

grocery, stationery and earthenware, and with the assistance of a niece, accommodated two elderly ladies of independent means, and an organ builder. There were lodging houses in spa towns and seaside resorts that provided for visiting families, although in the Isle of Thanet by the 1870s the term 'lodging house' had gained such unsavoury connotations that accommodation for respectable visitors came to be called 'apartments'. There were lodging houses catering specifically for members, usually recent graduates, of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The numbers of lodging house keepers recorded in the printed volumes of nineteenth century censuses cannot be regarded as reliable, for the totals include many keepers of establishments of the kinds described above, that were not common lodging houses, and excluded many that were. Most of these were households that contained many lodgers, but where the male head of a household is described by his principal trade, and no occupation was given for his wife who probably managed the establishment.

A writer explaining public health legislation in 1906 defined a common lodging house as 'that class of lodging-house in which persons of the poorer class are received for short periods, and though strangers to one another, are allowed to inhabit one common room'. He acknowledged that there was no satisfactory legal definition.<sup>3</sup> The lodging houses considered in this article accommodated lodgers in the Registrar General's definition of that term for census purposes, that is, people who provided themselves with food in common kitchens shared with other inmates. The enumerator of a Shrewsbury establishment in 1861 noted that it was a licensed lodging house, and 'all board in the same room'. According to the Registrar General, a 'boarder' was someone whose food was provided by the householder. Lodging houses of this kind were open to passing travellers, although they might also accommodate long-term residents.

In the 1830s and '40s, with the threat of cholera and a growing awareness of the unhealthiness of urban life, reformers became anxious to control lodging houses. Edwin Chadwick regarded legislation to be necessary 'for the protection of the inmates as well as the public'. Lodging houses were the first working class dwellings to be subjected to legislative control. The Nuisance Removal and Diseases Prevention Act, 1848, empowered local authorities to demand that they be adequately

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<sup>3</sup> J.W. Harrison, *Lessons on Sanitation*, London: Griffin, 1906, p. 81.