

# **Migrants and the media in nineteenth-century Liverpool**

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## **Abstract**

Migration is a controversial topic in twenty-first century Britain, and similar debates were equally visible in the nineteenth century with ample evidence that migrants from Ireland and Europe faced stigmatization and discrimination in British cities. Today the media plays a major role in fuelling such debates, but little is known about the impact of newspaper reporting on public perceptions of migrants in the past. This paper focuses on the reporting of cases brought before the police courts in Liverpool in 1851, 1871 and 1891 and, through the use of nominal record linkage to census data, examines the extent and manner in which migrant origin was commented on in one major Liverpool newspaper. It is demonstrated that, perhaps surprisingly, this media outlet largely ignored migrant origin in its reporting, and thus was not a significant factor in shaping public perceptions of migrants in the city.

## **Autobiographical note**

Colin G Pooley is Emeritus Professor of Social and Historical Geography at Lancaster University. His research focuses on societal change in Britain and continental Europe since the eighteenth century, with a specific emphasis on migration and mobility. He has published widely including Pooley C and Turnbull J (1998) *Migration and mobility in Britain since the 18<sup>th</sup> century* (London, UCL Press).

## Migrants and the media in nineteenth-century Liverpool

### 1. Introduction: the context

Migration, and the impact of immigrants on economy, society and culture, is a topic that twenty-first century global media frequently highlight. Most often such stories cast immigrants in a negative light and construe immigration as a problem. In turn, such reporting can fuel discrimination against immigrants and can make their lives more difficult<sup>1</sup>. In twenty-first century Britain it seems rare for a popular newspaper not to run a story that focuses on immigration in some form. For instance, a detailed survey of media reporting of immigrants carried out in 2002 demonstrated the extent to which parts of the national press focused on issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers, most often casting these immigrants in a negative light.<sup>2</sup> Much less is known about the role of media in nineteenth-century Britain in reporting migration and immigration, and thus in potentially shaping contemporary attitudes towards immigrants. Discrimination against Irish migrants to Britain is well-documented, and it is usually assumed that this was in part at least fuelled by stories that were

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<sup>1</sup> . P. Hartmann and C. Husband, *Racism and the mass media* (Totowa, N.J, 1974); C. Butterwegge, 'Mass media, immigrants and racism in Germany. A contribution to an on-going debate', *Communications*, 21 (1996), 203-20; K. O'Doherty and A. Lecouter, "'Asylum seekers", "Boat People" and "illegal immigrants": social categorization in the media', *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 59 (2007), 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> S. Buchanan, B. Grillo and T. Threadgold, *What's the Story? Results from Research into Media Coverage of Refugees and Asylum seekers in the UK* (London, 2003).

reported in both local and national media<sup>3</sup>, but there is little evidence about the extent to which nineteenth-century British media shaped social and cultural constructions of immigration more widely<sup>4</sup>. This paper reports a pilot project that explores one aspect of this question: the degree to which crime reporting in one local British newspaper recognized migrant origin as a significant descriptor. In doing so it raises questions about the role of the media in shaping public opinion about migrants and immigrants, including Irish migrants to Britain, in the nineteenth century.

First, it is appropriate to briefly explore existing evidence in more detail. There were high levels of both internal migration and immigration in nineteenth-century Britain, but it was migration from Ireland to Britain that attracted most attention in mid-century<sup>5</sup>. Anti-Irish sentiments were commonly expressed by some prominent public figures and writers. In Liverpool successive Medical Officers of Health condemned Irish living arrangements and, especially, funeral customs; frequently

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<sup>3</sup>. G.Davis, *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914* (Dublin, 1991); D. MacRaild, *Culture, conflict and migration. The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool, 1998); M. O'Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth-century Britain: problems of integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (1981), 149-73; J. Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: the history of the Liverpool Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool, 2007).

<sup>4</sup>. L. Brake, B. Bell and D. Finkelstein eds., *Nineteenth-century media and the construction of identities* (Basingstoke, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>. C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century* (London, 1998); D. Feldman, 'Migration', in M. Daunton ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume III 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), 185-206; L. Tabali, *Global migrants, local culture. Natives and newcomers in provincial England, 1841-1939* (Basingstoke, 2011).

blaming them for encouraging the spread of disease<sup>6</sup>. For instance in 1843, before the main influx of Irish famine migrants to the city, Dr Duncan (who later became Liverpool's first Medical Officer of Health (MoH)) stated forcefully:

The Irish poor are especially exposed to the operation of the physical causes of fever. It is they who inhabit the filthiest and worst ventilated courts and cellars, who congregate the most numerous in dirty lodging houses, who are the least cleanly in their habits, and the most apathetic about everything that befalls them ... Nor does the evil stop with themselves. By their example ... they are rapidly lowering the standard of comfort among their English neighbours<sup>7</sup>

