

cleaned. The Common Lodging Houses Act, 1851, required authorities to register and regulate lodging houses, and directed keepers to give access to officials and to notify them of cases of infectious diseases, to keep their premises clean, and specifically to limewash walls and ceiling in the first week of April and October each year. The legislation was extended by the Common Lodging Houses Act, 1853, which required potential keepers of lodging houses to produce character references, to provide supplies of clean water for inmates where this was practicable and, when requested, to reveal information to the authorities about vagrant inmates. The Labouring Classes Lodging Houses Act, 1851, which gave powers to local authorities to build or purchase lodging houses, was initially ineffective, although in the 1890s its provisions enabled boroughs to construct houses for families. The legislation of 1851 and 1853 was subsequently consolidated and reinforced by the Public Health Acts of 1866 and 1874.⁴

The hub of a common lodging house was its kitchen, which was commonly lined with benches, had a table at its centre and was focused on a fireplace, around which a few frying pans, gridirons and long forks were provided on which inmates could cook herring, saveloys or bacon. A tin teapot might be provided, while jam jars usually served as drinking vessels. The management did not provide cutlery, but regular inmates carried their own clasp knives. The sexes were not normally segregated in sleeping accommodation, although families might be provided with separate rooms. Beds were commonly shared. It was a recognised feature of lodging house culture that inmates remained anonymous. They were admitted without giving their names on payment of the appropriate fee of 3d or 4d a night, with Sunday nights free for those who stayed for a week. Some inmates were recorded on census returns by the nick-names that were commonly used in lodging houses. A 21-year old dressmaker at the house of John Bustin in Oxford in 1861 was recorded as 'Huzza King', an Italian musician in Bishop's Castle in 1891 called himself 'Abraham Lincoln', and a bricklayer and a carpet weaver travelling together and staying in Hereford in 1861 were known as 'Necodemus Salt' and 'Michael Pepper'. The numbers staying at lodging houses fluctuated night by night. The average number of inmates in 1861 was around nine,

⁴ E. Gaudie, *Cruel Habitations: a History of Working Class Housing 1780-1918* (1974), London: Allen & Unwin, pp. 241-46; Harrison, *Letters on Sanitation*, pp. 81-90.