere in the United Kingdom.

It can be assumed for the purposes of the survey that living and working conditions in Belfast are comparable with those in any large industrial port in England or Scotland and presumably the problems of the elderly lodging-house men in Belfast present a similar pattern in cities like Glasgow and Liverpool. Belfast has grown up at a phenomenal rate over the past 100 years and is now established as one of the greatest ship-building centres in the world. Many of the elderly men interviewed had worked (or 'wrought', to use the local expression) all their days at building ships, and this survey, although relating to Belfast men, applies equally to the problem of the reluctant retirement of old men elsewhere from lives of activity and usefulness and the problems and loneliness which follow.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

This survey was undertaken to study the reasons which oblige old men to adopt a lodging-house life, or which induce many of them to prefer such an existence to a more ordered life at home or

in residential homes; to examine at the same time the living conditions in lodging houses which appeared from social case-work to vary greatly in their standards; and to determine which factors in lodging-house life might be modified or improved so as to ensure the best living conditions for elderly residents and to reduce as far as possible the incidence of unnecessary illness and admission to hospital.

With the information obtained from the survey it was hoped to promote a better understanding of the problems which beset elderly lodgers and, in so doing, to suggest possible improvements and solutions to those problems.

3. METHOD OF THE SURVEY

The first task was to locate the old men and to do this all the common lodging houses were visited. A list of the registered houses (see Tables I and II) was obtained through the Belfast Welfare Authority and additional unregistered houses were visited from addresses of known lodging-house admissions to the wards. The booking lists of each lodging house do not include the residents' ages and in the large lodging houses the wardens undertook to ascertain the ages of the older men. In the small lodging houses the majority of residents were elderly and the interviews were often conducted in a most informal atmosphere. The wardens in some cases became very interested in the survey and some of their practical comments and suggestions are recorded later. Superficially it would seem an easy task to interview these old men whose main complaint was that the day passed so slowly with nothing in it to occupy them, but, in practice, difficulty was experienced in finding a suitable time in which to interview the lodgers. The majority of interviews were conducted in the evening between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. Thursday evenings were the most profitable because the lodgers were by then penniless and were forced to sit in, waiting to cash their pensions on Friday morning. For the same reason, Friday night interviews proved most unprofitable. A few of the old men were available at 9 a.m. and others during the afternoon. The small lodging houses, especially, enjoyed turning the occasion into a cosy firelit forum for reminiscences and general philosophizing at the conclusion of the interviews.

The majority of wardens were most helpful but it was difficult for them to check the ages of the lodgers. Thus the survey cannot

be a complete record of all the elderly men living in common lodging houses as it is possible that some were missed. In addition, two men—a small group—did not wish to be interviewed. Most of the men, on the other hand, were only too anxious to be seen though some hoped that a statutory benefit or amenity would be forthcoming as a result. Several old men seemed to enjoy their interview and on subsequent visits tried to persuade me to complete another survey form.

It is estimated from the wardens' observations that there are about 400 elderly men occupying lodging-house beds in Belfast in accommodation which varies from the one statutory lodging house of 369 beds to privately owned houses with 9-12 beds.

4. RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS

The survey was carried out between June and December 1951, and there were 371 successfully completed interviews and eleven failures. One form was incomplete because the old man was deaf and dumb. Two forms were abandoned because the old men concerned were drunk and unco-operative, two men refused to be interviewed, and one old man was too mentally confused to answer questions. Despite repeated visits four elderly men on night work could not be interviewed. One other man was interviewed who rented a room in a small lodging house with his wife but this form was discarded because he was not a genuine 'lodging house inmate'.

It became obvious during the interviews that certain points included in the questionnaire were not relevant. The section referring to 'Living Relatives' was discarded as so many of the old men admitted to having relatives but said they never saw them, so that in an emergency or illness they had no one on whom they could rely. The section on 'Present Occupation' revealed very little as most of the men had ceased working or were unemployed. 'Previous Place of Residence' did not contain much of interest. 'Doctor Attending' was taken to indicate whether or not the old man was registered with a general practitioner. This was asked because the wardens complained of difficulty in getting in touch with the men's doctors in cases of sudden illness and the suggestion was made that many men had failed to register. The section on 'Incontinence' was impossible to include in the interview and general comments from the wardens had to suffice.

The average interview lasted approximately 10 minutes but some

garrulous and lonely old men occupied as much as 25 minutes and others requested advice on their various social problems and could not be dealt with quickly. The questionnaire was completed at interview by the same person. The questions with few exceptions were framed to be answered by 'yes' or 'no' and this helped to simplify and speed up the interviews. None of the men questioned showed any resentment though some inquired suspiciously if the Government was conducting the survey! Very few were annoyed when asked about their habits. In the 'Remarks Including Special Disabilities' column, nothing was written until the old man had left the room.

II

Historical Background

COMMON lodging houses in some form must be almost as old as civilization. Every age produces its quota of people who are destitute or whose family relationships are insecure and unhappy, and some form of cheap lodgings becomes a necessity if the gaols and welfare wards are not to be filled with these homeless unsettled people. I have been unable to trace the history of common lodging houses in Ireland prior to 1847 when the Towns Improvement Clauses Act was introduced. Presumably there can have been little statutory legislation governing conditions in lodging houses before this, an assumption borne out by a book published in Belfast in 1853 by the Rev. W. M. O'Hanlon entitled 'Walks Among the Poor of Belfast'. He describes some of the appalling, filthy, and overcrowded conditions existing at that time in the city, particularly in the Smithfield area, and mentions 'the dangerous and perishing classes' trying to exist amidst scenes of strident poverty.

The Towns Improvement Clauses Act gave the first statutory recognition of common lodging houses in Ireland. In 1851 a Common Lodging House Act (England) was passed, and was followed in 1860 by a similar Irish Act. In these as in the Towns Improvement Clauses Act it is stated that 'payment for the accommodation is a necessary element of common lodging houses'. In 1853 Lord Hatherley and Chief Justice Cockburn at the request of the General Board of Health defined the lodging house of that period: 'It appears to us to have reference to that class of lodging house in which persons of the poorer classes are received for short periods, and tho' strangers to one another are allowed to inhabit one common room. We are of the opinion that it does not include hotels, inns, public houses or lodgings let to the upper and middle classes.' Lord Hatherley and Chief Justice Cockburn also held that a house was a common lodging house where hawkers and persons of a similar class were received, staying for various periods, having their meals in one room and paying 6d. for accommodation. In 1864 the

Dublin Improvement Act was introduced and ruled that a landlord who let all the rooms in his house below a rent of 3s. per week (although he did not live on the premises) was yet held to be the keeper of a lodging house within the meaning of the Act.

The Public Health (England) Act of 1875 empowered local authorities to provide lodging houses where the necessity arose. A similar Public Health (Ireland) Act was passed in 1878. The Housing of the Working Classes Act in 1890 enabled keepers of private lodging houses to sell or lease their lodging houses to the local authority and vested power in the local authority to determine reasonable charges for the tenancy of lodging houses and to lay down regulations and bye-laws for their management. This Act of 1890 was the most constructive step yet taken to control and improve common lodging houses and is in fact the corner-stone of present-day legislation. The Act insisted that a printed list of rules must be displayed in all lodging houses and that the houses must be open for inspection at all times. The local authority was also empowered to sell a lodging house established over seven years if it became too expensive to run. Another interesting clause in this 1890 Act relates to the financial status of a resident and is in direct opposition to present-day legislation. It ruled that a lodger who was in receipt of 'parochial relief' should not be permitted to remain in a common lodging house except where the grant was made as a result of an accident or temporary illness. Parochial relief was the counterpart of modern National Assistance Board allowances and were this clause still applied the vast majority of the present-day lodging-house residents would be denied lodgings. (Of those interviewed 312 out of 371 were in receipt of a National Assistance Board allowance.) I have been unable to trace when this clause was removed but it certainly did not apply for many years before the introduction of the National Health Service.

In 1900 the Court of Tribunal decreed: 'a lodging house is none the less a common lodging house because it is carried on for charity and not for the purpose of gain'. This clause still applies in Belfast today and notable examples are the hostels run by the Salvation Army and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. At this time a lodging house was opened in London for persons of a superior class. Cubicles were provided and the maintenance rates increased. Men who were drunk or disorderly, suspected criminals, or those who were verminous were not admitted. The scheme was not a success,

however, as the applicants were mostly destitute tramps and beggars. In 1908 the Housing of the Working Classes (Ireland) Act, usually known as Clancy's Act, authorized the local authorities to acquire lodging houses outside their districts where necessary. In those days the city of Belfast was split up into various parishes and these divisions were much smaller than our present-day wards. Hence the Act allowed for the setting up of lodging houses in adjacent parishes when an area became too congested.

The first record of lodging houses in the annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health for Belfast occurred in 1906. Various documents which might have contained information were destroyed during the last war. Moore (1951) mentions 'dingy doss lodgings in Croaker's Pad' which was the rather sinister name given to the entry between Smithfield and Hercules Street (now Royal Avenue). In this lodging house in the eighteenth century lived Luke White who was a dealer in second-hand books, almanacs, sermons, and archaic medical books. He was a shrewd business man and taught himself to read from the books which found their way to his pitch where he stood on a three-legged stool at Smithfield market. In later years Luke White amassed a very large fortune and held three seats in the House of Commons (symbolic, in the eyes of Moore, of the three legs of the stool from which his fortune was made). He later became High Sheriff for Dublin.

Gaffikin (1894) records the scene in the docks pending the sailing of ships bearing emigrants to America in the middle of the nineteenth century. He mentioned the lodging houses in the vicinity of Princes Street which in some form were still in existence ten years ago, and wrote:

Quay Lane was a narrow passage between High Street and Waring Street at the head of the docks. It had small houses on one side—the abodes of the retailers of salt herrings. In the emigration season, whole families of country people wandered about these lanes and docks, filling the lodging houses about Princes Street for several days until their chosen vessel was ready to sail. Lighters were engaged to carry them and their ponderous luggage with three months supply of provisions and cooking utensils down the Lough to the emigrant ship.

In 1892 a basement lodging house was opened in Upper Library Street but was closed down several years ago and is now the premises of a printer. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to trace another lodging house popularly supposed to have existed in

Castle Street at the end of the nineteenth century, where lodgers could either 'strap-hang' and doze at a modest cost or else, for a higher fee, sit on a bench and lean over a rope. The lodgers in this particular hostel were nearly all pedlars of cheap coloured delftware who tramped round the countryside during the day and came to roost in Castle Street at night. Another lodging house in Kennedy's Pad (near the site of the present Garfield Street) specialized in accommodation for pahvees (i.e. pedlars of suit lengths) who came mainly from the Omeath district and travelled as far afield as England and Scotland. Similar lodging houses existed in London and Paris and were known as 'Twopenny Hangovers'. At 5 a.m. the 'valet' (as the warden was called) cut the rope and the lodgers were then dismissed until the evening. Another term for the 'Twopenny Hangover' was the 'Twopenny Rope' and Sam Weller initiates Mr. Pickwick into the procedures and rites of this form of lodging in the following graphic conversation:

'Arter I run away from the carrier,' exclaimed Sam, 'and afore I took up with the vagginer, I had unfurnished lodgings for a fortnight.'

'Unfurnished lodgings?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Yes—the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. Fine sleeping place—within ten minutes' walk of all the public offices—only if there is any objection to it, it is that the sitivation's *rayther* too airy. I see some queer sights there.'

'Ah, I suppose you did,' said Mr. Pickwick, with an air of considerable interest.

'Sights, sir,' resumed Mr. Weller, 'as 'ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out on the other side. You don't see the reg'lar wagrants there; trust them, they knows better than that. Young beggars, male and females, as hasn't made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it's generally the worn out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves in the dark corners o' them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an't up to the twopenny rope.'

'And, pray, Sam, what is the twopenny rope?' inquired Mr. Pickwick.

'The twopenny rope, sir,' replied Mr. Weller, 'is just a cheap lodgin' house, where the beds is twopence a night.'

'What do they call a bed a rope for?' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Bless your innocence, sir, that a'nt it,' replied Sam.

'Wen the lady and gen'l'm'n as keeps the Hotel first begun business they used to make the beds on the floor; but this wouldn't do at no price, 'cos instead o' taking a moderate two-penn'orth o' sleep, the lodgers used to lie there half the day. So now they has two ropes, 'bout six foot apart,

and three from the floor, which goes right down the room; and the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking, stretched across 'em.'

'Well,' said Mr. Pickwick.

'Well,' said Mr. Weller, 'the advantage o' the plan's hobvious. At six o'clock every mornin' they lets go the ropes at one end, and down falls all the lodgers. Consequence is, that being thoroughly waked, they get up very quietly, and walk away!'

The earliest reference to the state of the Belfast lodging houses was made in August 1897 in a resolution passed by the Public Health Committee: 'We are of the opinion that the accommodation provided in common lodging houses in the city is in many instances very inferior and liable to be productive of disease, and that the time has come when the Corporation should erect lodging houses under the powers conferred upon them by Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890.' As a result of this proposal in 1902, the first statutory common lodging house was erected at 4 Lower Regent Street to accommodate 100 men and was named Carrick House.

Residence at Carrick House became very popular at 10*d.* per day or 5*s.* 6*d.* per week. In 1904 a new wing was added bringing the total number of beds to 213 and again in 1930 a further extension of 148 beds was built, the labour involved helping to alleviate the grim unemployment at that time. The Report of the Medical Officer of Health of Belfast in 1906 shows that there were 80 houses on the register with accommodation varying from 4 to 283 beds. They were inspected regularly by officers of the Public Health Authority, particular attention being paid to the general cleanliness of beds and bedding, cubicles, dormitories, and lavatories. Overcrowding was decried and attention paid to the separation of the sexes, for apparently women also lived in common lodging houses at that time. With the exception of Erindale Hostel, which accommodates women (only 11 of its 26 inmates are aged 60 years and over) and is run by the Legion of Mary Society, lodging houses now have an entirely male population. Beds there are provided at a cost of 1*s.* 6*d.* per night and residents are given meals on Sundays. It is significant that in 1906 only 28 of the lodging houses offered 'small iron camp beds', the remainder providing straw 'shakedown' on the floor.