Duncan continued to express similar sentiments during his tenure as MoH, effectively blaming the behaviour of Irish immigrants for the lack of improvement in sanitation and health in parts of the city:

The wards of high mortality ... are those which contain the largest population of Irish of the lowest class, not only the most destitute, but the most improvident and the most filthy in their habits; while those with low mortality ... are those which contain the smallest proportion of this class of the population. And so long as such an essential difference exists in the character and habits of the population of the two districts, no sanitary arrangements

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<sup>6</sup> . C. Pooley, 'The Irish in Liverpool c1850-1940', in M. Engman, F. Carter, A. Hepburn and C. Pooley eds., *Ethnic identity in urban Europe* (Aldershot, 1992), 71-98.

<sup>7</sup> . W. H. Duncan, *Report on the physical causes of high mortality in Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1843), 18.

however beneficial they may be, can ever reduce the mortality of the less healthy to that of the more healthy district.<sup>8</sup>

In 1863 Duncan was replaced as MoH by Dr Trench, but Duncan's successor was equally damning of the behaviour of Liverpool's Irish poor, effectively suggesting that they were not suited to what he saw as civilised urban life. Following a cholera death in an Irish neighbourhood in 1866 he wrote:

The three houses were crammed with men, women and children, while drunken women squatted thickly on the flags of the court before the open door of the crowded room where the corpse was laid. There had been, in the presence of death, one of those shameful carousals, which, to the disgrace of the enlightened progress and advanced civilisation of the nineteenth century, still lingers as dregs of ancient manners amongst the funeral customs of the Irish peasantry.<sup>9</sup>

Such views, even if expressed a little more charitably, persisted well into the twentieth century with one commentator writing of the Irish in Liverpool in 1912:

The Irish constitute a serious problem. They largely form the roughest and lowest elements of the people, and are mainly settled in two poor districts in the north and south. Gay, irresponsible, idle and quarrelsome, they seem by nature unfitted for the controlled life of a large town, which tends only to accentuate their feelings. It seems impossible for them to adopt the restraints, the responsibilities, and the sense of corporate citizenship which should be essential characteristics of the town dweller. They contribute abnormally to the

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<sup>8</sup> . W. H. Duncan, *Report on the Health of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1859), 11.

<sup>9</sup> . W. S. Trench, *Report on the Health of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1866), 23.

work of the police court and fill the workhouse and charitable institutions. They are the despair of the social reformer while they win his heart with their frolicsome humour'<sup>10</sup>

Given that such views were expressed by men in prominent public positions, and by other commentators, it might be expected that migrant origin, especially from Ireland, would be commented on in the press, especially when misdemeanours had been committed. However, this has not been systematically tested and research reported in this paper begins to examine this issue in the context of Victorian Liverpool

Some attention has been given to anti-Irish discrimination in the labour market, especially the extent to which newspaper advertisements specified that Irish servant girls would not be welcome in non-Irish households. This certainly occurred. Such adverts, specifically stating that no Irish need apply (NINA), peaked in Britain in the 1850s following the main wave of Irish migration, and were most common in London and North-west England (both areas with a large Irish migrant population). But in both Britain and the USA it has been argued that the myth of such discrimination was somewhat stronger than the reality (at least as expressed in newspaper adverts). There were of course many other ways in which discrimination in the recruitment of servants could operate.<sup>11</sup> One typical example from a Liverpool newspaper of 1871 read: 'Wanted a General Servant (not Irish) with good character. Wages £12. Two in family – apply after 11am at ....'.<sup>12</sup> However, this was the only such

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<sup>10</sup> . F. D'Aeth, 'Liverpool', in H. Bosanquet ed., *Social conditions in provincial towns* (London, 1912), 38.

<sup>11</sup> . R. Jensen, "'No Irish Need Apply": a myth of victimization', *Journal of Social History*, 36 (2002), 405-29; D. MacRaid, "'No Irish Need Apply": the origin and persistence of a prejudice', *Labour History Review* 78 (2013), 1-3.1

<sup>12</sup> . Liverpool Mercury, Wednesday May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1871.

example out of 69 adverts for servants in this issue of the newspaper suggesting that, although sometimes occurring, by this date the practice was by no means common. This paper explores the extent to which anti-Irish feelings were expressed through other sections of the printed media.

Liverpool and London were probably the two most cosmopolitan cities in nineteenth-century Britain, and London in particular had by far the greater number of migrants from a range of continental European countries. Migrants from France, Germany and Italy especially were concentrated in central London Boroughs, and here too there is some evidence of ethnic stereotyping and discrimination in the press and among other commentators<sup>13</sup>. Such reports especially occurred in local news media in the late-nineteenth century, usually associating European migrants with crime, immorality and dishonesty. For instance: 'The French colony located in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square attracts to it the immoral of the streets of Paris; and so of the German and other colonies'<sup>14</sup> and 'Italians are extremely clever at escaping from the clutches of the police, even when they commit a murder as well as a robbery'.<sup>15</sup> Were similar attributes attached to foreign migrants in late nineteenth-century Liverpool?

