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**IDENTIFICATION, INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE; VOTING
BEHAVIOUR IN FOUR ENGLISH CONSTITUENCIES IN THE DECADE
AFTER THE GREAT REFORM ACT.**

VOLUME 1 OF 2

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**Submitted to the University of Durham, for the degree
of Ph.D.**

History Department, 1992



12 MAY 1993

ABSTRACT

"Identification, Interests and Influence; Voting Behaviour in Four English Constituencies in the Decade After The Great Reform Act".

Paula K.V. Radice

This study - based on the four constituencies of Leicester, Guildford, Durham City and North Durham - examines voter behaviour, both in aggregate and at the level of the individual, in the ten or so years after the Reform Act of 1832. The impact of Reform on levels of participation, on the transmission of political (and social) values through language and behaviour, and on voters' attachment to a party-based model of political identification, are central focuses, analysed statically and - by employing computer-assisted nominal record linkage - longitudinally. The methodology of the record linkage process (here, between runs of pollbooks, and between the pollbooks and other sources of data such as ratebooks and denominational membership lists) is made explicit.

Detail is also given of the contextual framework within which voter behaviour took shape, since, as is demonstrated, only the specific events, language, candidate structures and "influence"-wielding of specific contests in unique constituencies can fully explain the significance of voting patterns, especially given the subtleties of the double-vote system through which all four electorates transmitted their political sentiments.

Structural phenomena, especially turnover rates and patterns of voting persistence, are described with particular reference to their interrelationship with the work of developing permanent local party organizations and other agencies of electoral mobilization.

Variations of behaviour between sub-groups within the electorate, defined by franchise qualification, occupation, "wealth", geographical location and (as far as is possible) religious affiliation, are examined to determine the relative effects (if any are discernible) of socio-economic attributes on electoral reactions.

*..measure not truth by the standards of party
- cherish your independence - narrow not the
conscience of a state - think for yourselves.*

Charles Baring Wall

*A man, to be useful as a politician, must act
with a party; impracticable men who will not
act with others because everything is not
precisely as they could wish, are useless as
politicians..*

William Biggs

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I would like also to thank the staff of Guildford Muniment Room, Guildford Library, Leicestershire Record Office (especially those who assisted me with the ratebooks in the Record Office Annexe at Humberstone Road), Leicester Reference Library and Durham County Record Office. The staff of Palace Green Library and the University Library here in Durham have been unfailingly helpful.

The encouragement of Fiona, Keith and Kerry Steptoe, and of Karen Lucas (who also did proof-reading of heroic proportions) is very much appreciated.

Most of all, my family deserve my thanks for their support over the past few years, and this work is dedicated to them; to Susan and Mark, and - above all others - to my parents.

Paula K.V. Radice
Durham 1992

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ABBREVIATIONS

- D.C.R.O. Durham County Record Office.
- D.U.L. Durham University Library.
- G.L. Guildford Library.
- G.M.R. Guildford Muniment Room, Guildford.
- L.R.L. Leicester Reference Library.
- L.R.O. Leicestershire Record Office.
- P.G.L. Palace Green Library, Durham.
- P.P. Parliamentary Papers
- S.A.S. Surrey Archaeological Society, Guildford
Museum.
- V.C.H. Victoria County History

INTRODUCTION

The conclusions at which historians have arrived as to the nature of the post-Reform Act electoral system have to a large extent been determined by their selection of constituencies. This point has recently been reinforced by Derek Beales: D.C. Moore's picture of deferential county voting, for example, reflected his attention to agricultural counties, while Phillips' study of boroughs with relatively frequent contests revealed politicisation and partisan commitment. As Beales points out, the diversity of constituencies ensures that "the study of elections is one of the fields in which historians can expect to stave off redundancy for ever".¹ Not only are constituencies unique, but the behaviour of their electorates responds closely to the circumstances of individual contests, so that the longer- and middle-term contexts of electoral politics - influence wielding, general political culture, and social, economic and industrial structures etc. - combine with election-specific factors to demand full examination before the real significance of voting choices can be described. For this reason, the

¹ D.E.D.Beales, "The Electorate Before and After 1832: the Right to Vote and the Opportunity", in *Parliamentary History*, 11 (1992), pp139-150.

quantitative analyses undertaken in this study are firmly founded on qualitative context: even where identification with the national political framework is at its strongest, only the events, language, and personalities of individual contests in individual constituencies can explain the full import of vote-giving, especially given the tactical and attitudinal subtleties of the double-vote system (which formed the framework of behaviour in all of the constituencies studied here).² Whilst "the exchange of anecdotes and the trading of instances are quite insufficient for the quantitative aspects of electoral history",³ it is equally true that statistical abstractions of behaviour, lacking reference to context, are inadequate.

The four constituencies examined - Guildford, Leicester, Durham City and North Durham - have no claim to represent a full typology of the post-1832 system. Their choice, however, is justified on the grounds of their diversity. The three boroughs are of different sizes, demographically and electorally (Guildford had a post-Reform electorate of around 350 voters; Durham City's stood at around 800, whilst Leicester's was just

² F.O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties. The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734-1832* (Oxford 1989), pp172-177; J.A.Phillips and C.Wetherell, "The Great Reform Bill of 1832 and the Rise of Partisanship", in *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (1991), pp621-646.

³ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p172.

over 3,000 strong⁴). They have different pre-Reform franchise structures that partially define the nature of their reformed electorates;⁵ display radically diverse internal power conflicts (both before and after 1832) that crucially affect the character of elections and voter behaviour; and represent different regions of the country, different industrial structures, different relationships with their counties (although all three are county towns), and - importantly - different socio-economic configurations (including patterns of religious affiliation) which, even if they are not fully represented in the post-Reform electorates as constituted, generate a variety of inter-class and inter-denominational relationships which influence the tenor of electoral politics. North Durham is included to give a non-borough view of the post-Reform system: its structural characteristics, franchise construction, influence patterns etc., all allow for comparison with borough behaviour. Specifically, however, the choice of North Durham (as opposed to West Surrey or South Leicestershire, which are examined largely only in the extent to which they form a back-drop to borough politics and an alternative arena of electoral participation for those borough residents who held a

⁴ P.P. 1833 (189) XXVII.129, 136 and 149. For a typology of post-1832 constituencies by size, see N.Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation 1830-1850* (London 1953), pp73-77.

⁵ See Chapter 2.

county franchise)⁶ was conditioned by its unique relationship with borough politics in the shape of the territorially overlapping influence networks operated by local landowners, especially Lords Londonderry and Durham, respectively "the most influential of the Ultra [Tory] peers"⁷ and the chief author of the Reform Act. The evidence on electoral relationships and the workings of the system found in surviving bodies of correspondence between these heads of "interests", their candidates and agents, allowed a detailed view of electoral mobilization and of the conceptual and behavioural norms held (often at variance with others') by participants.⁸ Contextual explanations of the voting behaviour both of the City electorate and that of North Durham are much informed by this evidence.

Recent studies have emphasized the elements of continuity between the "unreformed" system and that in operation after 1832: the "rational" political behaviour associated by historical psephologists with partisanship, especially, is clearly evident in many constituencies, counties as well as boroughs, before

⁶ See Chapters 2 and 7.

⁷ R. Stewart, *The Foundation of the Conservative Party 1830-1867* (London 1978), p119.

⁸ I would like here to acknowledge my gratitude to my Supervisor, Mr. Alan Heesom, for allowing me to use his transcriptions from the Lambton Mss., after I was denied permission to consult the originals at Chester-le-Street.

the Reform Act.⁹ However, the experience of the Reform crisis also had a profound effect in some constituencies on the focussing of partisan sentiments into the forms necessitated by the double-vote system to demonstrate party loyalty. Moreover, behaviour was not only, in these politicized constituencies, generally partisan, but also liable, with persistence, to increase in likelihood of being consistently repeated.¹⁰ Such structural manifestations of voters' relationships with parties and their locality's political culture after 1832 are a central focus of this study, and immediately pre-Reform contests are included for comparative purposes. Longitudinal analysis, employing nominal record linkage, allows for the reconstruction of behaviour over time, complementing the synchronic analysis of separate campaigns, and for a view of the success of agencies of mobilization (whether they be parties or individuals) in identifying, registering and polling their support constituencies. Variations of behaviour within the electorates - examined through subgroupings defined by voting experience, franchise qualification, occupational type, religion, "wealth" and spatial divisions in the constituency - must be identified to assess the relative impacts of differing forces and

⁹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, passim; J.A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters and Straights* (Guildford 1982), passim.

¹⁰ Phillips and Wetherell, "Great Reform Bill", passim.

political concepts, and to see what experiences are shared by the constituencies and which are specific to them.

One of the primary aims of this study, as this last point suggests, is to add data to the corpus of work compiled in the last twenty years of historical psephology, to present for comparison evidence as to what was happening in the years spanning Reform in specific places under specific circumstances. New historical techniques, especially those concerned with computerized (or rather, computer-assisted)¹¹ record linkage, mean that constituencies which have been the basis of previous studies can be revisited, and, indeed, a number of the conclusions reached by non-quantitative analysis (or partial quantitative analysis) for these constituencies are critically tested and in some cases thrown into serious doubt by empirical treatment (for example, the assumed link between franchise voting patterns and the "wealth" of the franchise groups' membership, or the political motivations behind some cross-party voting). In many ways, however, this study is traditional in nature, and follows (modestly) a well-established trail, that blazed by Vincent, Nossiter, Phillips, O'Gorman and

¹¹ See Chapter 1.

Fraser.¹² Emphasis is on voting: the voters, as they appear in the pollbooks and other sources, are its chief protagonists.

¹² The landmarks being J.R.Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (Cambridge 1967); T.J.Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England: Case Studies from the North East 1832-1874* (Hassocks 1974); D.Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (Leicester 1976); O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*.

CHAPTER 1 :
METHODOLOGY - THE POLLBOOK AND NOMINAL RECORD LINKAGE

Introduction

Historical psephologists have approached analysis of the voting records of the period before the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872 in two ways: through aggregated data and through examination of voting behaviour at the individual level. The advantages of the complementary use of both approaches have been accepted.¹

Aggregate data in the form of pollbooks is widely available. From 1696 the returning officer in each constituency was obliged by law to take a copy of the

¹ For example by J.A. Phillips in *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England, 1761-1802* (Princeton 1982) eg. p312; Idem., "Pollbooks and English Electoral Behaviour", in J.A. Sims, *A Handlist of British Parliamentary Pollbooks* (Leicester 1984), ppv-xviii; J.A. Cannon, "Short Guides to Records: Pollbooks", *History* 47 (1962), pp166-169; J. Elklit, "Nominal Record Linkage and the Study of Non-Secret Voting: A Danish Case", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XV (1985), pp419-443; P. Bourke and D. DeBats, "Individuals and Aggregates. A Note on Historical Data and Assumptions", in *Social Science History*, IV (1980), pp229-250; E.W. Austin, J.M. Clubb and M.W. Traugott, "Aggregate Units of Analysis" in Clubb, W.H. Flanigan and N.H. Zingale (eds.), *Analysing Electoral History: A Guide to the Study of American Voting Behaviour* (Beverly Hills 1981).

poll as it proceeded, and make copies available to the public: the first printed pollbook dates from 1698.² During the period studied here many borough pollbooks were published, printers recognizing that the political spirit of the time rendered them commercially viable.³ Although the North Durham pollbook for 1837 could not be published for less than three shillings and sixpence a copy, for which the Editor apologised, the cost was justified, he argued, by the amount of work required to produce "a comprehensive and faithful digest of the important events to which the [the following pages] relate".⁴ A printed pollbook has survived for all of the contests for this period in Leicester and Durham. Even where printed pollbooks do not exist, manuscript copies can fill the gap: manuscript pollbooks are available for the Guildford elections.⁵ Printed pollbooks were also used for the county contests studied in North Durham, West Surrey and South Leicestershire.⁶

² G.Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will in the First Age of Party* (Kendal 1976), p3; J.A.Cannon, *Pollbooks*, p166.

³ J.R.Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (Cambridge 1967), p1.

⁴ *Proceedings and Poll ... Northern Division of the County of Durham* (Durham 1837), frontispiece. The editor hoped, because the poll was "minutely correct", that it would be "to all persons interested in the Electioneering Politics of the Northern Division, an unquestionable source of valuable information, for their further guidance".

⁵ Phillips, *Pollbooks*, ppv-vi.

⁶ See bibliography.

The aggregated voting figures given in the pollbooks have a number of applications. From the votes themselves, general trends of party support are indicated, in terms of constituency-wide swings of opinion between elections, as also are some of the more obvious manifestations of "influence" and the appreciation (or otherwise) by voters of individual candidates. The extent to which voters were responding to party choices on a partisan basis (as opposed to "personality politics") may also be evident in the way in which electors deployed their votes within the double-vote system.

The additional information commonly given in pollbooks, such as the voters' occupations, addresses and the ways in which they qualified for the franchise, can be used in aggregate to identify some of the factors behind the disposition of votes among sub-groups within the electorate. Cross-sectional examinations of this sort can be done fairly easily from the pollbooks, particularly if the data can be manipulated with an appropriate computer software program.

Analysis at the level of the individual poses greater methodological challenges, but offers correspondingly, perhaps, greater rewards. Where records have survived of adequate quality and depth of coverage, nominal record linkage can be used to build a fuller picture of the motivation of individual voters.

Pollbooks can be linked to give a "longitudinal" view, in other words, a view of behaviour over time, including consistency of "partisan" choices, the effectiveness of the various mechanisms of electoral recruitment and mobilization, and, for the 1830s, the impact on these and other facets of voting behaviour of the franchise changes wrought by the Reform Act of 1832. The information given in the pollbooks can also be linked to other sources of data on individual participants - for example, rating assessments, petitions, and Dissenting congregation records - to give a fuller picture of the numerous, and sometimes conflicting, influences at work. Constructing extended records on voters also acts as a check on the usefulness of the pollbook data, especially occupational titles. Nominal record linkage has been described as "a whole little science of its own",⁷ and its procedures need to be discussed with reference to the material and techniques employed here.

⁷ S.Langholm quoted in I.Winchester, "Priorities in Record Linkage: A Theoretical and Practical Checklist", in J.M.Clubb and E.K.Scheuch (eds.), *Historical Social Research* (Stuttgart 1980), p414.

Aggregate Analysis

Most boroughs after 1832, as before, returned two M.P.s, and each voter had two votes to cast.⁸ At each contest, therefore, the voter was faced with four choices: he could choose not to vote at all, to give both votes to candidates of the same party (if two were standing), to "split" his vote by supporting candidates of different parties, or he could choose to use only one vote and withhold the other (known as "plumping"). This poses a problem as to how aggregate votes should be counted so as to compare relative party strengths accurately between constituencies, as the votes cannot simply be tallied, since they do not necessarily correlate to the number of electors. This problem is especially acute where contests took place between an unequal number of candidates from each party, most commonly in the form of three-way contests.⁹

Several solutions have been proposed. One proposal, originally devised in the late nineteenth century, is that the total party vote in each

⁸ There were 58 double-member county constituencies, and 132 double-member borough seats. There were also seven counties with three seats. M.Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London 1973), p310.

⁹ D.Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (Leicester 1976), p214; W.O.Aydelotte, "A Data Archive for Modern British Political History" in V.R.Lorwin and J.M.Price (eds.), *Materials, Problems and Opportunities for Quantitative Work in History* (New Haven 1972), p337; *Idem.*, *Quantification in History* (Reading 1971), pp106-108.

constituency (that is, the votes of all of the candidates on each side) should be totalled, and divided by the number of votes each elector possessed. Several studies have employed this method:¹⁰ its major drawback is its tendency to overstate the extent of party support, since it cannot distinguish inter-party rivalries, and thus can assume unanimity between candidates (especially, in the 1830s, between Whigs, Liberals and Radicals) that may not have existed in the local context. The technique has been refined by suggestions that only "serious" candidates should be included in the calculations (being defined as those who secured a minimum of 10% of the poll).¹¹

An alternative is to treat contests as if they occurred in single-member seats, comparing the "best performance" of each party (the number of votes obtained by its leading candidate) directly.¹² Neither of these methods copes adequately with cross-party voting: in effect "split" votes get counted twice. At the level of the constituency, however, these problems can largely be overcome by leaving the voting figures

¹⁰ J.P.D.Dunbabin, "Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain, 1868-1900: A Psephological Note", in *English Historical Review*, LXXXI (1966), pp82-99; also H.Pelling, *The Social Geography of British Elections* (London 1967).

¹¹ T.J.Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion, and Political Idioms in Reformed England. Case Studies from the North East, 1832-1874* (Hassocks 1974), pp180-182.

¹² D.Fraser, "The Fruits of Reform: Leeds Politics in the Eighteen-Thirties", in *Northern History*, VII (1972), pp89-112; Idem., *Urban Politics*, pp223-227.

in the form that the voters gave them - as combinations of two votes, in the form of "split", "plump" (a combination of a vote and a non-vote) and straight party votes. Indeed, this is the only way of remaining entirely true to the voters' intentions, and is especially important in the light of the fluidity of party development and affiliations immediately after the Reform Act.

The context of local politics, with its variety of shades of opinion, forms of influence, and electoral traditions, must remain paramount; this includes its relationship with politics at the national level. Quantitative analysis on its own will not reveal the full play of local and personal factors. Non-systematic records like newspapers, personal correspondence, the handbills and other ephemera of election contests are needed to show the networks and nature of political communication, the idioms of electoral behaviour and the transmission of social and political leadership; in other words, a view of the full significance of the voting figures, within the political culture.¹³ The aim is a balanced examination, with quantification used as a complement to other, more traditional, means of political study -

¹³ J.C.Mitchell and J.Cornford, "The Political Demography of Cambridge, 1832-1868", in *Albion*, IX (1977), pp242-272.

not just "positivism armed with a computer",¹⁴ with its inherent danger that the quantitative results will be held to have significance of their own without sufficient theoretical application.

M.I.S.T.

The computations from the pollbook and other sources done here were greatly facilitated by the use of the Manipulative Interactive Software Tools (M.I.S.T.) computer program developed by Mr. Peter Adman at Hull University. As its name suggests, M.I.S.T. is a set of software tools, rather than a database, and is designed to manipulate data fields. It consists of a number of functions which proved invaluable, especially frequency counting and the cross-tabulation of fields: these made possible a number of fundamental analyses that would have been impossibly time-consuming if attempted by hand. Of primary importance also, when it came to the nominal record linking procedures¹⁵ were the SORT and MERGE commands, which arranged the voters alphabetically (something the pollbooks frequently did not do) and then physically merged two or more pollbooks or other

¹⁴ E.P.Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London 1980), p220; W.A.Speck, "Clio and the Computer", in *University of Leeds Review*, 29 (1986), pp175-188.

¹⁵ See below.

sources of nominal information. This formed the first stage of the record comparison process.

The RECODE facility in M.I.S.T. meant that data could be entered as it appeared in the sources (with only a few exceptions¹⁶) and later recoded according to coding tables. The occupation categories, for example, were coded in this way. This meant that a maximum of flexibility was retained: codings could be applied, or altered, according to need, and the data in its original form remained unchanged. The advantage of such a facility to the researcher is that all the ways in which the data might need to be used do not have to be identified at the data-entry stage; as requirements and potential problems become apparent, new coding tables can be devised or existing ones changed. Codings can also be worked in different ways to test the significance of results. The advantages of "post-

¹⁶ Some characters, such as full-stops, could not be permitted in character strings, for example, because they would disrupt M.I.S.T.'s recognition of legitimate field delimiters. This did not pose any significant problem.

coding" of this sort have been recognized in the literature of historical computer work.¹⁷

Pollbook Data

Using M.I.S.T., pollbook information was entered in full, each piece of information after the voter's name being allocated a separate field. Tables 1.1 to 1.3 summarize what information on voters was given by each of the pollbooks.

Addresses

Residential information was given in a number of ways. In most cases, post-Reform borough pollbooks gave street names (and sometimes the electoral ward) for voters' addresses. The Durham City pollbooks

¹⁷ M.I.S.T. is described fully in P.Adman, "M.I.S.T.: Manipulative Interactive Software Tools", in ESRC Software Bulletin (May 1984), pp22-3; P.Adman, W.A.Speck and B.White, "A Computer Analysis", which forms the Appendix to J.F.Quinn, "Yorkshiremen go to the Polls", in Northern History, XXI (1985), pp137-174. The importance of "post-coding" is discussed in K.Schurer, "The Historical Researcher and Codes: Master and Slave or Slave and Master?", in E.Mawdsley, N.Morgan, L.Richmond and R.Trainor (eds.), History and Computing III: Historians, Computers and Data (Manchester 1991), pp74-82; S.Blumin, "The Classification of Occupations in Past Time: Problems of Fission and Fusion", Ibid., pp83-89; A.Janssens, "Managing Longitudinal Historical Data: An Example from Nineteenth Century Dutch Population Registers", in History and Computing, 3 (1991), pp161-174.

Table 1.1

INFORMATION IN BOROUGH POLLBOOKS, GENERAL ELECTIONS.
Leicester, Guildford and Durham City, 1826 to 1841

	1826	1830	1831	1832	1835	1837	1841
OCCUPATION							
Leicester	Yes	NC	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
Durham	NC	No*	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
Guildford	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
STREET							
Leicester	Yes	NC	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
Durham	NC	No	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
Guildford	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
WARD/PARISH							
Leicester	No	NC	NC	No	No	Yes	NC
Durham	NC	No	NC	Incp	No	No	NC
Guildford	NC	Incp	Incp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FRANCHISES							
Leicester	Yes	NC	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
Durham	NC	N/a	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
Guildford	NC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ABSTAINERS							
Leicester	No	NC	NC	Yes	No	Yes	NC
Durham	NC	No	NC	No	No	No	NC
Guildford	NC	No	No	No	Yes	No	No

* = guild titles only

N/a = not applicable

NC = no contest

MQs = multiple qualifications indicated

Incp = incomplete

NB : all Guildford pollbooks manuscript except 1835.
Franchises from electoral registers.

Table 1.2

INFORMATION IN BOROUGH POLLBOOKS, BY-ELECTIONS.
Leicester and Durham City, 1831-1843

	1831	1839	1843 April	1843 July
OCCUPATION				
Leicester	N/a	Yes	N/a	N/a
Durham	No*	N/a	Incp	Incp
STREET				
Leicester	N/a	Yes	N/a	N/a
Durham	No	N/a	Yes	Yes
WARD/PARISH				
Leicester	N/a	Yes	N/a	N/a
Durham	No	N/a	No	No
FRANCHISES				
Leicester	N/a	MQs	N/a	N/a
Durham	N/a	N/a	Yes	Yes
ABSTAINERS				
Leicester	N/a	Yes	N/a	N/a
Durham	No	N/a	No	Yes

*=guild titles only

N/a = not applicable

NC = no contest

MQs = multiple qualifications indicated

Incp = incomplete

Table 1.3

INFORMATION GIVEN IN COUNTY POLLBOOKS

	1832	1835	1837	1841
OCCUPATION				
North Durham	No	NC	No	NC
West Surrey	No	No	No	NC
S. Leicestershire	NC	NC	NC	No
ADDRESSES				
North Durham	Incp	NC	Incp	NC
West Surrey	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
S. Leicestershire	NC	NC	NC	Incp
FRANCHISES				
North Durham	Yes	NC	Yes	NC
West Surrey	No	No	No	NC
S. Leicestershire	NC	NC	NC	No
ABSTAINERS				
North Durham	No	NC	No	NC
West Surrey	Yes	Yes	Yes	NC
S. Leicestershire	NC	NC	NC	Yes

NC = no contest

Incp = incomplete

before 1832 (i.e. for 1830 and 1831), however, give only "Durham" for those resident in the city, to distinguish them from out-voters, and the pre-Reform Guildford (manuscript) pollbooks give full street, but incomplete parish, information.

The county pollbooks supply addresses, but in general in a less standardized way than do those for the boroughs. In the North Durham pollbooks of 1832 and 1837 addresses are given sometimes as the name of the street, sometimes only as the town or village, within the electoral districts, according to the relationship between the voter's actual address and the address of the property by means of which he qualified to vote. In this case the data was entered as it stood, and standardization - sufficient to allow meaningful analysis - was imposed on these data fields by coding tables which translated street names into the appropriate town or village name. The pollbook for the South Leicestershire election of 1841 gives street names in most cases, but in some only the name of the parish, and in a few only "Leicester". For the purposes of identifying urban freeholders in the county electorate, however, this information was adequate. In the same way, voters resident in Guildford were also easily identifiable in the West Surrey pollbooks.

Residential information for the boroughs will be used to attempt an isolation of geographical patterns of voting, especially in the light of other information

about specific parts of the towns, for example the contemporary political reputation of the wards in Leicester, or the picture of general relative prosperity given in various reports. It will also be tabulated with other social variables, and applied to voting behaviour.¹⁸

Information on residence in counties can be linked to known patterns of landownership, and to the industrial and agricultural structure within which the politically-powerful operated, to attempt the distinction of potential patterns of "influence". It can also be used to isolate the behaviour of the "urban" freeholders from that of their more rural-living counter-parts.

Abstention and "Turnout"

Abstainers - those on the electoral register (after 1832) who did not vote - are included in some pollbooks, and this information can be very useful. All of the Leicester post-Reform pollbooks, as well as the one printed Guildford pollbook (1835), the two Durham pollbooks in 1843 and the county pollbooks for the three West Surrey contests and South Leicestershire in 1841, give details of those who did not vote.

¹⁸ See below, Chapter 7.

"Turnout" has been called the measure of "the intensity of electoral activity",¹⁹ and levels of turnout have been related to voters' commitment to politics, and more specifically, to the extent of party identification or "partisanship" within an electorate. Phillips argues that participation is the most important aspect of a constituency's political culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁰ In another context, it has been said that "political involvement is more than half-way to political affiliation"²¹ and the tendency for turnout at contested elections to increase during the eighty years before 1832 has been well documented. O'Gorman has estimated the average turnout from 1741-1831 to have been over 80%, in contrast to "miserably small" turnouts of earlier in the eighteenth century. Most significantly, very many more turnouts were over 80% than below it.²² He explains the phenomenon of rising turnouts in three ways: improvements in communication; more effective techniques of voter mobilisation; and higher levels of communal involvement and

¹⁹ M. Drake, "The Mid-Victorian Voter", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, I (1971), pp473-490.

²⁰ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, p86.

²¹ D.E.D. Beales, "Parliamentary Parties and the "Independent" Member, 1810-1860" in R. Robson (ed.) *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain* (London 1967), p18. Beales was specifically referring to M.P.s' voting in House of Commons' divisions in this period.

²² F. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties* (Oxford 1989), pp182-186.

participation.²³ Stoker has confirmed these high pre-Reform turnout levels for the northern constituencies that he studied, finding average participation rates of 81% for counties and 82% for boroughs²⁴ and Phillips' boroughs exhibited turnout rates consistently over 80% and not uncommonly well over 90%.²⁵ Interestingly, surprisingly high occasional turnouts have been described for the very earliest decades of the eighteenth century - the "First Age of Party" - by Prof. Holmes, who suggests that party feeling could at times overcome all of the many disincentives to voting.²⁶

For the pre-Reform period, the calculation of turnout is made much more problematic by the absence of any formal registration system, and after 1832 the matter is comparatively much more simple. However, some problems remain. Multiple qualifications among potential voters mean that aggregated figures cannot be taken as they stand. The parliamentary returns of numbers of those registered in each constituency sometimes enumerate multiple qualifications, and

²³ F.O'Gorman, "Electoral Behaviour in England, 1700-1872", in P.Denley, S.Fogelvic and C.Harvey (eds.), *History and Computing II* (Manchester 1989), p225.

²⁴ D.Stoker, *Elections and Voting Behaviour: A Study of Elections in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and Westmorland, 1760-1832* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester 1980), p201.

²⁵ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp87-89.

²⁶ Holmes, *Electorate and National Will*, pp18-22.

sometimes do not. Even where turnout rates can be pinned down with some accuracy, there remains the problem of defining their significance. There is seldom enough evidence to allow for quantification of the impact of unavoidable obstacles to voting (like death, illness, absence from the constituency at the time of the poll), as opposed to non-participation motivated by personal political choices. Evidence on individuals' abstention is very rare: we do know that John Grievson of Durham, who had voted at every election since 1802, failed to get to the poll in time to vote in the April 1843 by-election because he had gone to work in Seaham ignorant that the election was taking place, and had (for some reason) to return to Durham via Stockton, but we know nothing of the reasons why 193 others on the register failed to appear at the polling booths in that contest.²⁷

A variety of influences on turnout rates can, however, be examined. Studies of modern-day democracies have identified a number of structural, social, economic and psychological factors that can affect an individual's decision whether or not to participate in elections. High income has been argued to be the feature most associated with propensity to

²⁷ P.P. 1843 (433) VI.200-204, "Minutes of the Proceedings and Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the Durham City Election Petitions (1843)"; Proceedings and Poll ... Durham City Election, April 1843 (Durham 1843), p22.

vote in the late twentieth century.²⁸ In contrast, there is some evidence for the early nineteenth century that members of the upper classes were disproportionately likely to abstain.²⁹ Other factors that will need to be examined include the relative abstention rates of "old" voters (those who have taken part in earlier contests) and "new" voters (making their first appearance on the register), linked to the impact of the local political environment on their perception of the contest, as well as residential patterns of participation and non-participation. The structure of election contests may also affect turnout. Modern-day studies have indicated a link between higher numbers of candidates and higher turnout percentages. Other local contextual characteristics affecting turnout might include the closeness of the contest, and the extent to which local party organizations are actively geared to maximizing the number of voters who poll. In other words, there is a complex of short-term (election-specific) and longer-term influences on turnout that need examining, including the extent of party identification within the electorate.³⁰

²⁸ S.M.Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Voting* (New York 1983 edn.), pp184-229; M.Drake, *Introduction to Historical Psephology* (Milton Keynes 1974) pp84-86.

²⁹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p187.

³⁰ A.Mughan, *Party and Participation in British Elections* (London 1986), Chaps. 1, 3 and Conclusion; I.Budge and D.Farlie, "A Comparative Analysis of Factors Correlated with Turnout and Voting Choice", in I.Budge, I.Crewe and D.Farlie (eds.), *Party Identification and Beyond* (London 1976), pp103-126.

*Franchise Groups: The Boroughs*³¹

The post-Reform borough electorate fell into two parts: those who qualified to vote under pre-1832 franchises, and those included under the new £10 householder qualification. Within these two groups, however, a multitude of ways to get on to the electoral register was possible.³² Some of the heterogeneity of the borough electorate had been actively sought by the Whig architects of the Reform Bill, but other aspects of it were unforeseen.

As originally drafted, the Reform Bill intended the abolition of the freeman's qualification to a vote in parliamentary elections. Resident freemen were to retain the vote for their lifetime, but non-residents were to be excluded, and the right to vote would not be transferable to descendents.³³ There was general consensus that freemen formed the most corrupt portion of the electorate, the most vulnerable to pecuniary and other sorts of voting inducements because of their

³¹ For discussion of the new county franchises after 1832, as they affected North Durham, see Chapter 2.

³² After 1832, electoral qualifications were qualifications for inclusion on to the register: however good a potential elector's claim, he could not vote unless his name was on the register. See N.Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation 1830-1850* (London 1953), p87.

³³ Brock, *The Great Reform Act*, pp138-9; C.Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: the Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832-1885* (New Haven 1915), p29.

generally low economic standing. Lord Durham, for example, deplored their "want of education and state of dependence", which he thought rendered them "quite unfit" for the franchise.³⁴ There were ninety-two freeman boroughs - including Durham and Leicester - but the franchise varied a great deal in detail, being "a somewhat haphazard function of the ancient municipal constitution".³⁵ Moreover, because the Corporation of each of these boroughs had full control over the creation of freemen, there was considerable scope for partisan misuse of the system. Mass creations of freemen for electoral purposes were notorious. After such an incident in Durham in 1761, the Durham Act of 1763 was intended to limit the opportunities for mass-creation of "faggot" freemen by allowing the parliamentary vote only to those freemen of more than twelve months' standing, but the corporations proved capable of sufficient forward-planning to avoid this obstacle. Other attempts at legislation were also unsuccessful in curbing the practice.³⁶ The creation of the 800 honorary Leicester freemen between 1822 and 1824, and their effect at the election of 1826, was perhaps the most infamous example of cynical

³⁴ New, Lord Durham, p28.

³⁵ O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, p28.

³⁶ J.Prest, Politics in the Age of Cobden (London 1977), pp2-9.

manipulation of the freemen in the early nineteenth century, but it was not a solitary incident.³⁷

The Whigs also considered the freemen unworthy of the vote because of the numbers of them who did not reside in the borough for which they voted. "Out-voters" commonly comprised a quarter to a third of freemen electorates, and could make up a majority in some of the larger boroughs.³⁸ At the Leicester election of 1826, over half of those voting were not resident in the town, mostly because of the Corporation's recruiting activity, but also partly due to natural processes of migration among already-qualified freemen. Even higher out-voting figures were recorded elsewhere, including 70% in Lancaster in 1793, and it has been argued that the incidence of out-voting was on the increase with the demographic changes of the pre-Reform decades.³⁹ The Leicester freemen came from all over the country to vote - in 1826, fifty-five from Birmingham, twenty-two from Manchester and 192 from Nottingham, for example - and there were a number who came from the lace-making regions of France (sixteen from Calais in 1826), but a very sizeable portion of the out-voter population came from London (269 in

³⁷ See Chapter 2. Up to two-thirds of freemen boroughs may have misused freemen creation for electoral purposes. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p47.

³⁸ Prest, *Politics in the Age of Cobden*, p3.

³⁹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp191-2.

1826).⁴⁰ In Durham elections, a higher percentage of participants lived within a relatively small radius from the City.⁴¹ However, at the 1831 by-election, it was estimated that

about 588 non-resident freemen of Durham, resided at 94 different places, in almost every county of England, many of them at a distance of between 200 and 450 miles from the place of polling ... the aggregate distance the whole body travelled ... exceeded 104,000 miles.⁴²

To the Whigs, such voters, frequently brought en masse to the borough by candidates' agents, were not a legitimate part of the constituency's socio-political nexus. They were not sufficiently bound to the place in which they voted, and were not part of the "face-to-face" society that reminded individuals of their local responsibilities.⁴³

The Whigs, however, proved unable to rid the electorate of the freemen. In Parliament, and around the country - and for a variety of reasons - the Tories took up the freemen's cause. Throughout the Reform Bill debates, the freeman was championed as a working-class buffer against Whig favouritism for middle-class interests. The Tories also argued that, on principle,

⁴⁰ Leicester 1826 Pollbook.

⁴¹ See Chapter 2. For discussion of out-voters (and especially those from London) see O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp191-3, and Brock, *Great Reform Act*, pp23-4.

⁴² *Durham Chronicle*, 16th July 1831.

⁴³ Prest, *Politics in the Age of Cobden*, p3.

no hereditary right should be interfered with.⁴⁴ In Durham, Trevor - like other Tories - argued that the abolition of the freeman qualification would lead to deteriorating social relationships, as working-class men perceived that they had been deliberately excluded from the political system:

Gentlemen, if this measure were to pass, a total separation will take place between the labouring and the higher classes of the country - a connection which ever ought to be maintained, and which nothing should cause to be severed.⁴⁵

Aided by some Radicals who disliked the implications of disfranchisement in the freeman clauses, the Tories were ultimately successful, the Whigs reluctantly conceding that the freeman franchise (but not the other "Ancient Rights" qualifications) would be continued in perpetuity. The right of voting, however, would in future lie exclusively with those who had obtained their freedom by servitude or by birth, (and in the latter case, the freedom had to pre-date March 1st, 1831). Like all borough voters after 1832, freemen were also subject to residence qualifications,

⁴⁴ Seymour, Electoral Reform, p30.

⁴⁵ Durham Advertiser, April 29th, 1831. See also May 6th, 1831.

both of duration of residence (twelve months) and distance from the borough (seven miles).⁴⁶

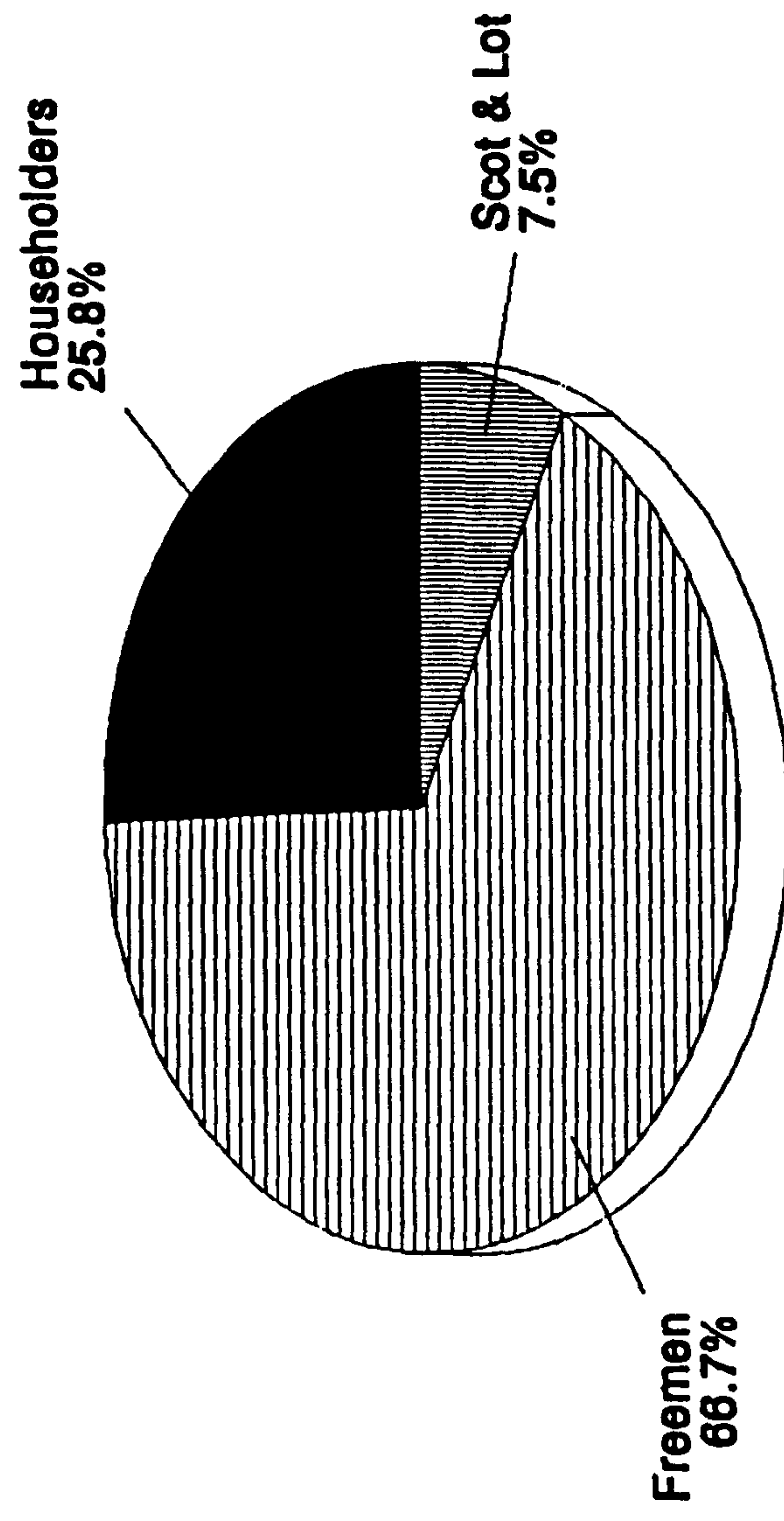
As a consequence, the borough electorate as it stood at the election of 1832 was more mixed than the Whigs had originally intended. Nationally, there were some 63,000 freemen voters and 45,000 other "Ancient Rights" voters (including the Scot and Lot voters of Leicester and the Freeholders of Guildford) out of a total electorate of some 650,000.⁴⁷ Some of these - and an increasing number as time went on - were also qualified as £10 householders.

Figures 1.1 to 1.3 show the percentages of the electorates of Guildford, Leicester and Durham that were given as belonging to each franchise group at the 1832 election. In Durham and Leicester, the freemen outnumbered the householders, in both boroughs constituting two-thirds of the electorate. In Guildford, the householders were overwhelmingly dominant. In all three boroughs, however, the picture is complicated by the undisclosed presence of those who held more than only one qualification, but chose to use

⁴⁶ Seymour, Electoral Reform, pp28-34; Brock, Great Reform Act, pp264, 138-9; Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, p87. Some confusion remained however: Durham's Revising Barrister, T.S.Brandreth, was still struggling to interpret the freeman clauses in late 1833. Dul/31/152, T.S.Brandreth to the Mayor of Durham, 19th September 1833 (D.C.R.O.).

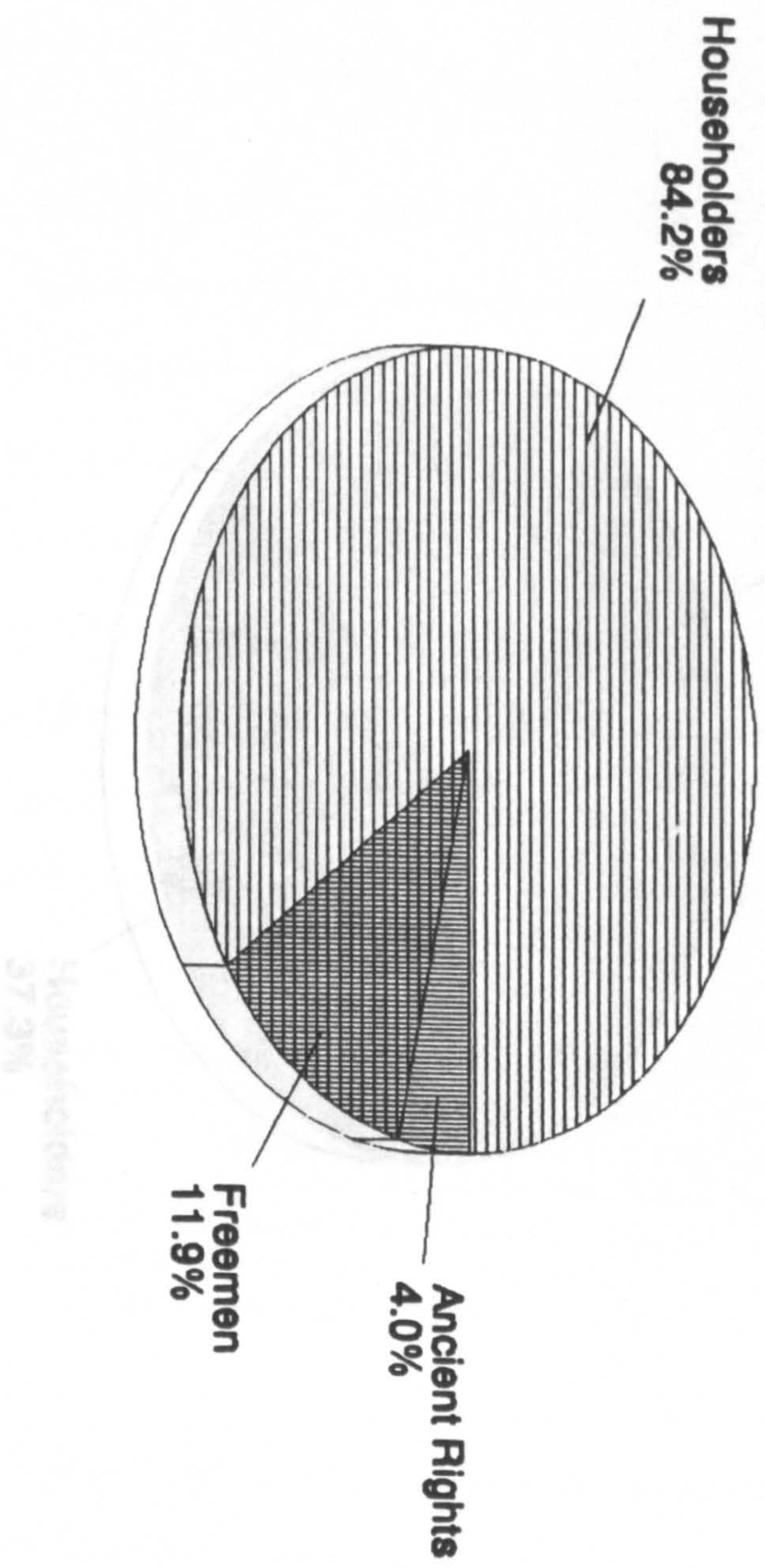
⁴⁷ M.Brock, Great Reform Act, p312; Seymour, Electoral Reform, pp83-4; Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, pp96-99; J.Cannon, Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832 (Cambridge 1980 edn.), pp219,229; O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, pp178-180.