The report also notes that the success of Carrick House and the overwhelming demand for beds (potential lodgers sometimes num-

bered 168 for 145 beds) induced private individuals to set up model lodging houses as investments. Others were established by philanthropic and religious bodies whose motives were the welfare of the residents. These new lodging houses included the old Royal Hospital which was converted into a lodging house and rather grandly named 'The Trades Hotel' with accommodation for 300 at prices ranging from 3½*d.* to 5*d.* per night. This 'Hotel' was demolished in 1936 and although no foundation stone was ever found, two padded cells (relics presumably of the old Royal Hospital days) were discovered. It is interesting to speculate if they were ever used by wardens for drunken or unmanageable lodgers. The Salvation Army Hostel in Waring Street was opened in 1907 with 300 beds, and a further 120 beds were made available in Station Street, York Road, and Henry Street all under the same management. Under the auspices of the Cripples Institute, Matilda Street lodging house was opened in 1907 with 100 beds. All these hostels charged 4*d.* a night in comparison with the Carrick House charge of 10*d.*

The Medical Officer's report states that between 1904 and 1907 approximately 1,000 lodging-house beds were added to those available in the city. Carrick House receipts went down in the face of this competition and in November 1906 50 per cent. of the lodgers departed to cheaper beds elsewhere. It is thought that the 'casuals' tended to boycott Carrick House in an attempt to procure lower charges by diverting intending lodgers elsewhere. However, if this was so, the scheme failed and the beds were soon occupied again. In 1906 the building of a second similar institution was suggested as the best means of securing cleanliness and self-respect and reducing the illness and degradation produced by smaller, privately run lodging houses. However, although a site in Ballymacarrett was considered, no action was taken.

During the first five years of Carrick House's existence only seven prosecutions against lodgers are recorded (usually for drunkenness) and the general health of the occupants was good.

The Public Health Department was responsible for the general supervision and repair of Carrick House and other registered lodging houses and endeavoured to avoid overcrowding. (As mentioned in the report of the Medical Officer of Health of the County Borough of Belfast (1907).) At that time the smaller lodging houses were being superseded by more suitable accommodation with better sanitary arrangements. The report states that 'extreme poverty and

intemperance are the chief causes of sickness in a common lodging house'. It goes on to inquire whether a better maintenance of lodging houses would be obtained by 'municipalizing' them or whether a philanthropic body with high ideas and altruistic motives might not produce better results.

At the close of the year (1907) there were nine common lodging houses in Upper Library Street and eight in Smithfield. In 1952 this area still has the monopoly of lodging house sites, for Carrick Hill is peppered with very old courts and houses, many of which have been bought cheaply by would-be lodging-house keepers. As far back as 1897 Dr. Henry Whitaker in his report on the Health of Belfast mentions that the population in this region is a floating one mostly composed of labourers, especially mill workers and rag-pickers.

Examination of the annual reports of the Public Health Department between 1907 and 1911 suggests that there was little change in the conditions or development of the Belfast lodging houses. In 1912 sixty-seven houses were registered and their populations mainly comprised tramps, hawkers, dealers, casual labourers, and 'the usual nondescripts'. However, there were considerable numbers of well-educated men in poor circumstances who preferred to pay 4d. for a lodging-house bed at night rather than seek shelter in the workhouse. In 1912 keen competition amongst the keepers of common lodging houses is recorded and this helped to speed the gradual disappearance of some of the smaller and inferior houses. It was not found practicable to provide suitable statutory lodging houses for women and the Public Health Department decided to leave this problem to those religious organizations which were prepared to accommodate them.

In the Report for 1913 on the Health of the Borough of Belfast an attempt was made to analyse the reasons for taking up residence in a common lodging house. It was felt that broken marriages and cheerless homes coupled with drunkenness and gambling drove many men into lodging houses where they could enjoy greater freedom and comfort. The Report even suggested that if more model lodging houses with good landlords were opened, they would be an inducement for men and boys to leave poor homes. In 1913 sixty-five lodging houses were registered. The Report states that the Sanitary Department investigated complaints against certain lodging houses and points out that the Sanitary Officer's duties

include not only making sure that accommodation is suitable but also that the warden's character is satisfactory.

In 1915 there were 1,730 lodging-house beds in Belfast. In 1919 60 houses were registered while the available beds still numbered about 1,730. In 1920 the Report comments that 6 summonses were issued against a warden in Winetavern Street; 2 summonses for allowing rooms to be occupied by persons of both sexes; 1 for having floors and stairs in a filthy condition and 3 for having bedding and bedclothes in a filthy condition. Fines of £9 were imposed and the warden's licence cancelled.

Between the years 1921 and 1938 no special information concerning the state of the lodging houses is recorded apart from the steady decline in the number of registered houses (in 1921 fifty-eight and in 1938 thirty registered houses). No mention of lodging houses is made in the Reports on the Health of the Borough of Belfast from 1939 to 1948 though in 1945 eleven registered lodging houses are reported.

In 1948 responsibility for the inspection, supervision, and management of the lodging houses was transferred from the Public Health Department to the newly established Welfare Authority, but the Public Health Department retained responsibility for the supervision of sanitation. It is not within the scope of this report to comment on the merits or the possible disadvantages of this arrangement beyond the fact that a close liaison between the County Borough Departments concerned would appear to be essential to the successful administration of lodging houses in the future. The brief review of the development and maintenance of lodging houses in Belfast given here shows that there has been a steady decline in their numbers over the past thirty years although the number of available beds has not fallen proportionally. For example, there were in 1916 about 60 lodging houses accommodating some 1,760 beds whereas in 1952 there were about 17 lodging houses with some 1,500 beds.

III

Description of Individual Lodging Houses visited in the survey

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

DURING the last fifty years the number of common lodging houses in Belfast has steadily dropped from 80 with accommodation for some 1,700 men to 17 with accommodation for roughly 1,500 men. The closing down of many small lodging houses and the introduction of larger ones accounted for this decline in number without any great change in beds. Seven of the sixteen lodging houses located are registered with the Welfare Authority and nine are unregistered. A lodging house should be registered when more than 4 men are lodging there and sharing a common room (see definition of a common lodging house on p. 6). Excluding the large lodging houses (i.e. 'A' Lodging House, 369 beds, 'B' Lodging House, 221 beds, 'C' Lodging House, 187 beds) the average number of beds in the smaller lodging house is about 20.

As the number of beds in each lodging house varies, so also does the quality and cleanliness of the accommodation. Living conditions in some of the smaller houses leave much to be desired, particularly bedding, the provision of cooking utensils, lockers, and washing facilities. These poor conditions apply more often to the unregistered lodging houses, though, as later comment will show, some of the registered houses are little better.

Lodging houses are largely dependent upon the type of lodger seeking shelter. Some lodgers being dirty and lazy in their habits, lower the standards of the house and make it impossible for the wardens to maintain cleanliness. Drunkenness and rowdyism are rare, except in some bad areas, and the lodging-house wardens, by a 'bush-telegraph' system, keep track of the less desirable characters who frequent lodging houses and maintain a 'black list' of their names.

A major difficulty frequently mentioned by the wardens of various lodging houses is the problem of arranging for admission to hospital of elderly residents when they become ill. Before the introduction of the National Health Service the Relieving Officer made the necessary arrangements to comply with the Bye-Laws in respect of Common Lodging Houses (1904) which forbids a warden to keep a sick man in residence. It is now the responsibility of the warden to get in touch with the patient's general practitioner, and difficulties arise for two reasons. Firstly, because some of the old men have failed to register with a doctor or have forgotten his name, and secondly because the doctor must often arrange for the patient to go to hospital although he is not so sick as to need hospital care. In the days of the ever-open workhouse infirmary door there was no such difficulty.

Admission to hospital in winter is often a godsend to old men from lodging houses who revive with a good 'clean-up' and regular meals in hospital. Naturally many of those admitted are loth to leave the warmth and security of a hospital ward and try to spin out their coughs and other ailments until the warmer weather arrives and they can return to common lodgings rather than lose their independence in a Welfare Residential Home.¹

The amenities and facilities offered to residents in the registered and unregistered lodging houses seen during the survey are summarized for convenience in the following tables (I and II) and thereafter each lodging house in turn is described briefly in more detail. During the survey both large and small lodging houses were visited and it was interesting to observe the differences in the inhabitants and atmosphere of each type. The ex-labouring old men tend to cling to the small lodging houses where they enjoy the warm squalor of the communal back kitchen and the companionable wrangles which occupy the long day pleasantly. The tobacco-laden, *laissez-faire* atmosphere appeals particularly to those sturdy individuals who dislike the anonymity of a large lodging house and prefer the cosy social life of a less disciplined concern. In all of these small houses residents can get up and go to bed at any hour they please, and even though most are in similar poor financial circumstances, they are considerate in trying to help those who are ill or suffering a temporary setback. There is no doubt that this

¹ A home for active elderly men and women run by the statutory local Welfare Authority.

TABLE I. *Amenities of Individual Lodging Houses*

Lodg- ing house	Whether regis- tered	Governing authority	Number of beds		Cost per week		No. of cleaners	Meals served	Cooking facilities	Laundry facilities	Lockers supplied	Permission for lodgers to stay in all day
			Open beds	Cubicles	Open	Cubicle						
A	Yes	Statutory authority	10	359	8s. 6d.	9s.	8	None	110 gas rings	Yes	Yes	Yes
B	Yes	Religious organization	151	70	8s. 3d.	10s.	5	Yes	None	Yes	Yes	Yes
C	Yes	Charitable organization	74	113	7s. 6d.	9s.	7	None	23 gas rings	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	Yes	Private owner	11	25	7s.	..	1	None	1 stove	None	Yes	Yes
E	Yes	Religious organization	38	..	1s. 6d. per night	..	2	None	None	Yes	Yes	No
F*	No	Private owner	12	..	5s.	..	None	None	1 stove	None	None	Yes
G*	No	Private owner	10	..	7s.	..	None	None	1 stove	None	None	Yes
H	Yes	Private owner	11	..	8s.	..	None	None	1 stove	None	None	Yes
I	Yes	Religious organization	40	..	7s.	..	1	Yes	None	None	None	No
J	No	Private owner	14	..	8s.	..	1	None	Range	None	Yes	Yes
K	No	Private owner	20	..	8s.	..	None	None	1 stove	None	None	Yes
L	No	Private owner	25	..	8s.	..	None	None	1 stove	None	None	Yes
M	No	Religious organization	48	..	8s. 6d.	..	1	None	7 gas rings	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	No	Private owner	27	..	6s.	..	Not known	None	1 stove	None	None	Yes
O	No	Private owner	8	..	7s.	..	None	None	1 stove	None	Yes	Yes
P	No	Private owner	14	..	7s.	..	1	None	Range	None	None	Yes
Q	No	Private owner	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

* Closed down in 1952.

TABLE II. Toilet Facilities in Individual Lodging Houses

Lodging house	Whether registered	Governing authority	No. of beds	No. of baths	Cost of bath	Washing facilities		No. of showers	No. of W.C.s	Towels supplied	Sheets changed
						Whb.	Sink				
A	Yes	Statutory authority	369	16	6d.	8	..	1	14	Roller	Weekly
B	Yes	Religious organization	221	3	Free	22	..	None	12	Bath only	Weekly
C	Yes	Charitable organization	187	2	Free	18	..	3	7	None	Fortnightly
D	Yes	Private owner	36	None	..	3	..	None	4	None	Uncertain
E	Yes	Religious organization	38	2	Free	10	..	None	5	Bath only	As required
F*	No	Private owner	12	None	..	..	1	None	1	None	No sheets
G*	No	Private owner	10	None	..	..	1	None	1	None	Uncertain
H	Yes	Private owner	11	None	..	..	1	None	1	None	As required
I	Yes	Religious organization	40	3	Free	5	..	None	5	Bath only	Fortnightly
J	No	Private owner	14	None	..	..	2	None	2	None	Fortnightly
K	No	Private owner	20	None	..	..	2	None	2	None	Uncertain
L	No	Private owner	25	None	..	..	2	None	2	None	Uncertain
M	No	Religious organization	48	3	Free	7	..	None	6	None	Weekly
N	No	Private owner	27	None	..	..	1	None	3	None	Uncertain
O	No	Private owner	8	None	..	..	1	None	1	None	Fortnightly
P	No	Private owner	14	None	..	..	1	None	2	None	Uncertain
Q	No	Private owner	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Uncertain

* Closed down in 1952.

more intimate type of lodging house is not so well kept or maintained as a larger house, but it is the answer to the type of old men who only want a 'place where they don't mind oul fellas sitting round the fire' and 'where the day will roll in nicely'. On the other hand, some of the residents would prefer to have the supervision and clean beds of the large lodging houses. The few cultured, fallen-on-hard-times old men were found only in the large lodging houses where they were obviously more content to conceal their pasts and histories in the impersonal organization that goes with size.

DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL LODGING HOUSES

'A' Lodging House

This lodging house with a bed capacity of 369 (10 open beds and 359 cubicles) is the largest in Belfast. Originally it was intended as a temporary home for single men without home ties and earning only a few shillings a week, and was not open to such persons as junior clerks who could afford ordinary lodgings. In the early days of its establishment most of the residents were young or middle-aged men but today roughly half of the residents are aged 60 or over. Many cannot find steady employment but a larger proportion are too lazy to hold down a regular job and prefer to eke out their existence on National Assistance Board allowances and judicious betting.