It is relatively easy to extract particular statements from newspapers or other media, and to assume that these are representative of a much wider trend. In this paper I attempt to undertake a more systematic analysis of references to migrant origin in the reporting of crime in nineteenth-century

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<sup>13</sup> . C. Holmes, *John Bull's island: immigration and British society, 1871-1971* (London, 1988); P. Panayi, *Immigration, ethnicity and racism in Britain, 1815-1945* (Manchester, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> . St Pancras Guardian, November 1889.

<sup>15</sup> . St Pancras Guardian, August 1890.



Liverpool. The above evidence suggests that migrant origin could have been routinely recorded for at least some identifiable groups of immigrants, and that this may have been used to create a degree of ethnic stereotyping. Systematic analysis of newspaper records linked to census data allows this hypothesis to be tested more directly. The reporting of crime has been chosen as the main area of focus because, as shown above, there is some evidence that both Irish and European migrants were assumed to be associated with criminality in the English press, and because migrant origin was a category that police were required to record, thus implying that those in authority considered this to be an important distinguishing characteristic. Annual Reports of the Chief Constables routinely tabulated crimes by broad categories of migrant origin, and these data demonstrate that migrants from Ireland and elsewhere overseas were over-represented in arrests relative to their presence in the total population. For instance in 1871 the Irish-born accounted for 15.6 per cent of the population of Liverpool whereas they represented over one third of arrests for all offences. Other overseas born formed 1.9 per cent of the city's population but accounted for 2.7 per cent of arrests in 1870/71 (Tables 1 and 2). These data would have been publicly available and could have shaped opinion towards such migrant groups. Whether the data reflect actual criminal activity or patterns of police behaviour is, of course, a matter of debate.<sup>16</sup>

## **2. Data and methods**

For this pilot study the research was focused on the city of Liverpool in North-west England. There were two main reasons for this choice. First, I have previously undertaken a considerable amount of research on Liverpool and thus was familiar with the context and, second, as a major port city

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<sup>16</sup> . J. Walton, M. Blinkhorn, C. Pooley, C., D. Tidswell and M. Winstanley, 'Crime, migration and social change in NW England and the Basque Country, 1840-1930', *British Journal of Criminology*, 39 (1999), 90-112.

Liverpool attracted migrants from all over the world in the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> It might thus be surmised that migrant origin would be seen by the media as a relevant characteristic of the population. The research methods adopted were relatively straightforward but time-consuming. The aim was to identify those named in newspaper reports of crime, to record what information was given about them (especially migrant origin if stated), and then to link all these individuals to the relevant census enumerators' books (which record place of birth) to see if some groups of migrants were more likely than others to be highlighted by the press. Data were first extracted from the reports of the Police Courts given in the *Liverpool Mercury*, one of the principal Liverpool newspapers of the time. The *Liverpool Mercury* was first published in 1811, originally as a weekly paper, but by 1858 it was published daily and had a wide circulation. Its politics were largely reformist and liberal in tone and it was assiduous in covering a wide range of local news.<sup>18</sup> The columns by Hugh Shimmin on urban life in Liverpool were seen as especially effective in highlighting social issues and gained wide visibility.<sup>19</sup>

For one month after the census dates of 1851, 1871 and 1891 the names and other details given in the reports from the Police Courts, including migrant origin if given, were recorded in a MS Access

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<sup>17</sup>. C. Pooley, 'Living in Liverpool', in J. Belchem ed., *Liverpool: character, culture and history* (Liverpool, 2006) 171-255

<sup>18</sup> . Nineteenth-century British Newspapers (British Library/Gage):

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

<sup>19</sup> . H. Shimmin, J. Walton and A. Wilcox. *Low life and moral improvement in mid-Victorian England: Liverpool through the journalism of Hugh Shimmin* (Leicester, 1991); H. Shimmin, *Liverpool Life: The Courts and Alleys of Liverpool* (New York, 1985; originally published Liverpool, 1856).

database for all those for whom a street address was stated. Information was recorded on both offenders and victims to see if migrant origin was more likely to be given for those committing crimes. This could imply that a particular migrant group was being stigmatised. Police Courts normally sat on six days of the week and were the first point to which all those arrested were referred. Minor offences were dealt with summarily but more serious offences were passed on to the County Court for justice.<sup>20</sup> Residential mobility in the nineteenth-century city was high,<sup>21</sup> so if effective record linkage was to occur then it was essential to record details close to a census date. Prior testing had demonstrated that using the period immediately after a census provided better linkage results than if data were collected for the weeks prior to the census. On-line census records for 1851, 1871 and 1891 were then searched using the Find My Past dataset (<http://www.findmypast.co.uk/>) to try to identify in the census all those recorded in the Police Court reports. When a link was made all relevant census details, including birthplace, were added to the database. In this way it was possible to check, for instance, how often those recorded in the census as coming from Ireland were recorded as Irish in the Police Court reports.