**Figure 1.1 : Leicester Franchises,
1832 Election**

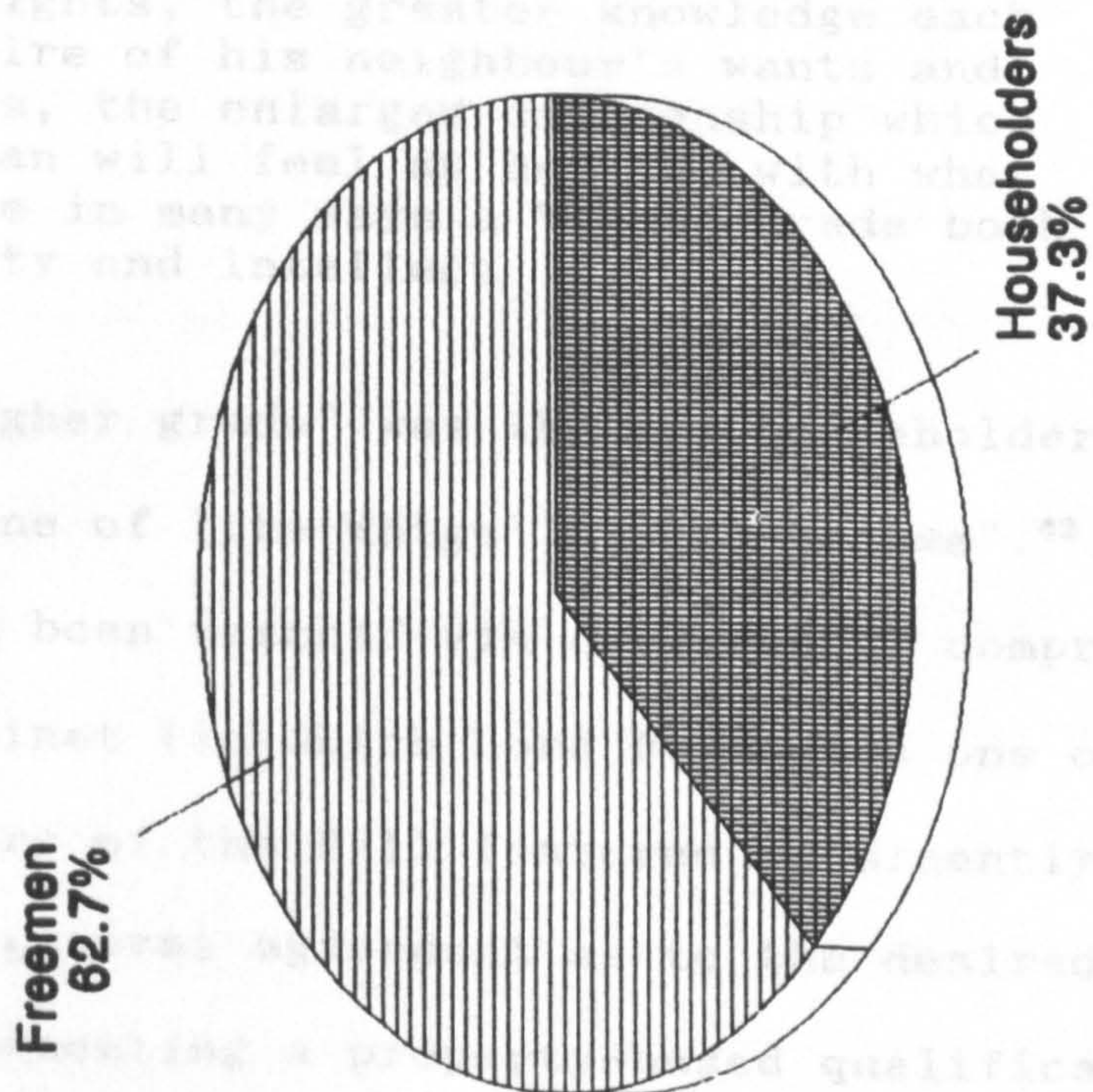


**Leicester Pollbook, 1832
N-3063**

**Figure 1.2 : Guildford Franchises,
1832 Election**



**Figure 1.3 : Durham City Franchises,
1832 Election**



(or were allocated) only one franchise title when they polled.

The variety of franchises within the boroughs seemed to some a welcome change. The Tyne Mercury for instance, foresaw:

the assimilation of disposition that will gradually follow the mutual exercise of their several rights, the greater knowledge each will acquire of his neighbour's wants and grievances, the enlarged citizenship which the freeman will feel as he acts with what will prove in many ways a higher grade both of property and intellect ...⁴⁸

This "higher grade" was the £10 householders, "the cornerstone of [the Whigs'] whole scheme".⁴⁹ The £10 figure had been reached via a series of compromises within the Cabinet (in which Lord Durham as one of the original authors of the Bill featured prominently),⁵⁰ but there was general agreement as to the desired effect of implementing a property-based qualification. Durham justified the enfranchisement of the £10 householders in the following terms:

⁴⁸ Tyne Mercury, December 20th, 1832.

⁴⁹ Seymour, Electoral Reform, p35.

⁵⁰ For discussion of the Whigs' settling on the £10 franchise, see: I. Newbould, Whiggery and Reform, 1830-1841 (London 1990), pp55-65; Seymour, Electoral Reform, pp35-38; Brock, Great Reform Act, pp136-142; Cannon, Parliamentary Reform, pp204-209.

the £10 householders are possessed of sufficient independence and property, to ensure a permanent interest in the prosperity of the country; ... and they are free from undue influence on the one hand, and factious excitement on the other; ... we could not have selected a better class of people in whom to vest this important privilege.⁵¹

In short, they were envisaged to be "a class above want, having comfortable houses over their heads, and families and homes to which they are attached".⁵² Property meant independence from corruption and demagoguery, and simultaneously stability and commitment to existing institutions, at least in principle.⁵³ The Times called the property qualification "that criterion of patriotism and knowledge which is founded on the extent of individual possession enjoyed by the elector".⁵⁴ According to D.C. Moore, the Whigs meant the householders to form an electoral body composed of men with clear associations with the borough within which they voted, a new set of strictly defined electoral communities, both in membership and geographical location, as a response to their genuine fears about the effects of mounting urban class conflicts.⁵⁵

⁵¹ The Speeches of the Right Hon., the Earl of Durham, delivered in the House of Commons, House of Lords and various other places ... (London 1836), p216 (speech 28th March 1831).

⁵² Brougham, 3 Hansard 8, p239 (7th October 1831).

⁵³ See Brock, Great Reform Act, pp142-148.

⁵⁴ The Times, 27th February 1832.

⁵⁵ D.C. Moore, The Politics of Deference: A Study of the mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System (Hassocks 1976), pp137-240 (especially pp179-189).

In practice, however, the franchise was far from uniform, and no clear dividing line seemed to have been drawn. From the start, the "householder" franchise was deliberately not restricted to residential property: houses, warehouses, counting-houses, shops or "other buildings" all counted.⁵⁶ The inclusion of warehouses - a Whig amendment of March 1831 - for example, was according to Lord John Russell a deliberate measure to ensure that manufacturers living outside the largest towns would not lose their votes. In the Leicester electoral register of 1834-5, there are some 55 "householders" qualifying in respect of a warehouse, among them some of the largest employers in the town and prominent members of the Liberal-Radical élite.⁵⁷

Moreover, as £10 was the minimum property value set for qualification, there could be a wide distribution of values among so-called "£10" voters. According to Lord Durham in 1831, only one-third of the householders who would gain votes under the Reform Bill lived in houses worth under £15.⁵⁸ Linkage of ratebook data to identified voters in Guildford and Leicester

⁵⁶ 2 & 3 William IV c45 clxxvii; Prest, *Politics in the Age of Cobden*, p17.

⁵⁷ Leicester Borough Electoral Register 1834-5 (L.R.L.). In Durham City in 1836, 123 voters were registered for property that was either exclusively or partially commercial (eg., "House and Shop"), Du/56/3, Durham City Electoral Register 1836-7 (D.C.R.O.); Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, p219; H.J.Hanham, *The Reformed Electoral System in Great Britain, 1832-1914* (London 1968), p34.

⁵⁸ 3 Hansard 3, p1028; Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp98-99.

has revealed a wide spread of values attributed to £10 householders. For example, nearly half of the Leicester householders linked to ratings assessments of 1837 were assessed for houses worth under £20, but 10% were assessed for houses worth between £40 and £50, and the highest assessment for any £10 voter was £110. In Guildford in 1836 nearly two-thirds of the £10 householders linked to ratings assessments were assessed for houses worth under £20; as in Leicester, 10% of the householder voters lived in houses worth over £40, and the highest assessment was for a house worth £80.⁵⁹ A Leicester manufacturer in 1835 described how

there is no such thing as a £10 property in Leicester, such description of houses are made as good as they can be to be worth only £8 or £9 a year, to avoid the window tax and late house tax, and then the next are worth £15 or £20 a year.⁶⁰

Around the country, this lack of social homogeneity within the ranks of the householder electorate was significantly heightened by the effect of regional variations in house values, something foreseen by Tories during Reform Bill debates. While Reformers argued that "The £10 qualification is wanted only as a sign, the essential qualities themselves

⁵⁹ These figures are only for properties designated "House", "Dwelling" or "House and Garden" in the respective ratebooks. See below for discussion of the linkage procedures, and Chapter 7 for full discussion of the results obtained.

⁶⁰ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.125.

being incapable of measurement in individual cases",⁶¹ critics claimed that even this function of the franchise would not be met. Lord Wharnecliffe, for example, pointed out that in places like Liverpool,

a £10 qualification would be mischievously low; ... it would in fact swamp the country with masses of electors the least likely to exercise the right of suffrage with discretion or advantage ...⁶²

In London the £10 limit very nearly equated to manhood suffrage, producing an electorate very different to that in provincial towns. "A very large proportion of the £10 householders in London" argued *The Tyne Mercury*, "are not persons so proper as to be entrusted with votes for members of the House of Commons as the £10 voters of any other portion of the three kingdoms."⁶³

Despite these diversifying factors, contemporaries referred to freemen and householders as separate and distinct political animals, and historical studies have also largely used franchise categories as discrete entities. Partly this must be attributed to the language used by the parties, with Whigs and Liberals tending to write off borough losses in the 1830s to the corruptibility of the freemen, characterized by the Attorney General as "poor,

⁶¹ *The Times*, 25th February 1832.

⁶² 3 *Hansard* 13, p111 (25th May 1832).

⁶³ *Tyne Mercury*, May 1st, 1832.

wretched, degraded and demoralized persons"⁶⁴ who tainted the whole electorate, whilst Conservatives, to their own ends, tended to defend them. The contemporary perception of the freemen (together with the other "Ancient Rights" voters) as a "bad and corruptible constituency"⁶⁵ has been reinforced by voting studies which have distinguished differences in the voting patterns of the franchise groups.⁶⁶ To date, however, reliance on cross-sectional (rather than longitudinal) analysis has acted largely to obscure the degree to which the boundaries of franchise group membership are blurred.

Analysis of the relationship between franchise group membership and voting behaviour in this study will refer to the dangers implicit in assuming that the franchise titles with which voters are labelled in the pollbooks have an unvarying degree of significance. In particular, this will entail identification of those voters who were multiply-qualified - in other words, those who held a pre-Reform franchise but also qualified as £10 householders.

⁶⁴ Morning Chronicle, June 24th, 1835 (debate on the Municipal Corporations Bill).

⁶⁵ Durham Chronicle, July 24th, 1835.

⁶⁶ For example, T.J.Nossiter, Elections and Political Behaviour in Count Durham and Westmorland, 1832-1874 (Unpubl. Ph.D., Oxford 1968) pp150, 311; and D.Stoker, Elections and Voting Behaviour, p226.

Aggregate numbers of those multiply-qualified in each constituency⁶⁷ are sometimes given in parliamentary returns.⁶⁸ Pollbooks almost exclusively give only one franchise title for each elector, but where a pollbook does indicate multiple qualification (as in the Leicester 1839 by-election pollbook) or where an individual's franchise title appears to change between pollbooks, much can be learnt - by linking such data backwards and forwards between pollbooks - about how the franchise titles were determined in each case, and, consequently about their potential significance to the voters themselves. Nominal record linkage, giving a longitudinal view, is the only way of identifying the real changes that were taking place in franchise group membership over time, as it enables the identification of the real representatives of each franchise group: i.e. the freemen who were not also £10 householders (and therefore not subject to whatever influences on voting might have been inherent in that group) and the

⁶⁷ "Multiply-qualified" here refers only to franchises held within the one constituency, and is therefore a separate phenomenon (although one with similar effects on turnout calculations) to the "plural voting" discussed elsewhere, eg. D.E.D.Beales, "The Electorate Before and After 1832: the Right to Vote and the Opportunity", in *Parliamentary History*, 11 (1992), pp139-150.

⁶⁸ Those used: P.P. 1833 (189), XXVII ("Electors Registered and Returning Officers' Charges"); P.P. (199) 1836 XLII ("Return of the Number of Electors Registered at the last General Election"); P.P. (329) 1837-8 XLIV ("Return of the Number of Electors Registered in each County, City and Borough"); P.P. 1840 (379) XLI ("Return of the Number of Freemen in the Boroughs of England and Wales Entitled to Vote for M.P.s").

householders who were not also "Ancient Rights" voters. This, it will be argued, is an essential preliminary to looking at the behaviour of the respective franchise groups, in the light of contemporary preconceptions about them, and in isolating meaningful factors influencing the voting choices made by individuals.

Of the three boroughs studied here, only Guildford's pollbooks (because they are, with the exception of 1835, the manuscript records) do not give franchise titles, but they do record the voters' electoral register number, and this was traced to allocate each voter to a franchise group.

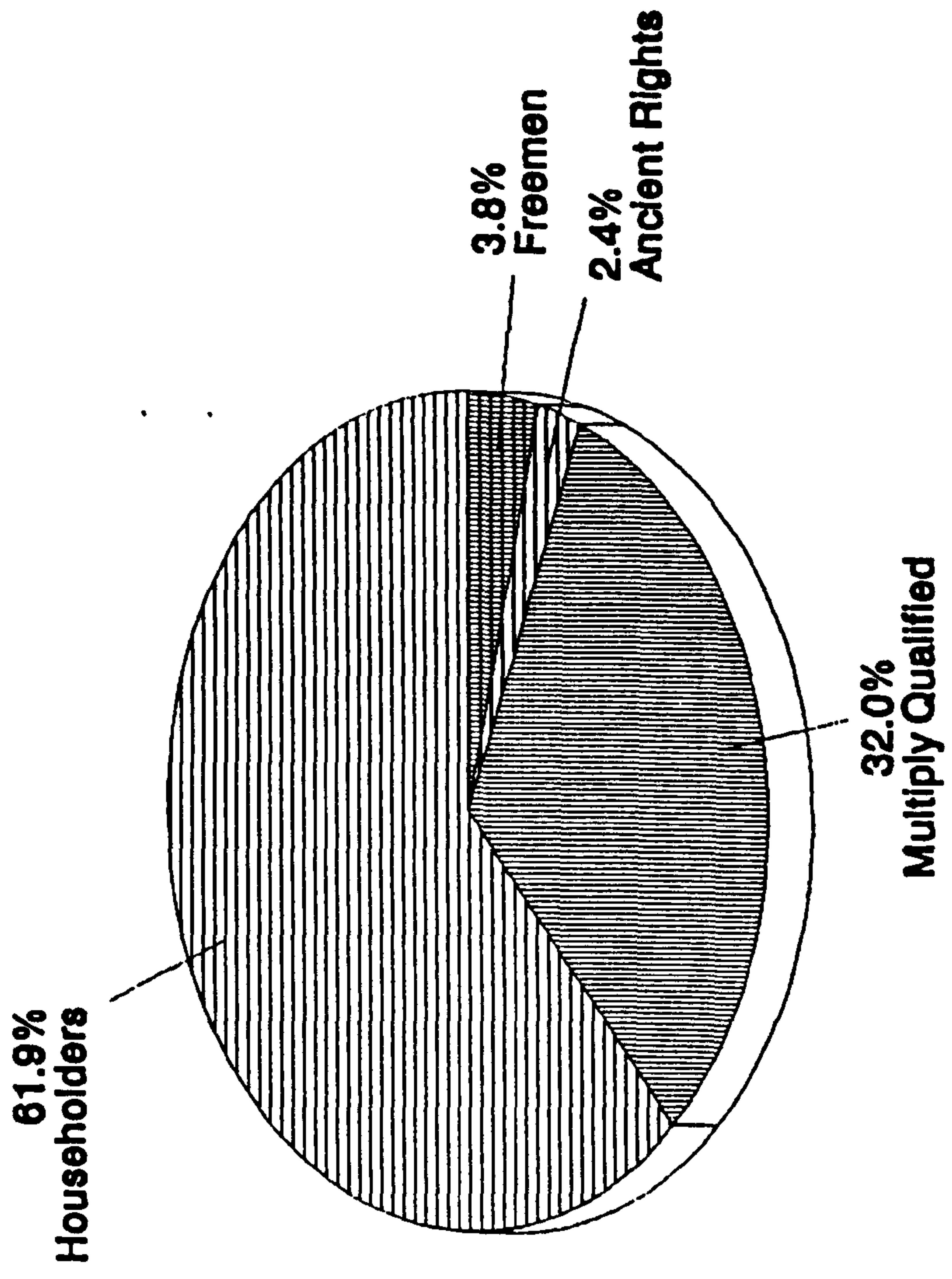
Durham was the only borough where some quantification of the degree of multiple-qualification was not possible from the pollbooks alone. Linking the Durham City pollbooks of 1832, 1835 and 1837 revealed that a consistent rule was followed, in that "H" (for Householder) was used only to indicate voters new to the electorate in 1832. Freeman, including presumably some who would also have qualified as the owners or occupiers of property worth at least £10, were always designated as Freeman. Linking the pollbooks was therefore no help. The parliamentary returns of the number of registered voters (unlike those for the other two boroughs) did not give any indication of the overlap between the franchise groups. The electoral registers, however, indicate that the number of those

qualified as both freemen and householders amounted only to around a dozen individuals.⁶⁹

For Leicester and Guildford, things were a little easier. Linking the six Guildford pollbooks, 1830-1841, threw up a number of voters who belonged to different franchise groups at different elections; "Ancient Rights" freeholders who became householders, voters who were sometimes freemen, sometimes householders, and householders who were also part of the pre-1832 electorate even if after 1832 they voted only as householders. Of the total population of 625 voters in the panel constructed for those eleven years (excluding those who did not vote again after the Reform Act), over a quarter demonstrated a multiple qualification. The percentage of those qualified only as £10 householders therefore falls to just over 70%, compared to the figures well over 90% that are apparent in the single pollbooks: 93% in 1837; over 94% in 1841. The parliamentary returns of electors registered corroborates this picture. In 1837 the number of those described as multiply-qualified amounts to very nearly one-third of the electorate, with householders making up only 60% (see Figure 1.4). Well over a quarter of those polling in 1837 possessed more than one qualification to the vote: of the sixty-six freemen

⁶⁹ Eg. Du/1/56/2 and Du1/56/3, Electoral Registers 1834/5 and 1836/6, which have pencil marks showing overlaps between franchise groups (D.C.R.O.).

**Figure 1.4 : Multiple Qualification,
Guildford 1832**



registered, only thirteen were not also householders.⁷⁰ It becomes clear, therefore, that taking franchise group membership from the poll-books cross-sectionally gives a misleading picture of the way the franchises were distributed through the electorate. For example, in the 1837 pollbook, those with more than one claim to the vote (and thus registered under more than one heading) are almost exclusively labelled by their electoral register number as "householders" when they vote, obscuring the fact that one out of every four voters was potentially at least subject to a different set of influences than were those who fell into only one group.⁷¹ In Guildford's case, however, the predominance of the property-value franchise title means that the householders are almost always readily identifiable. Where the older franchises were preferred, as they were exclusively in Durham and to a large degree in Leicester, there is arguably more of a need to pinpoint multiple-qualification, as the £10 dividing line - such as it was - is indistinguishable, making use of the pollbooks' franchise titles more methodologically suspect because of the danger of assuming that all freemen were (as contemporaries seemed to think) of "a lower class"⁷² than the householders.

⁷⁰ P.P. 1837-8 (329) XLIV.602. Guildford Electoral Register, 1832-1843, BR/PAR/1/2 (G.M.R.).

⁷¹ Guildford Pollbook 1837, BR/PAR/2/9a-c (G.M.R.).

⁷² P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.133.

It has generally been thought that voters preferred to use the old franchise titles if they could, apparently feeling that they were more select.⁷³ Seymour reckoned that "nearly everyone who held an ancient right preferred it to the new".⁷⁴ In Guildford, they seem not to have done so,⁷⁵ but it is impossible to recreate the circumstances under which the voters' registration number was entered into the pollbooks, and indeed the uniformity of the preference for the householder title may suggest that it was not the voters themselves who were choosing. It may have been due to nothing more significant than the fact that the householders' list came first in the register, and that it was easier for the polling clerk to refer where possible only to the one list as voters came forward.⁷⁶

For Leicester, individual-level examination of multiple-qualification is greatly facilitated by the by-election pollbook for 1839 which indicates those possessing two (or three) claims to the vote. Of 3,277

⁷³ Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p96.

⁷⁴ Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, pp30,83-4.

⁷⁵ P.P. 1837-8 (329) XLIV gives some other boroughs where the voters preferred to vote as householders (eg. Bury St. Edmunds (p588), Buckingham (p588), Monmouth (p617)).

⁷⁶ Polling booths in Guildford were organized by parish, so that freemen and householders voted together; in Durham and Leicester, the freemen's and householders' voting was separate. BR/PAR/4(1-2) and BR/PAR/4/3(6), *Notice of Polling Places, 1835 and 1841 (G.M.R.)*; *Leicester Chronicle*, 28th September 1833; Du1/31/74-78, *Polling Arrangements 1832*, and Du1/57/126(& 139, & 141), *Polling Booth Labels, 1835 and 1837 (D.C.R.O.)*.

voters, nearly 600 have more than one qualification: 525 (nearly 16% of the electorate) are joint householders/freemen.⁷⁷ This figure is very close to that given by the parliamentary returns for those registered before earlier elections: 15% of those registered in 1833 were said to be multiply-qualified, and nearly 19% in 1837 (see Figure 1.5). According to the figures given, over 18% of those voting at the 1837 election were qualified in more than one way.⁷⁸ In other words, between one in six and one in eight Leicester voters was multiply-qualified. Apart from that of 1839, however, the pollbooks record only one franchise title, with preference being given to the freeman title. Linking the pollbooks confirmed this. Of the total panel of 4,244 resident voters who participated in at least one election between 1832 and 1839, 13% used different titles at different times. Almost all of those who were indicated in 1839 as being both freemen and householders - 95% - had been designated as Freemen in previous elections.

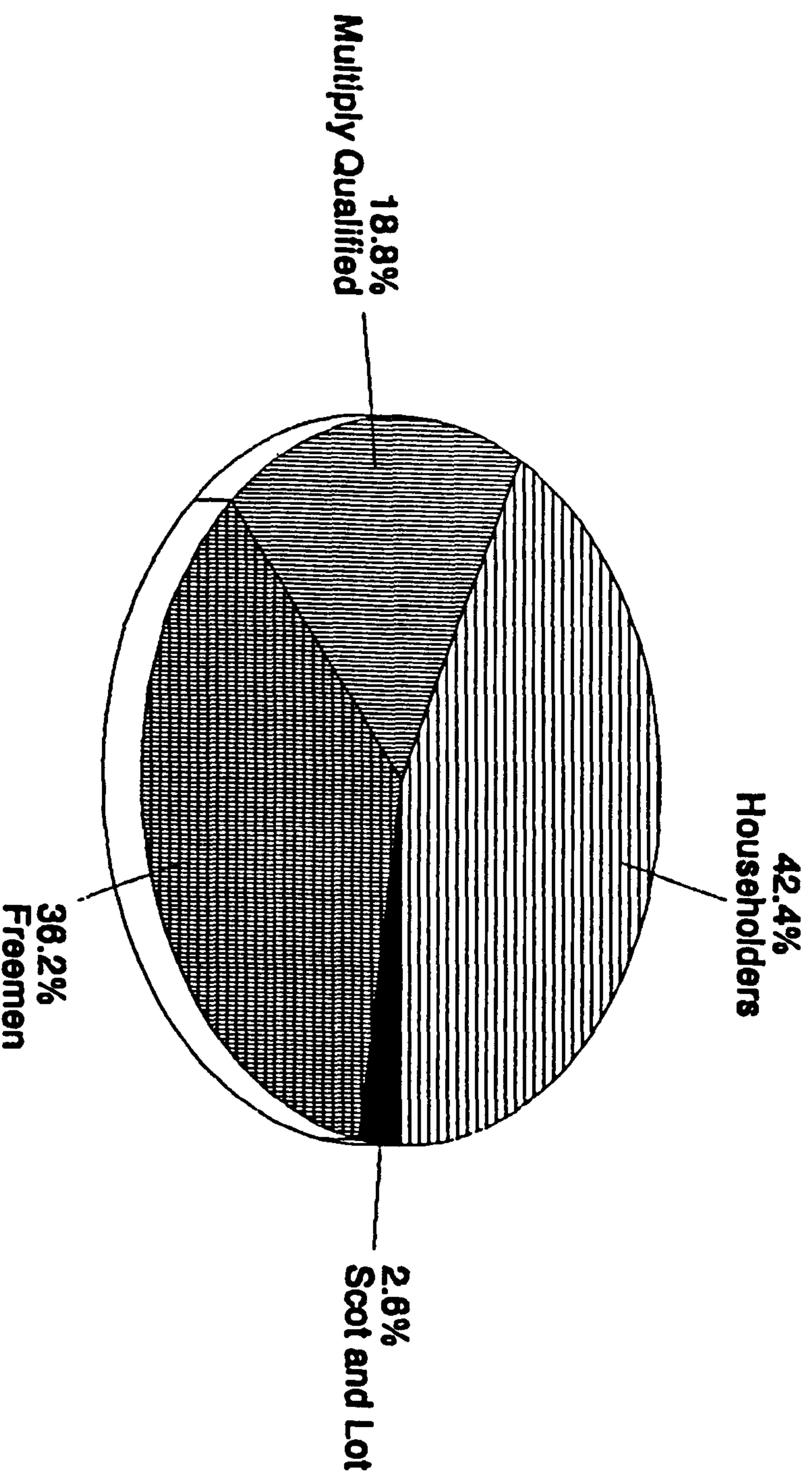
James Hudson gave some clue as to how these titles came to be entered:

Q: When you say there are 1,100 £10 householders, that is exclusive of freemen?

⁷⁷ Leicester Borough By-election Pollbook, 1839 (L.R.L.).

⁷⁸ P.P. 1833 (189) XXVII.21; P.P 1837-8 (329) XLIV.609-610. Leicester Borough Pollbook, 1837.

**Figure 1.5 : Multiple Qualification,
Leicester 1837**



Hudson: Many of those are freemen; I am entered as a £10 householder and also as a freeman; I may represent which franchise I please.⁷⁹

Hudson in fact chose to vote as a householder, as did other leading Liberals. Some leading Tories, like most of their fellow voters, chose to use the freemen title, out of conscious identification with the Leicester politics of the past, and also to justify and reinforce the Tory link with working-class freemens' interests.⁸⁰

The true relative balance of freemen and £10 householders in Leicester therefore was significantly different to the picture presented by each pollbook up to 1839. The 1837 pollbook, for example, suggests that nearly half of those voting were resident freemen, with non-resident freemen making up another 13%: in fact those qualified only as freemen constituted just over one third of all voters.

For local officials round the country, calculating the actual number of voters in their constituencies proved extremely problematic. For the largest constituencies (like Westminster, Liverpool, Bristol), it was not even attempted. The Town Clerk for Bristol admitted his difficulties:

⁷⁹ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.125.

⁸⁰ See Chapters 2 and 4.

It is to be observed that many persons are registered in several different parishes of this city, being also registered as freemen; and a still greater number are registered several times under two classes. Therefore the actual number of electors is considerably less than the apparent total, but not being able to identify these parties, I have no means of stating the difference.⁸¹

In the immediate wake of the Reform Act, his counterpart at Leeds archly referred to the new "arduous duties" he was expected to carry out.⁸² Officials in Welsh boroughs complained of the additional troubles they had because of "the similarity of names prevalent in Wales".⁸³ Those in Thirsk got so confused they just sent in a complete listing of the electorate!⁸⁴ For 1837, a detailed multiple qualification total (as opposed to a guess, which was more frequent) is available for 20 English and Welsh boroughs, with multiple qualification rates ranging from under 4% to 92%.⁸⁵

The significance of the extent of multiple qualification for methodological purposes will be fully realized in the context of the actual events and

⁸¹ P.P. 1837-8 (329) XLIV.588.

⁸² P.P. 1833 (189) XXVII.608-609.

⁸³ P.P. 1837 (329) XLIV.592 (Carnarvon).

⁸⁴ P.P. 1837 (329) XLIV.640-645.

⁸⁵ Ibid.; Abingdon, Berwick on Tweed, Bridport, Bury St. Edmunds, Cardigan, Carnarvon, Evesham, Grantham, Guildford, Leicester, Liskeard, Newcastle under Lyme, Northampton, Plymouth, Rochester, Shrewbury, Taunton, Tewkesbury, Warwick, and Winchester. A very rough calculation of the average multiple qualification rate from these figures gives around 30%. Drake, *Introduction to Historical Psephology*, pp71-72, notes that under 10% were multiply-qualified in Bath in 1841.

language of the election contests. In Leicester, the Liberals treated the freemen with great distrust, making violent verbal attacks on their alleged corruptibility whilst holding up the householders as models of virtue and independent voting.⁸⁶ It will be argued that this clear distinction between the two groups in the minds of local politicians was determined by the nature of the socio-political conflicts in the town, with the increasing rift from 1832 onwards between the Liberal élite who took municipal power in 1835 and sections of the working class (culminating in Leicester's particular brand of Chartism) and also the identification of some parts of the Conservative leadership with working class anti-Whig and anti-employer resentments. In this context, it is important to be able to identify those voters who may have been the representatives of the poorer sections of the town's population, in other words, those qualified only as freemen. The variable impact of corrupt agencies on different parts of the electorate will also be better studied if the voters of the lowest economic standing can be isolated.

⁸⁶ See Chapter 7.

Occupations

All of the post-Reform borough pollbooks used for this study give occupational information on voters. However, the pre-Reform Durham pollbooks give only guild-membership instead of real occupation, which as will be seen below, proved a limiting factor both in behavioural analysis and during record linkage.

It has been theorised that the presence or absence of occupations in pollbooks was "a question of the balance between printers' costs and printers' pride in their work", and certain types of constituency are more likely to have produced pollbooks which contain occupations - i.e. smaller to medium-sized boroughs rather than larger ones; boroughs as a whole rather than counties.⁸⁷ None of the county pollbooks for South Leicestershire, North Durham or West Surrey in this period gives voters' occupations.

Where occupations are provided, the question must be asked as to what uses they can justifiably be put. Their accessibility makes it tempting to take them at face value, but can their validity be trusted? Self-descriptions by voters may be subject to exaggeration, or to inaccuracy because of their level of

⁸⁷ Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp2-3.

generalization.⁸⁸ However, in smaller boroughs the voter would presumably have been known to enough people to require him to give a fairly accurate description of what he did, and his station in life. The polling clerk and the printer may also have had some influence on what was entered - how much is impossible to say.⁸⁹ On at least one occasion, the Durham City pollbook was compiled by the printer from a number of sources, including newspapers and the registers, rather than being a mere transcription of the pollbook. The editor of the North Durham Pollbook for 1837 also stressed that he had used numerous sources, among them agents' documents.⁹⁰

Record linkage of various sorts can be used to provide a more methodical check on the consistency of descriptions. Pollbooks can be linked over time to give a series of views of one man's occupational description. This is most useful where the intervals between elections are small, so that the effects of

⁸⁸ W.A.Armstrong, "The Use of Information about Occupation", in E.A.Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (Cambridge 1972), p210.

⁸⁹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p200; *Idem.*, *Electoral Behaviour*, p226; Vincent, *Pollbooks*, p3; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, p176, gives eighteenth century procedures.

⁹⁰ P.P. 1843 (433) VI.16; *Proceedings and Poll ... North Durham 1837*, frontispiece. Polling could take place in some confusion, making the polling clerks' task an unenviable one. In Durham in 1835, the last votes were taken "amidst very great clamour", during which the clerk's inkstand was knocked over and the electoral register badly stained. Du1/57/106, *Minutes of Election 13th January 1835* (D.C.R.O.).

social and occupational mobility are minimized, as is the case in the 1830s, and can particularly shed light on the use of generic "status" titles (especially "gentleman") if a more specific occupational description was given at an earlier or later election.

The applicability of pollbook occupational data to examination of the way in which a voter's environment affected his voting behaviour has been much debated. Occupations should not simply be "analysed as texts, rather than as historical realities".⁹¹

There are two parts to the debate. Firstly, there is the question as to whether single occupations are socially or economically homogeneous enough in the first place to be treated as discrete transmitters of strictly-definable sections of opinion; and secondly and subsequently, even if occupations can be said to be representative of socially-distinguishable groups, whether it is possible to fit these groups into a model of society in any way that allows for meaningful analysis of the political manifestations of social conflict.

In *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted*, Vincent believed that "occupation, taken by and large, gives an implicit and politically sufficient assessment of wealth, without taking the matter further by inquiring

⁹¹ Vincent, *Pollbooks*, p4.

into the means of actual individuals". In a paragraph that engendered much discussion, he argued:

Though their fortunes might vary considerably upward or downward, all shoemakers shared in a body of social opinion about what kind of people shoemakers were, which in turn derived from an objective economic homogeneity natural to skilled small producers competing in a free market.⁹²

It is in fact more difficult to perceive such occupational interests than Vincent suggested. Neale, for example, used ratings assessments to show that political behaviour cutting across occupational groups could be explained by wide differences in the source and size of income (and thus power) within individual occupations.⁹³ Social stratification within specific occupations or industries (eg. within shoemaking in Bath) due to unequal wealth and power distributions could result in highly localised conflicts. These distinctions are not visible in the pollbooks - for example, journeyman shoemakers cannot be distinguished from the master shoemakers who were their employers. Moreover, because only a small percentage of some occupations was enfranchised, care should be taken not to assume that the views and values of those in the

⁹² Vincent, Pollbooks, p6.

⁹³ R.S.Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (London 1972), pp62-74; also "Class and Class Consciousness in Early Nineteenth Century England; Three Classes or Five?" in *Victorian Studies*, 12 (1968), pp5-32, reprinted in *History and Class* (Oxford 1983); C.Behagg, "Masters and Manufacturers: Social Values and the Smaller Unit of Production 1800-1850", in G.Crossick (ed.), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth Century Europe* (London 1984), pp137-154.

pollbooks were also those of the wider, non-voting, part of their occupation.⁹⁴

However, the fact that for some occupations at least the distinctions between masters and men are seemingly deliberately blurred by the pollbooks may be taken as significant, as a reflection at least to some extent of contemporary opinion that there were important similarities between men occupied in the same work. This "fuzziness", as Katz called it, should in turn be kept in mind when determining any categorisation scheme for occupations.⁹⁵

Individual occupations may be more useful for analytical purposes if they can be combined with extra data. A check on their economic composition will allow a more detailed view of the way in which their members acted politically. Perhaps more importantly still, each occupation must be looked at within the specific context of the place within which they worked and voted. This is especially true of those occupations which are most visible, either because of their size, their central position within a town's economy, or

⁹⁴ Neale, *Class and Ideology*, p62ff., p70; *Idem.*, *Bath: A Social History 1680-1850*, (London 1981), pp356-362; R.J.Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution* (London 1979), pp45-63; S.Blumin, "Classification of Occupations", *passim*; Drake, *Introduction to Historical Psephology*, pp72-74.

⁹⁵ M.Katz, "Social Structure in Hamilton, Ontario" in S.Thernstrom and R.Sennett (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History* (Yale 1970), pp209-244; Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp52-3.

their political rôle (or all three), as with the framework knitters in Leicester.

For the purpose of more general examination of the social bases of voting, most studies employ systems of occupational classification, grouping occupations into categories which, hopefully, represent some socially realistic divisions, and can subsequently be tested.

Occupational classification has proved one of the most problematic of the procedures required by historians for computer-assisted recording and analysis of social data.⁹⁶ Occupations are unlike other social variables (like religion, age, wealth etc.): they are nominal rather than interval, not self-defining, and are frequently either anomalous or ambiguous.⁹⁷ Social scientists, however, commonly view it as one of the most useful of variables about which to have information, as "the variable which includes more, which sets more limits on the other variables than any other criterion of status".⁹⁸

⁹⁶ E.Higgs, "Structuring the Past: The Occupational and Household Classification of Nineteenth Century Census Data", in E.Mawdsley, et al. (eds.) : *History and Computing III*, pp67-73; T.Herschberg and R.Dockhorn, "Occupational Classification", in *Historical Methods Newsletter*, 9 (1976), pp59-98.

⁹⁷ S.Blumin, "Classification of Occupations", p83.

⁹⁸ S.Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress. Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Harvard 1964), p84; also *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880-1970* (Harvard 1973), p46.

The task of determining categories that are coherent and socially self-contained "bristles with ambushes",⁹⁹ having as it does crucial implications for the nature of the results that will be obtained. A classification system should fulfil a number of methodological criteria:

1. It should be appropriate to the questions being posed. Classifications which aim to discover whether or not there are visible social axes of voting should therefore stress "categorical principles of continuity and functional logic"¹⁰⁰, as opposed to giving priority to establishing hierarchy as is needed in studies of social mobility.¹⁰¹ The rationale behind an occupational classification should be made as explicit as possible, for this reason.

2. Occupational categories should be mutually exclusive (no title should occur in more than one category), and inclusive (each title should fit into one category).¹⁰²

⁹⁹ M.Katz, "Occupational Classification in History", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 3 (1972), p63.

¹⁰⁰ Katz, "Occupational Classification", p65.

¹⁰¹ These sorts of occupational classification can be found, for instance, in S.Thernstrom, "Immigrants and WASPs: Ethnic Differences in Occupational Mobility in Boston, 1890-1940", in S.Thernstrom and R.Sennet (eds.), *Op. Cit.*; S.Blumin, "Mobility and Change in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia", in S.Thernstrom and R.Sennett, *Op. Cit.* The distinction is pointed out by Katz, "Occupational Classification", p65.

¹⁰² Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness*, p30.

3. The limitations of the data should be fully acknowledged by testing. Here, occupation categories will be tested in two ways with record linkage: by linking successive pollbooks to examine consistency over time in occupational titles (as a guide both to the degree of terminological ambiguity and to the "significance" of titles as affected by occupational mobility), and by linking to other variables to test internal consistency. Intuitive perception of status hierarchy can to a certain degree be checked, and the addition of a more quantifiable dimension of status may be able to add greater legitimacy to categories.¹⁰³

4. The classification ultimately used should not be alien to early nineteenth century sensibilities. It is tautological, of course, to say that modern perceptions and biases should not be introduced regardless of the way that those themselves involved thought of the society in which they lived. The use of an occupational typology consisting of "artisans", "shopkeepers" and "professional men" was widespread in the early nineteenth century. The contemporary language of class and other conflicts will necessarily

¹⁰³ "...a scale reflecting two dimensions will have more analytic utility and predictive power than a scale based on only one factor..": Katz, "Social Structure", pp214-216. The validity of using rate book data as wealth indicators is discussed below.

be reflected.¹⁰⁴ Perceptual boundaries, however, are far more difficult to map than economic or functional rankings of occupations, as they are simultaneously more subjective, more susceptible to the influence of localized context, and, especially in this decade, constantly evolving. Moreover, they may not even have any "real" existence, perhaps being only normative perceptions which have no behavioural substance.¹⁰⁵ This is true whether one is referring to the workings of group identification or to individuals' perceptions of themselves within groups.

This last point needs elaboration. Whether occupational categorization is done according to a functional, economic, "class" or status framework, there can be no doubt of the reality of the numerous sub-divisions of rank throughout society to those within them. Concern for status was a preoccupation, derived from the essential inequalities of social opportunity: "minute distinctions of social differentiation were maintained almost as a condition

¹⁰⁴ T.J.Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behaviour in English Constituencies, 1832-1868", in E.Allardt and S.Rokkan (eds.), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York 1970), pp160-189; T.J.Nossiter, *Elections and Political Behaviour*, p21; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p202; P.Joyce, *Visions of the People* (Cambridge 1990).

¹⁰⁵ Neale, *Class and Class Consciousness*, p147.

of preserving social harmony".¹⁰⁶ As the Radical

Molesworth explained:

In England aristocratic feelings pervade every class of society. In no country in the world, save perhaps India, are the classes so clearly and harshly marked out. The man of birth looks down upon the parvenu; the rich upon the poor; the banker and merchant upon the shopkeeper; the general dealer upon the one in retail; the possessor of a factory upon his workmen ...¹⁰⁷

These perceptions of inequality were at the heart of class conflict, and subjective as well as objective criteria of social distinction must be considered. The identification of groups in conflict with each other within the authority structure has been argued to be the key to establishing where contemporaries would have regarded themselves within the social scale and how their attitude to it would be shaped. According to this model of society - most notably in Neale's interpretation of Dahrendorf - class is experiential as well as economic, and occupational classification will have to be seen to be reflective of this.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ F.O'Gorman, "Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England, 1760-1832", in *Journal of Modern History*, LV1 (1984), pp391-427; G.Crossick, *Artisan Élite in Victorian Society*, (London 1978), p244 and Chapter 7 passim.

