



Protesting about Pauperism (Royal Historical Society Studies in History New Series)

Elizabeth T. Hurren

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The consequences of extreme poverty were a grim reality for all too many people in Victorian England. The various poor laws implemented to try to deal with it contained a number of controversial measures, one of the most radical and unpopular being the crusade against outdoor relief, during which central government sought to halt all welfare payments at home. Via a close case study of Brixworth union in Northamptonshire, which offers an unusually rich corpus of primary material and evidence, the author looks at what happened to those impoverished men and women who struggled to live independently in a world-without-welfare outside the workhouse. She retraces the experiences of elderly paupers evicted from almshouses, of the children of the aged poor prosecuted for parental maintenance, of dying paupers who were refused medical care in their homes, and of women begging for funeral costs in an attempt to prevent the bodies of their loved ones being taken for dissection by anatomists. She then shows how increasing democratisation gave the labouring poor the means to win control of the poor law. ELIZABETH T. HURREN is a Reader in the Medical Humanities, University of Leicester.

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