There are many familiar problems of misrepresentation and misinterpretation that must be dealt with when undertaking record linkage between sources:<sup>22</sup> most of these were encountered in this research. For instance, offenders appearing in the Police Court may have used a false name or

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<sup>20</sup> . C. Emsley, *Crime and society in England, 1750-1900* (London, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> . C. Pooley, 'Residential mobility in the Victorian city', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, NS4 (1979), 258-77.

<sup>22</sup> . E. A. Wrigley, *Identifying people in the past* (London, 1973); M. Gutmann, 'The future of record linkage in History', *Journal of Family History*, 2.2 (1977), 151-58.

address, thus making linkage impossible; the journalist may have recorded personal details wrongly; transcription of the census enumerators' books for Find My Past may be inaccurate thus making it hard to establish a link using the on-line index; and, of course, victims or offenders may have moved between the census and the court report. Considerable care was taken to search for individuals through both name and address details, and to establish a firm link. It was clear that transcription and/or recording errors were common as in a number of cases a combination of evidence (for instance address, occupation etc) confirmed a link even though there were significant differences in the spelling of a name. The data are also likely to be only a partial representation of all offences brought before the Police Court as journalists and editors could decide which cases were worth reporting. For instance, few cases of arrest for drunkenness were reported (see below) even though this was a common offence recorded in police statistics. In total a sample of 225 names and addresses were recorded from the newspapers and 138 of these were firmly linked to the census, giving an overall linkage rate of 61.3 per cent (Table 3). Linkage was most successful in 1871, the year that also yielded the largest number of crime reports, and linkage was marginally more successful for males than for females. Overall, the sample consisted of about one third females and two thirds males.

In addition three further checks were made on the data. First, brief details were recorded for all those individuals who were named in the newspaper Police Court records with an ascription of origin, but with no address information that would have allowed record linkage; second, a word search was carried out in the entire newspaper for the same periods (one month after each census) to identify all other uses of key terms used to identify origin (for instance Irish, Welsh, Foreign etc). Thus even if origin was not recorded in court reports this information provided a check to see if migrant origin was routinely recorded in reports of other activities. The results of all these searches are reported below. Finally, the Police Court reports were examined to check that they did record personal details rather than just information about the offence. In other words, could it reasonably be expected that details such as migrant origin might be recorded. This is indeed the case as many

reports provided quite detailed information about offenders in particular. Two examples from 1871 will suffice:

Thomas Burke, a corn porter, who lives in Jenkinson Street, was charged on remand with dangerously assaulting his wife, Joanna. Mr Goodere defended. The prosecutrix stated that her husband was keeping another woman, and did not supply her with money sufficient for her livelihood. On the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> instant they quarrelled, and he struck her and jumped on her, fracturing her ribs. When the prisoner was taken into custody he said "I walked into her properly, and she deserved it". For the defence witnesses were called who stated that the prisoner was a hard-working man, who frequently made as much as £3 per week, but that his wife made his home wretched by pawning anything pledgable, and selling the tea, sugar &c, he brought home; also that the prosecutrix received the injuries to her ribs from falling on the stairs. Both prisoner and his wife had been repeatedly locked up for drunkenness. Fined £5 and costs, or two months.<sup>23</sup>

Eleanor Moore, a young lady, living at 7 Latham St, summoned Robert Thompson, said to be a master tailor, residing at No. 11 in the same street, for having assaulted her. Mr Sowton prosecuted and Mr Thornley defended. Complainant stated that on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> instant, about half past nine o'clock, she was in the back yard, when the defendant rushed in, seized her by the wrist, using vile language, and accused her of writing an anonymous letter. She denied that she had written any letter of that kind, but the defendant would not listen to her, "clawed" and struck her in the face with his clenched fist. Her face was very badly scratched, bled profusely, and her eye was bruised and blackened. After seeing the state in which her face was defendant took to his heels and ran away. Defendant had twice sent to her to settle the case, but she refused to do so, as she wanted him bound over to keep the peace. In cross-

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<sup>23</sup> . Liverpool Mercury, Friday April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1871, p8

examination, complainant deposed that she did not write any anonymous letter to the defendant about his family nor did she know anything about it. Edwin Pearson and Joseph Jackson were called for the complainant, and corroborated her statement as to the assault. For the defence, Mr. Thornley urged that his client was a Sunday school teacher, and a gentleman of unblemished character, but he and his family had been subjected to the greatest annoyance by anonymous letters containing the vilest calumnies. It could be proved that one of these letters was in the handwriting of the complainant, and he would establish that fact. ...<sup>24</sup>

These examples, typical of many entries, demonstrate that the newspaper Police Court reports did provide extensive detail of both the circumstances of the offence and the character of the accused, as represented in court. For instance, in the second example it is notable that in defence the accused stressed his work as a Sunday school teacher thus building the image of a respectable citizen. The fact that he came originally from Scotland (as revealed by the linked census entry) was not mentioned in the report.