¹⁰⁷ W.Molesworth, "Terms of Alliance Between Radicals and Whigs", in *Westminster Review*, XXVI (January 1837), pp279-318.

¹⁰⁸ Neale, *Class and Class Consciousness*, passim; R.Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society* (Stamford 1959); J.Foster, "Nineteenth Century Towns - a Class Dimension", in H.J.Dyos, *The Study of Urban History* (London 1968), pp282, 340.

Having said this, it should be made clear that the categories used here are primarily functional, and follow the pattern set by a number of previous studies. It has been pointed out that historians seem to have arrived independently at much the same answers as to how to classify occupations¹⁰⁹ and the categories here conform to O'Gorman's and others in being "not self-conscious social groups, ... not status groups, and ... not social classes. They are groupings of occupations which display recognizably similar functional and social qualities which illuminate the study of social behaviour".¹¹⁰

The contents of the categories used here are listed in the Appendix. Most occupations fit readily into one of these categories, but some allocations require explanation.

¹⁰⁹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp199-218. O'Gorman provides a very useful summary of the pioneering categorizations, in Appendix II, pp394-401, i.e. of those used in T.J.Nossiter, *Influence, Opinions and Political Idioms in Reformed England. Case Studies from the North East* (Hassocks 1974); D.Stoker, *Elections and Voting Behaviour*; J.A.Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*. An occupational categorization for census data for 1861 is set out in W.A.Armstrong, "The Use of Information about Occupation". Studies employing an occupational categorization include E.Bargent, *Bristol Society in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Unpubl. D.Phil., Oxford 1985); R.Sykes, *Politics and Electoral Behaviour in Guildford and West Surrey, 1790-1886* (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Surrey 1975); S.Thernstrom, "The Other Bostonians"; R.J.Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885* (Oxford 1973).

¹¹⁰ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp218-219. For a dissenting voice, see Beales, "The Electorate Before and After Reform".

The categories are:

- I : Gentlemen/Professionals/Public Servants
- II : Merchants and Manufacturers
- III : Retailers
- IV : Craftsmen
- V : The Drink Trade
- VI : Labourers and the Unskilled

Category I, especially, is constructed somewhat differently here than elsewhere. Members of the established professions (divinity, law, medicine, army, navy) are obvious inclusions. They are joined by other occupations for which a level of education or literacy was necessary (and whose work was exclusively non-manual), and, perhaps more problematically, all officials and public servants whatever the level of skill required for their jobs. As justification for the inclusion of the latter, there is some evidence of a contemporary distinction of the "politics of bumbledom",¹¹¹ influenced by the political character of the employing body, but also connected emotionally to the establishment and the status quo. The Radical candidate for Durham City in 1837, Granger, complained (or maybe boasted):

¹¹¹ Vincent, Pollbooks, p19.

I am not the "gentleman's candidate". The magistracy and those in power and authority are against me. I do not know that even a petty constable would be found to record his vote in my favour.¹¹²

Although their inclusion in Category I may be felt to work against the social exclusivity of the category, they are few in number (normally only one voter per title) and do not unreasonably distort the nature of the group. Moreover, it is difficult to see where they could be better placed. The only real alternative is with the unskilled in Category VI, and although it is true that some of these posts were not highly skilled (eg. turnkey, mace bearer!), the distinctiveness of their position within the institutional structure of their towns would be lost if they were included with the labourers.

"Gentlemen" formed a very substantial subgroup in Category I in each of the boroughs. In Guildford they were consistently 10% of the electorate; in Leicester they rivalled "hosiers" and "victuallers" for the position of second largest group after the framework knitters, ranging between 150 and 220 members at each election. There, as in Durham, they consistently formed 5% of the electorate.

Vincent reckoned the title of "gentleman" to be "a disguise for many of its members", an "irremediably impure" category.¹¹³ The title, unlike the specific

¹¹² Durham Advertiser, July 28th, 1837.

¹¹³ Vincent, Pollbooks, p35.

occupational titles, carried an historical weight of social and moral connotations, implying a set of assumptions about the status and respectability of anyone claiming it, although by this time it had dropped its older connotation of a non-working life.¹¹⁴ Its use in open voting must have carried the risk for those claiming it of ridicule if it was blatantly inappropriate. Suspicions that the "gentlemen" voters might not have been as "respectable" as they seemed proved, however, largely unfounded. Linkage of the pollbooks through the 1830s showed that claims to the title were highly consistent, and that although many "gentleman" did appear under different occupations at different times, most of their alternative guises were also high status (or at least were also occupations defined within Category I). By far the most frequent alternatives to "gentleman" were legal occupations, solicitors, attornies and barristers making up twenty-six of the 102 "gentlemen" in Leicester who appear as something else. Farmers, doctors and schoolmasters are also well-represented. In all three boroughs, it was most likely that a "gentleman" who gave another occupational title would not appear at another election as a member of another occupational category. There were some commercial men (manufacturers, hosiers, and especially brewers) who manifested themselves as "gentlemen", as well as retailers (for example,

¹¹⁴ P.J. Corfield, "Class By Name and Number in Eighteenth Century Britain", in *History*, 72 (1987), pp38-61.

butchers, chemists, bakers), a very small number of craftsmen, and even a few apparently unskilled men. But of the 425 "gentlemen" in the Leicester linked panel, only four ever voted under occupations which could be classified as unskilled, and only fourteen as "craftsmen". In Durham and Guildford craft or unskilled "gentlemen" were practically unknown.

Between Categories II and III it may at times be difficult to discern the line of separation, despite O'Gorman's picture of the retailers as "distinctly lower in the social structure".¹¹⁵ Important clues are given by the use of the terms "Dealer", "Agent" and "Wholesale", taken to indicate involvement in commerce on a different scale to that practised by individual retailers.¹¹⁶ The scale of business, however, may not have been consistently large. There appears to have been in Leicester politics a fairly clear distinction between retailers and wholesalers: it has been noted that wholesalers alone wielded any great political significance as individuals.¹¹⁷ However, the distinction between "hosiers" and "framework knitters" will have to be examined. Again, however, the number of members of Category II about whom there is any doubt

¹¹⁵ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p210.

¹¹⁶ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp182-4.

¹¹⁷ D.Freer, *Business Families in Victorian Leicester: A Study in Historical Sociology* (Unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, University of Leicester 1975), p165.

is relatively small, and the category seems satisfactorily self-defined.

Nossiter's distinction between retailers and craftsmen has been followed: craftsmen make, and retailers sell.¹¹⁸ Those who do both - like bakers and tailors - have been classed in Category III, on the basis that they had to deal with customers and so were subject to the same sorts of pressures as other retailers. Nossiter's and O'Gorman's allocations of "watchmaker" and "tallow chandler" have been followed, despite Phillips' doubts about the two occupations,¹¹⁹ but these are nit-picking points. In general, the shopkeeper was multi-skilled, where the craftsman exercised just one skill, although the size and scale of the retailing enterprises encompassed within Category III must have varied considerably. The contact with the customer was of primary importance, and had an impact on the shopkeeper's perception of his own interests (and on his ability to voice them).¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Nossiter, *Influence*, p145; Idem., "Shopkeeper Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century", in T.J.Nossiter, A.H.Hanson and S.Rokkan (eds.), *Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences* (London 1972), pp408-9; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp201-2.

¹¹⁹ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp183-4.

¹²⁰ Nossiter, "Shopkeeper Radicalism", pp408-9 and passim; Idem., "Voting Behaviour, 1832-1872", in M.Drake (ed.), *Applied Historical Studies* (London 1973), pp380-389; K.T.Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford 1984), pp47-56; Vincent, *Pollbooks*, p16.

The Craftsmen category - always the largest in the three boroughs here - contains a wide variety of types of work, with consequent implications for differences in work experience and life expectations. Craftsmen can, however, be functionally distinguished in several ways - by their non-selling nature, and in many cases by their experience of (or in the case of the framework knitters in Leicester, their memories of) an apprenticeship system that marked their skills out as distinct.

Major studies of the pre-Reform electorate have not included a "Drink" category, but have acknowledged that the contribution of the drink interest to electoral politics does appear to be qualitatively different for the period after 1832.¹²¹ The drink interest itself might operate as an electoral interest¹²² - especially given the political connotations of the granting of licenses, and the use made by candidates and agents of public houses - but moreover, the size of the industry manufacturing and supplying alcohol might have more direct implications for both the condition of urban life and the nature of election contests. The main technical problem in

¹²¹ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp186-7.

¹²² B.Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (London 1971), pp60-86, 344-345; J.R.Vincent, "The Electoral Sociology of Rochdale", in *Economic History Review*, XVI (1963-4), pp76-90; T.J.Nossiter, *Elections and Political Behaviour*, p185; W.B.Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain* (London 1962), p64.

constructing the category was doubt as to whether "victuallers" were solely retailers of drink. The 1841 census was very helpful: victuallers are included as a sub-division of "Tavern keepers".¹²³ The matter was finally solved by linking "victuallers" through the pollbooks. Of the twenty-one "victuallers" in Leicester whose occupational title changed between elections to another retailing designation, nineteen had been (or were to be) either "beersellers", "brewers" or "innkeepers".¹²⁴

Having defined the occupational categories, an attempt should be made to establish how stable occupational titles were over time. Most studies of electoral behaviour have worked occupational structure cross-sectionally, without reference to change. Occupational mobility - or merely the degree to which descriptions of jobs changed - may have implications for the significance in political terms of men's occupations to them. Some assumptions about the nature of a man's work can also be cross-referenced. The data here is not structured for study of occupational mobility as such,¹²⁵ but it can reveal some general

¹²³ Abstract of the Answers and Returns made Pursuant to Acts 3 & 4 Victoria c.99 ... MDCCCXLI England and Wales, Vol. 5 (London 1844).

¹²⁴ There were a number who had actually changed occupations, mostly from craft jobs. See Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp59-60, for the attractions of the drink business to working men, and the contemporary perception that they "rush into the trade".

¹²⁵ See Katz, "Occupational Classification", pp64-70.

levels of occupational title "instability", the possible effects of which should be considered before the occupational categories are put into operation.

By far the most common pattern found was for voters to have only ever voted under one occupational label. The results were consistent across the boroughs, despite the different scale of the linkage exercises, the different number of contests involved, and the different linkage problems encountered. Over 84% of the Guildford voters' panel, covering the six contests between 1830 and 1841, were entirely consistent in their choice of occupational title, and where occupations did change between elections, they mostly did so between "compatible" occupations where the difference was either terminological or caused by non-specificity on one or more occasions (meaning that there was probably no actual change of job involved), for example, attorney/barrister; farmer/grazier; tailor/draper; barber/hairdresser; bookseller/stationer; publican/innkeeper; coach painter/coach builder; cabinet maker/joiner; cow keeper/milkman; baker/confectioner; attorney's clerk/scrivener.¹²⁶ A few variations were taken to mean exactly the same thing, and were treated as being entirely consistent, eg. shoemaker/cordwainer. Of course, some of the voters in the linked panel only voted on one occasion,

¹²⁶ See section on nominal record linkage below for how these sorts of occupational title changes were dealt with.

but of the 190 voters who had polled at three or more elections two-thirds never gave a different occupation. Overall, less than 5% of the Guildford voting panel gave discrepant occupations (defined as ones that fell into different occupational categories). For Durham, taking the contests after the Reform Act only,¹²⁷ consistency is almost as great at over 90%. In other words, nine out of ten voters retained the same occupational title between 1832 and 1843.

Results for Leicester were very similar. Again, over 80% of voters displayed only consistent occupational titles, between 1832 and 1839 over four elections, regardless of other changes in their circumstances like changes of address. "Movement" between the occupational categories (either "real" or terminological) was limited in extent. Although there were examples of "lace hands" becoming "lace manufacturers", or "framework knitters" becoming "hosiers", they were very few and far between. Those framework knitters who did appear in the pollbooks as something else - 41 out of 560 - mainly stayed within the parameters of Category IV (as woolcombers, loom hands, framesmiths or turners, for example), in spite of the condition of the hosiery industry in the late 1830s which must have been a strong incentive to find other types of work. A very large majority of framework knitters with the vote remain framework

¹²⁷ See below for discussion of the problems with guild titles in pre-Reform Durham pollbooks.

knitters through the decade: the very low number who become labourers or grocers, or beersellers, or vice versa, indicates that the group was essentially stable in composition. In particular the low frequency of ambiguity between hosiers and knitters - only one instance is recorded in the pollbooks - is a strong reinforcement of the rationale between the separation of the two into Categories II and IV respectively.

Somewhat more problematic, however, is a categorical definition of Leicester's "worsted spinners". The term appears to have been used to describe both the capitalists of the industry (men like Brewin and Whetstone, Fielding, Oldacres, Raby)¹²⁸ who owned and ran Leicester's only real factories in the 1830s, and the workmen they employed to tend the machines, and indeed both sorts of "worsted spinner" occur in the pollbooks. The fact that no clear dividing line can be established (in nominal if not in social terms) is especially regrettable in this case, since a number of the manufacturers involved were of central political importance within the Liberal Dissenting group, and their loss to Category II may act to distort the voting of the "Merchants and Manufacturers" group. Correspondingly, the disparate

¹²⁸ Freer, *Business Families*, pp1-2, 33-46; Idem., "The Dynasty-builders of Victorian Leicester", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, LIII (1978), pp42-54; for a description of the worsted-spinning process, see Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp41-2, 88, 276-277.

social and economic standings of the two rest uncomfortably among the real "craftsmen".¹²⁹

A precise solution to this problem would necessitate identifying "capitalist" worsted spinners individually, using detailed local knowledge, but this would compromise the object of this particular occupational classification exercise. Therefore, the "worsted spinners" were left in Category IV, with the following justification: their numbers are relatively small (between twenty and thirty-five at each election) and the evidence suggests that the "manufacturers" number less than half a dozen on each occasion; at some elections, the "manufacturers" appear not as "spinners" but as hosiers or gentlemen, which acts to place them at specific points of time among what might be considered more appropriate categories.

The levels of occupational stability found here are perhaps surprisingly high considering the intervals of time involved. Katz' study of the correlation between census data and assessment rolls in Hamilton, Ontario in 1851 and 1852 found an occupational agreement of 75%, but for an interval of only three months, and he acknowledged that the short interval was a major factor in the agreement level.¹³⁰ Several

¹²⁹ P. Jones, "Perspectives, Sources and Methodology in a Comparative Study of the Middle Class in Nineteenth Century Leicester and Peterborough", in *Urban History Yearbook* (1987), pp22-32, gives an indication of the wealth of middle-class worsted spinners in Leicester.

¹³⁰ Katz, "Occupational Classification", p77.

longitudinal studies of pre-1832 electorates, however, have tended to confirm that the occupations given in pollbooks are generally consistent and that even where discrepancies occur, they are largely to be explained by changes of terminology which do not as such affect the integrity of the data.¹³¹

Using this system of occupational classification, then, gives the following picture of the occupational composition of each borough (see Table 1.4).

Only initial impressions will be discussed here: the details of each borough's occupational structure and its effect on voting behaviour will be tackled in following chapters. The first impression, however, is

Table 1.4 : Occupational Structure of Electorates, 1832

	Occupation Categories (%)						
	NG	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Leicester	0.3	14.1	8.0	13.0	49.9	5.9	8.8
Guildford	0.0	22.4	3.6	18.8	39.4	8.6	6.9
Durham	0.0	17.9	0.9	18.8	47.7	5.6	9.0

N= Leicester 2,777, Guildford 303, Durham 765
 NG=Not Given

how similar the three are to each other, despite the very different sizes of the towns, their geographical/regional spread, and their economic differences. In fact, they conform very strongly to the "blunt diamond" or "egg"-shaped¹³² occupational

¹³¹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p200; Mitchell and Cornford, "Political Demography", p250.

¹³² O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p217; Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness*, p35.

structures found for other constituencies in this period, dominated by the retailers and craftsmen, although they do not portray the proportion of retailing that Nossiter identified in some boroughs.¹³³ If the retail shopkeeper did constitute "rarely less than 30% and often as much as 40%"¹³⁴ of post-Reform electorates, the three boroughs here may be argued not to be typical, but in fact they are not dissimilar to the aggregated percentages compiled from Nossiter's figures by O'Gorman from a sample of thirty-two two-member English boroughs between 1832 and 1866, with retailers averaging 26% of the electorate, and craftsmen 30%. Categories I, II and V (Drink) are even more similar - 17%, 10% and 9% respectively.¹³⁵

The Reform Act does not seem to have wrought dramatic changes on the structure of these electorates.¹³⁶ Direct static comparison is not possible for Durham, because of the use of guild titles instead of occupations in the 1830 and 1831 pollbooks, but the other two borough electorates do not seem significantly different after 1832. In Leicester, the

¹³³ Nossiter, *Influence*, p166; *Idem.*, "Aspects of Electoral Behaviour", pp168-9.

¹³⁴ Nossiter, "Voting Behaviour, 1832-1872", in *Political Studies*, XVIII (1970), pp380-389.

¹³⁵ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p217, from Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p166.

¹³⁶ J.Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture and Communication 1808-1868* (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester 1991), pp56-73.

occupational composition of the 1826 and 1832 electorates is very similar in spite of the structural changes that had taken place in the six years between the two elections, and especially the loss of two thousand non-resident voters (see Table 1.5)

Table 1.5 : Occupational Structure of Leicester Electorate, 1826 and 1832

	NG	Occupation Categories (%)					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1826	0.1	18.7	5.6	11.6	50.8	3.6	9.6
1832	0.3	14.1	8.0	13.0	49.9	5.9	8.8

N=4781 (1826), 2,777 (1832)

There are less than 20 months between the last "unreformed" and the first "reformed" elections in Guildford. The pattern, however is much the same: despite another significant change in the numbers participating (in this case, the electorate had nearly doubled), the occupational structure remained almost identical (see Table 1.6).

Table 1.6 : Occupational Structure of Guildford Electorate, 1831 and 1832

	NG	Occupation Categories (%)					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1831	0.0	22.7	4.3	18.4	40.5	8.6	5.5
1832	0.0	22.4	3.6	18.8	39.9	8.3	6.9

N=163 (1831), 303 (1832)

The situation might have been different if the Freemen and other Ancient Rights voters had not been retained, and it will remain to be seen whether the nature of the electorate was changing with greater

householder recruitment by 1841, but the immediate impression is that, in these two boroughs at least, the Reform Act did not constitute a revolution in the occupational structure of the electoral body. This is a phenomenon that has also been described for other constituencies.¹³⁷

The pre-industrial nature of the electorates as shown here might be argued to demonstrate that the Whigs (and especially Brougham) had very accurately predicted the social effect of the 1832 franchise.¹³⁸ Working-class participation was effectively limited, as reflected by the weighting of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois elements. The mass of the semi- and unskilled urban population was not represented.¹³⁹ The real economic effects of this, however, must be tested. There are two questions to answer. Firstly, are these categories of voters economically distinct from each other? Secondly, can it be shown that these electorates, because of relative economic stability, were likely to be "less politically conscious"¹⁴⁰ than

¹³⁷ For example, by O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p217.

¹³⁸ Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp20, 24-26. Vincent follows Dahrendorf's definition of an "industrial society" as one in which "nearly one out of every two citizens ... earns his living in industrial enterprises of production." (Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p142); Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behaviour", pp166-171.

¹³⁹ Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behaviour", pp166-171; Fraser, *Urban Politics*, pp222-223.

¹⁴⁰ Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behaviour", p167.

more proletarian bodies would have been, and if they were, was it the result of deliberate Whig strategies or a largely unforeseen consequence? Moreover, did these occupational structures contain voters who were substantial enough to resist pressures on their voting so that their political inclinations can be seen to be truly theirs and not the result of corrupt or overly deferential forces?¹⁴¹

Some attempt towards answering the first question will be made here, using rates data to test the occupational categories.

Rates data is not available for Durham for this period, but linkage of rating information and the pollbooks proved possible for Guildford and Leicester. For the following applications, the rating information was used according to the following rules.¹⁴² Only domestic property values were examined (in nearly every case, this meant "House" or "Dwelling", but in a very few instances, "House and Yard" or "House and Garden"). Combinations of domestic and commercial property (most commonly "House and Shop") were excluded, as were all values which were for commercial property alone (warehouses, stables, bakehouses etc.). This makes results between occupational categories more comparable, but does not necessarily represent the full

¹⁴¹ R.J.Morris, "Property Titles and the Use of British Urban Pollbooks for Social Analysis", in *Urban History Yearbook* (1983), pp29-38.

¹⁴² This methodology is set out in Neale, Bath, p60.

extent of some voters' property ownership. For similar reasons, and with similar effects, only one value was allocated to each voter. Where a voter was rated for more than one property, the highest value rating only was used. Where voters were jointly rated for one property, each was credited with the full value of the assessment.¹⁴³

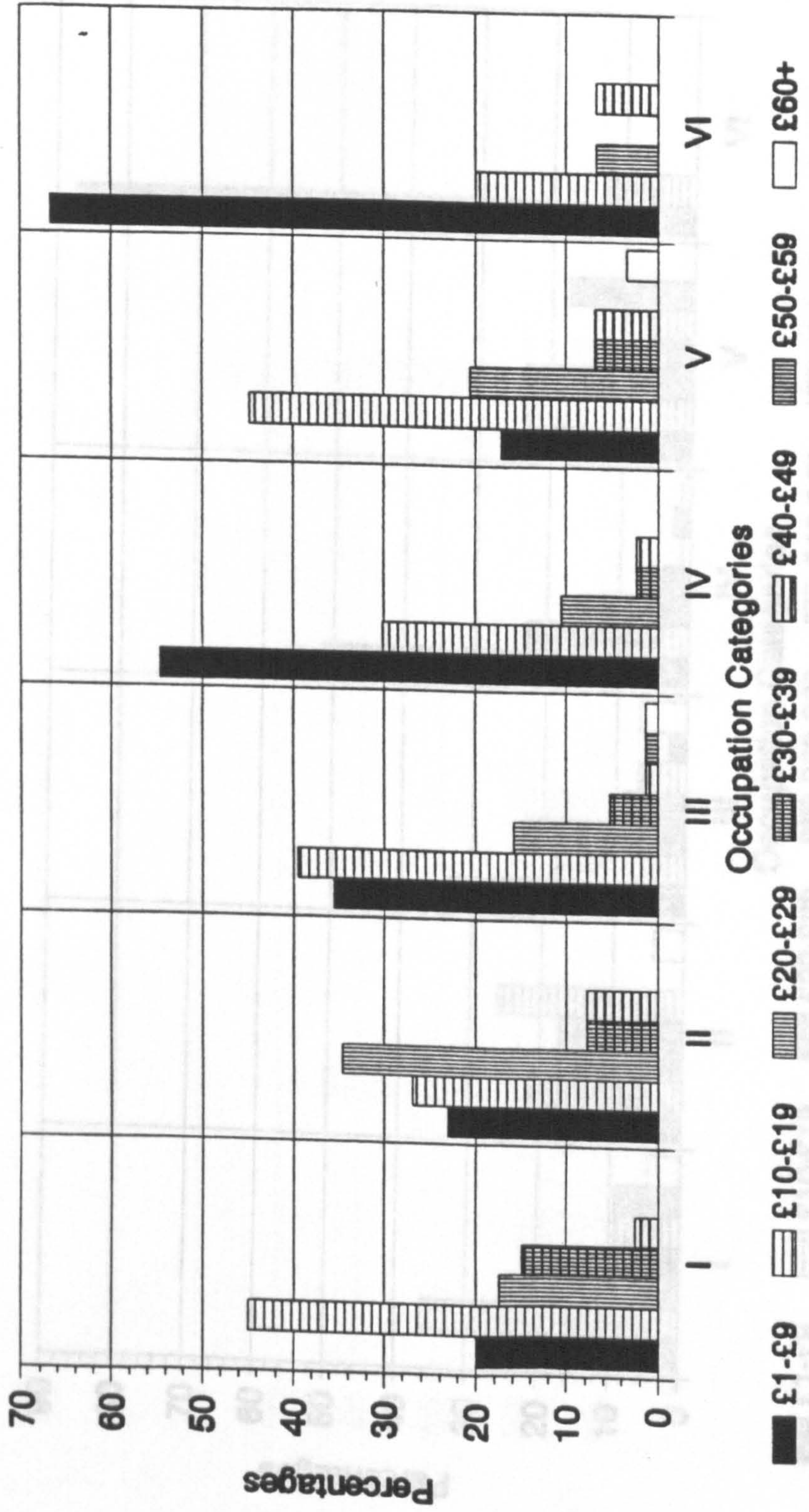
Three linkages were done: Leicester's 1834 ratebooks to the 1835 pollbook; Leicester's 1837 ratebooks to the 1837 pollbook; and Guildford's 1836 ratebooks to the 1837 and 1841 pollbooks.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Leicester ratebooks: 7D67/13 & 7D67/21 (All Saint's, 3rd quarter 1834 and 2nd quarter 1837); 7D67/220 (St. Margaret's, 4th quarter 1834 - the 1837 ratebook is missing); 7D67/251 & 7D67/260 (St. Martin's 3rd quarter 1834 and 2nd quarter 1837); 7D67/445 & 7D67/455 (St. Mary's 3rd quarter 1834 and 1st quarter 1837); 7D67/475 & 7D67/480 (St. Nicholas', 3rd quarter 1834 and 2nd quarter 1837). (All, L.R.O. Annexe). The values given in the Leicester parish ratebooks for 1837 were adjusted to the following formulae (given in P.P. 1837 (238) XXVII) to give the actual rental value of properties: all properties in St. Nicholas parish had one-third of the assessment added; all other parishes had one-quarter. Guildford ratebooks: BR/N/1/6 (St. Nicholas, May 5th, 1836); BR/HT/3/5 (Holy Trinity, May 3rd, 1836); BR/MA/3/5 (Blessed Virgin Mary, May 3rd, 1836) (All G.M.R.). For Guildford, nearly all of the assessments used were for Holy Trinity and Blessed Virgin Mary (also known as St. Mary's), as the agricultural nature of St. Nicholas, Stoke and Shalford meant that assessments for those areas were mainly for lands, tithes and bloc cottage ownership by large landowners (i.e. Lord Onslow and assorted gentry - see Sykes, Politics and Electoral Behaviour, p35.) See below for description of the linkage exercise.

¹⁴⁴ Because of the smallness of the linkage populations involved, Guildford proved very easy to link, so two voting entries were linked. Two Leicester linkage exercises were done to act as a check on each other because of the increased difficulties experienced due to the size of the population, greater incidence of commercial or joint commercial/domestic property, and missing ratebooks.

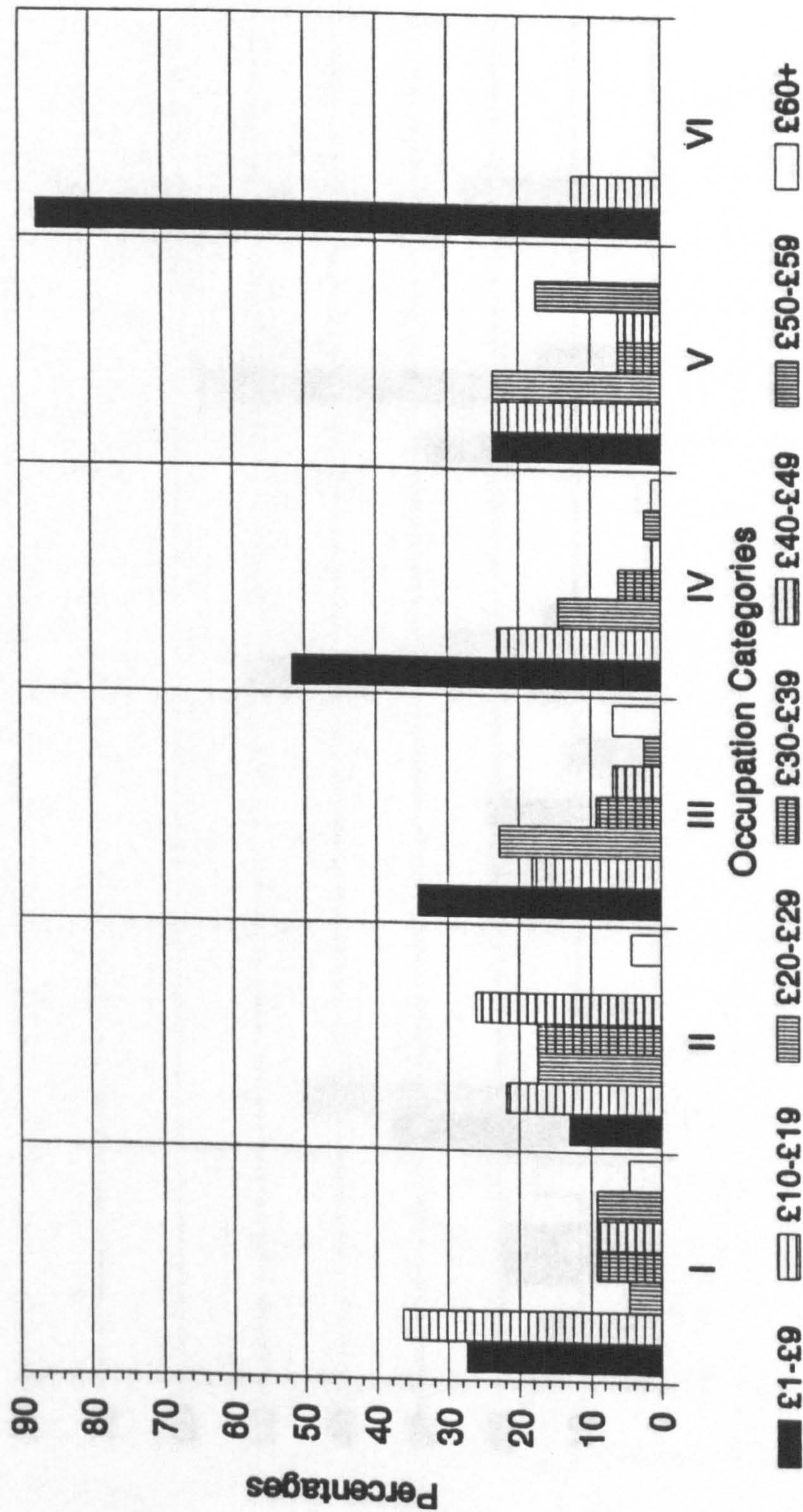
The results obtained were taken to indicate both that the occupational classification was inherently justifiable, and that the linkage of ratebooks and voters had been satisfactorily achieved (see Figures 1.6 to 1.8). The patterns displayed are consistent between the boroughs, and in Leicester's case, between the two dates. In all three cases, there is a distinct hierarchy of distributed values between retailers, craftsmen and the unskilled (Cats. III, IV and VI), the groups containing the majority of the electorate, suggesting that the occupational categories as defined do represent economically distinct sections of the electorate. Despite the heterogeneity within the Categories, retailers were significantly less likely to be rated for houses worth less than £10 than were craftsmen. The contrast is especially stark in Guildford (Figure 1.8) where only 17% of retailers were rated under £10, whilst over half of craftsmen were. The relatively low value of the property of the unskilled (Cat. VI) also marks them out as a group. In the linked panel for Leicester in 1837 (Figure 1.7), 88% of their members were rated for dwellings worth below £10, and none was rated for a property worth more than £20. It should be pointed out, however, that for some Categories, the number of individuals is small. For Leicester especially retailers proved easiest to link, and are subsequently rather over-represented in the sample. Craftsmen, in contrast, tend to be under-represented proportionately, but their numerical size

Figure 1.6 : Leicester 1835 - Voters' Assessed Rates



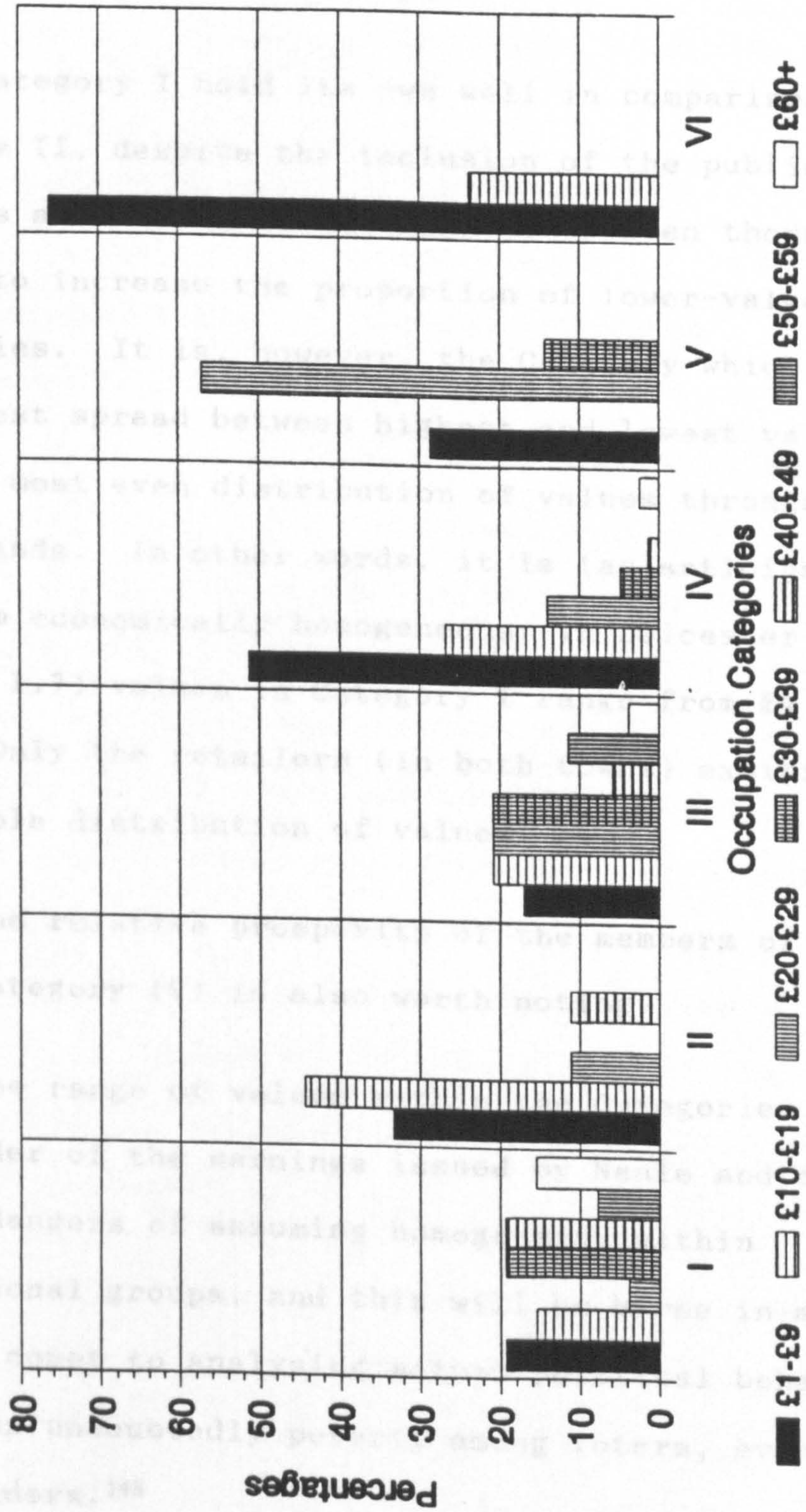
Ratings assessments for "House"
N=276

Figure 1.7 : Leicester 1837 - Voters' Assessed Rates



Ratings assessments for "House"
N=200

Figure 1.8 : Guildford 1837 - Voters' Assessed Rates



Ratings assessments for "House"
N=202

leads one to hope that the results are not unduly distorted.

Category I hold its own well in comparison with Category II, despite the inclusion of the public servants and officials who might have been thought likely to increase the proportion of lower-value properties. It is, however, the Category which records the widest spread between highest and lowest values, and the most even distribution of values through the value bands. In other words, it is (as anticipated) far from economically homogeneous: in Leicester in 1837 (Figure 1.7) values in Category I range from £4 to £110. Only the retailers (in both towns) exhibit a comparable distribution of values.

The relative prosperity of the members of the Drink Category (V) is also worth noting.

The range of values within the Categories acts as a reminder of the warnings issued by Neale and others of the dangers of assuming homogeneity within occupational groups, and this will be borne in mind when it comes to analysing actual political behaviour. There was undoubtedly poverty among voters, even among householders.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ For example, there are three voters in the linked panel for Leicester in 1835 (all craftsmen) rated for houses worth less than £2. Elsewhere in the ratebooks comes a definition of houses worth this amount being "uninhabitable". (7D67/475). It would seem that the pauper Irish voters were not unique: Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland*, p11.

Nominal Record Linkage: Longitudinal Analysis

Single pollbooks will not allow for psephological analysis in two crucial areas; individual voters' behaviour over time; and the ways in which a constituency's politics were affected by structural changes within the electorate.¹⁴⁶ Many questions cannot be adequately addressed cross-sectionally - for example, the rate at which voters entered and left the electorate, the effects of length of voting experience, the stability of partisan choice, and therefore the effectiveness with which parties and other agencies of electoral organization recruited and subsequently mobilized voters. The idiosyncracies of the double-vote system require that behaviour over time should be approached at the individual level so that the real motivations behind "plumping" and cross-party voting can also be identified.

For these reasons, it is only record linkage that can enable us to get at "the heart of voting behaviour",¹⁴⁷ reverting to the level at which, after all, the voting decisions were made. At its most

¹⁴⁶ See Mitchell & Cornford, "Political Demography", p243 for criticism on these grounds of Vincent and Moore's analyses; also Phillips, Pollbooks, ppvi-ix; Davis, Political Change and Continuity, 1760-1885. A Buckinghamshire Study (Newton Abbot 1972), pp100-101; Drake, "Mid-Victorian Voter", pp473-4.

¹⁴⁷ Drake, "Mid-Victorian Voter", p486.

fundamental, record linkage is in fact the most traditional of historical techniques, as the accumulating of data about a person or event to add to knowledge or to check what is already known.¹⁴⁸ Its refinement as a tool of social science has generated a large sub-section of literature in the last 25 years, especially in the wake of the development of computer linkage programs that enabled larger scale projects to be undertaken, and took much of the "great tedium" and labour out of the task.¹⁴⁹

This study includes both longitudinal linkage (of pollbooks) and inter-source linkage. The aim is to be wholly explicit about the nature of the linkage decisions made, and the difficulties encountered. The methodological issues involved in historical nominal record linkage were largely developed initially by demographers rather than by psephologists, with the result that there has been a tendency for record

¹⁴⁸ P.Adman, S.W.Baskerville, and K.F.Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage: or How Best to Optimize Links Without Generating Errors", in *History and Computing*, 4 (1992), pp2-15; I.Winchester, "On Referring to Ordinary Historical Persons", in E.A.Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People in the Past* (London 1973), pp17-40; Idem., "The Linkage of Historical Records by Man and Computer: Techniques and Problems", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, I (1970), pp107-124; E.A.Wrigley (ed), *Identifying People in the Past* (intro.), p2; Phillips, *Pollbooks*, ppix-x.

¹⁴⁹ Wrigley, *Identifying People*, pp3, 5; the pioneers in the field were W.A.Speck and W.A.Gray, "Computer Analysis of Pollbooks: An Initial Report", in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLIV (1970), pp64-90; W.A.Speck, W.A.Gray and R.Hopkinson, "Computer Analysis of Pollbooks: A Further Report", in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLVIII (1975), pp105-112.

linkage in the context of eighteenth and nineteenth century elections to be preoccupied with obtainable results and their significance rather than with explaining or justifying the way the linkage exercises were actually undertaken.¹⁵⁰ One result of this has been that results have in some cases been impossible to recreate or corroborate.

John Phillips was one of the first of the psephologists to state clearly the algorithm used.¹⁵¹ For his studies of "unreformed" voters, links were made where there was what he called "reasonable certainty", which was defined as "list-unique entries that agreed on all but one major point (such as address or occupation) or on two minor points (eg. variant name and analogous occupational titles)". However, the basis of individual links remained invisible.¹⁵²

The need for explicitness has consequently been stressed - whether the linkage is done manually, by computer, or with machine-assistance. Detailing the processes by which each linkage is arrived at allows

¹⁵⁰ Adman, Baskerville and Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage", p3; S.W.Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage" and the Analysis of Voter Behaviour in the Eighteenth Century", in *History and Computing*, I (1989), pp112-3.

¹⁵¹ "An algorithm is a set of operational rules specifying the steps through which a problem can be solved, or a goal achieved." Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, p312.

¹⁵² Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp315-7; see also Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage", pp115-6.

for full description of the data sets and their associated linkage problems, for clarity about how much confidence can justifiably be placed in the linkages done, and for analysis of the systematic biases introduced.¹⁵³ In other words, the parameters of possible error can be more strictly defined.

Winchester introduced the statistical terminology of "mu" and "lambda" errors to historical record linkage, the former being records which despite being linked do not in reality refer to the same individual, the latter where the same individual's records are erroneously left unlinked.¹⁵⁴ He suggested that linkage rules might be developed that allowed for possible links ("at

¹⁵³ Winchester concludes that "all linkages should follow definite rules which are reported as a standard part of the project" in "Priorities for Record Linkage: A Theoretical and Practical Checklist" in Clubb and Scheuch (eds.), *Historical Social Research* (Stuttgart 1980), pp414-430; Idem., "Linkage", pp109-110; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, p318; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p235; J.Elklit, "Nominal Record Linkage and the Study of Non-Secret Voting: A Danish Case", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15 (1985), pp419-443; M.Skolnick, "The Resolution of Ambiguities in Record Linkage", in E.A.Wrigley (ed), *Identifying People in the Past*, pp102-127.

¹⁵⁴ I.Winchester, "A Brief Survey of the Algorithmic, Mathematical and Philosophical Literature Relevant to Historical Record Linkage", in Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People*, pp142-145, describing the discussion in I.P.Felligi and A.B.Sunter, "A Theory for Record Linkage", in *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 64 (1969), pp1183-1210. The algorithmic problems described here, however, are mainly those encountered in demographic studies, where two very differently constructed sorts of sources may be being linked. See also Winchester, "On Referring", pp26-7; Elklit, "Nominal Record Linkage", pp427-33; Adman, Baskerville and Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage", pp5-6; Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage", pp112-3.

specified levels of error") to be described as well as positive links (those known to be "true") and positive non-links (those where the nature of the data prevented a link being assigned).¹⁵⁵

The strategies which lie behind linkage are fundamentally affected by two factors: the character of the data sets from which one is working, and the objectives towards which one is hopefully moving. This latter implies that some of the methodological issues developed around historical record linkage will not apply equally to different types of studies. In some studies, the maximization of "true links" has been the priority; in others, it has been the fullest possible recreation of a population or panel's behaviour, in which case, a degree of uncertainty might be acceptable as a preferred alternative to introducing biases to the results by only allowing selective linking.¹⁵⁶ With voting behaviour, for example, the accurate measurement of persistence versus abstention is crucial, and argues for the need for the fullest possible linkage.¹⁵⁷ Factors like these will have a prima facie effect on how a linkage algorithm is devised and implemented.