Many never go far outside the lodging house and small commissariats of seasoned residents are formed to cope with general activities—one member washes all the shirts, another makes the basic soup brew, while the more active members organize the rations and the weekly journey to the post office. The elderly lodgers expressed appreciation of the comfortable beds and the considerate staff in 'A' Lodging House but the majority complained that the dormitories were bitterly cold during the winter. Each man has a food locker and a clothes locker (with corresponding numbers) and a store (similar to a 'railway left luggage room') is provided. Some of the belongings in this store were deposited as long as fifty years ago and there is a motley collection of the old coats so much treasured by elderly men. There is also a 'writing' room which is seldom used for its original purpose but is instead the main rendezvous for the aged, some of whom are to be found dozing on its park-like bench seats all through the day. Cast-off

books from the public library are lent out at certain times and are very popular. Lodgers who lapse into incontinence are fined, given one or two chances to mend their ways and then dismissed from the lodging house and placed on the 'Black List' which hangs in the booking clerk's office. Men found to be verminous are given the opportunity of attending the cleansing centre, and if this fails are referred to their own doctor. No meals are served in 'A' Lodging House. A former superintendent tried to institute a canteen but ran it at a loss. All residents must be up by 9 a.m. and are only permitted to stay in bed for one day if they are ill—thereafter they must go to relatives or be admitted to hospital. Residents may use gas-rings for cooking meals any time during the day until 10 p.m. For this no extra charge is made. For those who have no change of underwear, a gas-power clothes-horse will dry clothing in half an hour. A surprisingly high proportion of old men send their clothes weekly to the laundry and the National Assistance Board helps with an extra supplementary grant. Two blankets are supplied in summer and three in winter. Verminous bedding is sent to the laundry at Peter's Hill Baths.

The accommodation, amenities, and general atmosphere of 'A' Lodging House were the best seen on the survey (Tables I and II). It serves partly as a residential home for robust independent old men, a purpose never considered in the terms on which it was originally established. It would seem that the outstanding reform need in 'A' Lodging House is a revision of the terms of residence—on one hand are the unmarried shipyard workers and on the other the old-age pensioners—but both have to pay the same charge for accommodation.

'B' Lodging House

This is the second largest lodging house in Belfast and can accommodate 221 men (70 cubicles and 151 open beds). Cubicles cost 10s. per week and 'open' dormitory beds 8s. 3d. The elderly population here is not so large (approximately one-third of the total population) as in 'A' Lodging House and this is partly explained by the fact that there are no cooking facilities available. Pensioners are unable to afford full board in this lodging house, otherwise they would have no money left for tobacco or clothing replacements. In contrast to 'A' Lodging House (Tables I and II) there are no gas-rings but good meals are provided at reasonable rates (bacon

and egg and half a pint of tea for 9d., or meat, vegetable, pudding, and tea for 1s. 2d.), for those who can afford them. These meals are greatly appreciated by the more decrepit and frail old men who are unfit to frequent cafés and spend most of their time in the common room. Lodgers are permitted to stay in all day except from 10 a.m. to noon, when scrubbing is in progress, and the lodgers are requested to vacate the building then. This compulsory two hours is the only time some of the old men spend in the fresh air, and on wet days they are not asked to leave.

The paid staff is helped by some twenty-five young lads who are on probation from the Juvenile Court. These boys are given 19s. 6d. pocket money a week with free board and lodging in return for scrubbing out dormitories and other odd jobs. The authorities of the Hostel try to help them to make good and find jobs and lodgings for some. Compared with elsewhere there are a greater number of men from Eire in this hostel, a fact which raised adverse comments among some of the Ulster residents.

The facilities in this lodging house are comparable with those in 'A' Lodging House with the minor variations shown in Tables I and II. Sinks and an airing-room are provided and clothes can be left to dry on the cloakroom ticket system. Persuading lodgers to take a bath is often a great problem and compulsory bathing amongst a few of the old men has produced some startling metamorphoses! Three blankets are supplied for each bed and sheets are changed weekly. If men are found to be verminous or incontinent, they are fined and given another chance before being dismissed. 'B' Lodging House has its own disinfecting boiler for clothes but this is seldom used as the warden states the incidence of vermin is not high. The recreation room also serves as the dining hall. Concerts, choirs, and services are held in the adjoining chapel.

The cost of maintaining a large voluntary lodging house is high and in one year the hostel was run at a loss of £3,500—coal alone costing £300 per annum.

'C' Lodging House

This lodging house has, like 'A' Lodging House, a higher proportion of beds in cubicles than in open dormitories. A waiting list is kept by the warden of those desiring cubicles and it is interesting that most men prefer the privacy of a cubicle. The twenty-three gas-rings provided can be used at any time during the day and their

use is included in the maintenance cost, though old-age pensioners are asked to stand aside at 5.30 when the workers return. Clothes can be washed at two deep sinks and dried on a line above the boiler in the common room. Three or more blankets are provided for each resident. Sheets are normally changed every fortnight though coal workers and others in similar grimy occupations have their sheets changed more frequently. Verminous bedding and clothing are washed in a boiler in the yard, dried out in the open air and sent to the laundry. Infested mattresses are destroyed and replaced.

Approximately one-third of the lodgers are elderly and only about forty go out to work. Men are permitted to stay in bed if they are sick, provided their relatives carry in meals to them. One side of the lodging house is reserved for ex-criminals and the warden states that they are the cleanest men in the house, take shower baths regularly and are seldom drunk or rowdy. Two men patrol the lodging house during the night to guard against fire risk from candles or lamps. On the whole the lodging house is well kept though the common room houses the gas-rings and there is constant cooking and clothes-drying in progress to the accompaniment of the wireless. Lodgers sit on backless benches and the whole place needs a coat of paint.

The standards maintained in this lodging house compare favourably with those in 'A' and 'B' Lodging Houses. There is a one-third ratio of older men to under sixties and the discipline and regulations appeared to be less strict to conform to the vagaries of the older generation. This may have reflected the particular interest taken in these old men by the warden rather than an accepted principle in the running of the establishment. It is regretted that this warden has since taken up duties elsewhere.

'D' Lodging House

This is a very poor lodging house and is run by an 'absentee' warden who only appears in the evening and leaves the day duty to one of the lodgers who is an ex-docker. The cubicles are like large cupboards and wire netting reaches to the ceiling in order to discourage thieving. Eneurism is obviously rife and the bedding is dirty and inadequate; the sheets (mainly fashioned out of old flour-bags) are said to be changed fortnightly but the lodgers testify otherwise; two sheets and two blankets are provided for each bed.

Food lockers are unhygienic and are frequently broken into by

rats (or by fellow lodgers). A large hot-plate downstairs, which is well stocked with coal, supplies cooking and heating facilities and dries clothes. Table I credits this lodging house with one gas stove but it is so ancient and dirt-encrusted that it is almost useless. The recreation room is bare and dingy with backless benches and tables.

The whole atmosphere of this lodging house is dark and unattractive and some of the windows have been boarded up. The lodgers are mostly elderly and dispirited; many of them moved to this lodging house when one under the same management was dismantled several years ago.

'E' Lodging House

This hostel is run by a religious society and accommodates thirty-eight men. It will be noted from Table 'I' that the majority of lodgers in this lodging house pay nightly rather than weekly. This is explained by the high proportion of 'casual' lodgers who only stay a short time. The charge is 1s. 6d. per night but if a man is destitute he can stay for four days without paying. After this period Eire residents are referred to the police. Breakfast (bread and half a pint of tea, with a 'fry' on Sundays) is included in the nightly cost as is dinner (meat, vegetable, pudding, and tea). The latter is prepared and served by voluntary workers. In consequence no cooking by residents is permitted. Men must leave at 8.30 a.m. and are let in again at 6 p.m., but the rigidity of this rule depends on the warden who sometimes makes an exception during the cold weather and permits the frail old men to remain inside for part of the day. The hostel is not designed to cope with elderly persons and the authorities would prefer active young men.

According to the warden there is a high proportion of enuretics among the old men. Fines are not imposed but a meal is given earlier in the evening and 'shakedowns' improvised on the floor.

Each lodger is given three blankets and two sheets—the latter frequently disappear though plainly marked. Most of the men object to taking a bath and if it is made a condition of admission will often depart speedily, even though they have registered as destitute. Some of the men are verminous when admitted and the beds are liberally sprayed with D.D.T.

Prospective lodgers must be in by 8 p.m. and the lights are put

out at 10 o'clock. Those under the influence of drink are banned from entering but the police have to be summoned periodically to cope with riots. The warden observed that those drinking eau de Cologne, cheap wine, and gas-treated milk cause the most disturbance.

The men sleep upstairs in bare, crowded dormitories with no lockers. A recreation room is provided where darts and dominoes can be played. If a lodger leaves the hostel without paying, he will not be accepted again until he has paid his debts.

'F' Lodging House

This lodging house was one of the worst encountered. (See Tables I and II.) Though it has a bed capacity of forty-two, only twelve are occupied; not surprising considering the state of the bedding—filthy mattresses with protruding stuffing, bits of thin blanket, no sheets, and all the lodger's available clothing packed on top of the bed. There is one sink (locally referred to as 'the jaw-box') and there is no electric light. All the lodgers sleep upstairs in the once elegant Georgian drawing-room which is now bare and must be very cold in winter. If a lodger is verminous he is usually informed on by his nearest bedfellow. A rent of 34s. per week is paid for the house and the warden states that no repairs have been done for years. The gas-stove is housed in a room at the back downstairs which also serves as a general common room and resembles a Hogarthian print on dark evenings when the ragged occupants are gathered round an inadequate fire by a flickering gas jet. The lodgers would not tolerate such conditions were they not a hopeless derelict collection.

The warden himself made a very poor impression and it is considered that the lodging house will soon be extinct, as the number of lodgers is declining.

'G' Lodging House

This is a small, most inferior lodging house accommodating ten men. All the lodgers are elderly and spend most of the time sitting on a high-backed settle round the range. All cooking is done on this range or on a single gas-ring. The one W.C. recorded in Table II deserves especial mention as it is situated in the yard, has no door, and some planks were missing from the walls. Behind the W.C. is a stable and a pile of manure. Bottles of milk are kept on

the window-sill in the yard. The beds are converted double bunks and look very uncomfortable; the ceilings are low and the floors slope unevenly. The owner, who lives on the premises, pays a rent of 13s. 3d. per week and supplies one bag of coal for the range-fire which is always lit. He states that he has to go out to work during the day as the lodging house does not pay.

'I' Lodging House

This hostel was opened in 1939 and houses forty lodgers who must leave at 9 a.m. and are not permitted to return until 5 p.m. Consequently most of the men are young as the older ones are not able to hang about street corners and doorways all day especially in winter time. No cooking facilities are provided but the warden or his assistant will fry anything the men like to provide. The charge of 7s. per week includes two meals of bread, jam, and tea morning and evening. Sausages are supplied twice a week, bacon on Sunday evenings and a 'fry' for Sunday morning breakfast. The warden and his assistant do the washing-up. Bathing is compulsory though in spite of this there is a high incidence of infestation with vermin. Incontinence is commonplace, probably related to the frequent drunkenness and rowdiness. No action is taken if a man is drunk, verminous, or incontinent but if he is found with a bottle in his pocket he is refused admission for fourteen days. Beds are sprayed with D.D.T. when necessary.

There are no cubicles and the dormitories are bare and poverty-stricken with army stretchers and grey blankets. Three blankets and one sheet are provided on each bed. No top covers or lockers are provided and men may not leave any possessions in the dormitories—a cupboard downstairs is kept for the purpose.

In spite of a drab appearance the floors are well scrubbed. The recreation-room provides a wireless and billiards and acts as a dining-hall as well. The seats are backless benches. The hostel is inter-denominational and a spiritual talk is given on Sunday evenings, though there is no compulsion to attend services. Clothes from voluntary sources are distributed when possible at the discretion of the warden and grants from voluntary sources help to maintain the hostel.

This was the only hostel found in the course of the survey which limits admission to those earning less than 26s. per week. Those in employment are automatically barred.

'J' Lodging House

This is another small but unexpectedly trim lodging house. It accommodates fourteen men (most of them go out to work and the elderly population is small) and is always full up with hand-picked 'regulars' who pay a weekly fee of 8s. Bedding is clean and lodgers are supplied with two blankets and a sheet. The lodging house is on the first floor above a public house and consequently the rooms are small—some only hold one bed while others hold three or four though the maintenance rate does not vary. The main living-room is spotlessly clean with four well-scrubbed tables. A large range heats the room and the old dresser sports some interesting china animals. The warden is a shrewd, capable man and his standards are equal to the best found in the smaller lodging houses.

'K' Lodging House

This is a very poor lodging house situated in a notoriously degenerate neighbourhood. Cooking is done on a dirt-encrusted gas-stove, there are no baths, and a sink and two W.C.s in the yard comprise the sanitary arrangements (a communal bucket on the landing at the top of the stairs serves the top-floor dormitories). The one sink is used for the dual purpose of clothes' washing and wash-hand basin and clothes are hung in the yard to dry. The beds are wartime 'utility' ship's bunks with the top bunk removed giving a curious four-poster bed effect. The bedding is filthy though the owner states that she sends eight sheets each week to the laundry. Dormitories are bare apart from the bunks, and no lockers are provided. The house has an objectionable smell and there is a general air of decay and disrepair. The occupants of the lodging house are mostly old men or shiftless young men who seem to spend most of their time in bed. Lodgers can remain in all day and lights are put out at 12 o'clock on Saturdays and 11 o'clock on other days.

A large notice prominently displayed states that men will be instantly dismissed if they use obscene language or talk politics—no mention is made about penalties for verminous or enuretic lodgers. If a man becomes ill, he must leave immediately. The old men are a pathetic, kindly lot and one was busy trying to rear a lost kitten. Altogether the standards in this lodging house were the second lowest encountered.

'L' Lodging House

This lodging house is owned by the same management as 'K' Lodging House and is not much better. It is situated above a public house. There are twenty-five beds at 8s. per week plus a 1s. gas charge. Here again about half of the lodgers are elderly and, like the younger population, they find it convenient to live so near to a public house. The all-purposes room is a wretched looking place with broken-down furniture and lines of indifferently washed shirts stretched from corner to corner. Although the accommodation here is more compact, it leaves much to be desired.