### **3. Results: the visibility of migrants in the media**

Before examining in detail the extent to which migrant origin was recorded in the media reports of cases brought to the Police Courts, it is necessary to summarise the main characteristics of the population sample produced by the research. As outlined above, it is unlikely to be a complete record of all offences or of arrests made, and thus will be a particular sub-set of the population of Liverpool. Overall, almost 70 per cent of individuals recorded from the newspaper reports were offenders and 30 per cent were victims, with the majority of those recorded being young adults. For instance, 48.6 per cent of those traced to the census were aged 20-39 years. 68 per cent of those

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<sup>24</sup> . Liverpool Mercury, Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1871.

recorded from the newspapers were male (this was the same for both victims and offenders), and linkage rates were almost identical for both males and females. The most common offences recorded were those relating to trading and licencing (for instance selling liquor out of hours or trading without a licence); followed by all forms of theft and, thirdly, by assaults (Table 4). Remember, these are the offences reported in the Liverpool Mercury and not a true reflection of all offences committed in Liverpool. As noted above the most obvious omission is those arrested for drunkenness.

Birthplace was recorded for all those linked to the census with Liverpool the most common place of birth, followed by those born in Ireland (Table 5). Migrants from Ireland and Scotland were both over-represented in the linked records of those named in the Police Courts compared to their presence in the total population (Table 2), but otherwise the origins of linked migrants broadly reflected the migrant composition of the city.

It was hypothesised at the start of the paper that reports of crime in the media would be likely to indicate the migrant origin of offenders who were not local to Liverpool. It was also suggested that this would be most likely for the Irish, but that it might also occur for others seen to be different from the majority population. In fact, the recording of migrant origin in the Police Court reports was very rare. For those with both a name and address (and therefore potentially traceable to the census to check place of birth) origin was recorded only twice in the entire dataset. Both occasions were in 1851 and related to Irish men, one arrested for assault and another for theft. In one case the census confirmed Irish birth; the second could not be traced successfully. These reports were immediately after the main Irish famine migration to Liverpool, when the Irish-born population was at its most visible in the city. However, in 1871 and 1891 no linked offenders or victims were identified by origin despite, as shown above, the reports frequently including other personal characteristics. Details were also recorded of instances where a migrant origin was recorded in the newspaper report but no address was given. In these cases it was not possible to link the individuals to the census to

corroborate the birthplace. In total there were just twelve such instances: six Irish (all but one recorded in 1851), three 'travellers' arrested as a group, one Welsh, one German and one recorded just as 'foreign'. Table 6 summarises all those cases where a migrant origin was noted in the newspaper reports. Two examples from 1851 illustrate those instances where origin was reported though, as shown in the first example, being of Irish origin did not necessarily lead to harsh treatment:

CHARGE OF ASSAULT AGAINST AN IRISH LODGING-HOUSE KEEPER – Police officer 530 charged a lodging-house keeper, named Kelly, with assaulting him on Tuesday. It appeared that an Irish girl had taken lodgings at the house of the prisoner, in Stewart Street, and had left a travelling-bag and some other articles. Her sister not approving of the lodgings, persuaded her not to live there, and she (complainant) called to get back her bag, which was refused. She then sought the assistance of officer 530, who, upon entering the house, was violently assaulted by the prisoner and his sister. Mr. Owen, on behalf of Kelly, contended that, as there was no charge of felony, the officer had no right to enter his client's house; it was an over exercise of power. The magistrate coincided in this view of the case, and the prisoner was discharged.<sup>25</sup>

ROBBERY OF TEA – Three Irish youths, named Luke Blake, Patrick Cahill, and Patrick Walsh, were brought up on a charge of stealing a quantity of tea from the ship Cuthberts, lying in the Victoria Dock. On Tuesday morning, an officer observed one of the prisoners go on board the vessel, and, suspecting him to be a thief, he followed him, when he found the other two prisoners concealed close to the vessel's figure-head. One of them threw some tea into the dock, and a quantity was concealed on their persons. It was then discovered

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<sup>25</sup> . Liverpool Mercury, Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1851, p6.



that a box of tea (part of the cargo) had been broken open, and 19lbs. stolen therefrom. The prisoners were sent to gaol for three months each.<sup>26</sup>