The influence that the data itself wields over linkage (in terms of its quality, its construction, the intervals between records etc.) means that familiarity

¹⁵⁵ Winchester, "Brief Survey", p142.

¹⁵⁶ Skolnick, "Resolution of Ambiguities", p104.

¹⁵⁷ Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage", p116.

with data files before attempting linkage is of great importance.¹⁵⁸ As will be demonstrated, even when working from only one type of record, and within a relatively small time-frame, the extent and quality of the items of information about individuals - known as identifiers or sorting-keys - may vary in such ways as to determine that algorithms have to be modified between data sets in order for the results to be comparable (acting also to increase the need for reporting). The runs of pollbooks to be linked (up to six over the eleven year period) also increased the need for a flexible link-assignment system.¹⁵⁹ Here, linkages are made explicit by means of "preference codes" which label each link according to its algorithm.¹⁶⁰

Before the process is described, the actual method of linking should be outlined. Linking was done by hand, with a large degree of computer assistance in handling the data. The procedure was: first, to add a date-identifying field (ie "32", "35", "37" etc) as field 3 of each of the entries of the single pollbooks (after surname and first name), using M.I.S.T.'s ADDFIELD command. Each pollbook file was then SORT-ed

¹⁵⁸ Adman, Baskerville and Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage", pp3-5; Winchester, "Priorities", pp416-8.

¹⁵⁹ Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage", p118.

¹⁶⁰ This approach was suggested by G.Buellens, *Computer Assisted Analysis of Hull Poll Books, 1774, 1780 and 1784* (Unpubl. M.A. Thesis, Hull 1987), and by Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage".

into alphabetical order, and the run of pollbooks for each constituency over the period MERGE-d to bring (hopefully) each of the voter's successive voting records adjacent to each other. These entries - defined by a common surname/first name combination - are known as clusters, which are the units within which the links are assessed.¹⁶¹ A cluster might look something like this:

BOXALL,Wm,30,Upholsterer,High St,HT,Freeholder,-WS
 BOXALL,Wm,31,Cabinet Mkr,High St,HT,Freeholder,-S-M
 BOXALL,Wm,32,Upholsterer,High St,HT,House,-MW
 BOXALL,Wm,35,Upholsterer,High St,HT,House,-MA
 BOXALL,Wm,37,Upholsterer,High St,HT,House,MW-
 BOXALL,Wm,41,Upholsterer,High St,HT,House,W-M-

These simple processes act to make the task of manually linking multiple files conceivable.¹⁶² If one had to construct clusters from entries in data sets that were randomly listed (or even listed in a non-alphabetical systematic way, for example by the type of votes cast, by electoral ward or by franchise type)¹⁶³ the task would be infinitely more time-consuming, and

¹⁶¹ E.A.Wrigley and R.S.Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage by Computer and the Logic of Family Reconstruction", in Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People*, pp64-101. "Each cluster...forms a self-contained record universe which is relevant to the breaking down of the cluster into a number of chains", p79.

¹⁶² Sort/Merge procedures are discussed in Winchester, "Brief Survey", p134ff.

¹⁶³ Eg. the Guildford manuscript pollbooks are naturally listed in the order of voting. Durham City pollbooks are split into franchise types; North Durham ones are listed by electoral district; for Leicester, the normal practice was for non-residents to be listed separately from residents.

quite probably impossible for all but the smallest constituencies.

The breaking-down of the clusters into chains (linked entries) was not automated, but the chain construction was done visually "on screen" with a simple text editor. Despite the size of some of the files to be linked, the task was manageable: linking four Leicester pollbooks (12,600 entries in all) took approximately 100 woman-hours; two North Durham county pollbooks (8,130 entries) about the same. The five Durham City pollbooks (4,400 entries) took about 30 hours; Guildford's six pollbooks (1,700 entries) less than 15.¹⁶⁴

The advantages and disadvantages of manual linkage are discussed in the literature.¹⁶⁵ Much of the enthusiasm for computer linkage can be attributed to the defence it erects against "the illusive bases and inconsistencies" of manual linkage where algorithms are not made explicit and the researcher appears to be at

¹⁶⁴ Whole populations had to be used because of the basic incompatibility of nominal linkage with almost all sampling techniques. See J.A. Phillips, "Achieving a Critical Mass while Avoiding an Explosion: Letter Cluster Sampling and Nominal Record Linkage", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, IX (1979), pp493-508; R.S. Schofield, "Sampling in Historical Research", in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (Cambridge 1972); S. Nenadic, "Record Linkage and the Exploration of Nineteenth Century Social Groups: a Methodological Perspective on the Glasgow Middle Class in 1861", in *Urban History Yearbook* (1987), pp32-42.

¹⁶⁵ See especially Winchester, "Priorities", *passim*; Wrigley, *Introduction to Identifying People*, p12.

the mercy of her (or his) intuition.¹⁶⁶ Formal, stated rules, uniformly applied, however, can remove these objections while retaining the advantages of linking manually - flexibility and a greater sensitivity to the real significance of the links being made.¹⁶⁷ In any case, nearly all of the users of automated linking have acknowledged the primary importance of checking links manually after the computer has finished: final judgements are human.¹⁶⁸ The most recent study using a preference coding system, for example, found that computer analysis of the data files alone was not sufficient.¹⁶⁹

Cluster comparison was done on the basis of the given identifiers. The commonest in pollbooks have already been described; name, address, occupation, franchise group.¹⁷⁰ The greater the number of identifiers, the greater the certainty of linkage decisions¹⁷¹ but in practice each type of identifier can

¹⁶⁶ Skolnick, "Resolution of Ambiguities", p105.

¹⁶⁷ Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People*, p3.

¹⁶⁸ Eg. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, p319; G.Guth, "Surname Spellings and Computerised Record Linkage", in *Historical Methods Newsletter*, X (1976), pp10-19; Wrigley and Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage", pp100-101.

¹⁶⁹ Buellens, *Computer Assisted Analysis*, p47. See also Adman, Baskerville and Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage", p8, and R.J.Morris' editorial foreword, *History and Computing*, 4 (1992), ppiii-vii.

¹⁷⁰ The vote was not used as a sorting-key, for obvious reasons. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp316-317.

¹⁷¹ Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People*, p5.

throw up its own obstacles to linking if the data is non-unique, discrepant, ambiguous, illegible or inconsistently structured.¹⁷² Because of such problems of reconciling data, the linkage process is essentially probabilistic: between the extremes of "obvious" links and "obvious" non-links lies a spectrum of uncertainty.¹⁷³ The parameters of this, and distinctions between levels and types of uncertainty, are mapped with preference codes which act as indices of probability that links are indeed "true".

Preference Codes:

Code 1 : Identical identifiers/list-unique
 Code 2 : List-unique, but different surname spelling
 Code 3 : "Minor" occupational variation
 Code 4 : Different street name
 Code 5 : "Major" occupational variation
 Code 6 : "Long-distance" residential variation
 Code B : Multiple non-uniqueness

Preference Code 1

In very general terms, completed chains were coded 1 where the surname/first name combination was unique and other fields were identical. In effect, however, because of what was already known about

¹⁷² The types of discrepancy between records that occur systematically are described in Winchester, "Linkage", p13, although he does not mention the phenomenon of inconsistently structured addresses (see below).

¹⁷³ T.Herschberg, A.Burstein and R.Dockhorn, "Record Linkage" in Historical Methods Newsletter, 9 (1976), pp137-163; Skolnick, "Resolution of Ambiguities", amongst others.

multiple-qualification¹⁷⁴ variations in franchise title did not exclude a chain from being coded 1.¹⁷⁵

Since the significance of Code 1 is that there is a minimum of uncertainty over whether the link is "true", in practice deviations could be made from the rule that all identifiers had to be exactly identical. These can be broken down as follows:

1. Some occupational labels were taken to indicate precisely the same job (eg. cordwainer/shoemaker; sock manufacturer/hosier; rope spinner/twine spinner; innkeeper/hotel keeper).

2. Some occupational titles which might today be perceived to have different meanings were used synonymously by contemporary censuses (eg. barber/hairdresser; hatter/hosier; glazier/plumber; tailor/breeches maker), and occurred within the pollbooks sufficiently regularly to be perceived as a distinct phenomenon, and so were treated as being the same.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ See above.

¹⁷⁵ Instead, a code - eg. F/H - was entered into the franchise field to indicate that the voter used different franchise titles at different elections. Only in the case of the Durham City pollbooks was franchise information used to distinguish between non-uniquely named individuals, and then only in a tiny number of cases.

¹⁷⁶ Abstract of the Answers and Returns pursuant to an Act passed in the 11th Year of ... King George IV, MDCCCXXXI (1833); Abstract of the Answers and Returns ... MDCCCXLI (1844).

3. Official titles (eg. Alderman, Mayor) were not held to detract from the likelihood that the records were referring to the same man.

4. Greater leniency was shown to "gentlemen" being described differently at different elections than to other occupational variations. Again, it was felt that the title "gentleman" in conjunction with other "high status" occupations in Categories I and II such as "banker", "attorney", "manufacturer", did not necessarily compromise the certainty that the entries referred to the same man.¹⁷⁷ The link was coded 1, however, only where there were at least two occurrences of the alternative occupation. Where the occupation concerned fell within Category III (Retail) the same practice was followed, but where occupations in the Craft or Unskilled categories (IV and VI) occurred in conjunction with "Gentleman" (which was in a very small number of cases¹⁷⁸), the status discrepancy was felt to be wide enough to draw doubt on the link and it was treated as a real occupational discrepancy (i.e. coded 5).

In all three boroughs, however, the large majority of Code 1 allocations were to chains derived

¹⁷⁷ This is a significant departure from the preference coding logic described in Buellens, Computer Assisted Analysis and Baskerville, "Preferred Linkage". Buellens (p45) acknowledges that treating "gentleman" as a distinct occupation prevents some links that common sense would make.

¹⁷⁸ See above.

from clusters containing wholly consistent occupational descriptions.

5. Familiarity with the data, and with the geography of the boroughs, meant that inconsistencies in the structuring of addresses were sometimes noted and compensated for. Working through the Leicester pollbooks manually, for example, it became clear that those who were given as living in "Green Lane" before 1835 were consistently said to be living in "Grange Lane" in 1837 and 1841, and the two were subsequently treated as the same. Sometimes an area of the borough was given, instead of a street name; eg. "Ruding Street" might be given in one pollbook, "Ruding Street, Black Friars" in another, "Black Friars" in a third. Voters given as living in a yard off a main street (eg. Davis' Yard Barkby Lane; Paradise Place Brook Street) could have their addresses given on another occasion as just the larger thoroughfare. In all these cases, where the likelihood was that the voter had not actually moved house, Code 1 could be used.¹⁷⁹

Preference Code 2

Code 2 signified a discrepancy in surname spelling. In theory, a nominal discrepancy should be

¹⁷⁹ This sort of flexibility in approach seems to be one of the greatest advantages of manual linkage.

considered the most potentially damaging, since linkage is de facto concerned with identifying individuals by name.¹⁸⁰ However, surname spelling discrepancies did not prove a significant problem, although they could be a nuisance, for example if they meant that the voters' entries were rendered physically distant from each other in the file (as happened where the surname was a commonly-occurring one - eg. Cook/Cooke; Clark/Clarke). Certainly they have been more of a problem to those using automated linkage (since the computer must be able to recognize that strings of different characters are in fact versions of the same surname), and to those using orthologically inferior eighteenth century records. Some eighteenth century records when compared have been found to have identically-spelled surnames in less than half of all cases.¹⁸¹

In the panels constructed for this study, there were extremely few instances where any imaginative leap

¹⁸⁰ Wrigley and Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage", p89. Names are treated as "primary attributes", with other identifiers being "secondary" ones.

¹⁸¹ Guth, "Surname Spellings", p13. Surname spelling is also discussed in Winchester, "Linkage", pp114-7; Elklit, "Nominal Record Linkage", p425; Wrigley and Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage", p99ff. Even where computer programs such as SOUNDEX are used, the ultimate decision as to whether different spellings equvalate to the same name still come down to human judgement: Adman, Baskerville and Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage", p6; R.J.Morris, in "In Search of the Urban Middle Class: Record Linkage and Methodology, Leeds 1832", in Urban History Yearbook (1976), pp15-20, notes that surname standardisation was much greater by the nineteenth century, and that many of the variations which did occur were probably due to clerical or printing mistakes.

had to be made to recognize that the surname was the same. In most cases, only one letter was different¹⁸² (Noon/Noone; Read/Reed; Willson/Wilson; Mac-/Mc-) and the fact that multiple entries were visible meant that the number and consistent patterning of secondary identifiers was often a strong reinforcement of the link: eg.

GWINN, Edward, 35, Baker, Chapel St, House, W-A
 GWYNN, Edward, 32, Baker, Chapel St, House, -MW
 GWYNN, Edward, 37, Baker, Chapel St, House, -WS
 GWYNN, Edward, 41, Baker, Chapel St, House, W-M-

As with all identifier deviance, however, problems could intensify where non-list-uniqueness was more common. On the other hand, where the data file was smallest (i.e. Guildford) and non-list-uniqueness the least frequent, the dangers of visual confusion due to manuscript were minimized.¹⁸³ Overall, Code 2 occurred in only about 3% of all completed chains.

¹⁸² In only two linked cases was the first letter different, ie. Dewsberry/Jewsberry; Kale/Cale. In such cases, the dangers of what has been recently labelled "epsilon" errors (where the first stage of comparison is missed altogether, despite records relating to a single individual) is greatly increased: Adman, Baskerville and Beedham, "Computer-Assisted Record Linkage", pp6-7.

¹⁸³ See S.W.Baskerville, P.Adman and K.F.Beedham, "Manuscript Pollbooks and English County Elections in the First Age of Party: A Reconsideration of their Provenance and Purpose", in *Archives*, 19 (1991), pp384-403, for the particular problems associated with manuscript. Surnames from the manuscript Guildford pollbooks could be checked against those in the electoral register.

Preference Codes 3 & 5 : occupational variations

The coding of variations within occupational descriptions was determined by whether the pairs of occupations fell within the same occupational category (in which case they were coded 3) or different categories (when they were coded 5). For linkage of pollbook runs for 1832 and later, the problems encountered were similar across the constituencies; however, when pre-Reform pollbooks were involved (especially Durham's) the algorithms underpinning the preference codes had to be modified.

The 1830 and 1831 Durham City pollbooks give a guild name instead of an occupational title (apart from two "Reverends" in each year). There are, therefore, only eighteen variations within the field,¹⁸⁴ as opposed to around 120 different occupational titles after 1832. The Durham City pollbooks were therefore linked twice: firstly, 1830-1837 (to give a view that covered the Reform crisis and the implementation of the Act) and secondly, just 1832-1837 (which could be done on exactly the same basis as the linkage of the other boroughs).

¹⁸⁴ Durham City Pollbooks, 1830 and 1831. The guilds were : Mercers; Carpenters; Saddlers; Dyers; Tanners; Skinners; Butchers; Cordwainers; Weavers; Glaziers, Plumbers etc.; Drapers & Tailors; Smiths; Fullers; Curriers & Chandlers; Barbers & Ropers; Masons. P.P.(1835) XXV.1509-1516 (Municipal Corporations Commission, England and Wales). C.W.Gibby, Durham Freemen and the Guilds (Durham 1971); B.Colgrave, Durham Freemen and the Guilds (Durham 1946).

For the 1830-1837 linkage, all combinations of a guild title with an occupational title were coded 3, since it was impossible to tell whether a "smith" was really a smith or just a member of that guild. This meant that conjunctions as apparently unlikely as "mason/schoolmaster", "joiner/Sheriff's officer" and "smith/surgeon" were classed as non-major changes, reflecting that the different bases of the pollbook construction mean that the sorting key is not uniformly applicable.¹⁸⁵ This seemed the optimum way of keeping Code 3 as an indicator of a defined level of certainty.

Combinations of two (or more) non-guild titles (i.e. where a voter did not appear before 1832) were coded as normal. There were very few of these: almost all of the Code 3 links for the 1830-1837 linkage were caused by guild name complications.

Code 3 allocations occurred with the following frequency: Durham (1830-1837 linkage) 15%; Durham (1832-1837 linkage) 3.7%; Leicester 6%; Guildford 8%.

Again, the multiple data could reassure that a Code 3 chain was likely to be a true link. The example of William Boxall above shows a cluster that generated a Code 3 chain (because of the "cabinet maker" entry in 1831) whilst there was little doubt in the mind of the

¹⁸⁵ The variety of occupations within the guilds (as shown by the linkages) makes examination of the voting preferences of each guild (as in Stoker, *Elections and Voting Behaviour*, pp214-217) seem rather pointless. Records of freemens' admissions do not give "real" occupations: Du5/1/19 and Du5/1/20 (D.C.R.O.).

linker that it was the same William Boxall at each election.

Code 5 allocations were given where the alternative occupations given fell into different Categories, implying relatively wide status differences between the two, eg. "brickmaker/gentleman", "grocer/farrier", "labourer/publican", "framework knitter/gentleman". These distinctions are ultimately, however, subjective, and the extent of difference between them is not constant. They occurred very rarely: in Guildford, they constituted around 4% of the linked chains; in Leicester 6%; in Durham 2%.¹⁸⁶ In some preferential (as opposed to probabilistic) systems of linkage, these links would be abandoned, with the danger of introducing a bias towards the occupationally stable:¹⁸⁷ here, preference coding means the links can be retained, but their use is determined by the objectives of analysis.

¹⁸⁶ P.J.Corfield, "Computerising Urban Occupations", in P.Denley and D.Hopkin (eds.), *History and Computing* (Manchester 1987), pp67-8, gives a description of occupational changes encountered in eighteenth century data.

¹⁸⁷ See R.J.Morris' editorial foreword, *History and Computing*, 4 (1992), piv.

Preference Codes 4 & 6 : address variations

Durham pollbooks pre-Reform also differed from those after 1832, and from those for elsewhere, in not stating the street on which the voter lived. Only town or village was given.¹⁸⁸ There was little alternative but to use only the post-1832 street names as residential identifiers for voters living in Durham City. This posed a real problem at times when names were not list-unique and the guild names compromised the utility of the "occupation" identifier as well.

For all the other linkage exercises, however, Code 4 was uniformly indicative of a change in street names between the elections (with the exceptions described above). This cluster would generate a Code 4 chain:

ARCHER, Thomas, 32, Humberstone Road, Grocer, F, EVEL-
 ARCHER, Thomas, 35, Humberstone Road, Grocer, F, EEL---
 ARCHER, Thomas, 37, Market Place, Grocer, F, DUEA--
 ARCHER, Thomas, 39, Market Place, Grocer, F, E-

Multiple discrepancies were given a multiple coding ("44" or in one case, "444"). Code 4 was applied to 9% of Guildford's linked chains, 13% of

¹⁸⁸ Guildford and Leicester pollbooks before 1832 gave street names for all resident voters, but commonly only place name for out-voters.

Leicester's and 4% of Durham's.¹⁸⁹ Code 6 occurred less frequently, and denoted those whose address changed between towns or villages. These were either pre-1832 out-voters who moved back to the constituency, or voters who moved between the villages within the seven mile limit after 1832. There were no examples in Guildford, and those for Leicester totalled only around 1% of the panel. Political context determined that Durham was likely to be the constituency for which these occurrences were the most interesting, because of other evidence of the ways in which the wielders of "influence" (especially Lord Londonderry) organized their electoral resources. It was thus important to be able to identify, for example, those Londonderry freemen who were deliberately moved into the seven mile limit after 1832, and this was another justification for the distinction between Codes 4 and 6.

Neither Codes 4 or 6 should be used as real indicators of residential mobility, but using

¹⁸⁹ These seem very low, considering that others have reported residential persistence rates of under 20% over a ten year period later in the century, eg. M.J.Daunton, *Coal Metropolis: Cardiff 1870-1914* (Leicester 1977), pp138-141; C.J.Pooley, "Residential Mobility in the Victorian City", in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, iv (1979), pp258-277. One study of Leicester later in the century has found that 4% of houses each year were vacated on account of death of the householder alone: R.M.Pritchard, *Housing and the Spatial Structure of the City* (Cambridge, 1976). All one can say is that for the 1830s at least, the electorates of these constituencies do not display such high levels of address variation. Part of the explanation may be that the "address" of the property by which some householders qualified was not their actual residence.

preference codes as a explicit measure of link-scoring, however, means that one can guard against the danger of introducing a bias against those who were more likely to change address (presumably, the less well-off¹⁹⁰).¹⁹¹ Putting a likelihood coefficient into the link acts to make the potential of bias fully recognized, even though it still may not be quantifiable, and analyses can be done on different bases to compare results.¹⁹²

Multiple Coding

Multiple codings must be considered indicators of less probability of a true link, although a "24" coding indicating a surname spelling change and a change of address might, for example, be considered less compromising to a link than a "34" (change of occupation and change of address) combination.

¹⁹⁰ "A manufacturing population is of a nomad character. A family changes its residence as easily as you change your coat": Fraser's Magazine, January 1848, "The Manufacturing Poor", p2, as reprinted in C.J.Wrigley (ed.), *The Working Classes in the Victorian Age, Vol.III Urban Conditions, 1848-1868* (Farnborough 1973). For persistence rates among different socio-economic groups, see R.Dennis and S.Daniels, "Community and the Social Geography of Victorian Cities", in *Urban History Yearbook* (1981) pp7-23 and R.Dennis, "Distance and Social Interaction in a Victorian City", in *Journal of Historical Geography*, 3 (1977), pp237-250.

¹⁹¹ Wrigley and Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage", pp88-91; Winchester, "Priorities", pp427-8; Wrigley, *Identifying People*, pp12-13; Morris, "In Search Of", p19.

¹⁹² See conclusion of Chapter 6.

Occupations are generally considered better identifiers than addresses.¹⁹³ Codes were applied consistently, irrespective of circumstantial evidence reinforcing the "logic" of the link. Changes of address and occupation at the same time, for example, might be considered more logical than the same changes happening at different times, especially where the new job description could be interpreted as being geographically-specific (servant, farmer, toll-gate keeper etc.). The suspicion that the same individual was involved grew where there was an "unusual" first name, or where others with the same surname (presumably family members) made the same residential and occupational changes at the same time.¹⁹⁴

Preference Code B: "uniqueness"

The most serious obstacle to record linkage is non-uniqueness of first name/surname combinations, as it throws the whole weight of the linkage decision on

¹⁹³ See, eg., Wrigley and Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage", p91; Winchester, "Priorities", p427.

¹⁹⁴ Eg. Lancelot Lee, and three other Lees, all Durham voters, who started as drapers living as far apart as Hartley, Northumberland, and Gilesgate Moor, and all ended up in 1837 as pitmen in Chilton Moor.

to the secondary attributes (address/occupation).¹⁹⁵
 Where these are themselves absent or deficient, there may be insufficient evidence to do anything but guess as to where the link lies, and a separate code ("B") was used to indicate these very uncertain links.¹⁹⁶
 Here is an example of a "typical" situation (where linkage is complicated by the two 1835 votes):

ELLIOTT, William, 30, Mason, Durham, TC-
 ELLIOTT, William, 31, Mason, Durham, -T
 ELLIOTT, William, 32, Mason, Gilesgate, --T
 ELLIOTT, William, 35, Mason, Gilesgate, T-G
 ELLIOTT, William, 35, Mason, Gilesgate, TH-

A large part of the problem is the narrow range of Christian names: of the Leicester entries, very nearly half referred to a John, William or Thomas.¹⁹⁷
 This compounded the difficulties caused by commonly occurring surnames. The larger the population, the greater the incidence of non-unique surnames (in the Guildford electorate, the problem occurred on less than

¹⁹⁵ This problem is covered extensively in the literature, but see especially Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp312-320; Elklit, "Nominal Record Linkage", p425; Winchester, "On Referring", pp24-26 and "A Brief Survey", pp131-2. It was a problem also for contemporaries, as the example of the Durham Revising Barrister trying to differentiate between the "Thomas Joplings" of the city, showed: Dul/31/164, E.E. Deacon to Hutchinson (Town Clerk), 2 February 1841 (D.C.R.O.).

¹⁹⁶ These are the links that other linkage systems reject out of hand.

¹⁹⁷ This does not include those Johns, Williams and Thomases for whom a second name was also given. See H. Rhodri Davies, "Automated Record Linkage of Census Enumerators' Books and Registration Data: Obstacles, Challenges and Solutions", in *History and Computing*, 4 (1992), pp16-26, for the frequency of Welsh forenames.

half a dozen occasions¹⁹⁸). The "John Smith" cluster for Leicester comprises 63 entries, of whom 10 had to be coded B because the secondary identifiers proved too weak.

Where there appeared to be only two individuals with the same surname and first name, a decision was sometimes avoided if the voting patterns were identical: the chains could be identically constructed.¹⁹⁹ This sometimes occurred where fathers and sons shared the same names, but the "jun." and "sen." appellations were missing on one or more occasions.²⁰⁰

Fortunately, Code B chains were a very small percentage of all the linked entries : 2% for Leicester; Guildford under 1%; Durham 2%. These links were not considered suitable for analysis: this implies, of course, a bias against those with commonly-occurring surnames (and conceivably, families of local origin whose surnames are geographically concentrated²⁰¹) but this was not felt to be a

¹⁹⁸ Guildford also benefitted from having some wonderfully idiosyncratically-named voters; eg., Tilly Adland, Casteels Cooper, Chorley Earl.

¹⁹⁹ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, p317.

²⁰⁰ There were of course a number of occasions where fathers and sons in the same situation voted differently, or one voted and one did not: under these circumstances, they were both coded B.

²⁰¹ Morris, "In Search Of the Urban Middle Class", p19.

significant danger, considering the small numbers involved.

Nominal Record Linkage: Pollbooks to Other Sources

It has been suggested that economic assessments of voters based on ratings assessments are too imprecise to be significant indicators of wealth, especially if attempting comparisons between constituencies.²⁰² However, as seen above, they can be used in general ways to test divisions of the electorate, for example by occupation, or geographically, and may be of some use in indicating where rough economic divisions occur between the supporters of different parties.

There are, however, a number of factors which make ratebook data more difficult to use than voting records or occupational information. The first is their potentially patchy coverage: for example, there are no surviving ratebooks for Durham before the 1850s, and some of Leicester's parishes' ratebooks have not survived. Another is the inconsistency with which rates were assessed. Before 1836, different parishes worked their own formulae; after the Parochial Assessments Act of 1836 (intended to "establish one

²⁰² Eg. by Mitchell and Cornford, "Political Demography", p247.

uniform mode of rating for the Relief of the Poor") there should be a consistent relationship between rent (net annual value) and rateable value, but comparison between earlier and later 1830s data thus become more difficult.²⁰³ Comparisons between towns are not advisable. Here, rates data is used as a guide to relative patterns of value (i.e. to show generally high/low housing values in conjunction with occupations, areas of the town, or votes), and to show some of the economic heterogeneity within the occupation categories. Rateable values are not treated as measures of real wealth, but as indicators of "inferred" prosperity.²⁰⁴

There are also other difficulties. Payment of rates was a condition of voting after 1832, but voters were often not the occupiers for the property from which they claimed the franchise, especially where the

²⁰³ S.B.Holt, "The Use of Ratebooks in Determining the Rent of Dwellings: the Evidence from Nineteenth Century Durham City", in Durham County Local History Society Bulletin, 37 (Dec. 1986), pp12-23; also Continuity and Change in Durham City: An Historical Geography of a Nineteenth Century Small Town (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Durham 1979). The difficulties in collecting and using rates data is also discussed in Phillips, Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England, pp198-205. The relationship of rent to rates assessment for Leicester in 1837 is discussed above.

²⁰⁴ See E.Green, "Social Structure and Political behaviour in Westminster, 1784-1788", in P.Denley, S.Fogelvik, C.Harvey (eds.), History and Computing II (Manchester 1989), pp238-242; G.Gordon, "Rateable Assessment as a Data Source for Status Area Analysis: The Example of Edinburgh, 1855-1962", in Urban History Yearbook (1979) pp92-100.

property was commercial, and this complicated the linkage between addresses.

Identifiers in the ratebooks were fewer than in the pollbooks, consisting only of surname, first name and street name. Moreover, the priority for this sort of linkage was rather different to that of the pollbooks. Precision was considered of greater importance than the size of the resultant file, and consequently the linkage algorithm was considerably more rigid. Links were considered only where all three identifiers were identical. Non-unique name/address combinations (a greater danger here than with the pollbooks because of the much larger population size), were excluded. This acted to cut down the number of links that could be made, but allowed for reasonable confidence in the trueness of those that were made. The small intervals between the data (rarely more than three or four months) hopefully mean that the potential bias against the residentially mobile is not too apparent.

The rating assessments were entered into the constructed chains in two ways; as absolute values (rounded to the nearest 10s.), and in coded £10 intervals (1=under £10; 2=£10-19 etc.).²⁰⁵

For analytical purposes, the linked files for Leicester were broken down into those streets for which

²⁰⁵ For description of how assessments were linked to individuals, see above.

the fullest picture seemed possible, attempting also to get a good spread of value distributions. These street assessments were tested against the assessments made in 1837 in the "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Report and Advise upon the Boundaries and Wards of Certain Boroughs and Corporate Towns".²⁰⁶

Voters were necessarily of course not a representative sample of the population economically, in spite of the continued presence of the freemen. Still, one would expect that "poorer" voters would be disproportionately evident in what were defined as "poorer" areas of the town. Comparison of the rankings of various streets worked from both the boundary commissioners' report and the nominally linked files suggests that voters' rating assessments (and therefore rents) do correlate with geographical patterns of rateable values, although the average value of voters' properties is in most cases worth around twice that for all rate-payers (see Table 1.7).²⁰⁷ This is taken to indicate that voters' rateable values can be used as an indicator of relative wealth.

The distribution of values within streets also tallied between the boundary commissioners' report and the voters' linked files (see Table 1.8).

²⁰⁶ P.P. 1837 (238) XXVII.

²⁰⁷ This may be partly explained by the non-inclusion of commercial property which - with the exception of breweries and public houses - tended to be of lower value than residential property.

The general agreement between the occupational categories and rateable values has already been discussed (see Figures 1.6 to 1.8), and the two might be considered mutually reinforcing, despite the acknowledged flaws of both as status measures. Other

Table 1.7 : Economic Ranking of Selected Streets, Leicester 1837

Street	Ave. Rental Values		Rankings	
	Ratepayers	Voters	Ratepayers	Voters
Gallowtree Gate	£51	£72	1	1
High Street	£31	£48	2	2
High Cross	£17	£29	3	3
Causeway Lane	£12	£24	4	4
Welford Road	£11	£21	5	5
Nicholas Street	£10	£19	6	6
Sanvey Gate	£6	£12	7	7
Jewry Wall Street	£4	£10	8	8

Ratepayers = worked from P.P 1837 (238) XXVII figures, adjusted to give rentals

studies have similarly concluded that mid-century data does demonstrate a largely consistent relationship between "wealth" and occupationally-defined status.²⁰⁸

Table 1.8 : Distribution of Rate Assessments over £20, Selected Streets, Leicester 1837

Streets	"Rank" (see Table 1.7)	% of properties rated over £20	
		Voters	Ratepayers
Gallowtree Gate	1	88.9	85.0
High Street	2	49.3	48.1
High Cross	3	65.2	78.7
Jewry Wall Street	8	5.9	0.0

²⁰⁸ Eg. Glasgow in 1861 : Nenadic, "Record Linkage", p39.

Such comparative data is not available for Guildford, but the degree of confidence in the links made between pollbook and ratebook was considerably aided by the fact that Guildford's much smaller electoral population proved much easier to identify among ratepayers. Non-uniqueness was much less of a problem, and nearly 60% of voters could be linked to a ratebook entry.

Guildford also provided some religious affiliation data which could be linked to voters. Baptism and membership information was collected for a number of dissenting congregations,²⁰⁹ and names were taken from an 1843 petition from Guildford "Protestant Dissenters" to Parliament, objecting to the educational clauses in Graham's Factory Bill.²¹⁰ From these, a panel of nearly ninety non-Established Church members was constructed, whose voting at specific points where religious questions intruded into the constituency's politics²¹¹ could be analysed relative to the voting of the electorate as a whole.

²⁰⁹ Unitarians (No.1378: 1845); Particular Baptists (RB01890); "New Chapel" (RG42207); Wesleyans (RG42716 & RG42208); Quakers (124/1/8); and Congregationalists. (All G.M.R.).

²¹⁰ 9a and 9b (1843 Petition)(G.M.R.).

²¹¹ For example, in 1835, when the Tories' "Church in Danger" cry was at its height, and Mangles was criticized for his vote against the Sabbath Observance Bill. See Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2 :
THE LAST "UNREFORMED" ELECTIONS AND THE COMING OF
REFORM, 1826-1832

Guildford

Guildford's M.P.s did not welcome the Reform Bill. When Lord John Russell introduced it on March 1st, 1831, one of them, Charles Baring Wall - who described himself as a "friend to moderate reform"¹ and had previously supported the government - turned to J.C. Hobhouse, angrily exclaiming "They are mad! They are mad!"² That was even before Russell had described Schedule B of the Bill, in which Guildford was among the forty-seven boroughs destined to lose one of its two representatives.

For the rest of the year, those connected politically to Guildford strove to impress upon ministers that Guildford merited both of its seats. Their campaign employed both qualitative and quantitative reasoning. The town was, they argued,

¹ See, for example, C.B.Wall, A Few Words to the Electors of Guildford on Reform (Guildford 1831), eg. p7, and The Times, 3rd March 1831.

² Quoted in M.Brock, The Great Reform Act (London 1973), p161.

both independent enough and large enough to justify its removal from the Schedule.

Guildford's rights of election had been determined in 1689 as lying in "the freemen and freeholders..paying Scot and Lot, and resident in the borough".³ This was a distinctive franchise: in 1830 there were only seven English boroughs (out of 202) in which Freeholders were in a majority (in Guildford they formed five-sixths of the electoral body⁴), of which Guildford was the smallest by a large margin.⁵ Because of the residential nature of the franchise, there were no out-voters. Despite its size, however, Guildford by 1830 was showing signs of moving from established styles of patronage politics to an electoral culture in which the language of independence was central.

Through the previous century, the town's representation had been almost exclusively the preserve

³ A Handbook to Guildford and its Environs (Gardner and Stent, publishers, Guildford 1859), p22; Russell, The History and Antiquities of Guildford (Guildford 1801), pp170-171; Guildford: A Descriptive and Historical View (Russell, publishers, Guildford 1845), p114.

⁴ Memorial of the Mayor and Inhabitants of the Town of Guildford, in the County of Surrey, to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department..., n.d. (July 15th 1831), BR/PAR/6/1, p3; 1830 Pollbook (mss.) BR/PAR/2/5 shows 81 freeholders to 53 freemen voting, but many of the freemen were also freeholders (G.M.R.).

⁵ Brock, Great Reform Act, pp20-21; C.Seymour, Electoral Reform in England and Wales: The Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise 1832-1885 (New Haven 1915), p85; F.O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties (Oxford 1989), p44 lists Guildford as a medium-sized freeman borough.

of two families, the Onslows (of Clandon Park) and the Nortons (family of Lord Grantley, of Wonersh). At least one Onslow had been returned at each election since the 1660s, and on more than one occasion Onslows had held both Guildford seats.⁶ Their virtual monopoly was broken in 1766 by the Nortons, who afterwards customarily provided a Whig member of the family to counterbalance the Tory Onslows. Although Guildford did exhibit the characteristics of a "family borough"⁷ it was not in 1830 a "pocket" borough, partly because of the effect of having the two separate and politically distinct influences at work, and partly because the franchise offered inherent protection against attempts at external manipulation, effectively barring tactics like the creation of faggot-votes. The smallness of the borough may also be argued to have worked against it becoming proprietary, since election costs remained low and therefore potentially at least

⁶ In 1734, 1741 and 1812. Gardner and Stent, *Handbook to Guildford*, p24-5; Russell's (1845), *Guildford*, pp122-3; C.R.Dod, *Electoral Facts, 1832-1853, Impartially Stated* (ed. J.Hanham) (Brighton 1972), p132; R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820* (London 1986), ii.381-2.

⁷ As defined, for example, by N.Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation 1830-1850* (London 1953), p193. The Earl of Onslow could still in 1883 describe his payments to local charities as a means of keeping up a two hundred year family interest in Guildford. 3 Hansard 280, p584, quoted in W.B.Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain* (London 1962), p58.

within reach of the pockets of independent candidates.⁸ Such candidates were, however, not thick on the ground. In the sixty-five years to 1830, Guildford had experienced only five contested (to thirteen uncontested) elections and by-elections.⁹ The contests which did occur nevertheless did constitute deliberate challenges to "the old interests".¹⁰ The first occurred in 1790, when the Pittite George Sumner (later George Holme Sumner), resentful of exclusion by the dominant families from a challenge for the county,¹¹ successfully put himself up against Lord Grantley's brother. Sumner withdrew in 1796 (at which election Norton beat another independent candidate), but 1806 saw a second Norton/Sumner clash, which Sumner won, only to be unseated on petition. In the following year, Norton beat Sumner very narrowly, but on the threat of a petition a compromise was reached whereby

⁸ R.Sykes, *Politics and Electoral Behaviour in Guildford and West Surrey 1790-1886* (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Surrey 1975), pp70-76; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p267, also notes the importance of restrictive franchises in encouraging traditions of electoral independence.

⁹ There is some ambiguity in reference sources: Thorne, *House of Commons*, ii.381 lists contests 1790-1820; H.Stooks Smith, *The Parliaments of England from 1715 to 1847* (ed. F.W.S.Craig) (Chichester 1973), pp322-3 gives the 1790 and 1818 elections as uncontested.

¹⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 25th May 1796, quoted in Thorne, *House of Commons*, ii.381.

¹¹ Thorne, *House of Commons*, ii.377 and 381, iv.679 (Norton), v.322 (Sumner). The Russells (family of the Dukes of Bedford) dominated Surrey's representation until 1807.



Sumner took a county seat with the assistance of both Lords Grantley and Onslow.¹²

The Sumner incursions had perceptibly weakened the Norton/Onslow axis in Guildford. Following the resignation of Sergeant Arthur Onslow, there was no Onslow candidate at the 1830 election.¹³ George Chapple Norton stood for re-election,¹⁴ and was joined by two other candidates, Sumner (who had been defeated at the Surrey election of 1826) and Charles Baring Wall.

Wall, grandson of Sir Francis Baring and one of the extended Baring clan in the House of Commons,¹⁵ had been M.P. for Guildford from 1819 to 1826, supposedly

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Arthur Onslow had not in fact been closely connected to the Clandon Onslows, and had in past elections stressed his, and the borough's, independence of them. Thorne, House of Commons, ii.382, iv.691-2.

¹⁴ Norton was a Commissioner for Bankruptcy and Recorder of the Borough but a political non-entity, destined for fame (or rather notoriety) only as the husband of the poet Caroline Norton and the instigator of a civil suit for damages against Melbourne in 1836. By all accounts, he was an unpleasant character, and there was suspicion that the action against Melbourne was encouraged by others for political reasons. The Greville Memoirs 1814-1860 (1904 edn.) iii, June 27th 1836; F.Boase, Modern English Biography (London 1965), pp1179-1181; Dictionary of National Biography (London 1888), vol.XIV pp651-3; P.Ziegler, Melbourne: A Biography of William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne (London 1976), pp226-239.

¹⁵ Francis Baring, the founder of the dynasty, was "the most successful and certainly the most prestigious financier of his day" (Thorne, House of Commons, iii.141). For biographical details of Wall, see Thorne, v.468; Boase, Modern English Biography, p1156; M.Stenton, Who's Who of British Members of Parliament (Hassocks 1976), i.395.

in the Norton interest. He had retired from the 1826 contest when George Chapple Norton came forward, choosing instead to stand for Wareham.¹⁶ In 1830, however, he was an independent. In fact, all of the surviving evidence of the contest is concerned with issues of "influence" and "independence". There were suspicions in the constituency that Wall's reappearance indicated a Norton ploy to hold both seats. Rumours - and handbills - were circulated to the effect that Lord Grantley had been heard by a voter to say "he could elect two Members for Guildford",¹⁷ damaging Norton's canvass to the extent that Grantley was forced to issue a denial that he was employing "illegitimate influence"¹⁸: "No Man has a greater RESPECT for your FREEDOM of Election than myself".¹⁹ By polling time, it was clear to electors that Wall was no Norton nominee. He talked of nothing but independence

¹⁶ As above, plus Gardner and Stent, Handbook to Guildford, p25; Russell's (1845), Guildford, p122; Sykes, Politics and Electoral Behaviour, p121-2.

¹⁷ G8067 (handbill) July 1st 1830 (G.M.R.). Attempts to monopolize a constituency's representation by asking for both votes was traditionally considered to overstep the bounds of natural influence : see R.W.Davis, "Deference and Aristocracy in the Time of the Great Reform Act", in American Historical Review, 81 (1976), pp532-539; O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, p246; Idem., "Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England, 1760-1832", in Journal of Modern History, LVI (1984), pp391-427.

¹⁸ The phrase was used in G8669 (handbill) July 3rd 1830 (G.M.R.). See above, Chapter 1 for discussion of the distinctions between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" manifestations of influence.

¹⁹ G8070 (handbill) Womersley, 2nd July 1830. See also G8065, 29th June 1830 and G8066, 30th June 1830, (all G.M.R.).

throughout the campaign, and when he and Sumner were elected, declared that the result proved that "Independence is the object sought after by the Borough of Guildford".²⁰

Sensitivity to independence was a national characteristic of the 1830 election.²¹ Even where parliamentary reform was not an issue - and there is no sign of it in Guildford - voters proved in rebellious mood against established interests. Although protestations of independence could be taken as merely an integral part of the codified language of electioneering,²² the degree to which the election in Guildford was steeped in independence idioms demonstrates a widespread feeling that the constituency had been taken for granted by its patrons in the past, and would not allow itself to be so in the future.

Certainly, when Guildford's case against Schedule B was being pleaded, all involved strenuously

²⁰ G3029 (handbill) 31st July 1830 (G.M.R.). The result was : Wall 117, Sumner 82, Norton 60 (134 voters). The Wall/Sumner combination accounted for over 50% of all votes whilst Wall/Norton only 36%. 1830 Pollbook, BR/PAR/2/5 (G.M.R.).

²¹ Brock, Great Reform Act, pp86-106, describes the 1830 election as "tearing holes in the network of nomination and influence" (p88). I.Newbould, Whiggery and Reform 1830-1841 (London 1990), pp47-49, also notes the contemporaray perception of the erosion of electoral control in 1830. The fullest description of the language of electoral independence in this period is in O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, pp259-285.