'M' Lodging House

This was one of the best-equipped and best-run lodging houses encountered in the survey. The building was drab and dingy-looking from the outside but well kept inside and it accommodated forty-eight lodgers. An unusual feature was the comfortable sitting-room cum recreation-room upstairs with a fire and American cloth-covered chairs—draughts, dominoes, and magazines were provided. The dining-room had white zinc-topped tables with asbestos mats for saucepans, kettles, &c. The dormitories were well aired and each man provided with three blankets and two sheets which were changed weekly. If a man was verminous, his mattress and bedclothes were removed immediately, and if he was incontinent a fine was imposed. Each man was given a locker beside his bed and part share in a chest of drawers—many, however, preferred to hang their clothing round the picture-rail and use the drawers for hoarding newspapers and other personal possessions.

Here again almost half the population was elderly and this lodging house was particularly suitable for their needs as they could remain in all day at the fire. No meals were supplied and the warden commented on the fact that many old men are very fussy about their food and prefer on the whole to make their own meals as they feel that this helps to eke out their pensions. In this hostel the emphasis was placed on moral rehabilitation and several social outcasts had been helped to regain their social status. The warden acted as banker and general adviser and was assisted by a resident staff of two and by a woman cleaner.

Men were permitted to stay in bed if they did not feel well and the warden was always considerate about accepting ex-hospital patients for admission. Provision was also made for men working

on night shifts to sleep in back rooms as far away as possible from the main house activities. It is to be regretted that the organization administering the lodging house was obliged to close its Belfast hostel in July as repairs to the old building were becoming a heavy financial drain. The old men themselves greatly regretted the disbanding of the hostel and many did not know where to look for alternative accommodation. The warden helped some to find vacancies in residential homes, others went into the welfare wards and the majority took up residence in other lodging houses.

'N' Lodging House

This is another lodging house run by private enterprise. The building is an old Georgian house with elaborate plaster cornices still visible on the ceilings of the four-bedded dormitories. The whole place is shabby and badly in need of paint and repair. Electric light is only available on the stairway which is uncovered, defective and unsafe. Candles are used elsewhere at a considerable risk of fire. Sleeping arrangements, sanitary accommodation, and cooking facilities are poor but there is a homely atmosphere in the house and lodgers spend most of their day reminiscing in the front parlour around a good fire with three ancient clocks on the mantelpiece. The bathroom was used principally as a store in the past, so the warden dismantled it and directs lodgers to Peter's Hill baths when necessary. One dirty gas-stove in the kitchen serves all lodgers; utensils (a caked frying-pan and a kettle) are supplied. Clothes can be washed in the kitchen sink and dried on clothes-lines in the dormitories. Lodgers are supplied with three blankets but the sheets look as if they are seldom changed. From Table I it will be seen that no proper lockers are provided but upturned orange boxes act as improvised lockers in the dormitories and men are permitted to stay in bed until midday.

'O' Lodging House

This is another small lodging house of eight beds. Conditions are reasonable; the warden is almost stone deaf but clean, alert, and co-operative and only takes weekly boarders, thus ruling out the chance of disturbances by nightly casuals. The house is old-fashioned looking but the common room is well kept with oilcloth on the table, scrubbed floors, a good fire, and a fine oak settle. There is no bath, and as there is only one W.C. old dried-milk tins

are used as urinals in the dormitories. The beds were fairly clean, all had good mattresses covered by three thick blankets and a quilt.

The door is locked at 11 o'clock and lodgers can stay in all day if they wish. The population here is mainly elderly and the men seem to like the homely atmosphere.

'P' Lodging House

This is a lodging house owned by a rag-picker. It is situated in a very poor area and accommodates about fourteen men. The house itself is high and narrow with a twisted staircase and the more feeble residents are able to sleep downstairs though at the time of the survey conditions were overcrowded. The residents spend most of their time in the kitchen at the back where a range fire burns brightly and the coal is kept in an alcove of the room. Bedding is reputed to be changed regularly but appearances suggest otherwise. As in most of the lodging houses, the frying-pan is the main cooking utensil and most of the lodgers provide their own meals. Two blind men live in this lodging house and are very sympathetically dealt with by their fellow lodgers.

'Q' Lodging House

This lodging house situated in the dock area cannot be reported on fully as the warden did not wish to answer questions. Three elderly men were interviewed who were not particularly happy in their surroundings but liked the district—all were ex-dockers and spent most of their time wandering round the docks. Conditions here seemed poor.

IV

Description of Elderly Men interviewed in the survey

Age distribution

Civil state

Social class

Outlook on life

Physical condition

Hospital admissions

Appearance

Mobility

Employment

Previous living and reasons for entering
a lodging house

Duration of lodging-house life among
the older residents

Hobbies

Habits

Income

Food habits

Future plans

I. AGE DISTRIBUTION

THE age distribution of the elderly men in lodging houses is shown in Table III. For the purposes of the survey sixty years was taken as a suitable dividing line and residents of that age and over were termed 'elderly'.

From Adams and Cheeseman (1951) it was noted that just under 1 per cent. of the total population of elderly males in Northern Ireland were patients in hospital, while from Table III it can be seen that 1.62 per cent. of the elderly men in the total population of Belfast lived in lodging houses.

The age frequency of the old men in lodging houses rises to a peak at 70-74 years and declines thereafter. Presumably the men of 80+ years must either die in the care of relatives or go into hospital, and this is borne out from the table of ages of elderly men in hospital in Northern Ireland (Adams and Cheeseman, 1951) which reaches a peak at 80+.

2. CIVIL STATE

In Table IV the civil state (single, married, widowed, divorced, or separated) of the elderly lodging-house men is shown according to age. The 205 single men (55.26 per cent.) outnumbered those of every other category and this is true of every age group and is

most noticeable among the younger men. It is interesting that only seven married men were interviewed which tends to emphasize the fact that lodging houses are a refuge mainly for single men and widowers.

TABLE III. *Age Distribution*

<i>Age in years</i>	<i>Number in lodging houses</i>	<i>Number in each age group as a percentage of total</i>	<i>Census Population Belfast 1951</i>	<i>Number in each age group as a percentage of city population</i>
60-	58	15.63	7,518	0.77
65-	82	22.10	6,002	1.37
70-	124	33.42	4,708	2.63
75-	74	19.95	2,968	2.49
80+	33	8.89	1,709	1.93
Total	371	100.00	22,905	1.62

3. SOCIAL CLASS

An attempt was made in Table V to classify the elderly lodging-house residents according to social status and the standards of occupational skill defined by the Registrar-General for England and Wales (1938). The five social classes adopted in the census were I 'professional' (e.g. legal, medical, the Arts, &c.), III 'skilled workers' (cabinet-maker, photographer, &c.), V 'unskilled workers' (labourers, dock hands, &c.). Classes II and IV were included as 'intermediate categories' and every occupation has been classified in the detailed census report. When the census criteria were applied to this survey it was found that the highest proportion of all the old men were unskilled workers in Class V (47.44 per cent.). It is not practicable to tabulate details of all the occupations encountered but the majority of group III (skilled workers) were men who had spent their lives in the shipyards, trained as platers or moulders, sheet-metal workers, or similar occupations which raised them from the unskilled status of labourers. In group V the unskilled workers were predominantly casual labourers. The fact that there were so few professional men encountered seems to suggest that those who have come down in the world from this class of society seldom drift in their old age into common lodging houses. It is intriguing to wonder where this type of man goes to, though a greater number may reside in the more cosmopolitan

TABLE IV. *Civil State*

Civil state	Age Group										Total	
	60-		65-		70-		75-		80+			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single	37	63.79	49	59.76	67	54.03	35	47.30	17	51.52	205	55.26
Married	..	..	3	3.66	2	1.61	2	2.70	..	..	7	1.89
Widowed	10	17.24	16	19.51	40	32.26	27	36.49	13	39.39	106	28.57
Divorced	1	1.72	..	..	..	..	1	1.35	..	..	2	0.54
Separated	10	17.24	14	17.07	15	12.10	9	12.16	3	9.09	51	13.75
Total	59	100	82	100	124	100	74	100	33	100	371	100

London lodging houses than in the Belfast ones. Perhaps here their families support some of them in private lodgings while others are to be found in the ex-workhouse wards.

TABLE V. *Social Class*

<i>Social Class</i>	<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
I . .	2	0.54
II . .	13	3.50
III . .	125	33.69
IV . .	55	14.82
V . .	176	47.44
Total . .	371	100

4. OUTLOOK ON LIFE

The opinions expressed by the old men about life in a lodging house are summarized in Table VI according to civil state.

It is interesting to note that 53 per cent. of all the men interviewed were satisfied with their lodging-house way of living while 25 per cent. were indifferent to their surroundings and 21 per cent. were not satisfied. Apparently the married men in the survey were the least satisfied but they were so few in number that no definite conclusion can be drawn from this statement.

The highest proportion in a civil state group of contented lodgers were the thirty-two old men (representing 60.38 per cent. of the 'divorced or separated' group) who presumably found any life better than the unhappy surroundings of the homes they had left. Most of those who were dissatisfied wished to make a change, but were uncertain how they should go about it, and those who were indifferent were too apathetic to express any opinions and seemed

to idle away their time from one pension day to the next. A surprisingly high proportion of the old men (94 per cent.) were considered mentally alert and the remaining 6 per cent. suffered from

TABLE VI. *Outlook on Life*

<i>State of mind</i>	<i>Single</i>		<i>Married</i>		<i>Widowed</i>		<i>Divorced and separated</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Satisfied . . .	110	53·66	1	14·29	56	52·83	32	60·38	199	53·64
Indifferent . .	54	26·34	3	42·86	28	26·42	8	15·09	93	25·07
Not satisfied . .	41	20·00	3	42·86	22	20·75	13	24·53	79	21·29
Total . . .	205	100	7	100	106	100	53	100	371	100

defective memory or were confused. On the whole the old men were very shrewd and knowledgeable about their financial affairs and pension rights.

5. PHYSICAL CONDITION

A medical examination of the old men seen in the survey was impracticable, and an assessment of their apparent general health and physical state was made at the interview. This assessment was based on personal observation of such evidence as pallor, 'blueness', or a florid complexion, tremors, unsteadiness, breathlessness or weakness combined with the old men's volunteered statements. In some cases an obvious defect such as a leg amputation or a missing eye were noted and in others the laboured 'wheezing' of an aged bronchitic was plainly audible even before he entered the room; other old men lowered themselves very tenderly into a chair and their expressions (and comments) denoted rheumatic twinges. Ex-servicemen on disability pensions had often to be restrained from detailed explanations of the exact nature of their injuries (whether visible or not) and liked to discuss the circumstances leading to the award of their pensions. Painful feet were self-evident in some old men who hobbled into the room in boots cut away to accommodate a corn or bunion. Interviews usually began with the conventional 'good evening—how are you?', and frequently the response was so instantaneous and graphic that it was difficult to proceed with the questionnaire. Comments upon doctors, operations (those performed on the old men themselves and also those on their relatives), and criticisms of hospitals were made and although these comments

tended to sidetrack the main issue, a sympathetic hearing produced a frank and co-operative interview later on. Thirty-two of the old men (8.6 per cent.) appeared to be ill to an extent likely to necessitate medical attention or hospital care. The old men themselves referred frequently to their ailments, often in picturesque language,

TABLE VII. *Physical Condition*

Appearance	Age Group											
	60-		65-		70-		75-		80+		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Healthy	31	53.45	53	64.63	74	59.68	42	56.76	9	27.27	209	56.33
Frail	19	32.76	22	26.83	42	33.87	26	35.14	21	63.64	130	35.04
Ill	8	13.79	7	8.54	8	6.45	6	8.11	3	9.09	32	8.63
Total	58	100	82	100	124	100	74	100	33	100	371	100

such as the old man who commented that his arteries were 'all stoved in'; or the one who complained graphically of a 'quare stiffness in my hinch'; or again the old man of 86 years who announced proudly that he was 'as supple as a hare'. The desire for warmth is predominant and a filthy looking resident remarked that 'with a little blink of sunshine and warm underclothes I would feel better'; and another ill-looking man said 'the cold kills old men in lodging houses off quickest and they just sit here world forgetting and world forgot'.

The amount of total deafness noted was surprisingly low and only four interviews were painstakingly conducted in writing (in two of these interviews defective eyesight was an additional difficulty). Several of the old men were merely 'hard of hearing' and a careful, measured enunciation into a cupped ear usually produced an answer without too much difficulty. Some mentioned their blast and bombing experiences in the First World War as possible explanations for deafness, while others accepted the condition philosophically as yet another tiresome manifestation of old age for which no cure is available. Hearing aids were seldom in evidence and not more than six were observed. One of these six was a tortoiseshell trumpet affair which the owner had brought back from foreign parts and used for sentimental rather than practical reasons. Another old gentleman had recently acquired a National Health hearing aid which intrigued him greatly and made him feel he 'was carrying a pair of opera glasses'. Unfortunately he spent such a

considerable time 'tuning in' for the interview that the aid was finally abandoned and the questionnaire completed by dint of much bawling on both sides. The interviewer's criterion of judgement concerning deafness was based on general hospital experience, and may have been biased, due to the number of allegedly stone-deaf patients encountered who, if not shouted at, respond quite well and are not really deaf in the strict sense. Many of the old men interviewed commented pathetically on the shut-in and unsociable effects of deafness but few would bother to try a remedy.

The medical complaints mentioned at the interviews fell broadly into six categories:

Bronchitis: 120 men (32.3 per cent. of the total number of men interviewed).

'Rheumatics': 60 men (16.2 per cent. of the total number of men interviewed).

Bad eyesight (including blindness): 58 men (15.6 per cent. of the total number of men interviewed).

Painful feet: 32 men (8.6 per cent. of the total number of men interviewed).

Skin complaints and varicose veins: 25 men (6.7 per cent. of the total number of men interviewed).

Visible deformities (including amputations): 48 men (12.9 per cent. of the total number of men interviewed).

6. HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS

Of the 371 men interviewed only 21 failed to register with a doctor. From the records of one lodging house it was found that 33 out of an estimated total of 150 of 60 years and over were admitted to hospital during the period between June and December 1951 and 2 were found dead in bed. The City Hospital alone admitted 76 elderly lodging-house residents between June and December 1951 and this figure was made up of 14 admissions to surgical wards and 62 admissions to medical wards. This proportion is interesting particularly in view of the number of old men who complained of bronchitis or other ill-defined ailments during the survey and is an indication not only of the unsatisfactory conditions of lodging-house life for old men but also of the problems which they present to hospital and welfare authorities alike. In most cases these elderly men insist on returning from hospital to the lodging house and sometimes on this account have to be kept in the wards

for longer than is medically considered necessary. Ultimately the aged lodging-house man may become a long-stay hospital case because of neglect and malnutrition and some are re-admitted as often as five times during the year.

7. APPEARANCE

The general appearance (dress and cleanliness) of the 371 old men was noted and has been summarized in Table VIII. The clothing and the general standard of cleanliness of at least 60 per cent. of all age groups were reasonably good, but about 30 per cent. of the men in all age groups had a neglected appearance—unshaven, with stained, unkempt clothing, dirty hands and nails, or other evidence of a lack of interest in life and personal standards. Only 12 of the

TABLE VIII. *Appearance*

Con- ditions	Age Group											
	60-		65-		70-		75-		80+		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Clean	35	60·34	56	68·29	83	66·94	48	64·86	20	60·61	242	65·23
Neg- lected	23	39·66	23	28·05	36	29·03	24	32·43	11	33·33	117	31·54
Filthy	..	..	3	3·66	5	4·03	2	2·70	2	6·06	12	3·23
Total	58	100	82	100	124	100	74	100	33	100	371	100

total number of old men (3·2 per cent.) were considered 'filthy': an estimate based on an entire absence of any visible effort to achieve cleanliness and an unpleasant smell left in the room when the interview had concluded. Eight of this group of 12 were men from the 60-79 age groups, and only 2 were octogenarians. It must be emphasized that this state of affairs appeared to be related to the indifferent health and general frailty of the individual men concerned. Contrary to what might be expected, the proportion of men between the ages of 55 and 64 regarded as 'clean' is low, and amongst them the proportion of 'neglected'-looking men is the highest of all ages. One warden stated that, once he has decided to give up the unequal struggle for existence, it is much more difficult to keep a well-educated man clean and free from vermin than it is to persuade the ex-labourer to keep himself clean.

8. MOBILITY

Because of variations in the demands made upon them in different lodging houses the assessment of mobility of the elderly lodgers including stair climbing was difficult. For instance, many lodging houses provide only upstairs dormitories, and men with leg injuries, those using crutches, or with amputations, must cope as best they can with narrow stairways. It was noticed that wardens on the whole were considerate of those old men suffering from a physical infirmity and often helped to propel them upstairs. Other old men solved stair-climbing difficulties by struggling up and down on their trouser seats. In others a few ground-floor beds were available and the occupants did not attempt to climb stairs. Table IX, therefore, gives only an approximate comparison of the capacities of the individuals from different lodging houses.

It appears, however, that 86.52 per cent. of the old men stated that they could climb stairs, 46.63 per cent. had unlimited walking ability, and 35.85 per cent. were capable of restricted activity indoors or outdoors. It is surprising that the proportion of men over 80 years of age who were confined to walking indoors only is very little higher than the proportion similarly restricted in all other age groups in Table IX.

9. EMPLOYMENT

The question of employment greatly interested the elderly lodgers and, quite apart from financial considerations, many of them desired a job as a diversion. The fact that 174 of the men formerly worked as skilled manual workers (including coal-miners, bottlers, painters, blacksmiths, and shipyard workers) and 165 as general labourers (including 11 dockers and 12 pedlars) implies that the majority of lodgers were accustomed to work long hours and to begin the day early. Of the higher skilled workers, including clerks, foremen, and hairdressers, there were about 35, and there were only 5 who could be said to have belonged to 'the professions'. Of these 5 one was a journalist whose compulsory retirement coincided with his wife and son's deaths so that he felt too unhappy to live alone; another, a solicitor, aged 88, with a mania for gambling and handicapped by severe osteoarthritis and an unshakeable and garrulous belief in free enterprise. A sanitary inspector, with a university career and a Royal Naval pension,

TABLE IX. *Mobility*

		Stair climbing	Age Group											
			60-		65-		70-		75-		80+		Total	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Indoors only	Yes	3	5.17	2	2.44	5	4.03	2	2.70	2	6.06	14	3.77	
	No	4	6.90	1	1.22	3	2.42	2	2.70	3	9.09	13	3.50	
Indoors and limited outdoors .	Yes	18	31.03	27	32.93	43	34.68	28	37.84	17	51.52	133	35.85	
	No	3	5.17	1	1.22	2	1.61	6	8.11	6	18.18	18	4.85	
Unlimited indoors and outdoors	Yes	27	46.55	43	52.44	65	52.42	34	45.95	4	12.12	173	46.63	
	No	3	5.17	8	9.76	5	4.03	2	2.70	1	3.03	19	5.12	
Not stated . . . . .	..	..	..	..	..	1	0.81	..	..	..	..	..	0.27
	Yes	48	82.76	72	87.80	114*	91.94	64	86.49	23	69.70	321†	86.52	
Total	No	10	17.24	10	12.20	10	8.06	10	13.51	10	30.30	50	13.48	
	Total	58	100	82	100	124	100	74	100	33	100	371	100	

* Included one not stated walking ability. † Deaf and dumb.

admitted that his home was broken up as a result of drink. A well-known pianist who has played before many famous people and still has a distinguished air in spite of a ragged and unkempt appearance. He is now deaf, has a cataract in one eye and feels lonely and hopeless. He also admitted that drink had been his downfall. The fifth is a violinist who has obviously come down in the world and whose career was disrupted owing to his father's death. Though he has played in well-known orchestras he has no pension or family, suffers from anaemia and eczema and lives on a National Assistance allowance.

Some interesting characters were encountered who were only too glad to have an opportunity of talking. An amateur botanist recently recovered from pneumonia who is now a jobbing gardener and who has no friends or relations. The sharp-featured cheerful printer who stated that he 'lived from day to day and always carried his policies in his pocket' and whose main worry was darning. The spry-looking grocer aged 86 who is a diabetic and blind in one eye. Unhappy with his married son he says that he manages his diet better himself; he does his own washing and disapproves of modern laundries. He would like to go into a residential home but must have a cubicle. There is a cultured man who was an officer in the First World War and has since appeared in various music hall shows where he used to draw a big audience with impersonations of Charlie Chaplin, but he is now reduced to wearing the black striped trousers of his act and proposes to tramp back to his native county when the warmer weather comes. And the neatly dressed footman who suffers from amnesia (shell shock) and claims to have served Queen Victoria on land (as a soldier during the Boer War) and at table (as a footman at a military tattoo); he is very lonely and has a cataract in one eye. The hairdresser with a persistent cough and a hand injury who has no family and lives entirely on tea, bread, and jam. The remarkable old man who came of a good family and told an excellent story with embellishments, a man who can best be described as 'a relic of ould dacency'. His main aim is to avoid applying for National Assistance, so he works at hair-cutting on Fridays and Saturdays, and supplements this income by acting as a casual porter—and is famed for his broth-making. An extraordinary old man of 80 with long white hair who spent twenty years in the workhouse and came out in July 1948. Though he is enjoying his independence he finds meals a difficulty and plays

patience all day. A 'chesty'-sounding old man of 76 who had a roving career canvassing but specialized in inducing people to attend an unregistered dentist, and when this failed became a photographer specializing in 'bust lengths in gilt frames'. A one-legged hawker of bootlaces and cheap coloured delft who was filthy and could neither read nor write but whose one ambition was to watch an international rugby match from a grandstand seat! A charming and courteous old man who had been a linen designer until his business failed. His wife died twenty years ago and he clings to his lodging-house cubicle rather than enter the dormitory of a residential home. A pathetic unshaven old man with a fixed stare and matt wig-like hair who spends his time waiting for a fortune to arrive from America. He confessed that 'you lose taste in yourself when you grow older' and planned to pass the coldest part of the winter in hospital having some attention for his varicose veins. Then there was the youthful-looking man wearing a striped scarf and tennis shoes who announced happily that he hadn't done a day's work since he left the Army at the age of 40 and has always managed quite well on National Assistance. He 'engages his interest in reading' particularly detective books and books about the sea. A long-haired, bearded eccentric who has been touring round lodging houses since he was 16 years old, was full of old chat and amusing malapropisms. He is a keen reader of history and an admirer of Robespierre who he considers makes an 'elikeint discourse'. The list of quaint and interesting characters met on the survey can be continued. There was, for example, an entertaining old octogenarian with large ears, a ragged suit and a weakness for fruit who commented wisely that 'it is far better to spin your own money out and you can then conceal the true state of your affairs'. Very grateful because his daughter-in-law did his washing, he spends his day 'taking wee turns up and down'. Or the squat, humorous old character, who wore a celluloid collar and enjoyed life apart from draughts which bring on his rheumatism. He prides himself on his patching and darning and continues to get up at 6 a.m. because he has always done so. He likes to do cobbling jobs and play bagatelle. A wonderful old man with thick white hair who has a quiet philosophical outlook on life and says 'that time passes swiftly as I think of former happy days'. He thinks men were men in his day and food better. He suffers from insomnia but is proud to have weathered the winter without going to a doctor. A sallow-faced,

dirt-ingrained old man finds cooking his main problem and thinks this might drive him into a residential home. He complains also of rheumatism and earnestly recommended garlic as an effective cure. A slender, emaciated old man with impeccable finger-nails who had lived for fifty years in the U.S.A. He wanted to return in his old age to his native country and is much impressed by the increased fertility of the land, the healthy-looking people, and the slower tempo of living. An interesting dapper gentleman in a clean shirt who confessed he has had all the excitement and novelty that life can afford. He can turn his hand to any occupation ranging from a circus clown to a patent trouser-press agent and from a singer of sentimental ballads to a saddle manufacturer. A decrepit weary-looking man in a stained coat who complained of painful feet but then remarked brightly that he 'could cook rightly if he had anything to cook with' and insisted on crouching over an evil-smelling brew while he talked in case his broth should spoil.

It seems that an educated man can put up with enforced idleness (which is one of the worst evils of poverty) better than the man accustomed to poverty all his life, because the latter has a blank, resourceless mind and has no reserves of initiative within himself. In a region of Co. Antrim elderly men are being brought back from their retirement to construct a section of stone wall which is beyond the experience of younger men. The zeal with which they are working is as expressive as the beautifully constructed wall. Orwell (1929) speaks of the 'torture of unemployment' amongst lodging-house residents. He states that 'people are wrong when they think that an unemployed man only worries about losing his wages; on the contrary an illiterate man with the work habit in his bones, needs work even more than he needs money'.

10. PREVIOUS LIVING AND REASONS FOR ENTERING A LODGING HOUSE

It was found that an old man's previous living conditions and his reasons for taking up residence in a lodging house were closely related and Tables X and XI are, therefore, considered together. It may be seen from Table X that the highest proportion of the old men (44.74 per cent.) had either changed to their present accommodation from another common lodging house, or had lived in private lodgings previously. The majority came from private lodgings (including more than half of the octogenarians) and gave

TABLE X. *Previous Living*

	<i>Age Group</i>										<i>Total</i>	
	60-		65-		70-		75-		80+		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Alone	2	3.45	1	1.22	4	3.23	4	5.41	2	6.06	13	3.50
With wife	7	12.07	12	14.63	17	13.71	9	12.16	3	9.09	48	12.94
With children	2	3.45	5	6.10	9	7.26	4	5.41	1	3.03	21	5.66
With other relatives	12	20.69	14	17.07	26	20.97	17	22.97	7	21.21	76	20.49
With friends	1	1.72	3	3.66	6	4.84	3	4.05	..	..	13	3.50
In an institution	3	5.17	3	3.66	6	4.84	9	12.16	1	3.03	22	5.93
In Services	2	3.45	1	1.22	2	1.61	1	1.35	..	..	6	1.62
In lodging	29	50.00	41	50.00	52	41.94	26	35.14	18	54.55	166	44.74
Living and working at place of employment	..	..	2	2.44	1	0.81	1	1.35	1	3.03	5	1.35
Not stated*	..	..	..	..	1	0.81	..	..	..	..	1	0.27
Total	58	100	82	100	124	100	74	100	33	100	371	100

* Deaf and dumb.

varied reasons for the change including retirement from work with a consequent drop in their incomes and a need to find accommodation at lower rents, death of a landlady (many of the octogenarians having outlived their landladies), or the destruction of homes due to bombing in war-time. There were 171 old men (46.09 per cent.) who had previously lived with relatives or friends and entered common lodgings due to the break-up of the home following the death of the dominant member or because of unhappy home circumstances.

The introduction of the National Health Act on the 'appointed day' saw a release from the workhouses of many able-bodied elderly inmates on a National Assistance Board allowance. Some of these old men were bewildered with the complex life outside the workhouse gates and in a very short time filtered back again thankfully relinquishing their allowances and responsibilities; others had no idea of the altered value of money after years in the workhouse or were intemperate in habits and soon arrived back under police escort for safe keeping in the old workhouse 'infirm wards'. A small proportion (5.93 per cent.) took up residence in the common lodging houses of the city as being the most economical way of eking out their allowances. Most of these were satisfied with their change of residence but some of the more frail individuals were anxious about the coming winter and the problem of food and wished to return to the workhouse. Thirteen of the old men (3.50 per cent.) lived alone when they became widowers and struggled on to maintain the home in the face of rising costs, increasing inability to keep the place clean, family hostility or unsatisfactory lodgers, and, above all, loneliness.