Although there is some limited evidence to suggest that migrant origin was deemed by the reporters to be a more important characteristic in 1851 than in 1871 or 1891; the only reasonable conclusion to draw from these data is that the migrant origin of an individual, whether offender or victim, was not considered of great importance in the Police Court reports compiled by journalists. Of those where an address was given migrant origin was only recorded in 0.9% of instances. To provide a further check on this evidence, a word search was carried out in the entire newspapers for the same time period as used for the main data extraction. All instances of the use of an obvious migrant origin (such as Irish, Welsh, Scots, Foreign etc. and their variants) were searched for to see if migrant origin was attributed to individuals in other reports. Once again there were very few such instances. Apart from the occasional advertisement specifying that an English or Welsh servant was required, or stating that no Irish need apply (see above), migrant origin was not referred to in a way that could be deemed to be derogatory in any reports of individuals. Again, it would seem that where someone came from was, for the most part, not deemed to be important in the news reports presented in the Liverpool Mercury at this time.

In many ways this is a surprising conclusion given the concerns about migrants visible in the press today, and the evidence elsewhere that the Irish in particular were subject to discrimination and stigmatisation in the nineteenth century. There are a number of possible explanations. First, it may be that Liverpool in the second half of the nineteenth century was more tolerant of migrants than other parts of Britain. In 1851 the Irish-born formed almost one quarter of the city's population, with substantial numbers of migrants from elsewhere in the British Isles and overseas. The cosmopolitan nature of the city may have meant that migrant origin was not considered particularly significant.

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<sup>26</sup> . Liverpool Mercury, Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1851, p6.

The fact that the, albeit sparse, recording of migrant origin appears to have declined after 1851 may support this. More research is needed on other places to see if conclusions drawn from Liverpool are borne out elsewhere. Second, it may be that the Liverpool Mercury (a broadly Liberal paper) was not typical of other media either in the city or elsewhere. It is currently the only Liverpool paper available and searchable on-line for the full period covered by this research, but it would be wise to carry out further research using other media outlets in Liverpool before firm conclusions are drawn.<sup>27</sup> Third, it may be that identification and possible stigmatisation of migrants was occurring in other ways, for instance in the labour market, in access to housing, on the street and in the pub: the fact that newspaper reporters did not routinely report migrant origin when recording court proceedings does not mean that the identification of migrants as different did not occur elsewhere. Fourth, it may of course be that there was simply much less antipathy expressed towards the Irish and other groups than is sometimes concluded. There is always a tendency for exceptional events to be recorded, and it may be that for most of the time migrants from all parts of the world could go about their daily lives without their migrant origins being remarked upon. Further research is necessary before any of these possible explanations can be substantiated.

## **Conclusions**

Only limited conclusions can be drawn from this pilot project. The sample is small and data are for just one town at three census dates. Further information from a wider range of places and media sources is needed before firm conclusions can be proposed. However, based on the evidence collected for Liverpool it would seem that migrant origin was not something that captured the attention of the nineteenth-century media. Liverpool was a city that drew migrants from all over the world, but for most of the time the migrant origins of individuals were not visible in the main daily

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<sup>27</sup>. This is a time-consuming task and will be the focus of future research.

newspaper circulating in the city. In some ways this evidence is counterintuitive and goes against some other evidence about the ways in which some migrants at least were stigmatised and discriminated against in the nineteenth century. It is always harder to explain things that do not occur than it is to explain particular events; and absence of evidence does not of course necessarily indicate evidence of absence. Historians of the nineteenth century rely on the written record for evidence and the fact that this record does not provide strong evidence does not mean that the phenomena did not exist, but rather that it may have been recorded in a form that has not survived to the present. Thus evidence presented in this paper does not indicate that migrants were not identified and in some cases discriminated against, but it does suggest that the local media of the day were not a major source of such information. There were, of course, many other routes through which stigmatisation could be channelled.

One question that remains to be answered is why the situation in the nineteenth century appears to be so different from that experienced today, when the media seem to frequently provide reports that cast immigrants in a negative light. There are a number of possible answers that are yet to be fully researched. First, it may be that there are differences between local and national media; and in particular between local newspapers of the nineteenth century and the much more visible television, radio and internet-based media of the twenty-first century. Analysis of *The Times* for the same months in 1851, 1871 and 1891 that the *Liverpool Mercury* was researched also produces relatively few instances where the origin of an individual was reported as a relevant item of information, but with more focus on the Irish in 1851 than in later years. For instance, in reporting legal and criminal matters in 1851 *The Times* mentions the Irish origin of individuals seven times in April 1851, but only once each in the same months in 1871 and 1891. However, there is one subtle difference that may be relevant. In reporting a murder case in Warrington that involved a Liverpool man *The Times* specifically noted his Irish origin. In contrast, in two reports the *Liverpool Mercury* does not state that the defendant was Irish, and this information only emerges by implication through the mention of a link with Dublin and a request that the prisoner should have access to a