²² D.E.D.Beales, "Parliamentary Parties and the "Independent" Member 1810-1860", in R.Robson (ed.), Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain (London 1967), pp1-19.

emphasized the borough's openness and honesty. Two hundred and eighty-five residents put their names to a Memorial from the Mayor to the Home Secretary which, amongst other things, argued that:

Guildford has always been an Open Borough, owing to the peculiar method of Voting, which admits every respectable resident to that Right.²³

Denison, Whig M.P. for the County, said "there was not ... a purer elective body in the Kingdom", whilst Norton bore testimony "to the respectability, the independence, and purity of the electors". Best, a former Guildford M.P.,

fully concurred in all that had been said of the purity and independence of the electors. No person who represented it since he knew the place ever paid a shilling to an elector. It was no nomination borough, and had always been represented by honourable and independent men.²⁴

The ex-Attorney General, Scarlett, saw Guildford as a "model for the rest of the Kingdom":

It contained within it all the elements of a good constituency. There were to be found wealth, intelligence, and independence. The neighbourhood abounded in men of independent circumstances.²⁵

Such praise for Guildford was not of course motiveless: some of it at least can be put down to giving the voters what they expected to hear, whilst it may also have been motivated in part (for example in

²³ Memorial, BR/PAR/6/1, p3 (G.M.R.).

²⁴ 3 Hansard 5, pp530, 533, 29th July 1831 (Denison, Norton, Best).

²⁵ 3 Hansard 5, pp537-538, 29th July 1831.

Scarlett's case) by dislike for the Bill as a whole. A somewhat more convincing argument against Schedule B attacked the way it had been drawn up. Its original basis, the 1821 Census, had given Guildford's population as 3,161, overlooking the outlying parts of the town in the parish of St. Nicholas, and in Stoke, over which the town's magistrates had jurisdiction. It was demonstrated that the real population in 1821 had been 4,212, which by mid-1831 had increased to 5,525,²⁶ well above the population level set by the Government for the retention of two seats.²⁷ This point was not sufficiently proved in the July debate, which Guildford's supporters lost by 253 to 186,²⁸ but the descriptions of the town as prosperous and developing were pertinent:

It was not an obscure and distant village; it was the county-town of Surrey; and ... it was highly respectable for buildings, wealth, industry and population..and daily advancing in prosperity.²⁹

The Boundary Commissioners confirmed that the town was "a well-conditioned place ... It is certainly flourishing, and may be expected to increase, chiefly in the parish of Stoke": the borough's population would total 4,833, with 432 houses worth £10 or more a year,

²⁶ Memorial, BR/PAR/6/1, pp2-3; 3 Hansard 5, pp529-532 29th July 1831 (Denison and Mangles).

²⁷ 3 Hansard 5, p534, 29th July 1831 (Russell).

²⁸ 3 Hansard 5, p542, 29th July 1831.

²⁹ 3 Hansard 5, pp530-531, 29th July 1831 (Denison).

if the boundary was extended to include the whole town (see Map 1).³⁰

Guildford was not alone in complaining about the use of ten-year-old census figures. In December 1831 the formula for disfranchisement was changed from population to the number of houses in the borough and the amount of assessed taxes paid, and Guildford was among the eleven boroughs reprieved from Schedule B.³¹

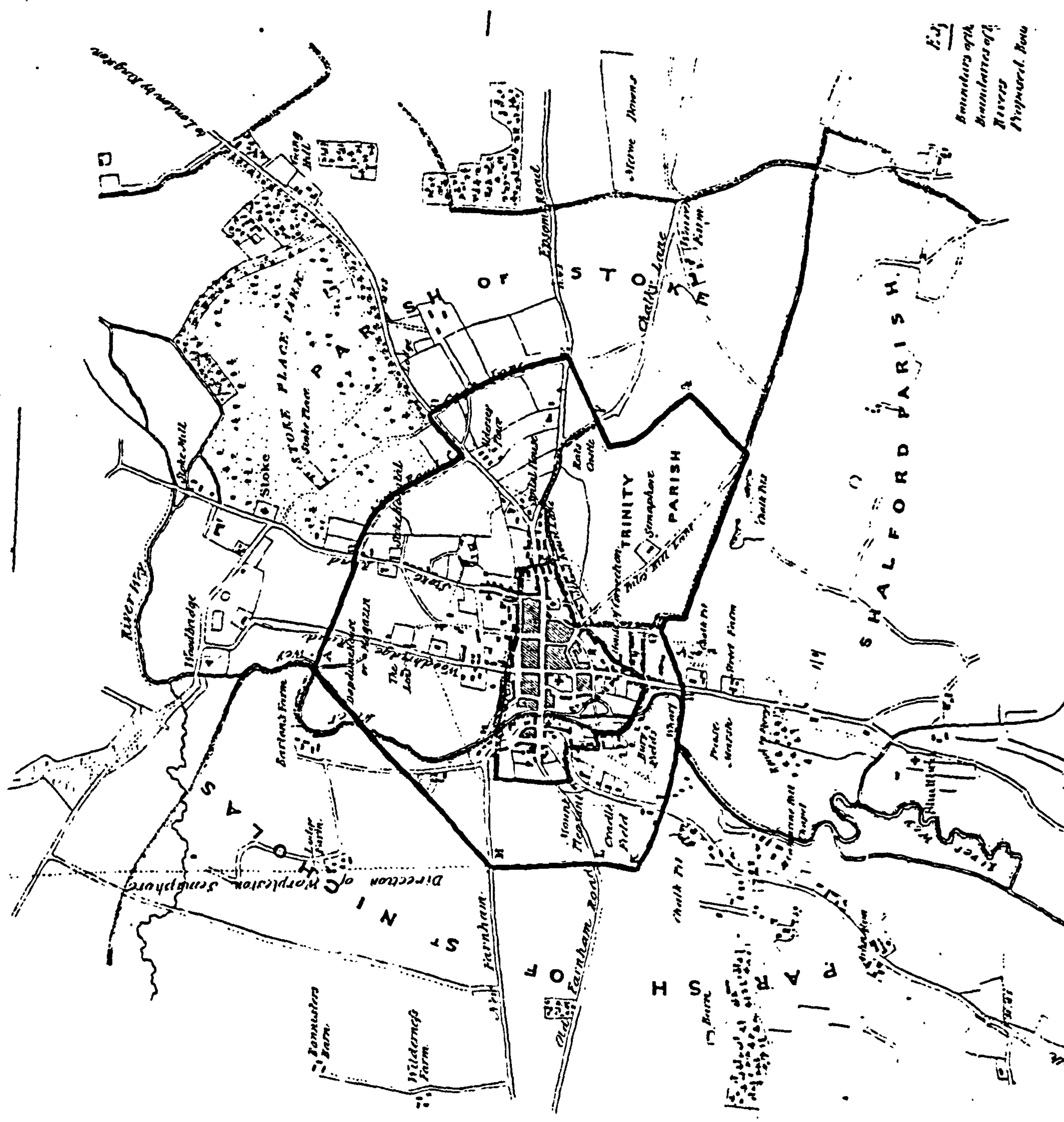
By then, Wall and Sumner's opposition to Reform had cost them their Guildford seats. Wall had set out his criticisms of the Bill in *A Few Words to the Electors of Guildford on Reform*. He was bitterly disappointed with the Whigs, explaining that he had voted against Wellington in 1830 ("to my shame") in the belief that the Whigs would be able to form only a ministry of "compromise and concession", which he could have supported. Instead, their reform proposals were suffused with "party affection", did not meet the real Spirit of Reform, constituted too "revolutionary" a set of changes, and were being pushed through by the clamour of the "active and restless class of society", who mistakenly believed that they were to benefit from them:

³⁰ P.P. 1831-2 (141) XL.75-79 ("Reports from Commissioners on Proposed Division of Counties, and Boundaries of Boroughs"); P.P. 1859 (166.Sess.1) XXIII.123.

³¹ P.P. 1831-2 (0.36) XXXVI.23-5, 87 ("Report of Commissioners on Proposed Boundaries of Boroughs in England and Wales"); Brock, *Great Reform Act*, pp184, 215-216, 265.

GUILDFORD.

From the Ordnance Survey



MAP 1 : Extension of Guildford Borough Boundary, 1832
P.P. 1831-2 (141) XL.74

This Bill talks not of inherent rights or principles. It is proposed to you as a mere question of expediency: be sure that your remedy is the right one for the grievances you complain of.³²

Wall was convinced that the Bill would not allow greater popular participation in the electoral body, because of its (as he saw it) encouragement of illegitimate influence:

Poor deluded people! Who will undeceive you? What nice logician will draw the line for your edification between due and undue influence?³³

He also appealed to anti-Catholic sentiments, which in Guildford as in the rest of Surrey were a recurrent theme of electioneering, pointing out that the Reform Bill would act to increase "the influence of papal Ireland, which some of you not long ago were so eager to avert".³⁴

The Times described him as "one of the bitterest and most virulent of all the opposers, not only of the

³² C.B.Wall, A Few Words to the Electors of Guildford on Reform (Guildford March 1831), pp8-33 (G.L.).

³³ Ibid., p15.

³⁴ Wall, A Few Words, p15; Thorne, House of Commons, ii.378.

bill itself, but of the King's Ministers generally."³⁵ His stance drew criticism from those who had taken him for a Reformer: a letter to *The Times* from "An Elector of Guildford" promised he would not be returned again.³⁶ There were rumours that Sir James Scarlett - another Whig who had baulked at the Reform Bill³⁷ - would stand, but Guildford's voters were reported as being, despite the threat of Schedule B, "determined not to return either this worthy Knight or anyone else unpledged to the Bill".³⁸ This prognosis proved correct. Two Reformers were returned - James Mangles, an East India proprietor and ship chandler (who described himself as a "staunch friend to the reform bill"³⁹) and the Hon. Charles Norton.

The result - Mangles 100, Norton 83, Sumner 73 and Wall 55 - showed that Wall's support had disintegrated in the space of a year. In 1830 he received a vote from over 87% of those polled; in 1831

³⁵ *The Times*, 29th June 1831. The Barings were renowned for their changes of allegiance. Ellenborough described them as "... the shabbiest fellows in the world, [they] will vote one way, and talk another, and be convinced another" (Lord Ellenborough's diary, 3rd March 1831, in A. Aspinall (ed.), *Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries* (London 1952), p52). Almost all of the Baring M.P.s went from being Whigs to Tories during the Reform crisis. N. Gash, *Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852* (London 1965), p163; Brock, *Great Reform Act*, p197.

³⁶ *The Times*, 12th March 1831.

³⁷ Stenton, *Who's Who*, p342.

³⁸ *The Times*, 27th April 1831.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; Stenton, *Who's Who*, p259.

less than a third of voters chose him. Of those who had voted Wall/Sumner in 1830, only a third did so again the following year.⁴⁰ New voters (there were 48 first-time voters out of a total of 163 polled) were the least likely to have supported him (20.8%) and the most likely to have voted for both Reform candidates.

Wall's support had fallen off across the occupational board (see Table 2.1).⁴¹ Although the numbers involved are small in some categories, the pattern is clear.

Table 2.1 : Wall Support, by Occupation Categories, Guildford 1830 and 1831

Occupation Categories	1830 (%)	(N=)	1831 (%)	(N=)
I	90.3	(31)	35.1	(37)
II	80.0	(5)	28.6	(7)
III	92.0	(25)	16.7	(30)
IV	87.0	(54)	37.9	(66)
V	71.4	(14)	50.0	(14)
VI	100.0	(5)	33.3	(9)

Those most unforgiving of Wall's anti-Reform stance were the retailers (Category III), but amongst all occupations he suffered from the perceived differences between his campaign platform of this election and the previous one.

This was emphatically not "personality politics". There was, however, a high level of vote splitting,

⁴⁰ 1830 Pollbook (mss.), BR/PAR/2/5 and 1831 Pollbook (mss.), BR/PAR/2/6 (G.M.R.). Longitudinal linking done as described in Chapter 1.

⁴¹ See Chapter 1 for description of the occupational categories.

with only just over a half (52%) of the voters choosing one of the ideologically-defined pairs of candidates (Wall/Sumner; Norton/Mangles).⁴² There is no doubt, however, that it was Reform that had determined allegiances.⁴³ Wall immediately put himself forward as a candidate for the constituency of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, where he was more careful to moderate his opposition to the Bill. As he put it, "... every member who wished to retain his seat was obliged to suppress his opinions if they happened to be unpalatable to popular constituencies."⁴⁴

Guildford's pro-Reform voting in 1831 was not a victory for "party" or for Radicalism: there was no apparent coalition between the pro-Reform candidates and no established or organized party of Radicals in the constituency - indeed there is no evidence of any political clubs or associations at this time. It was, however, a further manifestation of the independence spasms that the borough had been experiencing for

⁴² See O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p312, for the effects of cross party voting elsewhere on anti-Reform candidates in 1831. Sykes, *Politics and Electoral Behaviour*, p187, gives incorrect figures for split voting in Guildford.

⁴³ See for example G3204 (handbill) n.d. (1831) (G.M.R.).

⁴⁴ *The Times*, 29th June 1831 and 19th December 1831. For the referendum nature of the 1831 election, see J.A.Phillips and Wetherell, "The Great Reform Bill and the Rise of Partisanship", in *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (1991), pp621-646; J.C.D.Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge 1985), pp404-405; D.Eastwood, "Toryism, Reform, and Political Culture in Oxfordshire 1826-1837", in *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1988), pp98-121.

thirty years, felt more strongly for being focused on a single issue.⁴⁵ The contrast between the 1830 and 1831 elections demonstrated how dramatically single-issue politics could deconstruct voting behaviour among those determined to express their own opinions - and 1832 was to show how quickly more "normal" voting patterns could be resumed. The issue involved was a national one, but the conditions within which independence had taken root were specifically local. The return of a Norton in 1831 was emphatically on the voters' terms (and, perhaps to some extent, on some of the non-voters'⁴⁶). The Onslows abandoned their seat until 1859.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp277, 310-6, and I.Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform 1830-1841* (London 1990), pp67-70, for discussion of the interaction of Radicalism and independence in the 1831 election.

⁴⁶ There was an undercurrent of fear among Guildford respectables during the Reform crisis. One inhabitant later recollected his impression that most of the candles put in windows to mark the passing of the Act were there from caution rather than celebration: "It was the fear of having our windows smashed that inclined us to go with the stream". J.Mason, *Guildford* (Guildford 1897), p15.

⁴⁷ M.Stenton and J.Vincent (eds.), *McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book of All Elections, 1832-1918* (Brighton 1971), p127.

Leicester

In contrast, "party" feeling had been raging in Leicester for decades by the time of the last "unreformed" elections. Partisanship, defined along a twin axis of politics and religion, permeated municipal politics and formed the unambiguous norm of voting behaviour, finding its clearest expression before 1832 at the watershed election of 1826.

The Tories of Leicester Corporation had by 1826 been conducting their electoral preparations for four years. Caught unprepared in 1818, they had allowed the unopposed return, alongside their own candidate, John Mansfield, of the "constitutional whig" Thomas Pares jun., member of a local banking family and supported by the town's leading Radicals.⁴⁸ The Corporation, on the defensive against the growing political strength and confidence of its liberal opposition, and internally divided,⁴⁹ was at pains to make a more determined stand at a subsequent election. A sub-committee was appointed in 1822 to undertake the enrolment of a large body of right-thinking non-resident freemen. Within

⁴⁸ The reforming party had also tried to find a second candidate. Leicester Journal, 31st July 1818; A.T.Patterson, Radical Leicester (Leicester 1954), p123; Thorne, House of Commons, ii.143 and iv.720; R.W.Greaves, The Corporation of Leicester 1689-1836 (Leicester 1970 edn.), pp114-115; Idem., "Roman Catholic Relief and the Leicester Election of 1826", in Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 22 (1940), pp199-223.

⁴⁹ Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", p206.

two years the honorary freedom of the borough (with all fees waived except £3 stamp duty) had been voted to 2,000 "gentlemen of sound constitutional principles",⁵⁰ of whom 800 actually took up their freedom, including 104 clergymen and over a hundred farmers.⁵¹ Such activity was not unprecedented in Leicester - the 1807 election had also been fought after a mass enrolment of friends of the Corporation⁵² - and indeed the Whig Corporation of Nottingham had recently enrolled likeminded men in Leicester in exactly the same way,⁵³ but the scale of this operation and its systematic and utterly cynical implementation shocked even electioneering-hardened contemporaries.⁵⁴ That the

⁵⁰ Circular from Thomas Burbidge, Town Clerk, dated Leicester, 31st December 1823, reprinted in P.P.1835 (116) XXV.502 (Municipal Corporations Commission Report).

⁵¹ The Corporation's early start allowed the evasion of the 1763 Durham Act, which had determined that freemen could only vote after 12 months possession of their freedom. P.P.1835 (116) XXV.502; Corporation Hall Books (BR11/1/12, L.R.O.), 18th and 30th December 1830; G.R.Searson, A Quarter of a Century's Liberalism in Leicester (Leicester 1850), p14; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp146-147; Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp116-117; Prest, Politics in the Age of Cobden, pp1-3.

⁵² As had the 1774 election: V.C.H. Leicestershire (London 1958), iv.134; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p99; Thorne, House of Commons, ii.242.

⁵³ Leicester Journal 30th June 1826; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p147; Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", pp208-209; Brock, Great Reform Act, p26. Other Corporations employing the same tactic are mentioned in B.Keith-Lucas, The Unreformed Local Government System (London 1980), p27.

⁵⁴ See for example Joseph Parkes to Brougham, 20th September 1833, as quoted in W.E.G.Thomas, The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice 1817-1841 (Oxford 1979), p267.

Corporation was prepared to go to such lengths - and to the expense of perhaps £27,000⁵⁵ - to try to ensure victory was a measure of the significance that electoral trials of strength between the opposing camps in Leicester had assumed.

The Corporation/anti-Corporation battlelines had been hardening for a considerable period before the 1820s, and had their genesis in shifts in the town's socio-economic structure over the past century and a half. The Municipal Corporations Commission Report got to the heart of the problem:

... every office has been filled by persons of the ... Tory party, to the total exclusion of all who entertained different opinions, however wealthy, however intelligent, however respectable..not only difference in political opinion however - diversity of religious faith has also formed an equal ground of exclusion ...⁵⁶

This Tory-Anglican exclusivity, coupled with the Corporation's tendency to operate its political powers with overt partiality, was under attack from a unified, informed and wealthy body of radical Dissenters, who were claiming from the authorities that respect which they had increasingly throughout the eighteenth century come to believe they deserved. The Dissenting body they claimed to represent was not a small one. By 1834

⁵⁵ As claimed by the Municipal Corporations Commission Report, which was not however a completely objective account. P.P.1835 (116) XXV.503. For the bias of the Commission and its Report, see Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp139, 142-143.

⁵⁶ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.501.

nonconformists believed that they numbered over 21,000 in the town, compared to only 11,500 professing Church membership.⁵⁷ The élite group (in both social and political terms) was, however, not large in the 1830s: one study has identified a core of just eight families⁵⁸ - but men like the Pagets, Brewins, Biggses, Whetstones and Fieldings shared a coherent and powerful Utilitarian philosophy and a flexible, broad-minded nonconformity, largely in the shape of Unitarianism. Above all, they had a common belief in civil and religious liberty that fuelled their political enthusiasm and allowed for coalition with other reformers.

Many of the most important elements of Leicester's politics of the 1830s can be seen in embryo from the 1780s onwards, in the context of the growing political motivation of this group: the mobilization of Dissent behind protests against civil disabilities; the alienation of the "independents" in Leicester from what were originally anti-Tory forces in the county; the alignment of the Corporation with working men's (i.e. framework knitters') grievances against their employers when it suited them politically; and the Corporation's hardening resolve against any form of compromise.

⁵⁷ Morning Chronicle, 10th March 1834.

⁵⁸ D.Freer, "The Dynasty-builders of Victorian Leicester", in Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, LIII (1977-8), pp42-54.

Until the late 1780s, Leicester's representation had rested on compromise between the Tory Corporation and the interest of the Duke of Rutland, a Whig interest allied to the town opposition group. The stability of this arrangement foundered on two events in 1789 and 1790 - the French Revolution which scared the Whig families of the county into Toryism, and the organization of Leicester Dissenters in support of the movement to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. In effect, both left the Leicester opposition group politically isolated but also unified as never before, able to shake off Whiggish compromise and redefine itself "into the more constructive radicalism of the Bentham school".⁵⁹ Political associations were established on both sides of the political divide, in the forms of the Revolution Club and the Constitutional Society. Although both were short-lived, they spawned a succession of other organizations and marked the real start of the political cleavage that was to characterize Leicester politics for the next fifty years.⁶⁰

Perhaps even more significantly, the 1790s saw the transformation of the Great Meeting from Presbyterianism to Unitarianism, a critical point in the development into politicized, ideological conflict

⁵⁹ Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, p108; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp63-65.

⁶⁰ V.C.H., iv.137; Thorne, House of Commons, ii.242; Patterson, Radical Leicester, 63-69; Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, p109.

of older sectarian differences.⁶¹ From that point, the Unitarians played the primary role in the political culture of Dissent in the town, as they did in other Dissent-strong cities,⁶² occupying a strategic position of radical, intellectual and to some extent social detachment from other nonconformists who were less extreme both in their politics and theology. The Great Meeting was the head-quarters of rationalism and radicalism.⁶³

The Unitarians, together with the rest of the Radical élite, were always a middle-class group, whose interests - economic and political - diverged at critical points from those of the working class to whom they looked for support in their agitations for reform, and consequently a practical (if not electoral) radical alliance between the Dissenting élite and the working-class majority was to prove difficult to sustain over time. From the 1800 election (which the anti-Corporation candidate declared was a contest "between

⁶¹ A.H.Thomas, *A History of the Great Meeting, Leicester, and its Congregation* (Leicester 1908); Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp16-17; Greaves, *Corporation of Leicester*, p108.

⁶² See, for example, V.A.C.Gatrell, "Incorporation and the Pursuit of Liberal Hegemony in Manchester 1790-1839", in D.Fraser (ed.), *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester 1982), pp16-60.

⁶³ D.Freer, *Business Families in Victorian Leicester: A Study in Historical Sociology* (Unpubl. M.Phil. thesis, Leicester 1975) p.26; A.Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London 1963), p204; J.Seed, "Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Political Culture in Manchester 1830-1850", in *Social History*, 7 (1982-3), pp1-25; R.Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics* (Oxford 1987), pp161, 254-255.

rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed"⁶⁴) both the Corporation and their opponents sought to make issues of class interest predominant. Class differences between Radicals were evident in both 1807 and 1812, when lower class Radicals, many of them operatives, attempted to run their own candidates, independent of the bourgeois reformers.⁶⁵

At the heart of this division - which was to be a constant factor in Leicester Liberalism - was the contrasting viewpoints of the framework knitters (and others in the hosiery industry) and their employers. Of the middle class Radical leaders, the majority (eg. Coltman, Brewin, Whetstone, Harris, the Biggses) were hosiers or spinners: the chief exception was Thomas Paget, who was a banker.⁶⁶ The framework knitters constituted a large section of the electorate: nearly 900 voted in 1826, one fifth of the electorate.⁶⁷ The 1831 Census reckoned that the town contained "3,400 Manufacturers, of whom probably 3,000 are Stocking-Makers", but this figure excluded the many women and

⁶⁴ Leicester Journal, 28th March 1800.

⁶⁵ Thomas Paget was the only middle class reformer to work with them in 1812. Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp101-102.

⁶⁶ Freer, "Dynasty-builders", *passim*; *Idem.*, *Business Families*, pp23-25 and *passim*; R.H.Evans, "The Biggs Family of Leicester", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, XLVIII (1972-3), pp29-58; C.J.Billson, *Leicester Memoirs (Leicester 1924)*, pp15-25, 32-34; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp110-111; V.C.H., iv.178.

⁶⁷ Leicester Pollbook, 1826.

minors working in the industry.⁶⁸ A commercial directory of 1835 put the number of those employed at "upwards of 14,000": the town in 1831 had a total population of 40,000.⁶⁹ There were thought to be another 14,000 who were also directly dependent on the industry - framesmiths, dyers, combers, washers, seamers - a large proportion of whom were minors.⁷⁰ As the knitters' leaders pointed out, the prosperity of the whole town was dependent on the state of the hosiery industry, shopkeepers and tradesmen especially having a vested interest in the level of prosperity among the knitters.⁷¹

Conditions in the industry (which in Leicester meant the production of worsted rather than cotton knitting) had deteriorated from 1815 onwards, to a state of virtual stagnation by the 1830s. William Biggs told the 1845 Select Committee looking into the condition of the framework knitters that prices even for "the most regular, and ordinary articles in the

⁶⁸ Abstract of the Answers and Returns pursuant to an Act passed in the 11th Year of ... King George IV, MDCCCXXXI (1833).

⁶⁹ Pigot and Co.'s National and Commercial Directory of Leicestershire and Rutlandshire (London and Manchester 1835) p123; 1831 Census (as above), pp323-324; P.P.1831-2 (141) XXXIX.142 ("Reports from Commissioners on Proposed Divisions of Counties and Boundaries of Boroughs").

⁷⁰ P.P. 1833 (450) XX.542 ("Report from Commissioners Appointed to Collect Information in the Manufacturing Districts Relative to the Employment of Children in Factories: First Report").

⁷¹ For example, Leicester Chronicle, 2nd January 1830 (letter from William Jackson).

trade" (as opposed to the "fancy" goods which could command higher prices but were notoriously vulnerable to changes of taste and fashion) had substantially fallen. The price of womens' 24-gauge worsted stockings, for example, had fallen from 7s. 6d. per dozen in 1815 to 4s. 6d. per dozen in 1841. The Commission concluded that average wages had been reduced by at least 35% over the thirty year period: the impression among the knitters themselves was that their wages had halved.⁷² Certainly, narrow frame knitters had been earning around 14s. in 1815, and by the 1830s were receiving no more than 7s. for a week of working fifteen hour days.⁷³ Although prices fluctuated, and higher prices could be obtained in specialised sections of the industry, for most framework knitters the 1820s and 1830s meant extreme poverty most of the time, and the real danger of starvation at the worst times.⁷⁴ The epithet "as poor as a stockinger" dated from as early as the middle of the previous century, and there was an accepted belief that knitters as a group could be distinguished from other members of the labouring classes by their poor physical condition and living standards. A doctor

⁷² P.P.1845 (609) XV.67, 55 (Royal Commission to Inquire into the Condition of the Framework Knitters); V.C.H., iv.173, 175.

⁷³ P.P. 1833 (450) XX.535; Leicester Chronicle 2nd June 1830; F.A.Wells, *The British Hosiery and Knitwear Industry: Its History and Organization* (Newton Abbott 1972 edn.), pp84-85; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp124-125, 283; V.C.H., iv.303-4.

⁷⁴ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp165-166.

reported that he could tell if a man was a knitter by noting "a certain degree of emaciation and thinness".⁷⁵

In 1833, a Factory Commissioner officially confirmed what had long been a general impression:

[Knitters'] habits of work and subsistence are more destructive of health, comfort, cleanliness, and general well-being than any state of employment into which I have at present had the opportunity of inquiring ... scarcely any of them long standing in the trade were quite sound of constitution.⁷⁶

Many of the hosiery industry's problems were structural. There was a chronic over-supply of semi-skilled labour, both from immigration from the surrounding countryside and the practice of employing wives and children in the industry, making work - and therefore wages - irregular.⁷⁷ Knitters had increasingly lost control over their working conditions and rates of pay with the introduction of a stratum of middle-men (known as "bag-men" or "bag-hosiers"),⁷⁸

⁷⁵ R.A.Church and S.D.Chapman, "Gravenor Henson and the making of the English Working Class", in E.L.Jones and G.E.Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London 1967), pp145-146 compares the knitters and lace-workers of Nottingham; Wells, *British Hosiery Industry*, p90, 129-130.

⁷⁶ P.P. 1833 (450) XX.534.

⁷⁷ Wells, *British Hosiery Industry*, pp105-107; Church and Chapman, "Gravenor Henson", p146; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp41-46; V.C.H., iv.175-6.

⁷⁸ The terms had different meanings in Leicester than they did in the villages. A full description of the varieties of working arrangements can be found in P.Head, "Putting-out in the Leicester Hosiery Industry in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, XXXVII (1961-2), pp44-59; V.C.H., iv.169-70, 177-8.

whom most hosiers utilized by the 1830s, and with the growing trend for frames to be rented rather than owned.⁷⁹ As well as frame-rent, of which the knitters complained bitterly,⁸⁰ stockings had also to compete with the flooding of the market by inferior quality goods known as "cut-ups",⁸¹ which first appeared in the 1790s. Though they objected to having to produce such "utter rubbish",⁸² for which payment was very low, and although knitters had the support of the hosiers in their campaign to get Parliament to prohibit the manufacture of "cut-ups", the demand for cheaper goods could not be overcome.⁸³ Attempts to bring technological improvements to knitting machinery were also strongly resisted. As one knitter expressed his colleagues' distaste for the thought of factory work, "We have no factory bell; it is our only blessing".⁸⁴ The frame on which knitters worked was largely

⁷⁹ P.P. 1833 (450) XX.536; P.P.1845 (609) XV.135; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp41-46; J.V.Beckett and J.E.Heath, "When was the Industrial Revolution in the East Midlands?", in *Midland History*, XIII (1988), pp77-94. Head, "Putting-out", pp45-7, 52-55; W.Felkin, *A History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures* (London 1867), p457, gives examples of the sorts of profits that could be made by those renting out frames.

⁸⁰ See, for example, William Jackson, *An Address to the Framework Knitters of the Town and County of Leicester* (Leicester 1833), pp7-8.

⁸¹ So-called because they were shaped with scissors, rather than by the knitting process.

⁸² P.P. 1833 (450) XX.540 (Sansome).

⁸³ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp57-61, 123-124.

⁸⁴ P.P. 1833 (450) XX.532, 538.

unchanged for a hundred years;⁸⁵ any wide-spread factory-based knitting manufacture, with power-assisted machinery (which first appeared in 1839) had to wait until the 1860s.⁸⁶

Although violence could be a feature of Leicester stockings' agitations against the demoralized conditions in which they found themselves, in general their political activities were markedly restrained, at least in comparison with the violence that occurred elsewhere. Luddite activity, for example, although greeted with horror by the Leicester establishment, was notably concentrated in the industrial villages of the county - with one violent outburst in Loughborough - rather than in Leicester itself.⁸⁷ Indeed, despite great economic distress in 1816 and 1817, Leicester stockings continued largely to co-operate with both their employers and other Radicals, earning themselves a great deal of sympathy from the middle classes of all

⁸⁵ Head, "Putting-out", p45; V.C.H., iv.306-7.

⁸⁶ Some worsted spinning processes had been mechanized by 1830, although early attempts had been met with violence. Ironically, conditions and pay in the cotton spinning factories were considerably better in the early 1830s than those experienced by the knitters. P.P. 1833 (519) XXI.101-2 (Second Report); Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p166; D.L.Wykes, "The Leicester Riots of 1773 and 1787: A Study of the Victims of Popular Protest", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, LIV (1978-9), pp39-50; C.Ellis, *History in Leicester* (Leicester 1976), p99; Beckett and Heath, "When was the Industrial Revolution?", *passim*.

⁸⁷ A.T.Patterson, "Luddism, Hampden Clubs and Trades Unions in Leicestershire", in *English Historical Review*, LXIII (1948), pp170-187.

political complexions. One factor in this was the presence alongside the knitters in organized Radicalism (eg. in the Hampden Club) of large numbers of small tradesmen and "superior artisans". The Hampden Club certainly proved capable of working with the middle-class Radicals, many of whom were themselves hosiers.⁸⁸ Subscriptions to the Framework Knitters' Society (which was established in 1819) were forthcoming from "other classes of society, some from philanthropy, and others out of self-defence".⁸⁹ Much of this sympathy was undoubtedly politically motivated. During the 1819 strike, for example, the £800 public subscription included contributions from the Lord Lieutenant (Rutland) and most of the magistrates. Strike action in 1830 was aided by the vestry of St. Margaret's, at the same time engaged in the beginnings of its own political struggles with Dissenters.⁹⁰ The Corporation actively encouraged those framework knitters who perceived the philosophical gap between themselves and those of their employers who preached utilitarianism. The Society in its public statements made a clear distinction between the "most intelligent, considerate and wealthy" hosiers and those belonging to that "race of men who could only compete with them by some kind of

⁸⁸ Patterson, "Luddism", pp172, 178-179; M.I.Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835* (Oxford 1969), pp86, 199.

⁸⁹ *Legitimate Combination: A Concise Account of the Framework Knitters' Society...* from notes and documents furnished by James Cort (London 1843), pp6-7, 16-17.

⁹⁰ *Leicester Chronicle*, 5th June 1830.

artifice, or an unfeeling depression of wages".⁹¹
 Jackson in particular was clear that blame for the
 knitters' troubles could be laid at the door of
 political economy:

The man who advocates the doctrine of labour
 being left to find its own level; or of the
 poor being left to the mercy of their
 employers without any protection, are either
 very ignorant or very great enemies of the
 working classes ...⁹²

The political implications of this strand of
 thinking were eagerly seized by the Corporation, who
 fashioned an image of themselves as the paternalist
 champions of the knitters (especially those who were
 freemen) against unfeeling liberals. Splits were
 visible between middle-class and working-class Radicals
 at the 1812 election, after leading opposition hosiers
 (most notably Coltman) had been prominent in
 campaigning against a knitters' petition to the House
 of Commons that the industry should be regulated.⁹³
 The Corporation exploited the situation in 1818 by
 dropping their nominee Babington (who did not have the
 confidence of the knitters) in favour of Mansfield, the
 "Poor Man's Friend", who was returned and operated an

⁹¹ Ibid., pp4, 17.

⁹² Jackson, An Address, p6.

⁹³ Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp59-61, 101-102.
 Significantly, the hosiers of Nottingham mostly
 supported the petition in 1812. Church and Chapman,
 "Gravenor Henson", p141.

effective Tory-Radical alliance with a section of the knitters until 1826.⁹⁴

In other respects, however, the Corporation was losing touch with the concerns of the wider community. Increasingly by the early nineteenth century their economic, judicial and charitable powers were being directed politically, and their financial and administrative control was conspicuously inept. The Webbs famously condemned Leicester Corporation as "perhaps the worst ... of the Close Bodies".⁹⁵ Abuses were detailed in the Municipal Corporations Commission Report in 1835. The Magistrates - appointed exclusively from within the Corporation - were at times blatantly partisan in their judgements, especially where their political opponents were directly involved, so that in the Report's words, the inhabitants of Leicester had "a widely spread and deep rooted suspicion of their integrity".⁹⁶ In their appointments of parish officers - such as overseers, who had a crucial role to play at elections - and of police, the Magistrates had proved uniformly partisan. Thomas Paget went so far as to say that "Every man of opposite opinions [to the Corporation] believes he sees in a

⁹⁴ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp122-123, 128; Thorne, *House of Commons*, ii.243.

⁹⁵ S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act: the Manor and the Borough* (London 1924), p475.

⁹⁶ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.506-507.

peace officer an armed adversary".⁹⁷ The granting of licenses to publicans and victuallers was also determined politically. A Tory solicitor who gave evidence before the Commission admitted:

I think the licensed victuallers are of course conservatives - The number of them voting against the Corporation is very small in proportion to those who support it. - I think they feel it in their interest to support the Corporation candidates ... because the corporate Magistrates dispense licenses.⁹⁸

Tory publicans and victuallers were disproportionately likely to be recipients of funds from charities which the Corporation controlled. Of 738 loans granted out of Sir Thomas White's Charity since 1800, 203 had gone to licensed victuallers, all of them Tories and all Anglicans. No Dissenter had been known to have received any money from a charity administered by the Corporation. Non-Tories also did not get school places for their children.⁹⁹ Coupled with these cynical political manipulations went financial incompetence. Despite the narrowness of the range of services that the Corporation provided for the

⁹⁷ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.507-508; A Letter to the People of Leicester on Corporate Reform, dedicated without permission, to the Mayor and Magistrates, by "Z" (Leicester 1833), pp7-8 (L.R.L.).

⁹⁸ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.508.

⁹⁹ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.501 and 508.

town,¹⁰⁰ borough rates were on the rise. From £508 in 1811, rates had reached around £2,000 in the early 1820s and £4,800 in 1833.¹⁰¹ For Dissenters, who felt themselves to be excluded from any of the benefits of corporate government, higher rates were particularly galling.

The Corporation's position of control in the town was the main fuel igniting party feeling. Middle-class Dissenters, especially, felt the trials of the local situation to be more compelling as political motivators than events at Westminster. As one of the leading Dissenters, Brewin, put it:

The system tends to engender a spirit of insubordination and of resistance to constituted authorities, far more than national grievances, greater but more distant, would do - It is a sore always galling; a disease that visits us by our firesides.¹⁰²

The Municipal Corporations Report concluded that the level of party feeling discernible in Leicester was one of the most pernicious effects of the Corporation's

¹⁰⁰ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.513; Webbs, English Local Government, pp475-476 - "no expenditure from the Corporation funds on official buildings, street improvements, or public purposes". Lighting, paving and sewerage were all left to individuals. Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp23-4 and Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp138-140 point out that the town's expectations of such services, and political support for them, were not high in this period.

¹⁰¹ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.512; A Letter on Corporate Reform, pp9-10; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp143-144

¹⁰² P.P.1835 (116) XXV.513. The Report describes Brewin and the other Liberal witnesses to the Commission as of "first rate respectability and intelligence". The Commissioners dined at his house.

behaviour, acting as it did on the "general tone of social feeling". Exclusion and political prejudice

has produced in the minds of the excluded party a sense of grievance and injustice by which the vehemence of party spirit has been materially aggravated, and a degree of bitterness and rancour has been introduced into the conflicts of political opinion, such as the ordinary collision of parties, if left to a fair trial of strength, would not have been sufficient to engender.¹⁰³

It was in such an atmosphere that the election of 1826 was fought. The primary issue was that of Roman Catholic claims to relief. For the Corporation, the issue was not only one about which its members felt strongly (both theologically, and as a matter of self-preservation against all attacks on religious exclusivity), but was also tactically extremely useful as a rallying-point for defenders of Church and State against "what some call Catholic Emancipation, but what we call popish ascendancy"¹⁰⁴ whilst potentially splitting opinion amongst their Dissenting opponents.¹⁰⁵ Nationally, the issue did divide nonconformists - the Methodists were especially vigorous in their anti-Catholic rhetoric - and it was not until after the

¹⁰³ P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.513. See D.Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford 1979), pp120-123.

¹⁰⁴ Circular from Thomas Burbidge (Town Clerk) to honorary freemen, Leicester, 27 May 1826, reprinted P.P.1835 (116) XXV.502.

¹⁰⁵ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp147-149; Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", pp203-207; G.I.T.Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics* (Oxford 1964), p70. The Corporation petitioned against Catholic Emancipation: eg. *Corpn. Hall Book* (BR11/1/12) 11 April 1821 and 22 May 1822.

repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts that Trinitarians nationally were to feel able to pledge their wholehearted support to Catholic Emancipation.¹⁰⁶ Leicester Dissenters in this respect proved progressive in their attitudes, probably (as Greaves suggests) because of the extent to which Dissent's political leadership was concentrated in the hands of the Unitarians.¹⁰⁷ For these advanced liberal Dissenters, the exclusion of Catholics was directly parallel to the political disabilities they themselves faced: their reaction to it as an issue was therefore of the same nature as the Corporation's - first and foremost political, and determined by its implications for the local political balance.¹⁰⁸

The Liberal candidate, William Evans, was first in the field and pledged himself both to Emancipation and repeal of the Corn Laws, the latter gaining support, at a time of high economic distress among the knitters, from poorer voters who had been thought initially somewhat suspicious of Evans as a wealthy

¹⁰⁶ Machin, *Catholic Question*, pp55, 145-146; Davis, *Dissent in Politics*, pp218-37; D.M.Thompson (ed.), *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (London 1972), p68; D.Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (London 1984), pp116-48.

¹⁰⁷ Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", pp203-207; Machin, *Catholic Question*, p7n. See Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp162-163, for the rôle of the Unitarian Rev. Charles Berry in Catholic Emancipation activity in 1828.

¹⁰⁸ W.R.Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London 1972), pp114-115.

cotton manufacturer.¹⁰⁹ In an address to electors carefully aimed to placate both Anglican and nonconformist apprehensions, Evans explained that he advocated Emancipation as a "conciliatory" measure that would best lead to the extinction of the "theologically unsound, and politically dangerous" Roman Catholic Church.¹¹⁰

Next in the field was Robert Otway Cave, a Canningite, and unlike Evans, a Leicestershire man.¹¹¹ Whilst managing to give the impression of being pro-Emancipation, he was ambiguous on the subject, and refused to give any pledges.¹¹² Leading members of the Framework Knitters' Society, at least, were convinced that Cave was "a sincere friend of civil and religious liberty", although their appreciation of him may have been affected by the £50 donation he made to their funds.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Leicester Journal, 9th June 1826; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp148-149; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp9-10; Thorne, House of Commons, iii.717.

¹¹⁰ Leicester, 3rd June 1826, reprinted P.Jupp, British and Irish Elections 1784-1831 (Newton Abbott 1974), pp131-132.

¹¹¹ Leicester Journal, 5th May 1826.

¹¹² Leicester Journal, 12th May 1826. The Burbidge circular told the honorary freemen that Cave's "mind is not made up on the Catholic question", P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.502; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p149; Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", p210.

¹¹³ Leicester Journal, 2nd June 1826; Jupp, British and Irish Elections, pp132-133 (Statement from Framework Knitters' Society, 31st May 1826).

This liberal Toryism was not to the Corporation's taste, but they experienced some difficulty in finding a suitable candidate of their own. Eventually, they produced Sir Charles Abney Hastings of Willesley Hall, whose anti-Catholic views they could trust. For his part, Hastings obtained from the Corporation a promise to pay £7,000 towards his election expenses, and an endorsement which went out to all of the honorary freemen.¹¹⁴

The three-way contest held potential dangers for both Cave and the Corporation, especially after it became clear that Evans had conducted a successful canvass. In a borough with a tendency to absolutely-defined politics, Cave was vulnerable as a moderate; at the same time, the Corporation could not tolerate the prospect of split-voting against their candidate on the Emancipation issue. An agreement was therefore negotiated between the Corporation and Cave's committee: Cave was to have the support of the Corporation in return for promising both to pay a share of the expenses and not to vote for Emancipation. He would also withdraw from the contest if it were necessary in order for Hastings to be returned.¹¹⁵ On the day of the nominations, Cave made his changed attitude to Catholic Emancipation clear, declaring that

¹¹⁴ Leicester Journal, 26th May 1826; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p150; Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", pp210-211.

¹¹⁵ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.502-3; Leicester Journal, 16th June 1826; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p150.

"he had yielded to the general opinion of the electors". Some of the framework knitters in particular were not impressed with this *volte face*.¹¹⁶

Polling was chaotic, drunken and violent.¹¹⁷ The protracted voting did not help - the poll took ten days - but the catalyst for rioting was the partiality of the Corporation's officers. Parish overseers assiduously checked that non-Tory voters had not received parish relief, and prevented from polling those that had, whilst Tory voters were polled without hindrance. The Mayor, as returning officer, would hear no complaints from Evans' supporters. Most resented were the polling pens, organized so that votes, taken in rotation, piled up two to one against Evans. The Liberals met this challenge in two ways: firstly, by nominating a second candidate in the form of Denman, a lawyer who was passing through Leicester, to ensure that their party could garner safe double-votes,¹¹⁸ and secondly, by trying to tear down the pens. In the

¹¹⁶ Leicester Journal, 16th June 1826; Machin, Catholic Question, p73; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp12-13.