The reasons for entering a lodging house are shown in Table XI. Six men became lodging-house inmates on demobilization after the First World War. One classic example was an old gentleman who found his family had emigrated when he returned from the Boer War and he remained in the same lodging house until he died in Belfast City Hospital Geriatric Unit in Christmas 1951. He left £400 which he had not bequeathed to anyone. This 'fortune' was a complete surprise not only to his fellow lodgers and patients but also to the National Assistance Board and to the lodging-house warden who had known the old man for over thirty years.

Five men were found who entered a lodging house because their jobs had living quarters attached, so that when they retired they

had nowhere to go. Destitution was the main reason given for entering a lodging house and it is interesting that in this respect single men far outnumbered widowers. Some entered because they had lost employment and could not afford private lodgings, others in an attempt to find work in the city and to earn sufficient money to move out to private lodgings. Twenty-one admitted that drink had alienated them from their families and led them to live in a lodging house while twenty-five (seventeen of them single) craved independence. Twenty-six men had to leave their homes or private

TABLE XI. *Reasons for entering Lodging House*

Reasons	Civil State									
	Single		Married		Widowed		Divorced or separated		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Subject destitute	71	27.41	4	44.44	35	24.14	8	11.94	118	24.58
Death of member of subject's family	67	25.87	..	..	41	28.28	5	7.46	113	23.54
Unhappy home circumstances	17	6.56	1	11.11	22	15.17	36	53.73	76	15.83
Wanted inde- pendence	17	6.56	1	11.11	6	4.14	1	1.49	25	5.21
Lost employment	23	8.88	..	..	11	7.59	4	5.97	38	7.92
Seeking employ- ment	10	3.86	..	..	3	2.07	4	5.97	17	3.54
Drink	9	3.47	1	11.11	7	4.83	4	5.97	21	4.37
Other reasons stated	43	16.60	2	22.22	20	13.79	5	7.46	70	14.58
None	2*	0.77	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	0.42
Total	259	100	9	100	145	100	67	100	480	100

* Deaf and dumb.

lodgings because there was no room for them, because the home was sold or because the landlady ceased to keep lodgers. One old man returned to Belfast to qualify for a pension but in the meantime could only afford to live in a common lodging house. Another normally made his home in the country and was attending the Royal Victoria Hospital for treatment. Several left because they disliked their landladies and the quality of the food they supplied. One man had developed pulmonary tuberculosis and having lost his work could not maintain himself in private lodgings while he was patiently waiting for a bed in a sanatorium. Another old man became destitute because his family emigrated.

It was interesting that the possible reasons for entering a lodging house foreseen in the questionnaire as a result of experience in case work with elderly lodging-house men in the hospital wards, covered most of the reasons actually given by the old men encountered in the survey, and their validity was therefore established.

Each old man was asked where he had been born in an attempt to determine the extent of his travels over the years, and the following list gives the details elicited by the inquiry. Several of the old men expressed a desire to end their days in their 'home counties', and others keep in touch with the local news from the newspapers in the public library. The question frequently promoted doughty reminiscences about their home towns and events of bygone times.

TABLE XII

<i>Born in</i>	<i>Number of elderly lodging- house men</i>	<i>Born in</i>	<i>Number of elderly lodging- house men</i>
Belfast	169	Eire	25
Co. Antrim	52	Scotland	18
Co. Down	47	England	12
Co. Armagh	16	U.S.A.	3
Co. Tyrone	14	India	1
Co. Londonderry	10	..	..
Co. Fermanagh	4	..	..

II. DURATION OF LODGING-HOUSE LIFE AMONG THE OLDER RESIDENTS

The population of a common lodging house is traditionally a floating one but this is not so true of the older generation who seem to cling to the impersonal stability of whatever lodging house they originally entered. A few old reprobates have a periodic tour round the different hostels by way of variety or on account of some misdemeanour, but on the whole the elderly men remain static and in some cases seldom venture farther than the lodging-house door. From Table I it is seen that the greatest number of elderly men stayed in a lodging house from 1 to 4 years. In the 75+ age group the length of stay is longer, as the following case histories will illustrate.

The longevity record goes to a 70-year-old man who has lived in a lodging house for fifty years, primarily because he likes inde-

pendence. He worked all his life as a builder's labourer, does not believe in fretting or grumbling and enjoys doing his own washing and cooking. He admits cheerfully that drink was his downfall.

An old man of 75 years has lived in the same lodging house for forty years and helped to build the Belfast Mental Hospital. His family died when he was young and he had nowhere to go. He is tired of doing nothing all day. He exists on a bread and tea diet, and his boots and teeth were badly in need of repair, but he was wearing a shirt (darned meticulously by himself) and black silk tie.

TABLE XIII

<i>Length of stay in years</i>	60-74		75+		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 1 year .	71	26.89	17	15.89	88	23.72
1- .	78	29.55	25	23.36	103	27.76
5- .	58	21.97	24	22.43	82	22.10
10- .	40	15.15	35	32.71	75	20.22
30+ .	17	6.44	6	5.61	23	6.20
Total .	264	100	107	100	371	100

Another old man of 70 quarrelled with his family and has been a lodging-house resident for forty years. He was a great reader but now has cataract in both eyes. He finds life lonely and dull but would not renounce his pension and enter a residential home. He has painful feet and a twisted arm due to an unattended fracture in his youth.

An elfin-faced man of 78 was wearing an outmoded evening waistcoat and thick pullover. He entered a lodging house thirty years ago from County Antrim when his sister died, and thoroughly enjoys his freedom and his wide circle of friends amongst the lodgers. He has not seen a doctor for years and his only complaint is of sore feet. He has very bad teeth but says he lives mostly on broth and 'my teeth will do for that and all the time left to me'. Any spare money is put away carefully towards an occasional front-seat bus ride into the country.

An old man of 84 years has thirty years of lodging-house life to his credit and is still quite independent. He makes all his own meals which mostly consist of tea, bread, fries, and onions, and he considers fresh vegetables are beyond a pensioner's purse. He harbours a grudge against the Government for introducing the

Retirement Pension Scheme and would like to have continued working. He lost an eye due to an accident fifteen years ago and was in hospital last winter with pneumonia. He would not consider entering a residential home.

The desire for independence was the common bond in the seasoned group who have lived in a lodging house for more than twenty years. All are well-known characters and enjoy a privileged corner and status. To them entry into a residential home means the 'ironing out' of their individualities and many of them are fastidious about their meals and are reluctant to accept well-balanced cooking after years of an intensive tea and bread diet.

12. HOBBIES

It has often been observed in hospital that many elderly patients seem unable or disinclined to amuse and occupy themselves during their convalescence and will sit smoking their pipes and brooding over their fluctuating fortunes and their pensions, or upbraiding their fellow patients. Draughts and other board games were introduced to the wards but had to be removed as the old men quarrelled so vigorously about the moves. The daily newspaper is the main source of entertainment and diversion amongst elderly men in hospital and magazines tend to be contemptuously used for pipe spills.

During the survey the elderly lodgers were asked how they spent their time and it was apparent from some of the vague answers that life for many was aimless and boring. Retirement following a busy working life often seems to find the elderly male unprepared for leisure and the lodging-house man has a particularly difficult fight amongst drab surroundings and uninterested strangers. From the 371 lodgers interviewed 85 admitted (in varying and sometimes picturesque language) that they 'just knocked about the town'. Some haunted their former place of employment, some stood on the docks and watched the boats, some liked to watch the arrival and departure of trains, and others enjoyed pottering round the markets and the zoo. When tired of roaming round the town, the grounds of the City Hall and the public parks are sought. Out-of-door hobbies included gardening (5 men) and 10 men said they enjoyed watching football matches.

As one would expect, reading is the main diversion and many of the men favoured adventure and travel stories designed to carry

them beyond the stark reality and discomforts of their lodging-house existence. History, philosophy, religious and scientific books came next in popularity. The public library in Royal Avenue is a welcome rendezvous for the elderly, especially as it is within a short walking distance of most of the city lodging houses. During the day many of these old men can be seen thumbing through local and provincial newspapers in the news room or musing over bound volumes of *Punch* in the reference room. The warmth of the last-mentioned room is often a great inducement for the pursuit of knowledge and the elderly lodgers like to remain as long as possible especially in the winter. Some of the aged students take the opportunity of surreptitiously drying their socks on the hot pipes, but banishment to the cold outside is the penalty if discovered. One man in 'A' Lodging House aged 71 is planning to matriculate and has gone to the length of enrolling with a correspondence college. He spends most of his time as the promoter of a cremation club and described the *nouveaux riches* thus—'L.S.D. accumulators groveling in the social bran tub'. About fifteen old men were found who could neither read nor write and bad eyesight accounted for the inability of some to read anything other than the headlines of the newspapers.

The cinema attracted only a few old men who enjoyed the reduced prices for old-age pensioners in the afternoons. Sixteen men preferred indoor activities like draughts, cards, billiards, bagatelle, and quoits.

Three men played the trombone, violin, and clarinet respectively though their hobbies had lapsed by general consent of their fellow lodgers.

Astronomy, wood carving, cycling, bus rides, sketching, wireless listening, and crossword puzzles completed the range of hobbies mentioned by various lodgers.

13. HABITS

Lodgers were surprisingly frank concerning their habits and addictions and frequently volunteered suggestions for an extra tobacco voucher each week, a reduction of the cost of an old-age pensioner's whiskey or the best means of securing a fortune through football pools or horses. Only 23 non-smokers were encountered in the 371 interviews. This is an indication of the solace which tobacco seems to give to many old men who prefer a full

tobacco pouch to a square meal. One old man asserted wistfully that 'memories come back clearly in tobacco smoke'. One hundred and thirty-five men admitted that they smoked and drank; 142 smoked only because—in the words of one octogenarian—'I can only afford to keep up one vice'. Forty-eight men smoked, drank, and gambled as well—more often than not because they liked the gregarious atmosphere of the bookie's office rather than the prospect of a successful tip. Twenty-three men gambled only.

According to most of the lodging-house wardens excessive drunkenness and rowdy behaviour are relatively uncommon apart from the universal hilarity on pension day. Efforts to discourage drunkenness are being made by wardens who refuse to admit men under the influence of alcohol. This means that applicants must roam the streets, the brickfields behind Millfield, the quays or the grandstands of deserted football grounds when accessible, running the risk of being arrested by the police. In some of the small, less supervised lodging houses there is reported to be a heavy consumption of cheap red wine and eau de Cologne. Many of the men interviewed admitted that they were financially unable to drink, smoke, or gamble in the style to which they had been accustomed in their working days and this in itself has helped to check excessive indulgence.

14. INCOME

As was expected, the majority of elderly lodgers derived their income from a combination of old-age pension and National Assistance Board allowances. (The average weekly allowance for a lodging-house man totals approximately £2. 2s. 0d. This is made up of either a retirement pension of £1. 12s. 6d. per week or a non-contributory pension of £1. 10s. 0d. plus supplementation from the National Assistance Board to £2. 2s. 0d.) There were 195 old men with retirement pensions proving that they had worked consistently all their lives and 59 old men with non-contributory pensions (i.e. the '70' pension for those with insufficient stamps to qualify them for a retirement pension). Fifty men had been awarded disability pensions as a result of enemy action (bullet wounds and leg amputations seem to have accounted for many of these) and 15 ex-service-men had been granted long-service pensions.

The National Assistance Board provided total living allowances and supplementary allowances for some 312 of the 371 men inter-

viewed and the supplementary laundry grant was particularly appreciated by the frail old men who could not manage washing nor afford to pay someone to do it for them. An old man of 82 years was very indignant about increased laundry charges and now does his own—'10½d. tax on singlet and drawers is monstrous' was his comment. With the exception of two or three, none of the old men receives any financial help from relatives and an odd meal was the most that seemed to be expected from married children. Dis-satisfaction was expressed with pension rates in view of the present high cost of living, and replacement of worn-out clothes, particularly boots and underwear, presents a real problem. One lodging house has periodic sales amongst the residents of cast-off clothing which has been collected.

Some elderly pensioners who have been discharged from hospital complained that the return of their pension books was often delayed for more than a week, thus causing much inconvenience and distress, although wardens were sympathetic concerning bed fees in these circumstances. There were twelve men not in receipt of any statutory allowance who were working either part or whole-time.

15. FOOD HABITS

Many of the elderly lodgers, while saying that their interest in food diminished as they grew older, held and were quite willing to discuss their curious views on diet. The elderly man who remarked sprily 'we ould fellas don't have the same use for food now' summed up this situation very well. One particularly rubicund old gentleman attributed his good health to cod liver oil which he spread on bread instead of butter and washed down with spring water specially carried down by himself in bottles from the upper reaches of the River Lagan. Another was a firm believer in cabbages and herrings which he always ate together and which he bought in large quantities and stored happily in his locker from one pension day to the next. A wizened-faced old man was scornful of sausages and referred to them as 'those mysteries', a view which was held by most of his fellow lodgers; while a seedy, taciturn old man with no socks or dentures announced that tinned soup, bread, tea, and fries were his main dishes, though he confessed that his mother had taught him how to make 'pies and puddens'. These four items plus an occasional helping of potatoes, porridge, and broth, constituted the

main items of diet for those elderly men who took the trouble to cook.

Porridge and cornflakes with milk are probably the most important supplement to the monotonous bread and tea diet of these elderly men. It should be recorded that porridge or cornflakes represent the contents of the main meal and are seldom eaten at breakfast or supper. The broth gang has already been mentioned and is the answer either for the inexperienced cook or the old man who cannot be bothered to make a proper meal for himself. Each member of the gang contributes an offering to the pot and it was surprising the number of old men who have contacts in the market or who are 'in the way of getting' the odd carrot, turnip, or onion. In this manner a large pot of broth can be made by the acknowledged expert and is ladled out to serve as dinners for several days.

In many instances condensed milk is used in preference to fresh milk as the old men think it is cheaper, keeps for longer periods, and is more convenient to store in their lockers. Two small holes punctured in the lid is the accepted way of pouring out and preserving condensed milk.