priest who could hear confession in the Irish language. This is a theme worthy of further investigation. Second, it may be that the modern construction of migrants as a 'problem' is based on information drawn from very specific locations, and is not necessarily representative of all places. Modern reporting of court proceedings is simply factual and does not give the personal details found in nineteenth-century newspapers so direct comparisons are not possible, but a quick word search of the present day Liverpool Echo website (the main Liverpool on-line newspaper<sup>28</sup>) reveals very few specific mentions of immigrants and, where they are mentioned, this occurs in comment pieces that relate to a general national situation rather than to local issues. In contrast, a similar rapid search of the Boston Standard (the on-line newspaper for Boston, Lincolnshire<sup>29</sup>) produces numerous items on migrants, most relating to the local area. Census data for 2011 show that whereas in Boston migrants from countries that joined the EU 2001-11 (principally from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States) accounted for 10.6 per cent of the population, in Liverpool the figure was just 1.4 per cent. In England such migrants accounted for 2.0 per cent of the population. This influx of recent migrants to places such as Boston has attracted both local and national attention, including a substantial report produced by Boston Borough Council on 'the changing face of Boston'<sup>30</sup>, and could explain the wider national problematization of immigration in the twenty-first century. However, one conundrum remains. In the nineteenth century Liverpool had one of the most diverse populations in Britain, and yet the local media (in contrast to twenty-first century Boston) did not draw attention to the city's migrant population in its reporting. Further research is needed to fully explain such differences.

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<sup>28</sup> . Liverpool Echo: <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/> (accessed January 2014)

<sup>29</sup> . Boston Standard: <http://www.bostonstandard.co.uk/> (accessed January 2014)

<sup>30</sup> . The changing face of Boston (October 2012):  
<http://www.boston.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4721#content> (accessed January 2014)

**Table 1: Migrant origin (%) of persons arrested (all offences), Liverpool, 1862-1901**

| Place of birth   | 1862/3 | 1870/71 | 1880/81 | 1890/91 | 1901 |
|------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|------|
| <b>Liverpool</b> | 26.3   | 37.9    | 48.4    | 62.2    | 65.2 |
| <b>England</b>   | 24.9   | 18.7    | 18.7    | 15.4    | 15.7 |
| <b>Ireland</b>   | 38.8   | 33.4    | 23.9    | 15.6    | 11.5 |
| <b>Scotland</b>  | 3.5    | 3.9     | 3.5     | 2.6     | 3.1  |
| <b>Wales</b>     | 2.6    | 2.9     | 2.5     | 2.0     | 2.0  |
| <b>Foreign</b>   | 3.4    | 2.7     | 2.6     | 2.0     | 2.0  |

Source: Annual Reports of the Head Constables of Liverpool

**Table 2: Place of birth (%) of the population of Liverpool 1851-1911**

| Place of birth  | 1851 | 1871 | 1891 | 1911 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>England</b>  | 66.2 | 73.3 | 81.9 | 88.8 |
| <b>Ireland</b>  | 22.3 | 15.6 | 9.1  | 4.6  |
| <b>Scotland</b> | 3.7  | 4.1  | 3.0  | 1.9  |
| <b>Wales</b>    | 5.4  | 4.3  | 3.4  | 2.3  |
| <b>Foreign</b>  | 1.4  | 1.9  | 1.9  | 2.1  |

Separate data for Liverpool-born are only available in 1851 (42.4%)

Migrants from 'Islands in the British Sea' excluded

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1851-1911

**Table 3: Linkage rates by gender, 1851, 1871, 1891**

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|                        | <b>1851</b> | <b>1871</b> | <b>1891</b> | <b>All</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| <b>Males newspaper</b> | 43          | 71          | 39          | 153        |
| <b>Males census</b>    | 24          | 47          | 24          | 95         |
| <b>% linkage</b>       | 55.8        | 66.2        | 61.5        | 62.1       |
| <b>Females paper</b>   | 14          | 44          | 14          | 72         |
| <b>Females census</b>  | 7           | 29          | 7           | 43         |
| <b>%linkage</b>        | 50.0        | 65.9        | 50.0        | 59.7       |
| <b>All newspaper</b>   | 57          | 115         | 53          | 225        |
| <b>All Census</b>      | 31          | 76          | 31          | 138        |
| <b>% linkage</b>       | 54.4        | 66.1        | 58.5        | 61.3       |