¹¹⁷ There had already been some violence during the canvassing, largely directed at Hastings. Leicester Journal, 20th May 1826.

¹¹⁸ Leicester Journal, 16th June 1826; Leicester Chronicle, 28th September 1833; Burbidge nominated Cobbett and Hunt in facetious retaliation. Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", p212; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p151.

ensuing tumult - which went on for days - the cavalry were called in and 128 were arrested.¹¹⁹

When the poll closed, the result stood Hastings 2,773, Cave 2,678, Evans 2,063 and Denman 1,811.¹²⁰ Ironically, it was not the honorary freemen (of whom 445 had polled¹²¹) to whom the Corporation owed their victory. The Hastings/Cave combination polled 49% of resident voters, with additional plumpers giving them a narrow majority. The non-residents as a whole were more Tory than residents (60% to their 51%), but the town/county contrast was not as stark as might have been expected. Out-of-county votes were somewhat more biased: Hastings and Cave polled 1,463 "foreign" votes to Evans' and Denman's 835.

What is more striking about the voting figures is the degree of party identification displayed. Over 91% of vote combinations polled were for straight party votes - Cave/Hastings or Evans/Denman - with cross-party voting and plumping each accounting for less than 5% of the vote combinations polled. This is especially impressive in the light of the fact that some voting had taken place before Denman's nomination, so that at

¹¹⁹ Leicester Journal, 28th July 1826; P.P.1835 (547) VIII.130 (Report from the Select Committee ... Bribery, Corruption and Intimidation); P.P.1835 (116) XXV.504-506 (Municipal Corporations Commission Report); Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp12-13; O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, p258.

¹²⁰ Leicester Pollbook 1826.

¹²¹ P.P.1835 (116) XXV.502.

least some of Evans' 160 plump votes must be thought of as being fully partisan. There was also a suggestion that some of the cross-party voting was tactical. A note serving as introduction to the printed pollbook reads:

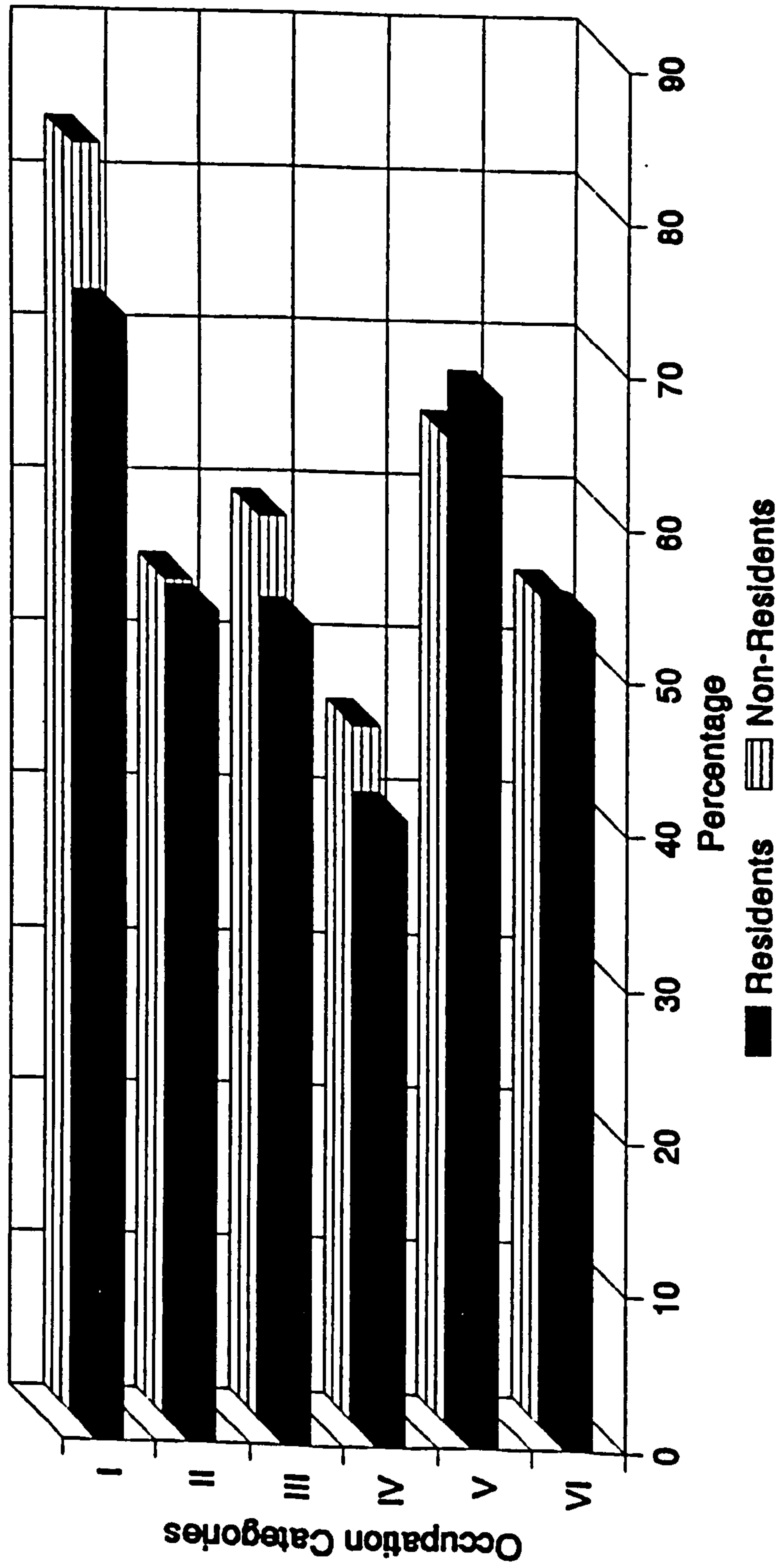
The Electors who polled for Cave and Denman were the friends of Hastings and Cave, but polled Cave and Denman by desire, to meet a particular exigency.¹²²

Most interesting, perhaps, is the perceived need to explain and thereby justify politically what was, in Leicester's terms, apparently aberrant voting behaviour.

An occupational breakdown shows that patterns of party preference within occupational categories were constant between resident and non-resident voters (see Figure 2.1), although the two groups were constructed somewhat differently (the most obvious difference between the two groups being that Category I voters (Gentleman and Professionals) constituted nearly 30% of the non-resident electorate, and under 10% of the resident group). In both groups the "craftsmen" of Category IV were the least likely, and the "gentlemen and professionals" of Category I the most likely, to poll Tory double-votes: the distance between them is well over 30%. Indeed, the craftsmen are the only

¹²² Leicester Pollbook, 1826. The Liberals later alleged that the statement was Burbidge's: Leicester Chronicle, 12th March 1831. There were 61 Cave/Denman votes. The "exigency" must have been the desire to make Evans come at the bottom of the poll: the ploy failed by 250 votes, but infuriated the Liberals.

**Figure 2.1 : Leicester 1826, Straight
Tory Voting, by Occupation Categories**



**Leicester Pollbook 1826
Straight votes-doubles**

category not to reflect the Tories' overall majority (non-residents = 45% Tory double-votes, residents = 41%). This was significant, in the light of their preponderance of numbers within the electorate - forming well over half of the resident voters and nearly half of the non-residents - and confirms them as the backbone of the anti-Corporation, anti-Tory, party. Retailers were in contrast only as predisposed to vote against the Corporation as was the electorate as a whole. Both resident and non-resident members of the "drink interest" (Category V) were disproportionately Tory: for residents at least it might be of some surprise that there were non-Tories among them at all, considering the Corporation's policy of license distribution.

Nearly 900 of the framework knitters voted, forming a third of the craftsmen category.¹²³ In their voting, there was no great distinction between residents and non-residents. Although the non-resident knitters gave a 5% lower Liberal double-vote to that of the residents (49% to 54%), their Tory double-voting was equally low (see Table 2.2).

In this, their voting was the opposite of that of the electorate as a whole, and of the hosiers. That nearly 40% of the framework knitters voted Tory can be

¹²³ There were many other craftsmen representatives of the hosiery industry in the electorate: eg. 167 woolcombers, 78 framesmiths, 43 worsted spinners, 41 needle makers, 40 woolstaplers, 31 dyers, 18 woolsorters etc. Leicester Pollbook 1826.

explained by the elements of Tory-Radicalism within the Framework Knitters' Society (William Jackson voted for Cave and Denman), by the favourable impression that Cave had made on them before his agreement with the Corporation, and by surviving elements of anti-Catholic

Table 2.2 : Voting of Framework Knitters and Hosiers, Leicester 1826

	Hosiers	FWKs
Liberal Double Votes	36.3%	51.0%
Tory Double Votes	58.7%	36.9%
Splits/Plumps	5.0%	12.1%

(and anti-Dissent) feeling among working-class Churchmen.¹²⁴ The impact on their voting of less overt influences - money, drink, intimidation, or a combination of the three¹²⁵ - cannot be quantified, but the uniformity of their "logical" party choices suggest that the motivation behind their voting should firstly be sought in real political terms.

The Corporation won the election, but their victory was an exceedingly hollow one. The financial costs of the contest were crippling - so much so that the Corporation was forced to mortgage some of its

¹²⁴ For early examples of violent working-class antagonism to Dissent in Leicester, see Wykes, "Leicester Riots", passim.

¹²⁵ The workings of electoral corruption will be discussed in Chapter 4, but in 1826 it is at least clear that that Tories were not the only ones spending a great deal of money. Evans was thought to have spent £17,000 on the contest; he himself thought the sum was nearer £22,000. Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p154; *The Speeches of the Right Honourable the Earl of Durham, delivered in the House of Commons..*(London 1836), pp191-192.

lands to raise cash¹²⁶ - but far worse was the almost immediate rupture with Cave. Not only did Cave decline to pay his full share of the costs (which he claimed had been agreed by his committee without his knowledge¹²⁷) but the argument that developed over the election expenses drove Cave full tilt into the camp of the Corporation's opponents. As an M.P., Cave brought the corruption and financial failings of Leicester Corporation to national attention, becoming a whole-hearted spokesman for the Leicester opposition party, and even in 1828 a sponsor of Evans' Corporate Funds Bill.¹²⁸ Most infuriatingly for the Corporation, Cave also reversed his promise not to vote for Emancipation, and revealed himself as a full supporter of campaigns for the removal of civil disabilities.¹²⁹

For all its efforts, therefore, the Corporation found itself in a worse position after 1826 than before. It had become "a national synonym for

¹²⁶ Corporation Hall Books (BR11/1/12), 24th March 1829.

¹²⁷ Braye Mss.: 23D57 Part II /3453-3465 (27th June 1826-February 1828) (L.R.O.); Corporation Hall Books, 12th September 1827 and 27th August 1828; Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp118-119. Cave paid £3,000 but would not pay the remaining £4,000 the Corporation wanted: Leicester Election: The Corporation and Mr Otway Cave (L.R.L.).

¹²⁸ Leicester Journal, 14th June 1828; Leicester Chronicle, 26th February 1831; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p156; Greaves, "Roman Catholic Relief", pp218-219.

¹²⁹ Leicester Journal, 28th March and 9th May 1828; Machin, Catholic Question, p73; V.C.H., iv.145-6.

corporate corruption"¹³⁰ and lacked either the cash or the confidence to force a contest in 1830 or 1831. In 1830, when Cave stood down,¹³¹ Hastings and Evans shared the representation. In 1831, when the reform party put up two candidates - Evans and Wynn Ellis, a wholesale silk merchant from London¹³² - the Corporation could do nothing to prevent their return uncontested (or as they put it, "Candidates could not be found with the same principles as the majority of electors"¹³³). The reformers were in full pursuit of the Corporation. With the brief exception of Paget's campaigns in Leicestershire in 1830 (unsuccessfully)¹³⁴ and in 1831 (when he was returned unopposed), Leicester Liberals

¹³⁰ D.Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (Leicester 1976), p123.

¹³¹ Evans was willing to stand with Cave, but Cave wanted a nomination for the county, which the reformers declined to give him. Paget Mss.: DG47/DE365/301, Wm. Evans to Thos. Paget, Leicester 11th December 1828, and Reform Committee to Cave, 9th and 10th August 1830; Braye Mss.: 23D57 Part II/3486-3492 (all July 1830); Leicester Journal, 6th August 1830. Some reformers - especially the hosiers - were suspicious of Cave's relationship with the knitters. The Times, 29th April 1831; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, pp24-25; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp176-180, 186-187.

¹³² Leicester Journal, 29th April and 6th May 1831; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, pp24-25; Boase, *Modern English Biography*, p987; Stenton, *Who's Who*, p127.

¹³³ Corporation Hall Book (BR11/1/12), 29th September 1831

¹³⁴ His defeat was attributed to "the dislike or at any Rate the disregard to radical politics which prevails among the farmers...": Paget Mss.: DG47/DE365/301, Reform Committee to Cave, 10th August 1830. See Brewin's speech criticizing county politics, quoted in Brock, *Great Reform Act*, p111; Freer, *Business Families*, p32.

committed themselves exclusively to the borough's conflicts, deliberately isolating the politics of the county town from those of its surrounding countryside, a tactic that was to continue throughout the 1830s.¹³⁵

Agitations for Reform were directed in Leicester by the Political Union, modelled by William Biggs on Birmingham's¹³⁶ to embrace both middle and working classes (or what the Chronicle called "the industrious classes"),¹³⁷ and comprising at one point nearly 4,500 members. Its committee contained all of the key figures of the liberal opposition.¹³⁸ Pro-Reform meetings attracted crowds of up to 10,000.¹³⁹ There were, however, dissentient working class voices. William Jackson disrupted one meeting to move an amendment that the Reform Bill, in working class interests, should only be supported "as the first step". Other leading knitters (for example, Seal and Sansome) denounced Jackson as a tool of the Tories, using his conduct at the 1826 election as evidence, and

¹³⁵ Moore, *Politics of Deference*, pp258-259; see Chapter 7.

¹³⁶ There was, however, little or no direct contact with Birmingham. C.Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union* (London 1978), p74.

¹³⁷ *Leicester Chronicle*, 5th November 1831.

¹³⁸ *Leicester Chronicle*, 22nd October and 19th November 1831, 27th April and 9th June 1831; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, pp31-32 notes the inter-class nature of the Union, but exaggerates the emphasis it placed on social questions.

¹³⁹ *Leicester Chronicle*, May 19th 1832; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, p34.

his amendment was defeated.¹⁴⁰ Several of the middle-class Radicals were, however, especially careful to emphasize that Reform agitation was fully legitimized only by working-class support.¹⁴¹

Opponents of Reform tried to claim that the Bill did not have full popular support. A Corporation petition to the House of Commons argued that Reform meetings in Leicester were the work of a "busy and restless, but very unimportant knot of individuals", who to their own political ends were whipping the masses into a "dangerous phrenzy".¹⁴² The Corporation also aided the anti-Reform Bill petition that circulated the county, eventually accumulating well over 2,000 signatures.¹⁴³ Even the gentlemen of the county, however, were forced to acknowledge (albeit privately) the weight of working-class support for the Bill. One of the collectors of signatures for the petition rued his lack of success in one village : "...

¹⁴⁰ Leicester Chronicle, 12th March 1831. The Chronicle had printed accusations in 1830 that Jackson was using strike subscriptions politically for the Tories: eg. Leicester Chronicle, 10th July 1830.

¹⁴¹ Eg. Rev. Charles Berry, "all civil power is, and ought to be, derived from the people, and be responsible to the people for its proper exercise ..."
Leicester Chronicle, May 19th 1832.

¹⁴² Corporation Hall Book (BR11/1/12), 29th September 1831.

¹⁴³ Berridge Mss.: 16D35/6 (Leicester Museum); Patterson, Radical Leicester, p192.

the lower order to a Man [are] for reform on any terms."¹⁴⁴

The passing of the Reform Act transformed the condition of party politics in Leicester. All the structural changes it wrought favoured the anti-Corporation party.¹⁴⁵ Abolition of the out-voters (at least, those beyond seven miles from the borough) robbed the Corporation of both its honorary freemen and many of the ordinary rural voters who were Tory by tendency. Because these had previously been such a large contingent in the electorate, plus the fact that most £10 householders were already qualified as freemen, Leicester was one of the few constituencies where the electorate was dramatically reduced in size by Reform.¹⁴⁶ The Liberals were also thought to benefit from changes to the borough boundary, which was extended to cover the extra-parochial Liberties (see Map 2).¹⁴⁷ In addition, the introduction of a system of

¹⁴⁴ Berridge Mss.: 16D35/6. Geo. Bakewell to C.Macaulay, Lockington, 21st May 1832.

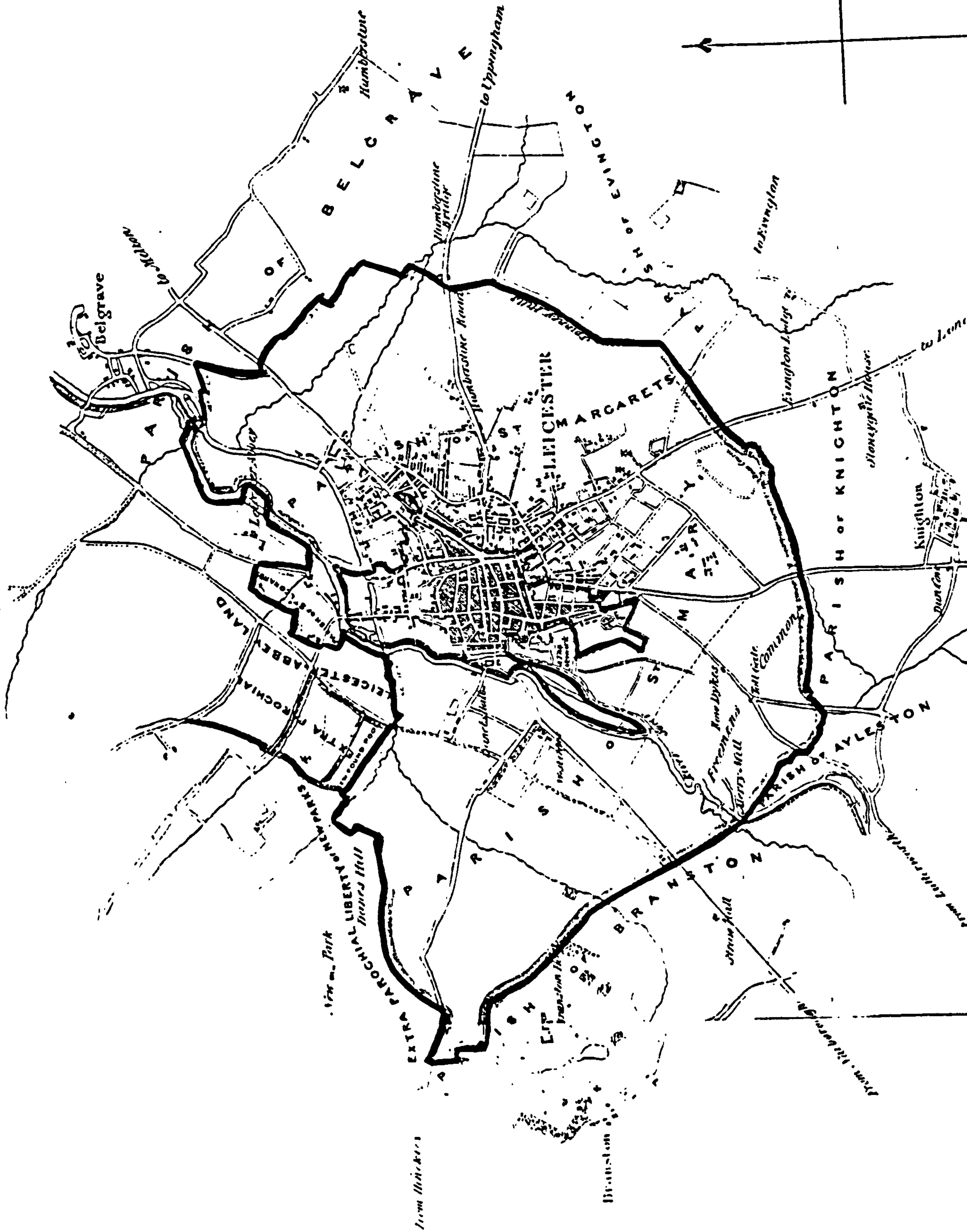
¹⁴⁵ For the occupational structure of the electorate, pre- and post-Reform, see Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁶ 4,781 voted in 1826, 2,795 in 1832 (out of 3,063 registered). Leicester Pollbooks, 1826 and 1832; P.P.1833 (189) XXVII.149 (which differs from the 1832 pollbook); P.P.1831-2 (141) XXXIX.141-2. Seymour, Electoral Reform, p84, greatly overestimates the number of freemen disenfranchised; Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp122-123; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp192-193; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p35.

¹⁴⁷ P.P.1831-2 (141) XXXIX.141-2 ("Reports from Commissioners on the Proposed Division of Counties and Boundaries of Boroughs"); P.P.1859 (166.Sess.1) XXIII.122: the parliamentary borough increased in size from 0.5 square miles to 4.9 square miles.

LEICESTER.
From the Ordnance Survey.

Beaumont Leys



MAP 2 : Extension of Leicester Borough Boundary, 1832.
P.P. 1831-2 (141) XXXIX.140

voter registration was also to prove of great utility to the Liberals. The Corporation was simultaneously affected by the passing of Evans' Corporate Funds Bill, which barred corporate bodies from using public money for electoral purposes.¹⁴⁸

At the end of 1832, therefore, the Liberals appeared poised to launch a final attack on the Corporation, after a protracted period characterized by sophisticated political awareness and a pervading sense of ideological identification.¹⁴⁹ The cry was:

Does the Corporation exist for the benefit of the Town ... or does the Town of Leicester, with its forty thousand inhabitants, exist for the benefit of the Corporation?¹⁵⁰

Durham

Although all three of the boroughs in this study are county towns, Durham allows for less distinction between town politics and county politics in the 1830s than do the others. The active political presence, at both the borough and county level, of aristocratic

¹⁴⁸ Leicester Chronicle, 26th February 1831; Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, p123; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p95.

¹⁴⁹ O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, pp188, 354, 370.

¹⁵⁰ Leicester Chronicle, 5th February 1831.

forces with a continued commitment to the upholding of family "interests" and the money with which to fight expensive county contests, meant that Durham City elections were part of a larger picture of political influence. Although the mechanisms, the personnel, and the idioms of electioneering to some extent varied between borough and county contests, the primary involvement in both of the same aristocratic influences - in the shape of the Lambtons (headed by Lord Durham, as he became in 1828) and the Tempest interest directed after 1819 by Lord Stewart (Londonderry after 1822) - as well as the influence wielded by the Church, means that Durham City and North Durham constituencies together offer a view of the ways in which the political landscape affected the impact of the Reform Act on electoral behaviour.

North Durham is the largest of the constituencies looked at here: with 4,267 registered voters in 1832, it was well above the average size of county constituencies.¹⁵¹ Its socio-economic composition, a mixture of a "prodigious Swarm" of small freeholders, a number of extremely powerful landowners managing some of the largest industrial undertakings in the country, and a relatively under-represented gentry, gave a

¹⁵¹ P.P. 1833 (189) XXVII.40 ("Electors Registered and Returning Officers' Charges"); Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp80-3.

distinctive tenor to county politics.¹⁵² There were not, geographically or politically, the same clear dividing lines between urban and rural, industrial and agricultural, that could be discerned, for example, in Leicestershire.

Durham City had a fairly large freeman electorate. A total of 988 voted in the 1830 election, nearly 60% of whom were not resident in the borough, and of whom a third lived outside the county: one in ten of all the electors lived in London. There was a registered electorate of 806 in 1832, after the imposition of the seven-mile residence limit.¹⁵³ In the borough, as in the county, the mobilizing political forces were individuals rather than collective political groups, although the 1830s saw both a strong correlation between these influence-wielders and party allegiance, and a simultaneous rise of more formally-organized and autonomous political organizations. Partly because of the communication gap between "influence" politics and the language of "party", there were changes after 1832 in the balance of power in the political infra-structure which exposed the workings of electoral control to increasingly articulate criticism, as revealed frankly in the bodies of correspondence between aristocrats, their agents, and candidates that

¹⁵² Londonderry Mss. (D.C.R.O.), D/Lo/C142(1), John Buddle to Lord Stewart, 28th March 1820; Nossiter, Influence etc., pp50-2.

¹⁵³ Durham City Pollbook 1830; P.P. 1833 (189) XXVII.129.

have survived. There was a constant and sensitive public critique of political influence and the modes in which it operated, and the relationships between voters and their patrons (or landlords or employers or their social superiors generally) were complex and mutable, requiring careful attention from those wanting to manipulate them. Political skills were far from being irrelevant to the politics of influence, as one historian has claimed.¹⁵⁴ Interests needed careful handling, of which the liberal distribution of resources was only one facet. Above all, the loyalty of an interest could not be taken for granted.¹⁵⁵

Members of the Lambton family and the Tempest family of Wynyard represented Durham City almost continuously throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, with a gap in 1761-2 when the Corporation, with Church support, brought in an independent candidate by creating over two hundred honorary freemen.¹⁵⁶ John George Lambton (later Lord Durham) also ran up against the influence of the Church

¹⁵⁴ T.J.Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion, and Political Idioms in Reformed England* (Hassocks 1974), p52.

¹⁵⁵ J.G.A.Pocock, "The Classical Theory of Deference", in *American Historical Review*, 81 (1976), pp516-23; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp43-55, 225-259; D.Stoker, *Elections and Voting Behaviour: A Study of Elections in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and Westmorland* (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester 1980), p50.

¹⁵⁶ Thorne, *House of Commons*, ii.151.

in his re-election for the County in 1820,¹⁵⁷ the clergy, headed by Canon Philpotts, drawing criticism on themselves for the degree of their political involvement.¹⁵⁸ The feeling among Tories was that anti-Church sentiment among the voters was responsible for Lambton's victory, commentators noting Church tenants abstaining "merely to thwart the wishes of [their] landlords, whom they were afraid to go directly against",¹⁵⁹ but "Radical Jack" Lambton's popularity with the freeholders (and also with non-voters) was a critical factor: "...no other Colours but his own can be shewn for the mob, whose Idol he is at the present".¹⁶⁰

The new head of the Tempest interest, Lord Stewart, who had married into the family in 1819, was ambitious to regenerate his new family's influence, but was unable in 1820 to challenge Lambton in the county, his agent John Buddle realizing that the Tempest influence for Lambton's opponent Wharton was "but

¹⁵⁷ Lambton first represented the county in 1813, at which time his uncle, Ralph Lambton, resigned from his City seat, feeling that "one family ought not to fill two, of the four, parliamentary seats possessed by the county of Durham", Sir C. Sharp, *A List of the Knights and Burgesses who have Represented the County and City of Durham in Parliament* (Sunderland, 2nd edn., 1831), p51; Thorne, *House of Commons*, ii.151 and 154.

¹⁵⁸ C.W. Daykin, *The History of Parliamentary Representation in the City and County of Durham 1675-1832* (Unpubl. M.Litt. thesis, Durham 1961), pp359-64.

¹⁵⁹ D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Stewart, 28th March 1820, and Buddle to Iveson, March 25th 1820.

¹⁶⁰ D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Iveson, 11th and 15th March 1820.

small".¹⁶¹ In the City, however, Stewart's brother-in-law Sir Henry Hardinge was successfully returned, sharing the representation with Michael Angelo Taylor, who was Stewart's wife's uncle, but also the Lambton candidate.¹⁶² Taylor had taken on to himself some of the Tempest interest during Stewart's wife's minority,¹⁶³ and on that account found his position in Durham challenged by Stewart, who was - as Taylor complained to Lambton - determined to "shew the commanding interest he had", despite warnings from those more familiar with local politics that the existing interests would not easily be overtaken.¹⁶⁴

After the 1820 elections, it became clear that Lambton would not allow Hardinge to go unchallenged at a future election, and Stewart's agents set about implementing his instructions to reconstruct the interest.¹⁶⁵ Their activity mostly took the form of recruiting freemen to Stewart's employment, especially

¹⁶¹ D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Iveson, 11th March 1820.

¹⁶² D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Iveson, 11th March 1820; Sharp, List of Knights and Burgesses, p53; Thorne, House of Commons, v.339-43.

¹⁶³ A.J.Heesom, " 'Legitimate' versus 'Illegitimate' Influences: Aristocratic Electioneering in Mid-Victorian Britain", in Parliamentary History, 7 (1988), pp282-305; Nossiter, Influence, p118.

¹⁶⁴ Lambton Mss., Taylor to Lambton, 4th July 1819. Taylor's wife had tried to prevent Stewart's marriage: R.W.Sturgess, "The Londonderry Trust 1819-1854", in Archaeologia Aeliana, Fifth Series X (1982), pp179-92.

¹⁶⁵ D/Lo/C267(2), Stewart to Buddle, 9th June 1819; D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Iveson, n.d. (?25th March 1820), Buddle to Stewart, 15th April 1820.

in the collieries and, after 1828, in the new harbour that Stewart was building at Seaham,¹⁶⁶ where cottages were provided for workers.¹⁶⁷ Orders for supplies for the collieries, "Cast Iron, Timber, Leather etc.", were also given to freemen and freeholders wherever possible. This "recruiting service",¹⁶⁸ Buddle found, had to be undertaken quietly, not because it was an "illegitimate" activity which had to be concealed - providing employment as a means of gaining reciprocal political support being considered an extension of the natural influence of property¹⁶⁹- but because openly conducting such activity was to risk both alerting Lambton's agents and starting a stampede amongst the freemen for the work on offer. However, it proved impossible to maintain the secrecy. Buddle complained of the freemen:

They are running upon us in Shoals - Taylors (sic), Weavers, Cobblers, - rag, tag and bobtail ... We manage them as well we can, but we cannot keep them as quiet as might be wished. The Agents have directions to discourage the idea, to the public, as much as they can that we are making efforts to collect Freemen ...¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Sturgess, "Londonderry Trust", p183.

¹⁶⁷ D/Lo/C142(3), Buddle to Londonderry, 21st September 1828; Heesom, "Legitimate versus Illegitimate Influences", pp282-305.

¹⁶⁸ D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Stewart, 15th April 1820.

¹⁶⁹ Heesom, "Legitimate versus Illegitimate Influences", passim.

¹⁷⁰ D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Iveson, 16th April 1820, Buddle to Stewart, 15th April 1820.

Buddle was to find the maintenance of the interest among the employed freemen an uphill task. The employment of so many workers (at times, more than were necessary for the work) "swelled up" the pay-bills "fearfully".¹⁷¹ At election-time, the freemen's demands for attention increased with their recognition of their value to the interest. For them, an election was a "chance for plunder" and an opportunity to get away with doing less work.¹⁷² They also had an inbuilt advantage over other employees when it came to industrial action.¹⁷³ Buddle was severely harassed at the 1830 election:

... the sponging and impertinence of the Freemen, is quite a disgusting nuisance. To attend to, and talk to them, on all their wants and wishes would be full time occupation for all your Lordship's Agents; and if we had 500 Clerks' places to give away, they all might be filled in an hour. Nothing short of a Clerk's place is suitable.¹⁷⁴

Londonderry's aim was to tie the loyalty of those who benefitted from this selective distribution of spending power, to the Vane-Tempest family. Buddle

¹⁷¹ D/Lo/C142(23), Buddle to Londonderry, 7th July 1831.

¹⁷² D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 8th July 1830; D/Lo/C142(23), Buddle to Londonderry, 7th July 1831.

¹⁷³ Heesom, "Legitimate versus Illegitimate Influences", p291.

¹⁷⁴ D/Lo/C142(20), Buddle to Londonderry, 26th June 1830.

called the arrangements "direct ties of Interest".¹⁷⁵ It was a contract within which all of the parties involved perceived their own advantage, as well as their reciprocal obligations, as was shown by the unsolicited approaches of freemen to Buddle, offering him the future deployment of their votes, in return for employment.¹⁷⁶ Deference of this sort was legitimate since it was voluntary and "spontaneously exhibited rather than enforced", and regarded as a freely-entered social relationship with naturally-occurring implications for political behaviour.¹⁷⁷ Londonderry and his supporters cherished this concept of a system of natural, mutual, benefits. As the Rev. E. Davison put it in 1834 at the First Anniversary Dinner of the Durham Conservative Association - which Londonderry had founded¹⁷⁸ - it was natural that gratitude would (and should) be extended to one who "by his princely fortune ... has given bread and diffused happiness to thousands".¹⁷⁹ With striking paternalist imagery,

¹⁷⁵ D/Lo/C142(22), Buddle to Londonderry, 24th March 1831.

¹⁷⁶ For examples of individuals approaching Buddle, D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 8th July 1830 and D/Lo/C142(22), Buddle to Londonderry, 7th March 1831.

¹⁷⁷ Pocock, "Classical Theory of Deference", p516; O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties, p225ff.; Nossiter, Influence, pp5-6.

¹⁷⁸ Report of the Speeches Delivered at the First Anniversary Dinner of the County of Durham Conservative Association ... January 13th, 1834, the most noble the Marquis of Londonderry in the chair (B.M. 1250.c.37(c) Newcastle 1834); Nossiter, Influences, pp29-31.

¹⁷⁹ Report of the Speeches, p5.

Buddle referred to Londonderry's coal-working employees as his Lordship's "little black family".¹⁸⁰ Londonderry himself, when later criticized for the ways in which he manipulated his electoral influence, spelled out his view of his political relationship with those who were in some way dependent on him:

I wish to know by what authority I may not advise them ... I am placed in mutual connection with those who live under me ... (and) I shall tell them I shall not interfere with their votes ... but I shall gratefully receive any deference to my judgement on their part. They have ever shewn me affectionate attachment - they know that my family and I spend our large means within the bosom of this county ...¹⁸¹

In practice in the next twenty years, these publicly stated conceptions were not fully to reflect the reality of influence mobilization, which took a number of forms.¹⁸² The demands made by the freemen suggested at times that it might be less troublesome (and less expensive) to use more direct means of buying allegiances. There were conflicting views of the efficacy of different methods. Maynard, one of Londonderry's solicitors, thought that money spent among the freemen over the longer term saved large

¹⁸⁰ D/Lo/C142(3), Buddle to Londonderry, 14th September 1821.

¹⁸¹ Electors' Scrap Book (Durham 1832), pp59-60; for a similar brand of theoretical influence at work in Cheltenham, see A.Courtenay, "Cheltenham Spa and the Berkeleys 1832-1848: Pocket Borough and Patron?" in *Midland History*, XVII (1992), pp93-108.

¹⁸² See *Durham Chronicle*, 24th July 1830.

expenditure at elections, whilst Buddle suspected that it might be cheaper to buy votes than freedoms:

I am not quite satisfied of the prudence of being at expense ... as when the Election comes, they may be bought (not in open market) but covertly, at a Guinea a head.¹⁸³

As will be discussed below,¹⁸⁴ the lines between "corruption", intimidation, and legitimate manifestations of "influence" could be exceedingly fine, particularly because partisan interpretations were so often involved. For a peer to be directly involved in electioneering at all was, theoretically at least, improper, since a House of Commons standing order at the turn of the century had specifically forbidden "any Lord of Parliament, or any Peer or Prelate ... to concern himself in the election of members to serve for the Commons in Parliament": it was not, however, strictly illegal.¹⁸⁵ In the constituency, nuances of language were of vital importance. The gratitude that Londonderry expected from employees was on occasion thought to have been demanded in too forceful a manner rather than gratefully received, or his language used insensitively (he spoke, for example, of Durham City as "a seat paid for and belonging to my

¹⁸³ D/Lo/C467(3), Maynard to Londonderry, 6th March 1838; D/Lo/C142(20), Buddle to Londonderry, 20th and 16th June 1830.

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter 5.

¹⁸⁵ Heesom, "Legitimate versus Illegitimate Influences", pp282-4.

family").¹⁸⁶ Londonderry's candidates, and agents - as well as the voters themselves - were at various times to accuse him of overstepping the bounds of acceptable behaviour. Hardinge, for example, on his appointment to the War Office in 1828 offered to pay the costs of his re-election, something Londonderry could not tolerate because of the implication that the City would thus be "rendered independent of the patron's control",¹⁸⁷ and which he refused in terms that severely damaged their relationship.

The immediate effect of Londonderry's determination to defend his "long established and legitimate family interest",¹⁸⁸ however, was successful. By 1830 Buddle could report that there were "about 80 Freemen and 20 influential relations employed in our Works": on another occasion he counted 115 "Household Troops" (out of 130 to 140 freeman employees) who could be called on from the collieries and Seaham, not including the "Garrison troops in the City and the Detachments from the outposts".¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ D/Lo/C107(17), Londonderry to Dungannon, 10th May 1838.

¹⁸⁷ Londonderry to Mrs Arbuthnot, 7th June 1828, in A.Asplinall (ed.), *The Correspondence of Charles Arbuthnot* (London 1941), pp104-105.

¹⁸⁸ Londonderry to Peel, July 25th 1843, Peel Papers, Add. Mss. 40, 531, f.291-2, quoted in D.Large, "The Election of John Bright as M.P. for Durham City in 1843", in *Durham University Journal*, XLVII (1954-5), pp17-23.

¹⁸⁹ D/Lo/C142(20), Buddle to Londonderry, 12th June 1830, D/Lo/C142(21), 2nd July 1830, D/Lo/C142(23), 7th July 1831.

With the troops assembled, tactics remained to be decided. Londonderry ultimately wanted a county seat for his son, Seaham, when he came of age in 1842. Until that time, it made sense to look to ways to keep down costs. Elections were very expensive: Buddle reckoned £5,000 "by no means an adequate sum", and £10,000 a possible maximum, for a City election, whilst a county contest meant spending £30,000.¹⁹⁰ Much of the cost of City elections lay in the mobilization of the out-voters. Bringing up one London voter by coach, "feeding him like a fighting cock, and paying his loss of time", cost £25, so that as Buddle pointed out, "A Thousand Pounds only buys 40 votes".¹⁹¹ A working compromise with another interest or interests was therefore an attractive proposition. Hardinge thought it fortunate that Londonderry had no "Tory competition" to fear in Durham:

Thus yr. choice of an ally must be made from the Whigs with a view to carry the Co. for your son, and to keep a seat in the City - of the Whig families Lambton's is decidedly the most powerful from Coal expenditure and family habits of representation - therefore as far as Seaham's interest in the City, I should say your political alliance ought to lean towards Lambton ...¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ D/Lo/C142(1), Buddle to Stewart, 11th February 1820; D/Lo/C142(20), Buddle to Londonderry, 28th June 1830; D/Lo/C142(21), 1st and 8th July and 11th August 1830; D/Lo/C/83, Hardinge to Londonderry, 4th July 1830; 3 Hansard 12, pp364-5, 13th April 1832 (Lord Durham).

¹⁹¹ D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 8th and 15th July 1830.

¹⁹² D/Lo/C83, Hardinge to Londonderry, 4th July 1827.

Such an alliance would be of benefit to both parties. For Londonderry, there would be greater certainty of the continuation of the interest (in a telling phrase, Hardinge suggested that "with 1500 votes the representation of the City is almost popular and open"); for Lambton, the advantages would be money saved if contests could be avoided, and political (as well as social) peace: "It would be in his interest not to disturb you and yours not to disturb him".¹⁹³

The Londonderry/Lambton alliance that came into being also had a commercial rationale. Although their coal interests were in competition, their respective positions at the head of the industry in the region gave them much in common.¹⁹⁴ Agreement between them allowed for common policies towards their pitmen (wage regulations were agreed in 1822), for the exchanging of parcels of land, and, most importantly, for joint action through the Wear Coal Owners' Association against incursions into their hegemony by new collieries.¹⁹⁵ In 1823, Londonderry informed Lambton that he would

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ A.J.Taylor, "The Third Marquis of Londonderry and the North-Eastern Coal Trade", in *Durham University Journal*, XVII (1955-6), pp21-27; R.W.Sturgess, *Aristocrat in Business: The Third Marquis of Londonderry as Coalowner and Portbuilder* (Durham 1975), pp8-9 and passim.

¹⁹⁵ Sturgess, "Londonderry Trust", pp182-8.

always continue desirous to cooperate ... in all arrangements connected with the joint interests in the coal trade on the Weir (sic), and more especially to preserve that superiority which their possessions entitle them to, against all innovators, or speculating adventurers.¹⁹⁶

He had earlier argued that it was important that there should be "no doubt in the country that nothing is further from both our intentions than to have contest or strife in our private affairs, however we may differ in politics". In other words, "if we are competitors in the same field we shall be played off against each other".¹⁹⁷

Despite their different political allegiances, Londonderry and Lord Durham (as he was after 1828) shared, at least until the Reform crisis, a common view of established political interests. In effect, both defined their electioneering as "doing our best for our country's and our own family welfare",¹⁹⁸ something that "Radical Jack" was as clear about - at least in private - as was Londonderry: "My motives are the same as yours. I found the Interest in existence as you did Lady L's and we must both protect them to the best of our abilities".¹⁹⁹ Whilst Londonderry was deliberately

¹⁹⁶ Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Lambton, 1st August 1823.

¹⁹⁷ Lambton Mss., Box 20, Stewart to ?, 24th January 1822, and Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 19th April 1831.

¹⁹⁸ Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 6th June 1831.

¹⁹⁹ D/Lo/C86(17), Durham to Londonderry, 27th April 1831.

reconstructing an interest, however, Durham's rôle was rather more passive in that he was acting to ensure that one was not lost: "... I cannot assent to see it altogether annihilated ... it must be supported by me as usual".²⁰⁰ As a legitimate interest, it did not extend to more than one seat in the constituency,²⁰¹ so arrangement could be reached with Londonderry to share the City's representation. There was also cooperation in county politics. Londonderry did not, for example, offer his support to William Russell in the 1828 county election until he had inquired of Durham whether there was anyone on his "family interest" standing.²⁰²

Hardinge was challenged in the Durham City election of 1828 by an independent candidate sponsored by a group of the London freemen,²⁰³ and Lord Durham proved as annoyed as Londonderry at the threat to the balance of power in the constituency, pledging the support of his Chester-le-Street voters should Hardinge require them.²⁰⁴ His indignation was directed at an attempt, as he saw it, to degrade the constituency by

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ See note 17.

²⁰² Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 2nd January 1828.

²⁰³ The London freemen had also mounted an independence campaign in 1823: D/Lo/C142(7), Buddle to Londonderry, 28th March 1823; Raine Mss., 96, ff.5, 10, 11, 12, 22. For the 1828 election, see Sharp Mss., 82; Heesom, "Legitimate versus Illegitimate Influences", p294.