It was often possible to speculate upon an old man's general philosophy and background by his food pattern. The hopeless, nothing-to-live-for type nearly always had no appetite and just ate bread and tea interspersed with an occasional fry. Conversely the spry, gregarious old man enjoyed manufacturing tasty, if not always nutritious, dishes and liked to enlarge on his food theories. It is true to say that those men on a higher social scale who had been used to more in their younger days were resigned to much less in their elderly down-and-out days and they made little attempt to try and cook for themselves.

It was impossible to discuss any topic, particularly that of food and meals, with the old men without being aware of their dental difficulties and deficiencies. Many wore dentures which did not fit them properly and were used purely for cosmetic purposes and taken out for the serious business of eating. Other old men were blatantly toothless at all times, chewed on their gums and seemed undaunted when faced with tough meat. Their reasons for not obtaining dentures were interesting and included such practical points as objections to the 'clicking' noise or the nightly display of unattractive looking dentures ranged on locker tops or the danger of losing or mislaying dentures and needing fittings all over again.

One old man pulled his remaining two fangs out several months ago and just 'couldn't be bothered' with dentures, while another old man lost his on a sea trip many years ago and manages very well without them. A charming old octogenarian wearing a boiler-suit and a frock-coat said he could not understand the Government giving away spectacles and dentures; he, for his part, would contrive to pay his way as he had always been taught to do.

Practically all the old men (except those with dentures) had discoloured, filthy teeth—many only possessed two or three—and in several cases it was obvious that oral hygiene was non-existent.

It would seem that the food habits of elderly men in lodging houses are governed not so much by lack of funds as by sheer disinterestedness both in themselves and in their surroundings. Undoubtedly inefficient dentures, toothlessness, the counter-attractions of gambling, drinking, tobacco, and the inaccessibility of cooking utensils are also responsible for an old man's unbalanced diet.

16. FUTURE PLANS

The future has little part in the life and plans of the aged. This was particularly noticeable in the survey, for 298 of the elderly lodgers were uncertain about their future plans. One old man summed up the general feeling by remarking 'us old men have a past but no future and we are too old to hope'. Many were bitter about relatives who had discarded them or regretful of lost opportunities, but all lived from day to day. Thirty-eight expressed the hope that they would enter a residential home but were uncertain of the procedure and none of them wished to live in a residential home run under religious auspices. These were mostly frail old men and the desire for residential accommodation arose more from a dread of becoming ill during the winter than the urge to be looked after and provided for. Sixteen men hoped to move out to private lodgings but in most cases this was due to 'wishful thinking' combined with a longing for privacy and properly cooked meals. Ten men were hopeful that work might be forthcoming for them again, usually in England, and eight had vague plans to go and live with relations. One sprightly old man in his late sixties was about to take a wife unto himself but for the most part the future held no hope for the elderly lodging-house resident.

Summary and Conclusions

I. GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

THE impressions of lodging-house life gained from conversations and case work amongst elderly patients in hospital were confirmed in the visits made to the lodging houses and in the information compiled in the survey questionnaire. The difficulties connected with food and with clothing replacements, temporary illness, and lack of warmth were particularly evident. After seeing the conditions prevailing in some of the lodging houses it is easier to understand and to sympathize with the disinclination of so many elderly lodgers to leave a comfortable hospital ward and return to a community where in their struggle for existence they must assert their right to a fair share of cooking utensils and facilities or go hungry, and where they must put up with the peculiar and disturbing nocturnal habits of some of their bedfellows. Yet the independence of the aged lodging-house residents became increasingly apparent as the survey progressed and is obviously related to the reluctance commonly found amongst them to entering residential homes.

Rather than bear the discipline and the restrictions of a workhouse, the Irishman, if in possession of health and strength, would wander the world over in search of employment. Confinement of any kind is more irksome to an Irishman than it is even to an Englishman. Hence, although he might be lodged, fed, and clothed, in a workhouse, better than he could lodge, feed, and clothe himself by his own exertions—he will yet, like the Englishman, never enter the workhouse, unless driven thither for refuge by actual necessity; and he will not remain there one moment longer than that necessity exists.

These words might have been written today but were actually penned 113 years ago by Mr. George Nicholls when he was instigating and recommending the provision of the Irish Poor Relief Act. The same sturdy, independent sentiments are still prevalent especially amongst the elderly lodging-house population who have not wholly adapted themselves to the resources and amenities of

the Welfare State. A period in hospital is considered quite 'above board' and excusable by these old gentlemen but they take fright immediately residential accommodation is mentioned as a more satisfactory method of maintaining health. One quaint old character with a crab-like gait and a violent taste in ties always refers to the hospital as the 'hospitable' which is hardly surprising considering the number of times in the year he occupies a bed there!

There is a whimsical quality of dignified independence about these elderly lodging-house men which was apparent even in the most loquacious old reprobates, and which makes one feel that every encouragement should be given to them to preserve their chosen way of life.

I feel that the experience gained in the survey was worth while and hope that the knowledge and information derived from what has hitherto been an unexplored field of study will lead to a better appreciation of the transition which has taken place in the type of lodger who now lives in common lodgings and of the way of life of this relatively unknown section of the community. From the survey it was apparent that elderly lodging-house men are a neglected group in society. Even had they served no other purpose the interviews gave an opportunity for the old men to unload their worries, grievances, fears, past experiences, and general comments on life.

The change from workers to pensioners has taken place gradually over the past 35-40 years and has laid a heavier financial burden on statutory services. It has changed the character of many lodging houses and whether it is desirable or not these changes are probably here to stay owing to present population trends towards an increased proportion of aged people in the community.

The survey has brought to light various difficulties experienced by wardens and general practitioners in dealing with elderly lodging-house residents. From the wardens' standpoint an old man is a potential liability as a lodger—there is always the danger that his physical infirmities will make him too dependent upon the services of his fellow lodgers or that his absentminded musings and elderly forgetfulness may cause an accident (particularly where candles, gas-rings, or smoking in bed are concerned). In addition to the necessity for more supervision of elderly lodging-house residents, unlike those who are working and who are out all day, they are constantly 'at home'. Much depends, therefore, on

the 'good offices' and consideration of the warden towards the older men.

In many respects the days of the old Poor Law system were kinder to elderly lodging-house men and the Relieving Officer was a central dominant figure who gathered together all available statutory help and took concerted action quickly. Often the one Relieving Officer served the same lodging-house district for many years and knew not only the scroungers amongst the old men but also the quality of the lodging house and its keeper. In many cases the Relieving Officer acted as a sort of 'Dutch uncle' to the entire neighbourhood and was let into the intimate comings and goings of the various households.

Nowadays the machinery of the Welfare State is slower and more officials are involved before assistance or transfer to residential accommodation can be arranged. As against this, there are more statutory benefits available now than in pre-1948 days, although some of the old men object to having their movements restricted and would prefer the gay, irresponsible, 'no fixed abode' days.

The general practitioner's main difficulty lies in keeping elderly lodgers on their feet or in having to arrange for their admission to hospital when they become ill. Many of those with minor ailments are too frail to stay up all day but yet do not really require hospital nursing care. Thus the main gap in the Welfare State legislation today is found in the lack of facilities for dealing with illness in elderly lodging-house men. According to the lodging-house rules, no man may remain ill in the lodging house for more than a day or two although the enforcement of this rule depends to a large extent on the benevolence of the warden.

Before July 1948 these sick old men (whether mildly or acutely ill) were admitted to the ever-open wards of the Belfast Union but now, owing to the change-over from the compulsory acceptance of admissions in the Union days and the increased usage of hospital beds everywhere, the general practitioner must make out a good case when requiring a bed. This problem is, of course, particularly difficult during the winter months when the overall pressure on hospital beds is very great. The Geriatric Unit at the Belfast City Hospital gives priority to these old men who quite often are not sufficiently ill to qualify for an acute medical or surgical bed but will deteriorate if not properly cared for at an early stage of their illness. It is difficult to reconcile the preventive aspect of the prob-

lem with the long waiting lists of younger, potentially remediable patients, particularly as old people are constantly blocking acute beds for social as much as medical reasons. It was interesting and rather surprising to note that the majority of the old men seen on the survey were registered with a doctor, though many of them are careless about such details and tend to lose their cards or forget the name of their general practitioner. In a sudden illness at night this may place the warden in a dilemma, though usually he can rely on helpful neighbouring doctors who will always attend in an emergency.

Since the introduction of the National Health Act, the Medical Officer of Health has had less responsibility in the management of lodging houses, and his department is now only concerned with the maintenance and inspection of sanitary facilities and similar routine Public Health responsibilities. The Welfare Authority maintains the register of lodging houses, decides whether or not they will be established or closed down, and has the responsibility for inspections to ensure that proper standards of cleanliness are being observed. The warden is given a printed list of rules in addition to the statutory regulations concerning distance between beds, number of beds and number of lodgers, and he is directly responsible to the Welfare Department for preserving discipline and safeguarding the amenities of the lodging house.

2. THE LODGING HOUSES

It is difficult to summarize the findings in the lodging houses themselves on account of variations in the detail of character and amenities in different lodging houses. It was evident that the elderly lodger usually prefers the convivial atmosphere of the smaller lodging houses though this may conflict with his desire for the privacy of a cubicle rather than an open dormitory bed. Some form of partitioning, or curtains, is desirable in the smaller lodging houses to provide privacy in the dormitories, for the demand for such beds is indicated by the waiting lists for cubicles kept by the wardens. Ground-floor accommodation is the exception in most lodging houses but an increased number of beds downstairs is badly needed for the very frail old men and those using crutches or otherwise physically handicapped. It has been noted that old men tend to live many years in a lodging house, and where lockers are not provided, property is more liable to be stolen. The absence of lockers produces a feeling of insecurity in old men

who like to keep what few belongings they have under lock and key beside their bed. Where there are no lockers a man either takes his belongings to bed with him, or else uses the pawnshop or the railway left-luggage office as a wardrobe.

Bathing facilities in the large lodging houses were good and every inducement was offered to persuade men to keep themselves clean. Unfortunately many of the old men have an insufficient change of underwear and so the benefits of bathing are often undermined. In some of the smaller lodging houses little encouragement is given to standards of personal cleanliness. Often a sink does duty for wash-hand basin, for preparation of food, and for clothes-washing, and no baths are available. Similarly, in the smaller lodging houses lavatory accommodation, particularly on the upper floors, is often totally inadequate or in a very bad state of repair. Altogether the smaller lodging houses are badly run and maintained but their very lack of organization seems to attract the lonely old man who is seeking a homely companionable corner rather than the sterile cleanliness and amenities of a larger lodging house. A less disciplined smaller lodging house means that residents can get up and go to bed when they like and this is often a serious matter when an elderly man has to make a choice of lodging house.

In the majority of lodging houses visited there was a general lack of comfort. It is appreciated that the cost of extra furniture might be too heavy, but the frail old men who have to spend so much time indoors would enjoy a few comfortable chairs as a change from the unpopular park-like benches which furnish so many lodging houses. Meals for the elderly lodging-house man are a problem whether or not they are supplied in the lodging house. Where gas-rings are included in the maintenance charge the old men mainly exist on fried foods, bread, and tea. In lodging houses where meals are provided, many of the old-age pensioners cannot afford full board, but many of the older men are incapable of obtaining and preparing an adequate diet for themselves, and exist 'from kettle to frying-pan' with tea and bread as the staple diet. This provides little resistance to the winter ills with which so many old men are afflicted, and leads gradually to listlessness and to a lowering of standards. Very few of the men interviewed ever eat fresh vegetables because they are too expensive. Tinned soups and fried onions seemed to be the height of luxury. Some of the men managed to afford a plate of stew and a mug of tea once a week at a dockside

café. Malnutrition leading to debility and increasing infirmity frequently results in ill health and admission to hospital. After some weeks of proper diet and nursing care these patients return to the same unsatisfactory conditions and soon break down again.

Every lodging house has its quota of old reprobates who defy discipline, refuse to keep themselves clean, spit indiscriminately, and try to qualify for as many extra benefits as their plausibility will earn them. This type of old man makes the warden's task difficult and lowers the standards of the lodging house. Mayhew (1861) describes the ragged tramps in the casual wards of the work-houses in England and brings to light many interesting personalities who spent the summer on the open road and the winter on a systematic tour of various casual wards. In these days of compulsory registration and official disapproval of a 'no fixed abode' address, the lot of the true tramp or vagrant is hard. During the survey some queer old characters were met and could best be described as the successors of the former picturesque tramp who, worldly possessions on shoulder, stepped his carefree way round the countryside.

One old man, for example, though now forced by failing sight to give up his roving ways and settle in a lodging house, used to be a familiar figure at all the horse fairs from Co. Antrim to Co. Tipperary and claims to know a man's native townland in Ireland by the inflection of his voice saying 'good morning'. This same old man, now totally blind, scorns a white stick and can be seen making his way through the traffic with the aid of a small motor horn.

Another old man used to tramp round a country district outside Belfast selling bootlaces and china animals. He is now too frail for this out-of-door life and lives in a lodging house. Whenever he can afford a single bus ticket to his old haunts, he does so, and the local inhabitants arrange a 'lift' for him back to town again. Even today he is a quaint-looking figure with his series of ragged mackintoshes (each layer firmly hitched round his waist with string) and a large brown hat setting off his yellow beard and hair.

Vagrancy has always been frowned upon and succeeding generations have tried different methods of dealing with the problem. In 1771 during the reign of George III was passed 'an Act for Badging such poor as shall be found unable to support themselves by labour and otherwise providing for them and for restraining such as shall be found able to support themselves by labour or industry

from begging'. This Act has almost a modern counterpart in the street traders' licence and badge of today.

The first workhouses were built at about the same time and were intended for the reception of 'the helpless poor and for keeping in restraint sturdy beggars and vagabonds'. Nowadays the police are empowered to put into custody any man found wandering at night without the price of a lodging-house bed in his pocket. A destitute man may make application to a police station and an officer will then conduct him to the nearest lodging house and pay for a bed. Sometimes, however, being taken into custody is a great relief particularly to the elderly down-and-out during cold, wet, winter weather.