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**Table 4: Summary of offences recorded in the Liverpool Mercury reports of the Police Courts, 1851-91**

| Offence                             | 1851 |    | 1871 |    | 1891 |   | All |     | Total | Total % |
|-------------------------------------|------|----|------|----|------|---|-----|-----|-------|---------|
|                                     | O    | V  | O    | V  | O    | V | O   | V   |       |         |
| <b>Trading/licencing offences</b>   | 25   | 0  | 42   | 1  | 21   | 0 | 88  | 1   | 89    | 39.6    |
| <b>Thefts/larcenies</b>             | 7    | 20 | 4    | 16 | 6    | 8 | 17  | 44  | 61    | 27.1    |
| <b>Assaults</b>                     | 2    | 2  | 16   | 21 | 0    | 1 | 18  | 24  | 42    | 18.7    |
| <b>Prostitution/brothel keeping</b> | 0    | 0  | 8    | 0  | 4    | 0 | 12  | 0   | 12    | 5.3     |
| <b>Cruelty to animals</b>           | 0    | 0  | 1    | 0  | 7    | 0 | 8   | 0   | 8     | 3.6     |
| <b>Attempted suicide</b>            | 0    | 0  | 2    | 0  | 0    | 1 | 0   | 3   | 3     | 1.3     |
| <b>Damage to property</b>           | 1    | 0  | 1    | 0  | 1    | 0 | 3   | 0   | 3     | 1.3     |
| <b>Other offences</b>               | 0    | 0  | 3    | 0  | 4    | 0 | 7   | 0   | 7     | 3.1     |
| <b>All offences</b>                 | 35   | 22 | 77   | 38 | 44   | 9 | 156 | 169 | 225   | 100     |

O: Offender; V: Victim

Source: Liverpool Mercury 1851-1891

**Table 5: Birthplaces of individuals traced from newspaper Police Court reports to the census enumerators' books; Liverpool, 1851, 1871, 1891**

| <b>Birthplace</b>         | <b>1851 (N)</b> | <b>1851 (%)</b> | <b>1871 (N)</b> | <b>1871 (%)</b> | <b>1891 (N)</b> | <b>1891 (%)</b> | <b>All (N)</b> | <b>All (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Liverpool</b>          | 4               | 12.9            | 24              | 31.6            | 11              | 35.5            | 39             | 28.3           |
| <b>Lancashire (other)</b> | 2               | 6.5             | 4               | 5.3             | 6               | 19.4            | 12             | 8.7            |
| <b>Yorkshire</b>          | 2               | 6.5             | 6               | 7.9             | 2               | 6.5             | 10             | 7.3            |
| <b>Cheshire</b>           | 2               | 6.5             | 2               | 2.6             | 0               | 0.0             | 4              | 2.9            |
| <b>Cumbria*</b>           | 1               | 3.2             | 2               | 2.6             | 1               | 3.2             | 4              | 2.9            |
| <b>England (other)</b>    | 4               | 12.9            | 9               | 11.8            | 3               | 9.7             | 16             | 11.6           |
| <b>Ireland</b>            | 9               | 29.0            | 20              | 26.3            | 5               | 16.1            | 34             | 24.6           |
| <b>Wales</b>              | 2               | 6.5             | 1               | 1.4             | 0               | 0.0             | 3              | 2.2            |
| <b>Scotland</b>           | 3               | 9.7             | 6               | 7.9             | 2               | 6.5             | 11             | 8.0            |
| <b>Overseas**</b>         | 2               | 6.5             | 2               | 2.6             | 1               | 3.2             | 5              | 3.6            |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>31</b>       | <b>100.0</b>    | <b>76</b>       | <b>100.0</b>    | <b>31</b>       | <b>100.0</b>    | <b>138</b>     | <b>100.0</b>   |

\*Cumberland and Westmorland

\*\*Including the Isle of Man

Source: Liverpool Mercury and Census Enumerators' Books, Liverpool, 1851, 1871, 1891.



**Table 6: Summary of instances where migrant origin was recorded in the Liverpool Mercury Police Court Reports, 1851, 1871, 1891**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Attributed origin</b> | <b>Offender/Victim</b> | <b>Crime recorded</b> | <b>Male/Female</b> |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Offender               | Theft                 | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Offender               | Theft                 | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Offender               | Theft                 | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Victim                 | Robbed                | Female             |
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Offender               | Begging               | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Germany                  | Offender               | Arson                 | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Foreign                  | Victim                 | Theft                 | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Offender               | Theft                 | Male               |
| <b>1851</b> | Irish                    | Offender               | Assault               | Male               |
| <b>1871</b> | Traveller                | Offender               | Theft                 | Female             |
| <b>1871</b> | Traveller                | Offender               | Theft                 | Female             |
| <b>1871</b> | Traveller                | Offender               | Theft                 | Female             |
| <b>1871</b> | Irish (Dublin)           | Offender               | Theft                 | Male               |
| <b>1891</b> | Welsh                    | Offender               | Assault               | Male               |

Source: Liverpool Mercury Police Court reports, 1851, 1871, 1891