²⁰⁴ Lambton Mss., Hardinge to Storey (Durham's agent), 6th February 1828; Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 9th February 1828.

turning it into one of the "mercenary towns" where elections were decided by an "open purse".²⁰⁵ Hardinge won easily, without the need for Durham's voters,²⁰⁶ so that it was not until 1830 that the Durham City electorate had their first experience of the coalition in operation at the polls, with Londonderry and Durham working together to effect the return of Taylor together with Londonderry's nominee, Sir Roger Gresley, in the face of another freemen challenge, this time in the form of Col. William Chaytor. Durham wrote to Gresley: "Mr. Taylor is of course my first object, but ... I shall be happy to render you any assistance in my power".²⁰⁷ Buddle, concerned at the expense of a contested election,²⁰⁸ suggested that Chaytor might be persuaded out of a contest by enlisting him to "serve in our Ranks", if he were willing to "lend us £5,000 at 5% Interest for 5 years, as a bonus for withdrawing our opposition and letting him in, free of expense".²⁰⁹ Londonderry did not take up the idea. Although all of the candidates denied, as protocol demanded, that any

²⁰⁵ D/Lo/C86(5), Durham to Londonderry, n.d. (February 1828).

²⁰⁶ Sharp Mss., 82; Raine Mss., 7, f.57 (5th February 1828).

²⁰⁷ Lambton Mss., 2nd July 1828.

²⁰⁸ " ... the idea of being exposed to the risk, of having to throw away £5,000 to £7,000 on the City election, is just about as agreeable to me, as the idea of having 5 or 6 of my front teeth pulled out.", D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 1st July 1830. For Londonderry's shaky financial position in 1830, see Sturgess, "Londonderry Trust", passim.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

coalitions existed,²¹⁰ on the third day of polling Lord Durham's voters (who had been kept back while Chaytor's voted, in the knowledge that many Chaytor supporters would split on Taylor) were sent in to poll for Gresley and Taylor. Eighty-one Gresley/Taylor splits were recorded in the one afternoon, pushing an infuriated Chaytor from second place to last in the poll.²¹¹ Chaytor denounced the "coalition between the Great Houses of the County",²¹² and accused Durham of hypocrisy, alleging that he had canvassed Durham's voters under the impression that they were free to vote as they wished.²¹³

Londonderry was undoubtedly the chief beneficiary of the coalition. Chaytor had clearly outspent him among the freemen during the campaign, Buddle reporting that "old Tatie [Chaytor], his son and Agents, are living amongst the Freemen, and are far outdoing us, in

²¹⁰ Proceedings and Addresses at the Durham City Election ... 1830 (Durham 1830), pp7, 10; Durham Chronicle, 17th and 31st July, and 7th August 1830; Raine Mss., 5, ff.7 and 9 (both 2nd August 1830).

²¹¹ D/Lo/C86(13) & (14), Durham to Londonderry, n.d. (3rd and 4th August 1830); Proceedings and Addresses, pp11-13; Electors' Scrap Book, pp8-9; Durham Chronicle, 7th August 1830; Durham Advertiser, 8th June 1832

²¹² Proceedings and Addresses, p16.

²¹³ Ibid., p13.

point of treating and expense".²¹⁴ Gresley's canvass was limited by the money at Buddle's disposal, and met with much "growling of the Durham, Stockton etc. Tradesmen".²¹⁵ Buddle was gravely concerned about his inability to "maintain our credit in the eyes of the public..a matter of the greatest importance".²¹⁶ Lord Durham's voters also insulated Gresley from some of the Tory criticism, much of it coming from the College, of Londonderry's recent breach with Hardinge and the Duke of Wellington.²¹⁷ Alliance with Durham meant, above all, that Londonderry was spared the worst effects of the pro-independence, pro-reform feeling that was apparent nationally in 1830. Buddle had noticed it in Durham: "On this canvass I have observed a great increase of democratic principles".²¹⁸

²¹⁴ D/Lo/C142(20) and (21), Buddle to Londonderry, 10th March and 8th, 15th and 20th July 1830; Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 11th August 1830. Londonderry's banker, Backhouse, was very reluctant to forward money for electioneering: D/Lo/C142(20), Buddle to Londonderry, 26th and 18th June; D/Lo/C142(21), 1st and 2nd July, 5th and 11th August, 1830; D/Lo/C142(22), Buddle to Londonderry, 3rd May 1831; Sturgess, "Londonderry Trust", pp183-5.

²¹⁵ D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 2nd and 5th July 1830.

²¹⁶ D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 11th August 1830.

²¹⁷ D/Lo/C142(20), Buddle to Londonderry, 12th and 16th June, and 4th July 1830. For Londonderry's resentment of Wellington's failure to give him office, see Durham Chronicle, 24th July 1830; Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry, Frances Anne (London 1958), p151; Daykin, Parliamentary Representation, pp400-408.

²¹⁸ D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 31st July 1830; Brock, Great Reform Act, pp86-119.

The working of the coalition had not been faultless. Durham's agents informed him that Londonderry's agents had not always observed their instructions. Londonderry apologized: "... of course if I have been disobeyed I must feel in greater proportion my debt to you", and praised Durham's voters for polling "loyally and efficiently".²¹⁹ In fact, it is difficult to believe that Londonderry was ignorant of what his agents were doing.²²⁰ Thirty-eight London freemen - amongst those brought by Londonderry agents to Durham, housed, fed and paid for their time²²¹ - plumped for Gresley, with only 12 splitting Gresley/Taylor.²²² Of voters identifiable as living in Seaham, Rainton and Houghton-le-Spring (where the Londonderry interest was most concentrated²²³), very nearly half (48%) plumped for Gresley instead of splitting. Gresley himself consistently claimed to be

²¹⁹ D/Lo/C86(13), Durham to Londonderry, n.d. (3rd August 1830); Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 11th August 1830.

²²⁰ Londonderry's control over his agents was, however, apparently never complete: see Chapter 5.

²²¹ D/Lo/C142(21), Buddle to Londonderry, 8th and 15th July, and 5th August 1830.

²²² Proceedings and Addresses at the Durham City Election, with the Poll ... 1830.

²²³ Many of the pitmen at Londonderry's Rainton colliery lived in Houghton-le-Spring. D/Lo/C142(3), Buddle to Londonderry, 10th October 1821.

the "third man" in the contest, and urged his supporters to "stick to your plumpers!"²²⁴

The alliance faltered, and then disintegrated, within a year of the 1830 election, under the twin pressures of another election and the Reform question. Chaytor successfully petitioned against Gresley's return, to Buddle's anguish,²²⁵ forcing a by-election, at which he put forward his son, W.R.C. Chaytor.²²⁶ Londonderry's candidate was Arthur Trevor, son of the 2nd Viscount Dungannon, a neighbour of Londonderry's Irish estates, and relative of his wife.²²⁷ He canvassed with Gresley, but encountered difficulties in the most pro-Reform areas of the County. The canvass of the Durham freemen in Sunderland was stopped by a mob "by brute force - this mob supposed to be hired or incited by Tatie, or his adherents". But it was Reform, rather than support for Chaytor that lay behind mob activity:

²²⁴ Proceedings and Addresses, p68, pp10-11. Gresley used the Chaytor/Taylor splits given on the first day's polling as evidence of a liberal coalition against him.

²²⁵ D/Lo/C142(22), Buddle to Londonderry, 3rd January, 7th, 10th and 13th March 1831; Durham Chronicle 20th November 1830; Sharp Mss., 82 f.41. The Bribery Oath had been administered to at least two of Gresley's voters: Proceedings and Addresses, pp11-2, 23, 68.

²²⁶ Raine Mss., 7, f.71 (22nd April 1831); Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 12th March 1831. A second Chaytor son, J.C.Chaytor, also stood at the last minute, attracting 3 votes; Sharp Mss., 82, p41.

²²⁷ Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry, Frances Anne, p169; Stenton, Who's Who, p384; W.W.Bean, The Parliamentary Representation of the Six Northern Counties of England (Hull 1890), p157.

It is the Cause - the Blue, and if a "Mop-Stick" had been put up under the Blue banner, they would have supported it ... In Sunderland the people, high and low, are quite wild, on the Reform question..

Newcastle and South Shields were the same.²²⁸ There was some disquiet among freemen, however, that the Reform Bill proposed to abolish their franchise, and this Trevor set out to exploit, arguing that a complete class of freemen, "Artizans, Mechanics, Agricultural Labourers ..." were being robbed of their electoral rights by middle-class householders.²²⁹ If the Bill were passed, each resident freeman would lose his privilege of handing his vote down "to his own Son, whom he has taught to expect it, and endeavoured to bring up to his own principles": non-residents would lose their votes outright.²³⁰ One Tory expressed his belief that the freemen "would never commit the suicidal act of voting for their own disfranchisement".²³¹ Trevor's opponents could not deny that the large body of non-residents were being asked to vote away their right to vote in Durham, but asserted that the considerable expense involved in polling the out-voters was the leading reason why

²²⁸ D/Lo/C142(22), Buddle to Londonderry, 15th and 24th March 1831, and Carr to Londonderry, 15th March 1831; A.J.Heesom, "Parliamentary Politics 1830 to the 1860s" in Sunderland: River, Town and People (Sunderland 1988), p91.

²²⁹ Raine Mss., 7, f.69, (15th March 1831).

²³⁰ Raine Mss.; f.83 and f.88, n.d. (1831).

²³¹ Durham Chronicle, 19th March 1831 (Chipchase).

control of constituencies was in the hands of "unprincipled Adventurers".²³²

Londonderry's electoral compromise with Lord Durham was shaken by the introduction of the Reform Bill, although for the period of the March by-election, it was not yet apparent that there was to be an absolute split between them. Londonderry was, despite his great fear of and distaste for reform, still corresponding amicably with Durham (one of the authors of the Reform Bill²³³) although confessing to mounting ideological difficulties:

We can not consent to Reform! ... I am sadly worried at all this bother and hardly know where in public or private concerns to find a consolatory position ... I might wish for my own sake my conscience was less stubborn because I really like Ld. Grey and many of yours ...²³⁴

Lady Durham had written to Londonderry to assure him that Lord Durham understood his motives in rejoining Wellington in late 1830,²³⁵ and Durham was thought by Londonderry to have promised to remain neutral in the by-election.²³⁶ In the event, although

²³² Raine Mss., 5, f.14, (16th March 1831).

²³³ L.Cooper, *Radical Jack: The Life of the First Earl of Durham* (London 1965), pp101-7.

²³⁴ Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 12th March 1831. For Londonderry's fear of reform, see Londonderry to Durham, 16th September 1830.

²³⁵ D/Lo/C86(11), Lady Durham to Londonderry, 24th November 1830.

²³⁶ Lambton Mss, Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 19th March 1831.

Gresley plumpers from 1830 overwhelmingly voted for Trevor in 1831 (95%), Taylor plumpers in 1830 turned almost as emphatically (83%) to Chaytor in 1831,²³⁷ and in a closely fought contest provided Chaytor with victory.

Geographical analysis of the voting shows how "independence" sentiment (support for Chaytor) increased with distance from Durham (see Table 2.3), with out-of-county voters being less subject to the normal bonds of deference, in spite of the Londonderry out-voters.²³⁸

Londonderry initially blamed both Durham and Taylor for Trevor's defeat - "both yr. voters and Mr. Taylor's ... are polling for Chaytor. I cannot see it is for any of our interests to get in such a man", he wrote to Durham.²³⁹ It was not so straightforward, however.

Table 2.3 : Geographical Voting Patterns, Durham City, 1831

Residence:	Trevor	Chaytor	N=
Durham City	52.4%	47.6%	399
County	51.5%	48.5%	317
Out-of-County	40.9%	59.1%	249
(London	45.5%	54.5%	99)

²³⁷ 1830 and 1831 Pollbooks. These figures count only those who voted on both occasions.

²³⁸ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p191.

²³⁹ Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 19th March 1831.

The radical Tyne Mercury after several days' polling blasted Durham for making his voters support Trevor:

political principle ... appears to us to be at a very low ebb indeed ... It is a monstrous abuse of power for any peer to cause his dependents to vote on a particular side, but is certainly much worse if he makes them vote in favour of a corrupt system at the very time that he is himself decrying it.²⁴⁰

After the election, however, the paper reversed its opinion:

The truth is ... that all the remaining freemen under the control of Lord Durham, after the first two days, voted for Mr. Chaytor, the declared supporter of the reform bill ... [this warrants] a conclusion that Lord Durham did not bias the election one way or the other, and that his Lordship adhered to the neutrality his agents stated he meant to observe.²⁴¹

For his part, Londonderry came to absolve Durham, placing the blame squarely on Taylor. A robust majority - 80% - of the Taylor/Gresley splitters in 1830 voted for Trevor, including Lambton voters. Londonderry wrote to Durham:

I am persuaded from what you say that the breach of your instructions is from Election Chance - Taylor's people have in many more instances than yours voted against us ...²⁴²

This he considered a mistake on Taylor's part. Not only was he upholding an "upstart interest" which transgressed "the legitimate interest of property" and

²⁴⁰ Tyne Mercury, 29th March 1831.

²⁴¹ Tyne Mercury, 5th April 1831.

²⁴² Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 20th and 31st March 1831.

would in future threaten his own seat, but he was, in going against Londonderry, ensuring that Londonderry would give him a "sharp fight" at every subsequent election.²⁴³

Buddle tried to warn Londonderry that a new election on dissolution would be practically unwinnable, because of the "overwhelming torrent of popular feeling" for Reform: "the Millions are for the measure - the Units are against it",²⁴⁴ but when the election came in early May, Trevor was unexpectedly returned unopposed (with Chaytor) when Taylor declined a contest on the grounds of the cost.²⁴⁵ Trevor, whose campaign for the second time had been based on a non-party appeal to the freemen to look to their own class interests, pledged to fight the freeman clauses of the Reform Bill when he got to Westminster, labelling himself a "moderate reformer".²⁴⁶ Reformers were dismayed at the manner of Taylor's defection, which at the height of the crisis, and when an association had been formed in Durham (as elsewhere in the county) to

²⁴³ Lambton Mss., Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 19th, 20th and 31st March 1831.

²⁴⁴ D/Lo/C142(22), Buddle to Londonderry, 26th and 27th March 1831.

²⁴⁵ Raine Mss., 5, f.15, (23rd April 1831); Durham Advertiser, 29th April 1831.

²⁴⁶ Raine Mss., 5, f.19, (26th April 1831), f.22, (2nd May 1831); Durham Advertiser, 6th May 1831; Tyne Mercury, 10th May 1831.

organize the reforming candidates' campaigns,²⁴⁷ had allowed for a restoration of Londonderry's influence in the city, "after it appeared to be crushed for ever".²⁴⁸ There was at least one suggestion that Londonderry had somehow engineered Taylor's retirement, so late in the contest as to ensure that no other Reformer could be brought forward in time to force a poll.²⁴⁹ An exchange of letters between Londonderry and Lord Durham on the subject established that their compromise was at an end, Durham informing the Marquis that :

Hitherto - and especially in your instance - I have made political feelings give way to feelings of private friendship - but now if my son stood on anti-Reform feelings I would oppose him.²⁵⁰

The county election was also uncontested. There were two pro-Reform candidates, William Russell, the sitting M.P., and Sir Hedworth Williamson, Baronet, son-in-law of Lord Ravensworth and landowner in Monkwearmouth.²⁵¹ Russell canvassed against clerical abuses, in the face of which the College looked to

²⁴⁷ Raine Mss., 6, f.22 (29th April 1831); Durham Chronicle, 30th April 1831.

²⁴⁸ Durham Chronicle, 7th May 1831; The Times, 26th April and 5th May 1831; Lambton Mss., Williamson to Durham, 31st May 1831.

²⁴⁹ Raine Mss., 6, f.24, (7th May 1831).

²⁵⁰ D/Lo/C86(17), Durham to Londonderry, 27th April 1831; Lambton Mss, Box 20, Londonderry to Durham, 27th April 1831.

²⁵¹ Stenton, Who's Who, p412; T.J.Nossiter, "Dock Politics and Unholy Alliances 1832-1852", in H.G.Bowling (ed.), Some Chapters on the History of Sunderland (Sunderland 1969), p80.

support a Tory candidate.²⁵² Londonderry made several attempts to find someone with whom to challenge the Whig preponderance in the county, heartened as he was by his borough windfall, and believing that Williamson would not go to a contest if challenged. He approached Col. Chaytor, offering him £5,000 to stand as a "moderate reformer"²⁵³: when rebuffed, he tried Hardinge, in the hope that their joint opposition to Reform might have eased a reconciliation between them.²⁵⁴ Hardinge, however, "would have nothing to do with Londonderry".²⁵⁵

There was no more reason to suppose that an anti-Reformer would have stood much chance of success in a county election in the summer of 1831 than in the City. The Bishop of Durham, Van Mildert, grieved at the effect that the crisis was having on Durham politics, seeing "the rapid encroachment of party in every direction".²⁵⁶ The scale of the pitmen's Reform meetings, and the activities of the Northern Political Union, which attracted crowds of up to 80,000 to reform

²⁵² Durham Chronicle, 7th and 14th May 1831.

²⁵³ Lambton Mss., Williamson to Durham, 26th and 31st May 1831.

²⁵⁴ Raine Mss., 6, f.23, (4th May 1831), f.24, (7th May 1831); The Times, 5th May 1831.

²⁵⁵ Lord Ellenborough's Diary, 18th March 1831, in Aspinall, Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries, p68.

²⁵⁶ E.Hughes, "The Bishops and Reform 1831-3: Some Fresh Correspondence", in English Historical Review, 56 (1941), pp459-490.

meetings in Newcastle,²⁵⁷ convinced Buddle that the region was "on the verge of a revolution".²⁵⁸ A huge Reform meeting was held in Durham at the end of October, at which Hedworth Lambton spoke, and a few freemen - held to be Londonderry's - attempted disruption: feeling in Durham seemed, with very few exceptions, eager for the Bill.²⁵⁹ Londonderry's entrenched opposition made him a target for popular odium outside the county as well as inside, which culminated in attacks on both himself and his residence in London.²⁶⁰

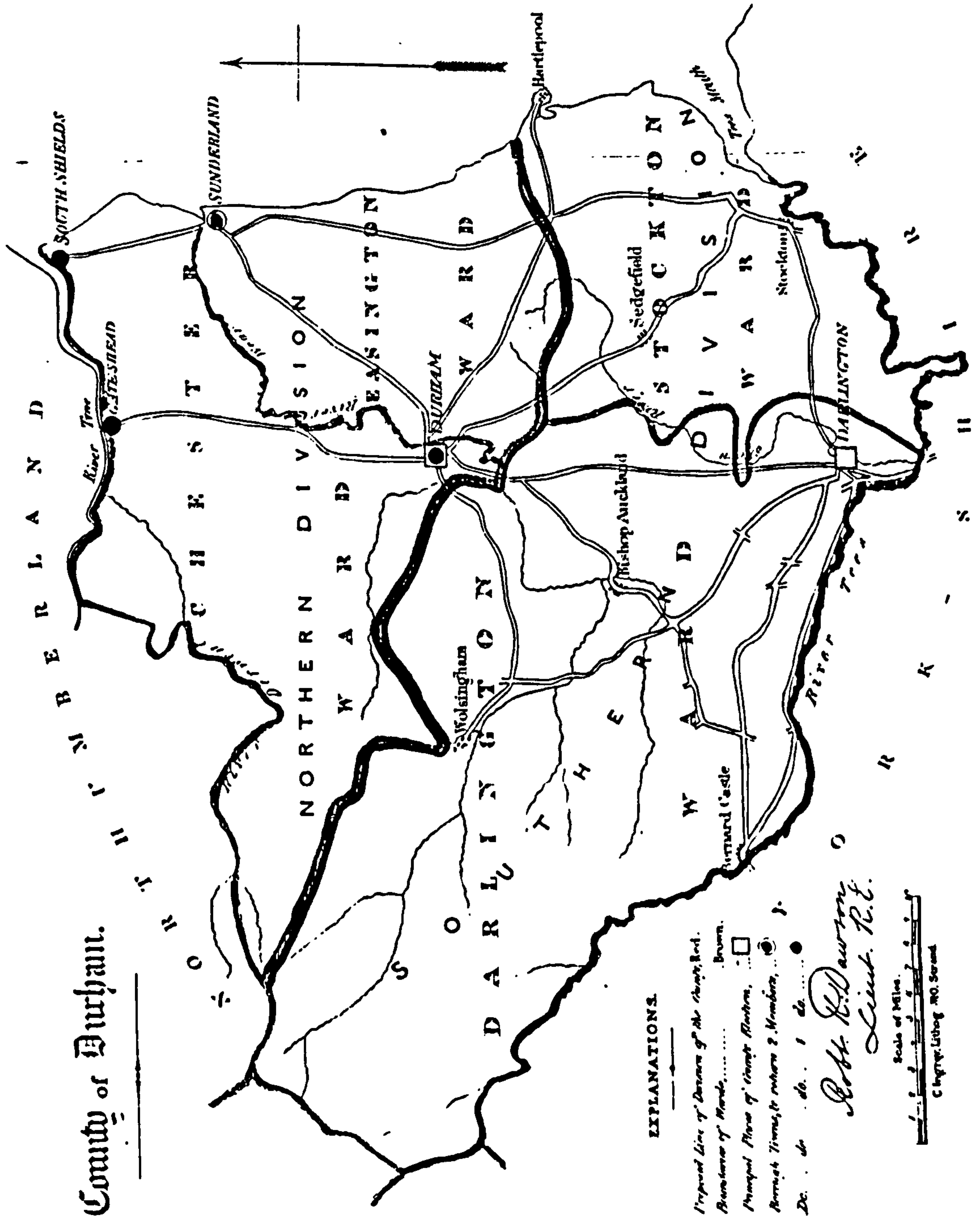
In his criticism of the Bill in the House of Lords, Londonderry came into direct collision with Lord Durham. His objections were to those parts of the Bill that would directly affect his own electoral interest in Durham - the proposed seven-mile residence limit around the boroughs, the enfranchisement of three new boroughs in the county, and the splitting of the county into two divisions, each returning two members - all of which he saw as Whig partiality (not to say gerrymandering) for Lord Durham (see Map 3). Londonderry, along with other Tories, pointed out that

²⁵⁷ Durham Chronicle, 22nd October 1831; E.Hughes (ed.), The Diaries of James Losh, II, p200, Losh to Brougham, 9th November 1831.

²⁵⁸ D/Lo/C142(24), Buddle to Londonderry, 15th May 1831.

²⁵⁹ The Times, 8th November 1831; Tyne Mercury, 3rd November 1831; Du1/29/45, Durham Corporation petition to House of Lords, 26th September 1831 (D.C.R.O.).

²⁶⁰ The Times, 15th October 1831.



MAP 3 : North and South Divisions of County Durham, 1832. P.P. 1831-2 (141) XXXVIII.264

Durham was among the counties receiving two additional representatives (all of them dominated by Whig interests) that were smaller than some of the seven counties which were not to be divided, and were getting only one extra M.P.²⁶¹ Ministers explained that the division of counties was intended to restrict the expense of contests (an appropriate argument in Durham's case), and that it was not intended purely to be a reflection of the number of voters involved, but as a means of representing specific industrial interests: the northern division of the county was to represent coal and shipping interests, and the southern, agricultural interests.²⁶²

This was also the reasoning behind new borough enfranchisements: Sunderland (which was to include Bishopwearmouth and Monkwearmouth), Gateshead and South Shields were to have M.P.s who would speak for the shipping interest, which had hitherto been "not largely represented".²⁶³ Critics noted the proximity to each other of these new boroughs, all of them in the northern division, which Croker dubbed "the Elysium of franchise".²⁶⁴ Hardinge argued that Gateshead, especially, was not fit for representation, being "no

²⁶¹ Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics*, p45.

²⁶² 3 Hansard 12, p1389 (23rd May 1832); 3 Hansard 9, pp980-1007 (27th January 1832); Brock, *Great Reform Act*, pp222-3, 264.

²⁶³ 3 Hansard 5, pp847-55 (5th August 1831) (Althorp).

²⁶⁴ 3 Hansard 5, pp846 (5th August 1831).

more than a suburb of Newcastle". His assertion that "the inhabitants of Gateshead were not the most respectable in the world" was countered by Williamson, who claimed that Hardinge's knowledge of the town came only from his canvassing of Durham freemen resident there, and they did not form the most respectable portion of the population.²⁶⁵ Londonderry, never one to mince his words, called Durham's new enfranchisements "the most gross of all the Whig jobs in this disgraceful Whig-jobbing Bill", arguing that Lord Durham would be able to exercise influence in all three of the new boroughs, and particularly in Gateshead (which he declared "a most filthy spot - containing the vilest class of society") because of its location "in the midst of the numerous and extensive collieries of the noble Baron" and "the immense body of labourers and operatives to which those collieries afforded employment".²⁶⁶

Londonderry - and Trevor in the House of Commons - moved amendments that Stockton should take Gateshead's place on Schedule D, to even the balance between the North and South Divisions - without mentioning that his Wynyard Park home was within a few miles of the town.²⁶⁷ That Londonderry's objections

²⁶⁵ 3 Hansard 5, pp855-7, (5th August 1831).

²⁶⁶ 3 Hansard 12, pp118, 1378-80 (10th April and 23rd May 1832); 3 Hansard 13, p114 (25th May 1832).

²⁶⁷ 3 Hansard 10, pp1118-21 (5th March 1832) and pp1379-80 (23rd May 1832).

were based not on matters of principle but on resentment that his own influence was apparently being undermined and Durham's strengthened, was readily apparent.²⁶⁸ He premised that, if town residents were allowed to remain in county electorates, Lord Durham would "have the power of procuring" the return of seven out of the eight M.P.s in the Northern division, and that, combined with Cleveland's influence in the Southern division, the effect of the Bill would be to make it "impossible for any other interest but those of the two noble individuals ... to succeed in a contest for the Representation of those towns, or for the county".²⁶⁹ The seven mile residence limit for borough franchises he objected to because it would "deprive many of his tenants of a vote for the city of Durham" while acting to include more of Lord Durham's tenants in the constituency. The significance of his objection - that this would strike right at the heart of his own electoral organization which had been so carefully and expensively built up in the last dozen years - was not lost on his opponents. The Duke of Richmond, the instigator of the proposal, exposed Londonderry's motives: "he had objected to the distance of seven miles, because that did not include Seaham, which was his property".²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Heesom, "Legitimate versus Illegitimate Influences", p295.

²⁶⁹ 3 Hansard 12, pp1379-80 (23rd May 1832).

²⁷⁰ 3 Hansard 13, pp114-7 (25th May 1832).

In the face of Tory accusations of partiality, Lord Durham set out his expectations of the Reform Act's effect on the workings of influence politics, and his attitude to his own political interests in Durham. The householder and county franchises would, he hoped, guarantee that no individual property-owner could control the voting of a constituency:

There may be a few persons who, from their situations in life, or the nature of their tenure, dare not vote except as they are directed by their masters or landlords; these, however, can be but few, while the rest form a respectable and independent constituency, on whom no improper influence can possibly be exercised.²⁷¹

This was not to suggest that all influence would be eradicated: the government was striving to ensure that legitimate forms of influence (which Durham defined as "that proper and salutary influence which is derived from property and station, and the respect which attaches to the proper exercise of their duties") should continue to play a central rôle.²⁷² It was nomination, with its associations with coercion, that was to be done away with. Durham's championing of the secret ballot, which had been excluded from the Reform

²⁷¹ 3 Hansard 12, p1389 (23rd May 1832).

²⁷² Ibid., E.P.Hennock and D.C.Moore, "The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act: A Critical Note", in *Victorian Studies*, XIV (1971), pp328-337; E.Wasson, "The Spirit of Reform", in *Albion*, 12 (1980), pp164-74; J.Milton-Smith, "Earl Grey's Cabinet and the Objects of Parliamentary Reform", in *Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), pp55-74; J.Phillips, "The Many Faces of Reform: The Reform Bill and the Electorate", in *Parliamentary History*, 1 (1982), pp115-135; R.W.Davis, "The Whigs and the Idea of Electoral Deference: Some Further Thoughts on the Great Reform Act", in *Durham University Journal*, LXVII (1974), pp79-91.

Bill because of the hostility of his Cabinet colleagues,²⁷³ showed the clarity of his distinction between proper and improper forms of influence.

Durham disclaimed any intention of actively manipulating his influence in the newly-defined borough and county constituencies of North Durham. In a retort to Londonderry in the Lords, Durham announced he had "no desire to drive his voters to the poll, whatever might be the practice or the wishes of other noble Lords on such subjects",²⁷⁴ and pledged his non-interference at future elections: "I shall be well content to leave the merits of any friend of mine, who may wish to represent these places, to be freely decided on by its electors ...".²⁷⁵

A stark contrast was drawn by Durham supporters between these statements and Londonderry's habit of talking about his freemen "as though they were so many slaves",²⁷⁶ but there was disingenuity in Durham's

²⁷³ Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832*, pp208-9; Brock, *Great Reform Act*, pp140-2, 155-6; L.Cooper, *Radical Jack*, pp101-7; B.Kinzer, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth Century English Politics* (London 1982), pp13-16.

²⁷⁴ 3 Hansard 13, p115 (25th May 1832).

²⁷⁵ 3 Hansard 12, pp1389-90 (23rd May 1832).

²⁷⁶ *Durham Chronicle*, 1st June 1832. The Chronicle was a Lambton-financed paper: *The Larchfield Diary*. Extracts from the Diary of the Late Mr. Mewburn, First Railway Solicitor (London 1876); Stoker, *Elections and Voting Behaviour*, p322; Lambton Mss., Morton to Durham, 9th August 1835.

avowal that he could have "no personal interest"²⁷⁷ in local elections, as subsequently became apparent. His brother Hedworth stood for re-election for the county later in the year, and Durham's support of other candidates, especially those who turned out to be unsatisfactory like Barrington in Sunderland, brought criticism from Radicals, as well as Tories, that his methods in practice could be little different to Londonderry's. The Reform debates had, though, demonstrated Durham's ability - which Londonderry did not share - to adapt the tone of his relationship with his interest according to changing circumstances. In essence, this meant, as he had tried to explain to Londonderry, recognizing the legitimacy of "public opinion" ("the just demands of the age") and making "judicious and yet sufficient concession"²⁷⁸ to it, as the safest means of guaranteeing the protection of property interests.

The reformed electorate of North Durham was somewhat differently constructed from how Durham and the government had envisaged, because of the enfranchisement of the £50 tenants-at-will through the so-called "Chandos Clause", and the allied Whig decision not to disenfranchise those 40s. freeholders

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ D/Lo/C86(16), Durham to Londonderry, 22nd November 1830.

whose qualification derived from urban property.²⁷⁹ For North Durham, the latter was of far greater consequence than the former. Although Lord Durham greatly regretted the "unfortunate" inclusion of the tenants-at-will,²⁸⁰ and other local Whigs were to be surprised at how many there actually were in the county,²⁸¹ "Chandos clause" voters were always heavily outnumbered by the freeholders, in 1832 amounting to under 20% of the electorate, compared to the 73% who were freeholders (see Figure 2.2).²⁸² In most English counties after 1832, £50 occupiers were in a decided minority,²⁸³ but North Durham was one of the most extreme examples of freeholder predominance. Copyholders and leaseholders were enfranchised in small numbers: around 5% of the electorate qualified in

²⁷⁹ D.C.Moore, "Concession or Cure: The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act", in *Historical Journal*, IX (1966), pp39-59; Hennock and Moore, "Sociological Premises", pp321-327; Phillips, "Many Faces of Reform", pp115-135; Milton-Smith, "Earl Grey's Cabinet and the Objects of Parliamentary Reform", pp55-74; Wasson, "Spirit of Reform", pp164-174.

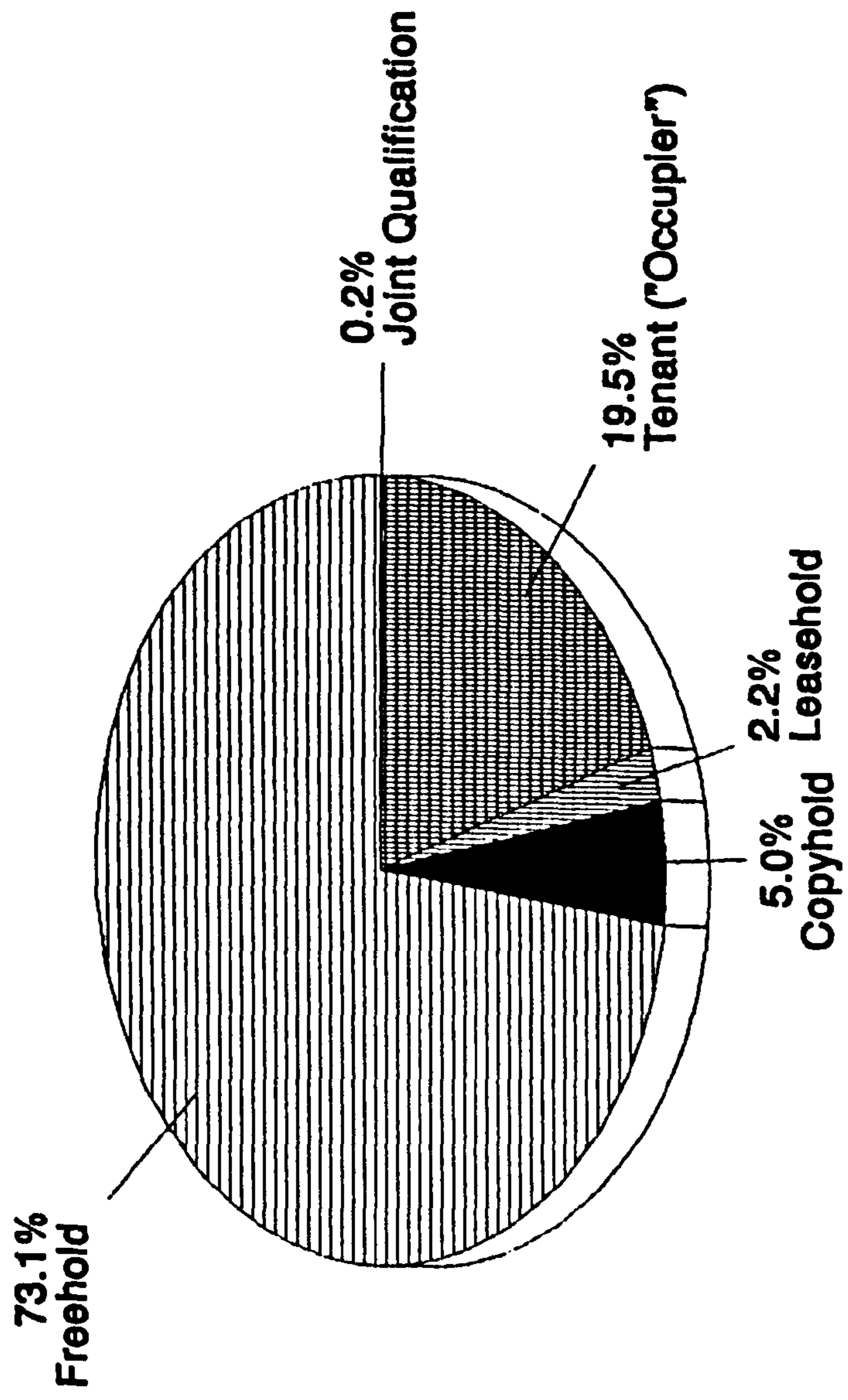
²⁸⁰ 3 Hansard 7, p940; S.J.Reid, *Life and Letters of the First Earl of Durham* (London 1906), p406.

²⁸¹ Losh to Brougham, 1st December 1832, in Hughes, *Diaries of James Losh*, ii.219; the radical *Tyne Mercury* supported the Chandos Clause as bringing more voters into the electorate: eg. 23rd August 1831.

²⁸² North Durham Pollbook 1832; P.P. 1837-8 (329). XLIV.558 gives a tenant percentage of 16.9% in the 1837 election.

²⁸³ Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp93-4; Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, pp78-83; K.Hoppen, "The Franchise and Electoral Politics in England and Ireland 1832-1885", in *History*, 70 (1985), pp202-217; J.R.Fisher, "The Tory Revival of the 1830s: An Uncontested Election in South Nottinghamshire", in *Midland History*, 6 (1981), pp95-108.

**Figure 2.2 : North Durham Franchises,
1832 Election**



**1832 North Durham Pollbook
N = 3,841**

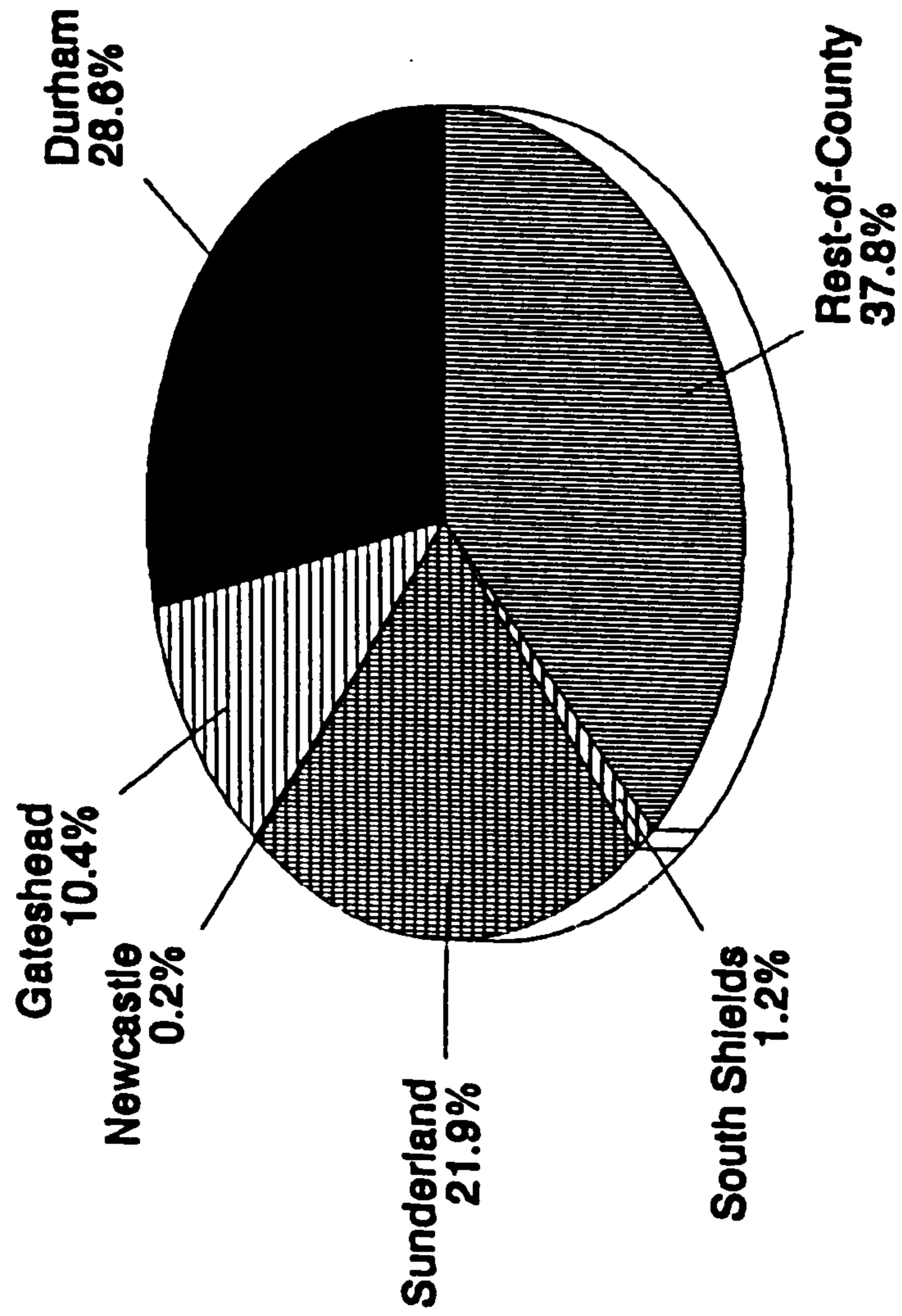
respect of a copyhold, somewhere under 3% for a leasehold.²⁸⁴

The implications of this franchise structure were magnified by the distribution of the freeholders. The retention of the county franchise by the "urban freeholders" was intended by the Whigs to act as a counterweight to what they regarded as landlord-dependent tenants.²⁸⁵ Broadly speaking, there were three ways that urban property could generate a county qualification: if the property was worth more than 40s., but less than £10 and therefore did not confer a borough vote; if the owner did not satisfy the residence requirements for a £10 borough vote; or if the property was in a town which was not itself a parliamentary borough. In North Durham, urban freeholders abounded, and their ratio to tenants was one of the highest in the country. Nossiter has them as constituting half of the electorate by 1865; in 1852, according to parliamentary figures, only Middlesex, South Lancashire and South Northumberland had higher percentages of electors registered for

²⁸⁴ Leaseholds nationally were tending to be replaced by tenancies-at-will: F.M.L.Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London 1963), pp228-9; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp241-2.

²⁸⁵ Hennock and Moore, "Sociological Premises", *passim*; Brock, *Great Reform Act*, pp223-30; D.C.Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System* (Hassocks 1976), pp137-189.

**Figure 2.3 : Geographic Distribution of
North Durham Voters, 1832 Election**



**North Durham Pollbook 1832
N-3841**

property within parliamentary boroughs.²⁸⁶ Working from the pollbook for the 1832 North Durham contest, the percentage of voters whose qualifying property was situated within the towns (all parliamentary boroughs) of Durham City, Sunderland, Gateshead and South Shields was over 62%: in other words, less than 40% of those voting were not "urban" voters (see Figure 2.3). That the freeholders should demonstrate such an urban concentration reflects real geographic demography. The combined population of the four parliamentary boroughs, at over 86,000, comprised well over half of the population of the whole Northern division.²⁸⁷ The urban voters were overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, freeholders. Although over half of the copyholders in the 1832 electorate were qualified in respect of property in Durham City, of the 840 Sunderland and over 400 Gateshead county voters, almost all were freeholders.²⁸⁸

Whether or not these voters were able to be more independent in their politics will be a focus for analysis: although they were potentially more distant from rural landed influences, the particular nature of influence in North Durham (in that where the most powerful were concerned, the influence was as likely to

²⁸⁶ Nossiter, *Influence*, pp58-60; Hennock, "Sociological Premises", p323.

²⁸⁷ P.P. 1831-2 (141) XXXVIII.265.

²⁸⁸ See below, Table 7.11, for a franchise breakdown of the "urban" voters.

be industrially-based as it was to be agricultural) may suggest that, while influences on urban freeholders might have been different, they were not non-existent. The thousand-plus county voters in Durham City, for example, many of whom cannot have been far from the bottom of the economic ladder,²⁸⁹ were naturally subject to similar voting influences as were the borough voters, some of whose number they also were. The poorest of the freeholders - the pitmen and labourers - were to be especially prone to accusations of involvement in market-style politics.²⁹⁰

Conversely, the great majority - nearly three-quarters - of occupiers (tenants-at-will) were not qualified for urban property. As occupations are not recorded in the county pollbooks, it is difficult to say precisely who these voters were; however, the majority of the occupier qualifications recorded in 1832 are for land tenancies, although there are also tenancies for mills and collieries, and one for a salt works.²⁹¹ Contemporary assumptions that tenants-at-will would all be farmers were therefore not wholly accurate,²⁹² but farmers and others primarily involved in agriculture were certainly strongly represented.