A report from the National Assistance Board to the Minister of National Insurance (1952) deals with reception centres for persons without a settled way of living and makes the following recommendation: 'The work of attempting to persuade and help casuals to settle down and play a normal part in the community would be much easier if there were more good communal lodging houses at which men who have rough habits, unacceptable to private landladies or who cannot live contentedly except in a crowd, might be persuaded to settle down.'

3. THE ELDERLY LODGING-HOUSE RESIDENTS

There are approximately 400-430 old men living in lodging houses and their average age is about 70 years. There is a preponderance of single men, very few married men, and a small number of widowers and those separated. There were some thirty-three octogenarians. The older men were mainly labourers and skilled tradesmen and there were few decayed gentlefolk. The large variety of occupations includes many connected with shipbuilding. A desire for work following compulsory retirement was dominant amongst the old men, and steady deterioration was noted after giving up regular employment and appears to be aggravated by the lack of incentive to live a full life and by the *laissez-faire* atmosphere of the lodging houses themselves.

On the whole the old men looked reasonably healthy though many suffered from bronchitis, defective eyesight and hearing, visible deformities (e.g. leg amputations, painful feet, rheumatic pains, skin and varicose conditions). The majority of the old men were fairly clean though their clothing was usually indifferent

and in poor repair owing to the difficulty of paying for replacements and the cost of cleaning. A few of the men were truly filthy and lacked any apparent sense of personal hygiene, but it was evident that the condition of these men was due to a combination of illness, frailty, and complete apathy. The majority of the old men were fairly active apart from the small proportion who through infirmity or some disability were unable to negotiate stairs or unfit to roam the streets. Following admission to a hospital ward, warmth is usually the quality which the old men most appreciate and which they comment upon first. Apart from the practical aspect of inadequate clothing, bedding, and poorly heated dormitories, old men become dispirited and hopeless when they are cold. Methods of keeping warm are exchanged amongst the elderly fraternity of the lodging houses and layers of newspaper 'underwear' were considered essential. On several occasions an ex-hospital elderly lodging-house man has presented himself for readmission simply because he felt so cold, or he had no dry clothes into which he could change.

Incontinence

Though it was impossible to assess the extent of incontinence amongst the elderly lodgers, an idea of the situation in individual lodging houses could be gained after a visit to the dormitories. Some of the more frail old gentlemen, especially those with poor eyesight, admitted difficulty in finding their way to the wash-up during the night and they frequently bumped into something *en route* and brought forth torrents of abuse from a rudely awakened fellow lodger. This state of affairs sometimes leads to a lapse as the elderly gentleman concerned decides it would be safer and more peaceful to stay in bed. Some wardens try to place elderly lodgers suffering from frequency near the wash-up door and in the small lodging houses various makeshift utensils ease the situation. What could best be described as 'malicious incontinence' causes the most trouble and is related to drunkenness, poor hygiene, and laziness rather than any organic ailment. Where persistent incontinence related to senility occurs, the warden does not hesitate to call in the old man's doctor and hospital admission usually results. As already mentioned, some wardens impose fines for a wet bed, others keep a 'black list' of offenders, others (where possible) restrict the fluid intake, while some improvise a straw shake-down on the floor:

About half of the elderly lodgers were satisfied with their mode of life and the other half were indifferent or were dissatisfied. Their reasons for entering a lodging house and previous living conditions were closely linked. It was found that most of the old men (44 per cent.) had previously lived in private lodgings or other lodging houses and 42 per cent. had lived with relatives or friends. This change to a lodging house was brought about mainly by loss of employment and income, death of a landlady or member of family, or because of unhappy home circumstances. Other reasons for living in a lodging house were given in addition to those listed on the questionnaire and varied from a desire for independence to the selling up of a home or the emigration of a family. Some of the lodgers were conscious of the fact that their landladies wanted to get rid of them before they became too much of a burden. It was interesting to discover that many of the old men had lived for half a lifetime in a lodging house, contrary to the belief that a lodging house existence is fleeting and impermanent. On the whole, diversions and hobbies played little part in the lives of the elderly lodging-house men who seemed to be indifferent or else to be incapable of amusing themselves and yet admitted that life was aimless and monotonous. Smoking was the universal panacea and only twenty-three non-smokers were found. About one-third of the old men smoked and drank and about an eighth admitted they smoked, drank, and gambled though not in the style they were accustomed to in their working days. Restricted financial means account for the fairly general lack of over-indulgence.

The National Assistance Board was the main source of income for the majority of old men. Those receiving contributory and non-contributory pensions were also supplemented by the Board. The gap between pensions and cost of living was lamented by the old men who found clothing replacements a particular hardship. Old men do not dwell on their future plans and the majority were not only surprised at being asked but quite at a loss for an answer. As was found in the survey of the general population of Old Age in Northern Ireland (Adams and Cheeseman, 1951) no great demand for residential-home accommodation was apparent amongst the elderly lodging-house population. The sturdy independent lodging-house man will not consider entering a residential home and relinquishing not only the major part of his pension but also his freedom to do as he likes.

Lodging houses fulfil an invaluable function in the lives of homeless elderly pensioners who are unable to afford private lodgings and who are unwilling to enter a residential home. Lodging houses will always be necessary as long as the spirit of independence inspires old men to fend for themselves. Measures to make lodging houses more comfortable and better suited to the needs of the elderly are needed while still preserving the qualities of freedom and independence.

It would appear from the impressions gained in this survey that some change in the present system of supervision and registration of common lodging houses, including a reconsideration of the terms of appointment of the wardens (e.g. a period on probation), would do much to raise the general standards and amenities offered to them. It is appreciated that it is difficult to reconcile high standards of care and maintenance in a lodging house with the low charges, and with a large and growing proportion of elderly pensioners among the residents. The cost of improved surroundings and amenities would impose a heavier financial burden of maintenance. This could not be found satisfactorily by increasing the charges for the older men. The cost in the better lodging houses is already fairly high and leaves little for other expenses of food and clothes quite apart from smoking, betting, and other diversions. Raising the cost would probably drive the elderly men into cheaper and less desirable lodgings run by private owners, and not, as might be hoped, into residential accommodation. The old men seldom can be induced to realize that they would be better off in a residential home with full board and a few shillings a week pocket money to spend as they please than struggling to maintain themselves on what remains of a pension after paying for lodgings. The attraction of freedom to come and go as they please is paramount and many of them prefer to forgo a square meal in favour of their other pursuits such as gambling or drink. It might be possible, however, as suggested earlier (p. 19), to subsidize the older residents to some extent by raising the maintenance charges for working men. Perhaps some form of 'means test' could be applied because at the moment the younger working man pays exactly the same for his bed and amenities as the elderly pensioner. Improvements clearly are necessary for it would seem that the change in the pattern of lodging-house populations towards increasing numbers of older men has come to stay, presenting a problem which needs

further inquiry and corresponding changes in lodging-house management.

It may be thought that these old men do not need, or do not desire, anything better than the rough and ready life they are obliged to accept at present, but the interviews gave a very different impression, and hospital experience with such men has shown how rapidly most of them do respond to decent surroundings and proper care by increased self-respect and civilized behaviour. It is hardly necessary to stress in this age the importance of improved conditions in reducing the incidence of illness and unnecessary invalidism. Throughout the survey, as has been seen, the desire for independence was the guiding principle for the adoption of the lodging house way of life. It is felt therefore that this principle must always be borne in mind in any scheme for the improvement of these elderly men's conditions.

It is difficult to know in what other ways existing lodging houses could be modified or improved to care for the frailer types or for those men who were relatively robust when they took up residence but whose gradual deterioration has been accelerated by their unhomely and unsatisfactory mode of living. Lodging houses were originally designed as cheap lodgings for single working men and thus few of them are in any way suitably planned as permanent accommodation for retired men. It is true to say that any concessions or attempts to make life easier for the men come from the wardens themselves who certainly do what they can amidst difficult and unattractive surroundings.

One wonders if a resident community centre would be the answer with accommodation which would be midway between that provided by a residential home and a lodging house. The centre must be well heated and each man should have the privacy of a cubicle as well as an adequate locker or cupboard. Gas-rings and cooking utensils should be supplied so that each man can cook and eat when and what he likes, but provision should also be made for a cheap basic midday meal to try and encourage the lazy and the inveterate 'bread and tea' old folk to feed themselves properly. A lady warden should be in charge and where possible she should cope with minor ailments in the same way as she would do in a residential home. Recreational and workshop facilities should be provided and the general surroundings made sufficiently attractive and comfortable to arouse in the old men a feeling of self-respect

and a desire to keep up appearances, without, of course, over-awing them. A store of clothing (particularly underwear) should be maintained, and these the residents could obtain cheaply either on the instalment system or as a return for services rendered towards the maintenance of the centre.

Altogether this suggested residential community centre for old men would provide the best of both worlds as it would combine the care of a residential home with the freedom and independence of the lodging house.

It may sound a completely Utopian scheme but if the problem of the elderly is to be tackled with vision some further provision for the ever-increasing numbers of these independent old men will have to be made.

Already in England the trend is towards building bungalows and flats for robust old men who can thus preserve their independence rather than towards segregation in residential homes which are now regarded as more suitable for the frail types requiring supervision.

In Belfast, certainly, extra hospital beds for sick men are not the answer to the problem; such men are already given priority in the Geriatric Unit of the Belfast City Hospital.

Clubs for old men living in heavily populated lodging-house areas would be of great benefit particularly where lodging houses are closed during the day. These clubs could provide facilities for work, hobbies, or creative recreation in suitably warmed rooms with the addition perhaps of a cheap midday meal (a bowl of broth or soup seemed to be the universal choice for sustaining body and soul during the winter months). Facilities for the treatment of minor ailments might also be available. Frequent reference has been made in other reports on the problems of ageing to the need for chiropody services for the elderly, and the advantage of such services for the elderly residents in lodging houses were obvious from experience in this survey.

'Work lifts you up and contents your mind wonderfully', said one old man wistfully, and when one reflects on the many and varied trades represented in the Belfast lodging houses, a number of old men could spend their time profitably and happily engaged in labour of some description at these suggested clubs. The question of remuneration did not seem to occur to the old men and they merely desired work for its own sake. It has been said that 'the only way to depauperise a lodging-house man is to find him work of which

he can enjoy the benefit' (Orwell, 1929), and this was confirmed by the remarks of some of the men on the survey. If the compulsory retirement age was abolished many of the lodging houses would lose their complement of hopeless old men who would be only too glad to give up their life of crushing boredom in return for some form of work.

Intelligence and reflection and judgment reside in old men, and if there had been none of them, no state could exist at all—old age, especially an honoured old age, has so great authority that this is of more value than all the pleasures of youth.

/ Cicero.

APPENDIX

LODGING HOUSE SURVEY

SPM 49

Date of interview.....

SURNAME		FIRST NAMES	LODGING HOUSE	LEAVE BLANK			
AGE		SPARE		Number	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
				Lodging house	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
				Age	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
CIVIL STATE		LIVING RELATIVES		Civil state	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1 Single		1 Children		Relatives	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2 Married		2 Other relatives		Religion	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3 Widowed		3 Children and others		Birthplace	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4 Divorced		4 None			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5 Separated					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
RELIGION		PLACE OF BIRTH			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
OLD AGE PENSION		SERVICE PENSION		Old age pension	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1 Contributory		1 Yes		Service pension	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2 Non-contributory		2 No		Disablement pension	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3 None				National Assistance	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
DISABLEMENT PENSION		NATIONAL ASSISTANCE			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1 Yes		1 Yes			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2 No		2 No			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
EMPLOYMENT		PRESENT OCCUPATION		Employment	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1 Full time				Present occupation	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2 Part time				Previous occupation	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3 Unemployed		PREVIOUS OCCUPATION			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4 Retired					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
PREVIOUS LIVING		PREVIOUS PLACE OF RESIDENCE		Previous living	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
1 Alone				Previous residence	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2 With wife					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3 With children					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4 With other relatives					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5 With friends					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6 In an Institution					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7 In the Services					<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

REASONS FOR ENTERING LODGING HOUSE		LEAVE BLANK	
Subject destitute	1 Yes 2 No	Destitute	
Death of member of subject's family	1 Yes 2 No		
Unhappy home circumstances	1 Yes 2 No	Death	
Wanted independence	1 Yes 2 No		
Wanted to live in lodging house	1 Yes 2 No	Unhappy	
Lost employment	1 Yes 2 No		
Seeking employment	1 Yes 2 No	Independence	
Drink (confirmed by Warden)	1 Yes 2 No		
Other stated reasons:—		Desire	
		Employment lost	
		Employment sought	
		Other	
FUTURE PLANS		Marriage	
Hopes to get married	1 Yes 2 No	Relative	
Hopes to live with relatives	1 Yes 2 No		
Hopes to find private lodgings	1 Yes 2 No	Private lodgings	
Hopes to go into residential home	1 Yes 2 No	Residential home	
Other stated hopes:—		Other	
		Uncertain	
Uncertain about future plans?	1 Certain 2 Uncertain		
HOBBIES	HABITS	Hobbies	
		Habits	
STATE OF MIND	APPEARANCE	State of mind	
1 Satisfied	1 Healthy	Appearance	
2 Not satisfied	2 Frail		
3 Indifferent	3 Ill		
CONDITION	VERTIGO	Condition	
1 Clean	1 Yes	Vertigo	
2 Neglected	2 No		
3 Filthy			
DOCTOR ATTENDING	STAIR CLIMBING	Doctor attending	
1 Yes	1 Yes	Stair climbing	
2 No	2 No		
WALKING ABILITY		Walking ability	
1 Indoors only			
2 Limited outdoors and indoors			
3 Unlimited indoors and outdoors			
INCONTINENT	MENTAL STATE	Incontinent	
1 Yes	1 Alert	Mental state	
2 No	2 Defective memory		
	3 Confused		
REMARKS INCLUDING SPECIAL DISABILITIES			