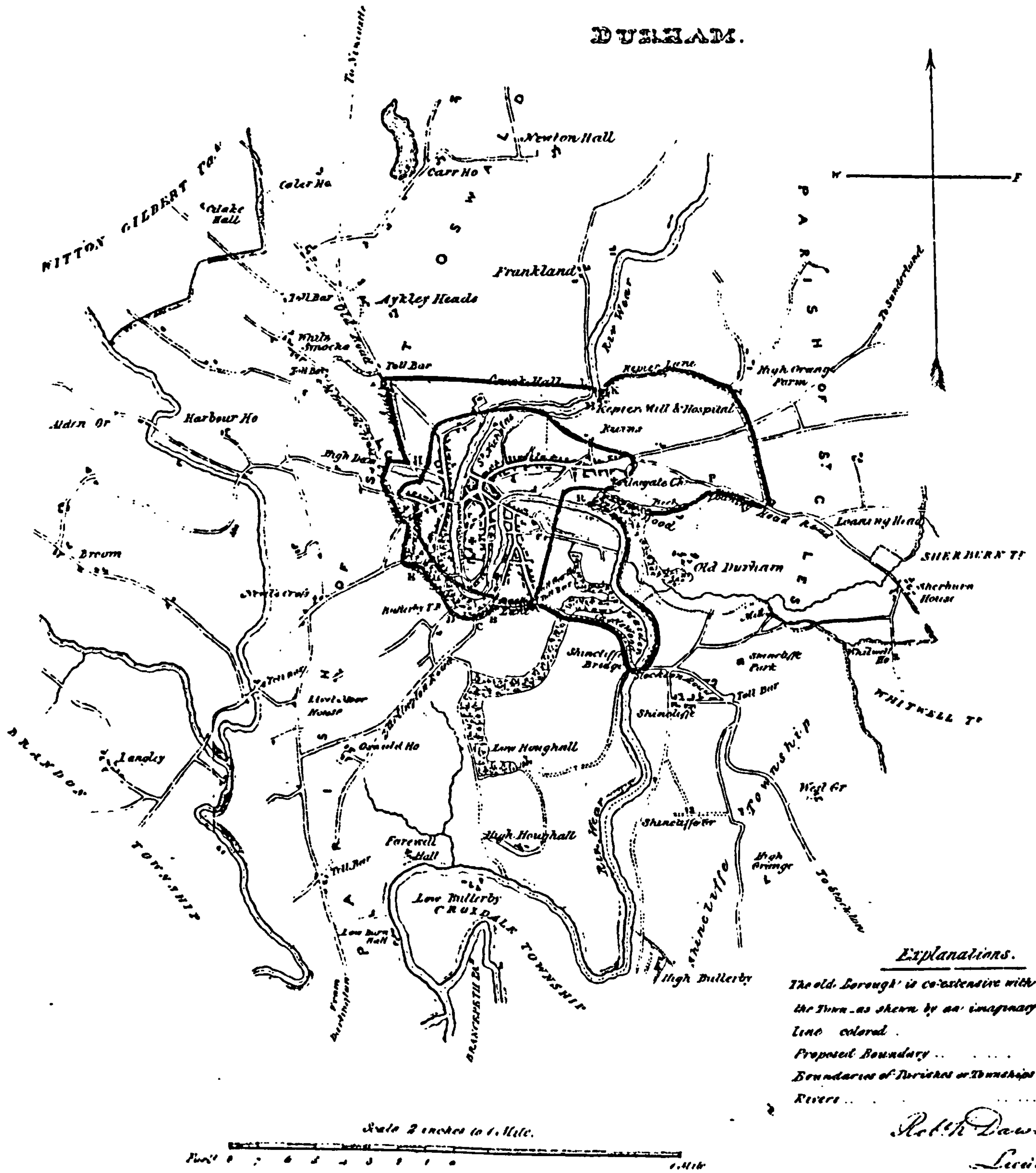
²⁸⁹ See Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p91, for discussion of the lowness of the 40s. qualification.

²⁹⁰ See, for example, Lambton Mss., Morton to Durham, 30th October 1836.

²⁹¹ North Durham Pollbook 1832; Prest, *Politics in the Age of Cobden*, p30.

²⁹² Eg. Tyne Mercury, 7th June 1831.

DURHAM.



MAP 4 : Extension of Durham City Borough Boudary, 1832. P.P. 1831-2 (141) XXXVIII.269

For Durham City, the continuation of the resident freeman franchise, thanks to some extent to Trevor, left an electorate that was not as radically changed as had at one time looked possible, but which was still substantially restructured.²⁹³ Somewhere between 550 and 600 non-resident freemen were no longer eligible to vote, and were replaced by a body of just over 300 £10 householders at the first registration in the autumn of 1832.²⁹⁴ Of the 285 householders who polled for the first time in 1832, one in three belonged to Category I ("Gentleman and Professionals") and only one in four to Category IV ("Craft"), compared to the freemen figures of 10% and 60% respectively, justifying Durham and the Whigs' confidence that they would form a respectable and property-minded constituency.²⁹⁵ The electoral registers reveal how autonomous the two franchise groups were in Durham: even by 1837 the overlap between them amounted to only a dozen individuals, all of whom voted as freemen.²⁹⁶ Whether or not there was also as stark a distinction between the behavioural expectations of the two groups when voting will be examined in Chapter 7.

²⁹³ For the altered borough boundary, see Map 4.

²⁹⁴ P.P. 1833 (189) XXVII.129; P.P. 1832-2 (141) XXXVIII.269.

²⁹⁵ Speeches of the Earl of Durham, p216; Tyne Mercury, 7th June 1831; Nossiter, Elections and Political Behaviour, p310.

²⁹⁶ Dul/56/2 and 3, Electoral Registers, 1834-5 and 1836-7 (C.R.O.); Durham City Pollbooks 1832, 1835 and 1837. See Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3 :
THE LANGUAGE OF INDEPENDENCE IN GUILDFORD, 1832 - 1841

After the short hiatus of the Reform crisis, Charles Baring Wall was returned as one of Guildford's representatives in December 1832, a position he was to occupy for the next fifteen years.¹ That Wall remained a "popular favourite" of the electorate during a period which saw him twice effect a change of party allegiance - and saw the scandal of a nationally-publicized court case in 1833 in which he was tried, and acquitted, of "indecentcy with a Policeman"² - may suggest that personality politics was far from a spent force in a post-Reform small borough. Guildford, however, may be alternatively viewed as one of the constituencies for which Reform presaged a period characterized by the gradual (and sometimes reluctant) assimilation of new political techniques, alongside an older political culture which respected, above all things, the notion of the independence of both the individual and the political community; Wall's success throughout the

¹ M.Stenton, *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* (Hassocks 1976), p395; F.Boase, *Modern British Biography* (London 1965), p1156.

² *Surrey Standard*, 29th July 1837; *The Times*, 10th and 13th May 1833; L.Strachey and R.Fulford (eds.), *The Greville Memoirs* (London 1938), Vol. II, p364.

1830s was his ability to appear the champion of traditional political values without confronting the growing sense of the electorate by 1841 that they were operating within a political structure that was bounded by the language of party loyalty.

The 1832 election, from the paucity of electoral material which has survived, would appear to have been an unremarkable contest, with no predominant issue, or indeed any great public interest, in comparison to that of 1831. Wall, bottom of the poll as an opponent of the Reform Bill a year and a half earlier, attracted enough cross-party votes in combination with James Mangles to take Norton's seat (see Table 3.1).³

Table 3.1 : Voting, Guildford, 1832

	Votes	(%)
Norton	8	2.6
Mangles	9	3.0
Wall	32	10.6
Mangles/Wall	124	40.9
Norton/Wall	24	7.9
Norton/Mangles	106	35.0
N=303		

Electioneering, after the relative unquiet of 1831, was restrained, with a discernible absence of partisan fervour. Mangles was careful to avow his "sincere attachment to our happy constitution", whilst promising to support "such measures only, as will

³ BR/PAR/2/7a-c, Mss. Pollbooks, Guildford 1832 (G.M.R.); M. Stenton and J. Vincent (eds.), *McCalmont's Parliamentary Pollbook of All Elections, 1832-1918* (Brighton 1971), gives Mangles 60 too many votes; *A Handbook to Guildford and its Environs* (Gardner and Stent (publishers), Guildford 1859), p25.

conduce to the prosperity of the Country at large, and of this independent borough in particular".⁴ Wall, thanking electors for his return, noted that his canvass had shown that his opinions and those of the voters were "in unison on all essential points", without specifying which points had been under discussion.⁵

Pre-Reform methods of electoral management proved in 1832 and in 1835 more than adequate for dealing with an electorate which, although doubled in size since the last "unreformed" contest, remained small enough for an intimate knowledge of individual voters. A canvasser for Wall working from a list of those qualified to vote, printed immediately after the first registration, was able to ascertain voting intentions - along with information about illnesses and probable absences from home on polling day - so precisely as to be able to predict, from an electorate of 342, Mangles' and Norton's support to within three or four votes.⁶

Wall repeated his success in 1835, but under strained circumstances. Although his acquittal in 1833 had been celebrated in Guildford with a public dinner at which over a hundred electors offered Wall their "congratulations on his restoration to society", there

⁴ G.3202 (handbill), 12th December 1832 (G.M.R.).

⁵ PF/GFD/99 (handbill), 12th December 1832 (S.A.S.).

⁶ Alphabetical List of Voters for the Borough of Guildford (Guildford 1832) SP.324 G.L. (with handwritten canvassers' notes).

was suspicion that "nobody can be plunged into such a mire without smelling of it more or less ever after". Certainly Wall's opponents in 1835 attempted to exploit the affair as far as was possible by arguing that, even though not legally guilty, he had shown a lack of wisdom and discretion that should disqualify him from public office.⁷ Wall's statements on the case, issued via his uncle, Sir Thomas Baring, had contained discrepancies which were fully publicized by the Radicals. Voters were reminded of "those crimes for which God burn'd an ancient city", and asked whether they, if they voted for Wall, would "like to be pointed at as a companion and abettor of beastliness": some of the election literature in this vein was so scurrilous that it could not be printed in Guildford, and was therefore brought down from London.⁸ Wall maintained an absolute silence on the matter during his campaign, pointedly referring to the "public grounds" of his platform - specifically, his support for Peel's manifesto of preserving the institutions of State and Church by "the expedient removing of abuses"⁹ - but

⁷ County Chronicle, 4th June 1833; Greville Memoirs, Vol. II, p364; G.3229 (handbill), 31st December 1834 (G.M.R.); The Times, 6th January 1835, reported that "... every means were used ... to direct attention to the circumstances in which he [Wall] has been involved ...".

⁸ G.3246, G.3261, G.3239, G.3229 (handbills), n.d. (all 1832, and printed in Whitechapel) (G.M.R.); R.Sykes, Politics and Electoral Behaviour in Guildford and West Surrey, 1790-1886 (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Surrey 1975), pp327-8.

⁹ G.3252 (handbill), 13th December 1834 (G.M.R.).

that the outcome of the election was of vital importance to him both privately and publicly was in little doubt. A refusal of the Guildford electorate to restate their confidence in him, recognised one of Wall's critics at the nominations, would instantly render him "a complete outcast in society".¹⁰

There had been some competition to secure the second Liberal candidacy to Mangles'. A Whig landowner, C.B. Sheridan, offered his services to "his fellow Labourers in the cause of Reform", but only because "not one reformer with local claims or influence could be found for the post": he proved willing to stand down when another Liberal, Robert Austen, came forward, apparently with the backing of a large number of Guildford voters, including prominent Radicals.¹¹ Austen presented himself as a consistent reformer, warning voters not to be taken in by the Tories' new guise as "no longer enemies of judicious reform".¹² In Surrey's county town, however, he made it clear that his interpretation of "the welfare of our Country" was directly related to the condition of the

¹⁰ Morning Chronicle, 6th January 1835; The Times, 6th January 1835.

¹¹ G.3251, G.3227, G.3262 (handbills), 15th and 16th December 1834 (G.M.R.); A Col. J.B.Delap also made it known that he was willing to stand if needed, G.3243 (handbill), 26th December 1834 (G.M.R.); The Times, 6th January 1835.

¹² G.3248 (handbill), 22nd December 1834 (G.M.R.).

agricultural community, which after three abundant harvests was suffering the effects of low prices.¹³

Discussion of agricultural protection was minimal, however, and other issues too received only passing mention from all three candidates. Austen's support for "liberal principles and measures" therefore did not distinguish him ideologically with any clarity from Wall, who, though aligning himself with Peel's government, gave as one of the cornerstones of his politics "the Liberties of the People - and your own local interests".¹⁴ Mangles too was reported to have deliberately down-played his reformism in his canvass, and stressed his attachment to "our Glorious Constitution and the Union of Church and State".¹⁵ More controversial issues, as distinct from the formulaic phraseology of support for established institutions which all three candidates employed, were noticeably few and far between.

Mangles was rewarded for his apparent moderation with an increased share of the poll, which he headed

¹³ For the preoccupation of West Surrey elections with agricultural matters, see (eg.) G.3295 (handbill), n.d. (West Surrey election, 1832): "Manufacturers of England! You are but one in five ..."; G.3200 (handbill), 12th September 1832; G.3214 (handbill), 3rd January 1835 (all G.M.R.).

¹⁴ G.3249 (handbill), 9th January 1835 (G.M.R.); County Chronicle, 6th January 1835.

¹⁵ G.28A (petition), 10th April 1835 (G.M.R.).

(see Table 3.2), picking up votes split on to both Wall and Austen.¹⁶

Table 3.2 : Voting, Guildford, 1835

	Votes	(%)
Austen	2	0.6
Mangles	6	1.8
Wall	24	7.1
Mangles/Austen	116	34.3
Wall/Austen	13	3.8
Wall/Mangles	177	52.4
N=338		

For the first time, there had been no Norton family candidate, and it may be inferred that this break with tradition represented another step taken away from influence politics. The borough, however, was proving resistant to the incursion of party idiom, and clung, electorate and M.P.s alike, to the watchword of "independence" as conveying a mutual respect and a joint defence against outside interference, founded on an historical notion of political liberty and a local, flexible, self-determination.¹⁷ Social and organizational manifestations of partisanship (in the

¹⁶ BR/PAR/2/8, Mss. Pollbook, Guildford 1835 (also A Correct Account of the Poll at the Election for the Borough of Guildford ... 1835 (Guildford 1835), SP.337 G.L.

¹⁷ D.E.D.Beales, "Parliamentary Parties and the "Independent Member" 1810-1860", in R.Robson (ed.), Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain (London 1967), pp1-19; J.A.Phillips, Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters and Straights (Guildford 1982); F.O'Gorman, Voters, Patrons and Parties (Oxford 1989), pp259-285. See J.Vernon, Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture and Communication 1808-1868 (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester 1991), Chapter 4, for the local persistence after 1832 of the creed of "independence".

sense of strict party allegiance) in Guildford after 1832 and before 1841 are, at least in comparison to Leicester and Durham, rare. Radical critics of Wall in 1835 specifically denied that they were acting "from party motives".¹⁸ There was no established party organization for the borough until December 1836, when a Conservative Association was founded, but not without a considerable reluctance and a perceived need to justify the move. The Association's first Chairman, J.P. Shrubbs, deplored the fact that the country was being divided into factions, and claimed that the aims of the new body were entirely defensive, and necessary because of the activity of a few Radicals at the previous year's registration. Although the Association soon claimed the support of two hundred borough voters, there was obvious discomfort with the party label. Thomas Williams, a Committee member, summed up their unease:

He said he was an old-fashioned English tradesman, who wished to see all classes happy; and it appeared to him that first with one new political nostrum, and then another, and as matters were now working, they were likely to be all set by the ears ...¹⁹

Conservative suspicion of party organization was also evident in county politics, the Surrey Standard throughout 1835 decrying "the total want of system displayed by Conservatives" in Surrey in the face of Radical activity, especially in Lambeth and Godalming:

¹⁸ The Times, 6th January 1835.

¹⁹ Surrey Standard, 3rd September and 16th December 1836.

an organization (The West Surrey Conservative Association) was established in early 1836.²⁰

The natural strength of Conservatism in the town had hitherto been a barrier to the excesses of party fervour, and there was resentment that a small number of Radicals could disturb the relative tranquillity of political feeling. Partisanship had early in 1835 been introduced into the Mechanics' Institute by a handful of men who had managed to engineer the rejection of Wall's application for membership.²¹ The Radicals had also been spurred by municipal reform to challenge Tory ascendancy in borough government, on the basis that "no Private Political Party has a right to govern this Town exclusively".²² They were, however, unsuccessful. There were nine Liberals to thirty Conservatives on the unreformed Corporation; at the first Town Council elections, only two non-Tories survived, and both of the Dissenters who had previously been on the Corporation lost their seats,²³ a marked demonstration

²⁰ Sykes, *Politics and Electoral Behaviour*, pp25-256; *Surrey Standard*, 7th and 21st March, 23rd May, 26th December 1835, 9th January 1836.

²¹ *Surrey Standard*, 7th March 1835; *County Herald*, 13th June 1835.

²² PF/GFD/159 (handbill), 19th December 1835 (S.A.S.); Despite its Tory-Anglican bias, Guildford's Corporation had been remarkably free of political interference. As the *Municipal Corporations Report* revealed, only six honorary freemen had been created in thirty years. P.P. 1835 (116) XXVI.799-806; BR/BUR/2, *Freemens' Book*, List of Admissions 1681-1838; BR/BUR/3, *Freemens' Roll* (both G.M.R.).

²³ PF/GFD/157, 158, 160, 161, 164, 170, 171 (handbills), December 1835-January 1836 (S.A.S.).

of the weight of Conservative sentiment in the borough. The partisanship of these elections was also played down, the Surrey Standard magnanimously declaring that the two Liberal Councillors were "of such respectability that no objection is felt".²⁴ This pattern of Conservative supremacy on the Town Council was set for the rest of the century; there were to be only two Liberal Mayors in the next fifty years.²⁵ Local government reflected a more general state of affairs in Guildford's socio-politics. As one future Mayor, who had first come to Guildford in 1832, later explained:

I had been only a short time in the town when I learned that to be respectable or prosperous - or to be anything at all, one must needs be Conservative or Tory as then more properly called, and I soon discovered that the ruling power of the town was entirely that way ...²⁶

That a portion of the electorate felt strongly about the politics of "faction" was demonstrated soon after the 1835 election, when Mangles' voting in the House of Commons against the Conservative government drew heavy criticism, and calls for his resignation, from those who had been convinced of his intention to

²⁴ Surrey Standard, 2nd January 1836.

²⁵ Handbook to Guildford (Gardner and Stent, publishers), pp17-21.

²⁶ H. Peak, *Recollections and Activities as Mayor of Guildford* (Mss., 16 Vols.), Vol. E, f.402 (G.L.).

support "Measures and not Men".²⁷ The fifty-five voters, led by the Rev. Henry Beloe, who signed a petition calling for him to step down were Conservative voters claiming to be disillusioned at Mangles' failure to support Peel's government, and especially at his votes for liberal religious principles, but their grievances were couched in strong anti-party terms:

... it is obvious to us and to all the World
 ... You make Party and Faction your only
 guide. You do not hesitate to blind your
 judgement, and to stand fast by "Men"
 regardless of "Measures", although these men
 shall be the declared Enemies of the Church
 of England ...

The petitioners were careful to state, however, that it was not their policy "to fetter Representatives with pledges and it has ever been far from our desire that your judgement should be on every occasion submitted to the constituency which you represent ..."; their action was justified, they felt, by Mangles having voluntarily given pledges during his canvass in order to gain the support of moderate Conservatives.²⁸ Anti-Catholic feeling - a recurrent feature in Guildford politics²⁹ - was undoubtedly another factor. Mangles was the recipient of Anglican vilification for his "alliance, offensive and defensive, with the demagogue

²⁷ G.3262, "Copy of a Letter In Answer to an Address Presented to J.Mangles, Esq., signed by Messrs. Beloe and others, calling upon him to resign the Representation of the Borough of Guildford", 14th April 1836 (G.M.R.); Surrey Standard, 28th March 1835.

²⁸ G.28A (petition), 10th April 1835 (G.M.R.).

²⁹ A Protestant Association was founded in May 1835, Surrey Standard, 20th May and 17th June 1835.

O'Connell".³⁰ He replied with a detailed and measured defence of the votes he had given against the Sabbath Observance Bill (he thought it was directed too exclusively against the lives of the middle and working classes) and for Russell's Irish Church proposals (because the education clauses promised to show Catholics "their gross and bigoted errors ... thereby making many converts to our Established Church"), and his reasons generally for not supporting Peel:

I was ... determined to support LIBERAL MEASURES from whatever party they might emanate; but when I found the existing Government was not disposed to grant a Charter to the London University, or reduce the Standing Army ... I could not vote for them.³¹

Nearly a hundred and fifty voters put their names to a counter-petition to Beloe's, thanking Mangles for his "upright, conscientious, and independent votes", but despite Mangles' appending his name to a petition to the King for support of the Established Church,³² the trust of many Conservative voters that they might safely split on him was severed.

Ironically, hostility to Mangles' supposed partisanship ensured that party issues were more prominent in the 1837 election than they had been since 1831. With the Conservative Association feeling that

³⁰ C.B.Wall, *Thoughts on Parliamentary Independence* (Guildford 1839), p20; PF/GFD/100 (handbill), n.d. (1835) (S.A.S.).

³¹ G.3262 (handbill), 14th April 1836; *Surrey Standard*, 18th and 25th February 1835.

³² *Surrey Standard*, 16th May 1835.

"Guildford has almost not been represented", since Mangles' and Wall's votes (for example on tithes, the Poor Law, the Ballot, and the abolition of Church Rates³³) cancelled each other out, a requisition was sent in early 1837 to the Hon. James Yorke Scarlett, the second son of Lord Abinger, to stand as the second Conservative candidate at a future election.³⁴

Scarlett's first address to Guildford's voters after dissolution set the tone of his campaign: "Let our cry be, CHURCH and STATE and QUEEN and the good old BRITISH CONSTITUTION".³⁵

Wall had, at a Conservative dinner in Guildford in the previous year, restated his commitment to Conservatism, but proved more moderate than Scarlett during canvassing, claiming that he sought re-election "by the common consent of all Liberal Conservatives and Moderate Reformers".³⁶ The Radicals took some heart from this, despite their pique at the apparent

³³ Surrey Standard, 18th March 1837; See, eg., 3 Hansard 38, pp1073-1078 (25th May 1837, division on Church Rates), 3 Hansard 37, pp67-71 (7th March 1837, division on Ballot).

³⁴ G.3270 (handbill), 12th January 1837; Surrey Standard, 18th and 25th March 1837; Stenton, Who's Who, p342. Scarlett was a soldier, and was to lead the heavy cavalry brigade in the Crimea; Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XVII, pp892-893; his father defended Wall at his trial in 1833: The Times, 7th May 1833; his brother Robert was Chairman of West Surrey Conservative Association: County Herald, 9th January 1836.

³⁵ G.3273 (Poster), 12th July 1837. See also G.3284 and G.3288 (handbills), 17th March and 26th July 1837 (G.M.R.).

³⁶ Surrey Standard, 6th February 1836; G.3275 (handbill), 13th July 1837 (G.M.R.).

the Poor and delusive to the rich".⁴⁰ Despite its relative prosperity, Guildford was not without poverty, especially of the agricultural variety. In 1832, the numbers requiring assistance had been assessed at 140 families in Holy Trinity parish, 177 families in St. Mary's, and 148 families in St. Nicholas.⁴¹ After an incident in 1835 in Godalming workhouse (which fell within the Guildford Union), in which twenty-seven male inmates had knocked down a partition separating them from their wives and children and had been prosecuted over the damage, local Tories had made much of Whig cruelty to the poor, and returned to the theme in 1837. Guildford Conservatives linked Mangles to "The Godalming Radical Influence", arguing that he promoted "the interests of Godalming, even to the prejudice of this Town".⁴²

Another local issue which impinged on the 1837 campaigns was the so-called "Barrack Field's Job" of the previous year. William Elkins, a brewer and one of the most senior Conservatives in the borough, had been threatened with the loss of his government lease of a parcel of land known as "Barrack Field". Having been promised the renewal of the twenty-one year lease,

⁴⁰ PF/GFD/106 (handbill), 26th June 1837 (S.A.S.).

⁴¹ County Herald, 7th January 1832; D.A.Baugh, "The Cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834", in Economic History Review, XXVIII (1975), pp50-68.

⁴² G.3282 and G.3272 (handbills), 19th July 1837 (G.M.R.). The Godalming Radicals in turn blamed "the Guildford Influence" for the fact that the men had been prosecuted.

unless the land was required for "public service", Elkins had been astounded to find it up for tender and eventually awarded to three other Guildford men of business - a Radical and two Whigs. He considered it (as did many others) due to political jobbery in the light of his consistent anti-Mangles voting, and threatened legal action, at which point the government backed down. The literature which described the affair to electors in 1837 constituted a new departure for Guildford electioneering, in the closeness of its argument and the extent to which Mangles was identified with the actions of the government.⁴³ Radical attempts, in this context, to return to the anti-Wall propaganda of the type seen in the last election were probably, although vicious, counterproductive, allowing the Conservatives to accuse them of "utter weakness of principle".⁴⁴

Mangles' main defence against the criticisms being made on him took the form of an attack on the weaker of his two opponents: Scarlett would not vote for the repeal of the Poor Law, his father had opposed the original enfranchisement of the ten pound householders (whose support Mangles was particularly

⁴³ PF/GFD/104 (Poster), 31st March 1837 (S.A.S.); G.3463 (poem), n.d. (1837).

⁴⁴ PF/GFD/110 (handbill), n.d. (1837); G.3463 (poem), n.d. (1837), part of which read "Will Scarlett such a recreant embrace, and wed himself to this, so foul disgrace?". For some reason, the Surrey Standard took to praising Scarlett's "manly addresses" and describing the Guildford Conservatives as "fighting the good fight manfully", eg. 25th March and 29th July 1837.

courting in this election), and since he was not a local man, would not match Mangles' spending and charity donations in Guildford. In fact, electors were asked "would you ever see him, except when he comes to ask favors at your hands?".⁴⁵ Mangles alleged that Scarlett's candidacy demonstrated the workings of a Conservative clique, and tried to raise indignation against the attempt to compromise the borough's independence:

There are combined against me a few families in your borough - They have before had the credit of returning one member - they are now endeavouring to return two ...⁴⁶

Mangles claimed to have collected enough promises to assure him of re-election, but in fact came third in the poll, by a sizeable margin (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 : Voting, Guildford, 1837

	Votes	(%)
Scarlett	1	0.3
Wall	6	1.7
Mangles	94	26.9
Wall/Scarlett	185	52.8
Mangles/Scarlett	3	0.9
Mangles/Wall	61	17.4
N=350		

Wall and Scarlett's joint victory was taken by the Conservatives, on the evidence of the extremely low level of Conservative plumping (less than 0.2% of all voting combinations), to be a "party ticket" success, their conclusion of Mangles being that "it was the

⁴⁵ G.3271 (handbill), n.d. (1837) (G.M.R.).

⁴⁶ G.3283 (handbill), n.d. (1837) (G.M.R.).

principles rather than the man which sustained defeat",⁴⁷ but the truth was that, despite Wall's espousal of the Conservative party since 1831, the ideological contrast between the two Conservatives had been noticeably greater than that between Wall and Mangles, despite the Conservatives' efforts to magnify Mangles' reformist principles. The continued Wall/Mangles tactical split, which constituted nearly 40% of Mangles' vote and was the choice of nearly one in six voters, was the natural result. Scarlett's blustering against reforms and reformers of all descriptions occupied an extreme position at one end of the spectrum of Conservative thought, a considerable philosophical distance from Wall's appeal to the "union of interests" existing between moderate and independent men, with its emphasis on consensus and its receptiveness to moderate reforms.⁴⁸ Within two years, Wall was called upon to justify the fluidity of his interpretation of his politics. In party terms, he was transformed between 1837 and 1839 from a Conservative to a Whig; by 1841 he was advocating purely Liberal principles: in fact, as he very ably argued, the step had ideologically been a small one, and entirely consistent with his views (and he believed his constituents') on the nature of political independence. It did, however, bring the whole question of political partisanship to the fore in Guildford, and gave the

⁴⁷ Surrey Standard, 29th July 1837.

⁴⁸ Eg. G.3275 (handbill), 13th July 1837 (G.M.R.)

party framework of the 1841 election a paradoxical construction. Whilst the handling of issues, the changing electoral culture, the state of Westminster politics, and the structure within which the election was fought (in that it was a four-way rather than a three-way contest) all tended towards maximizing the polarization of the electorate into more strictly defined party camps, the election was seen also as a quasi-referendum of the acceptability of Wall's exchanging of party labels.

Wall had declared to the Conservative dinner in Guildford in early 1836 that he, after breaking with the Whigs over Reform, "threw himself into the ranks of Conservatism",⁴⁹ but his enthusiasm for identification with Peel's reconstructed party had not manifested itself in consistent voting in the House of Commons. One study has identified Wall among only seven M.P.s (one per cent of the total) whose voting justified their description as "waverers or unaligned" before the 1837 election, something which might have surprised Guildford's voters.⁵⁰ The very low number of M.P.s who cannot, in the 1835 and 1837 Parliaments, be labelled with certainty as members of either the Whig or Conservative parties from their behaviour in the division lobbies, viewed together with the failure of a

⁴⁹ Surrey Standard, 6th February 1836.

⁵⁰ D.H.Close, "The Formation of a Two Party Alignment in the House of Commons between 1832 and 1841", in English Historical Review, LXXXIV (1969), pp257-277; The Times, 31st August 1837.

number of prominent waverers or party apostates (such as Sir James Graham) to be returned in the 1837 election, highlights the intensity of the party battle after 1835, ascribable to the polarizing nature of the issues involved (chiefly Protection, Ireland, and the Church).⁵¹ Within this hardening ideological conflict, Wall seems to have participated with some unease. His drift back to support for the Whig government - motivated to a significant degree by a personal admiration for and friendship with Lord Melbourne, who he considered had "never ministered to the passions or prejudices of mankind, and ... has always told the people the truth"⁵² - became apparent in 1839 with, in

⁵¹ Beales, "Parliamentary Parties", passim.; W.O.Aydelotte, "Voting Patterns in the British House of Commons in the 1840s", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, V (1962-3), pp134-163; Idem., "Parties and Issues in Early Victorian England", in *Journal of British Studies*, 5 (1965-6), pp95-114; Close, "Formation of a Two Party Alignment", passim.; A.J.Heesom, "'Two Perennial Groups Labelled Whig and Tory': Parties and Party Leaders in Early Victorian England", in *Durham University Journal*, 15 (1973), pp81-94; R.E.McGowen and W.Arnstein, "The Mid-Victorians and the Two-Party System", in *Albion*, II (1979), pp242-258; I.Newbould, "The Emergence of a Two-Party System in England from 1830 to 1841: Roll Call and Reconsideration", in *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, V (1985), pp25-32; Idem., "Whiggery and the Growth of Party, 1830-1841", in *Parliamentary History*, 4 (1985), pp137-156; Idem., *Whiggery and Reform* (London 1990), pp13-24, which argues that rather than being derived from new organizational concepts, the hardened party discipline evident in the Commons, 1835-1841, was due to the temporary phenomenon of political issues. For another caveat, describing the illusory nature of party discipline, see A.Hawkins, "'Parliamentary Government" and Victorian Political Parties, c.1830-1880", in *English Historical Review*, CIV (1989), pp638-669.

⁵² Wall, *Thoughts on Parliamentary Independence*, p12; Melbourne Papers, Box 39, 7, Melbourne to Wall, 8th September 1839.

particular, his vote for the annually-renewable Maynooth grant, against which the "Mayor and Inhabitants of Guildford" had petitioned the House of Commons.⁵³ In answer to calls for his resignation,⁵⁴ Wall issued "Thoughts on Parliamentary Independence", an open letter to the voters of Guildford, in which he made an elegant plea against the encroachments of partisanship. Wall argued that, while others portrayed his behaviour as vacillating, independence was the highest form of political consistency, but he had to acknowledge that it was becoming increasingly unfashionable:

Independence may be a losing game for a Season - it may be held in little estimation in times of party political excitement - but with rational and discerning men it will in the end meet its reward.⁵⁵

Wall blamed the growing pressure on M.P.s to conform to a party description on the new rôles afforded to public opinion and press since 1832 ("public opinion is every thing"⁵⁶). He regarded both as dangerously destabilizing, especially in the changes wrought on the conception of the functions of the Opposition. As a man born and brought up a Whig of the

⁵³ Surrey Standard, 5th February 1839; Sykes, Political and Electoral Behaviour, p294; E.R.Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (London 1968), pp23-51.

⁵⁴ The Times, 20th August 1832; The Standard, 13th September 1839.

⁵⁵ Wall, Thoughts, p4.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p6.

old school,⁵⁷ Wall believed the task of those in opposition to be "to tolerate, conciliate, and win", and it to be their duty, in the interests of political stability and social tranquillity, not to undermine public confidence in the government without having the will or the ability to turn it out.⁵⁸ With "a Parliament of partisans", political antagonism threatened the encouragement of political manifestations of social dissatisfaction.

Wall justified his "non-party" votes on these grounds. Most resented were his votes for Irish reforms, and he admitted that "my principles are in favour of a more liberal system of Irish government than yours".⁵⁹ He claimed to understand and sympathise with Guildford's fear of Catholicism in general and O'Connell in particular; intolerance, however, could only make the situation worse. Wall asked the voters of Guildford to "recollect above all things, that an Administration of resistance is by no means so easily carried on as one of concession", and urged tolerance:

⁵⁷ Surrey Standard, 6th February 1836; P.Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform. Whigs and Liberals, 1830-1852* (Oxford 1990), p100, points to Wall as an example of the pre-1830 anti-party Whigs, concerned with "the natural foundations of social order", as shown by his subscription to the Committee for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1827.

⁵⁸ Wall, *Thoughts*, pp5-7, 23-24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p16; Wall voted with the Whigs, for example, for the Irish Municipal Corporations Bill, 3 Hansard 43, pp652-653, 1070-1075 (11th and 25th June 1839).

On the subject of Catholicism, I would say to you, be not afraid of any man, whatever letter of the alphabet his name begins with.⁶⁰

Wall's conclusion was clearly stated. In the face of Chartism and other evidence that "all deference for authority is gone", all political questions should be ones of compromise, since any early change of government "would advance the question of the Ballot and organic changes of every description, by many years". To Tories, he suggested that a liberal interpretation of the Reform Bill was "the best chance you have of saving yourselves from further and indefinite changes". To all voters, he advocated independent thinking:

... measure not truth by the standards of party - cherish your independence - narrow not the conscience of a state - think for yourselves.⁶¹

Wall's last sentence was a promise to put all of these points to discussion on the hustings. By 1841, any doubt that his sympathies were more in alignment with the government than with the Conservatives had disappeared, the Surrey Standard branding him "a decided deserter".⁶² At a public meeting in Southampton to introduce James Mangles' son Charles to that constituency, Wall was present outlining his

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp18-23.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp26-28.

⁶² Surrey Standard, 22nd May 1840. The Conservative Whip could apparently still include Wall on a list of eight considered "doubtful" in 1840, Beales, "Parliamentary Parties", p9.

opposition to the Corn Laws and to Tory "monopolists ... enemies to cheap bread and sugar", despite the acknowledged fact that his own income was entirely derived from landownership.⁶³ On dissolution, his campaign in Guildford reiterated that the main issue of the election was "the independence of your Borough", and asked electors to support him as "the Friend of the People and the Poor".⁶⁴

Guildford Conservatives faced additional problems to Wall's defection. A year earlier, a leading Tory, William Sparkes, who had been Mayor four times, drowned himself, and it had been subsequently discovered that the Guildford Bank, of which he was the Senior Partner, was in debt to the tune of more than £200,000. The event shook the Conservatives, and was still resounding through local politics a year later, when the start of bankruptcy proceedings coincided with the election.⁶⁵

The second Liberal candidate in 1841 was Ross Donnelly Mangles, another of James Mangles' sons, who had returned from fourteen years spent in Europe and India (where he had served in the Bengal Civil Service)

⁶³ Morning Chronicle, 2nd June 1841. Up to 1839, Wall consistently voted for the retention of the Corn Laws), Thoughts, p16.

⁶⁴ G.6108 (handbill), 16th June 1841 (G.M.R.). Wall reported receiving "a hearty welcome and triumphant success among the less favored classes in your Borough".

⁶⁵ Surrey Standard, 31st October and 14th November 1840; G.3291 (poem), 1841 (G.M.R.); Handbook to Guildford, pp18-19.

to offer himself to Guildford as an out-and-out Free Trader.⁶⁶ Like his father and brother, Ross Donnelly was an ambitious East India Company man,⁶⁷ and also like them, was opposed to taxation which fell disproportionately on "the productive classes".⁶⁸ His campaign made Free Trade the central theme of the election, although it was noticeable that, presumably sensitive to Guildford's agricultural bias, Mangles mentioned corn less frequently in his addresses and election literature than he did other commodities - tobacco, tea, sugar, coffee, timber.⁶⁹ His platform was summarized thus:

I think that we are necessarily better judges than our ancestors could be, of the wants and interests of our own generation; I am not disposed to allow that any body of men is better qualified to govern the educated classes of the country, than those classes are to govern themselves ...⁷⁰

For the first time since 1831, there were four candidates in the field, Scarlett acquiring a Tory

⁶⁶ Stenton, *Who's Who*, p259; Boase, *Modern British Biography*, p718.

⁶⁷ The *Surrey Standard*, 30th January 1841, claimed that Mangles needed to be an M.P. in order to secure a directorship of the East India Company (which he did in 1847).

⁶⁸ G.3293 (handbill), 22nd January 1841 (G.M.R.).

⁶⁹ Eg. PF/GFD/109 (Poster), n.d. (1841) (S.A.S.). For the rôle of the Whig's Free Trade Budget in the 1841 election nationally, see B.Kemp, "The General Election of 1841", in *History*, XXXVII (1952), pp146-157; E.Jaggard, "The 1841 British General Election: A Reconsideration", in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 30 (1984), pp99-114.

⁷⁰ G.3293 (handbill), 22nd January 1841 (G.M.R.).

running-mate in the shape of Henry Currie of West Horsley, a banker.⁷¹ Currie's views were, however, decidedly less ultra than Scarlett's; although he promised he could "never consent to any scheme that has not for its fundamental Arrangement, the Protection of the Agricultural Interest", he described himself as equally opposed to abuses in Church and State, and especially concerned to support any temperate plans "for the improvement and religious Education of the Lower Classes". In an interesting parallel with Wall (and unlike either Scarlett or Mangles), Currie stressed his independent standing: "I seek neither place nor patronage".⁷²

Despite there being thus four distinct ideological positions apparent among the candidates, the election was conducted along discrete party lines. The number of national issues covered in the election literature, and the detail in which they were discussed, was unprecedented. The Whigs were attacked for the National Debt, their misuse of patronage, the Poor Law, the war with China, and the size of the Borough Rate; in turn, the Whigs pointed to the Conservatives' opposition to the grant for national education, their wish to depress the manufacturing interest, the size of the National Debt under the Tory

⁷¹ Stenton, Who's Who, p98.

⁷² G.3292 (handbill), 4th February 1841 (G.M.R.). For Scarlett's manifesto, see PF/GFD/119, 8th June 1841 (S.A.S.).

governments of 1821 to 1831, the cost of the French and American Wars, and their opposition to the emancipation of the slaves.⁷³ The pros and cons of Corn Law repeal were closely argued, Scarlett and Currie insisting that the Whig budget proposals and free trade in general would mean lower wages, and the ruin of agriculture.⁷⁴ The implication throughout the campaign was that there were two pairs of candidates for voters to choose between, and for the first time literature was produced which specifically requested both votes from electors, although none of the candidates spoke in such terms, and Wall went so far as to avoid mentioning the names of either of the parties at any stage of the election.⁷⁵

In returning a pair of Free Traders in 1841 (see Table 3.4), Guildford went against the tendency for small, semi-agricultural boroughs to prefer Conservatives.⁷⁶ In the degree of its partisanship (i.e. in the deployment of its double-votes) the

⁷³ G.3466 and G.3301 (Posters), n.d. (1841) (G.M.R.); PF/GFD/116, n.d. (1841) (S.A.S.); The Times, 8th July 1841.

⁷⁴ PF/GFD/113, 114, 115, 120, 121 (handbills), all June-July 1841 (S.A.S.).

⁷⁵ Eg. G.3301 (handbill), 19th June 1841 and G.3291, n.d. (1841). See J.A.Phillips and C.Wetherell, "The Great Reform Bill of 1832 and the Rise of Partisanship", in *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (1991), pp621-646, p637, for a similar contrast in Shrewsbury in 1837 between what the candidates said and their parties' activities.

⁷⁶ Jaggard, "The 1841 British General Election", pp103-113.

Guildford electorate revealed a keen grasp of the framework within which the candidates had been presented to them, and a willingness, even an eagerness, to conform to it. Plumping amounted to only

Table 3.4 : Voting, Guildford, 1841

	Votes	(%)
Mangles	9	2.2
Scarlett	2	0.5
Wall	2	0.5
Mangles/Currie	5	1.2
Scarlett/Currie	144	35.9
Scarlett/Mangles	19	4.7
Wall/Currie	1	0.2
Wall/Mangles	208	51.8
Wall/Scarlett	11	3.0
N=401		

3% of vote combinations given, and splitting to only 9%, so that nearly nine out of every ten voters chose to cast a wholly partisan vote despite the number of options available in a four-way contest conducted within a double-voting system.⁷⁷ For Guildford, this polarization was new, but there was an underlying irony that returning Wall had also seemed to have registered an appreciation, or at least an acceptance, of his "independence" manifesto.

In fact, pair-wise analysis of Wall's support over the four contests, 1832 to 1841, reveals the extent to which the basis of his constituency shifted over the decade. As the transition tables below (Tables 3.5 to 3.7) demonstrate, the Wall/Mangles votes of 1832 and 1835, although stable over time when there

⁷⁷ See Chapter 6.

was only one Conservative standing (with nearly 90% returning to Wall/Mangles in 1835 (Table 3.5)), were less so once another Conservative was available. With a second Tory (Scarlett) in the field in 1837, not only those who had previously plumped for Wall, but also the bulk (76%) of those who had split on Mangles switched to a Tory double-vote. Only 5% of the Wall/Mangles constituency of 1835 failed to cast a vote of some description for Wall in 1837 (Table 3.6). On the other hand, those Wall/Mangles voters who remained constant

Table 3.5 : Transition of Wall Vote, 1832-1835

1832 Vote:	1835 Vote:				
	W/M	W	W/A	N-W	nv
Wall	10	14	1	0	7
W/M	88	4	1	7	24
W/N	8	0	9	2	5
nv	54	6	2	32	*

(Codes : Wall=Wall plump; W/M=Wall/Mangles; W/N=Wall/Norton; W/A=Wall/Austen; N-W=Non-Wall Vote; nv=No Vote)

Table 3.6 : Transition of Wall Vote, 1835-1837

1835 Vote:	1837 Vote:				
	W/M	W	W/S	N-W	nv
Wall	1	0	17	0	6
W/M	23	3	102	7	41
W/A	4	0	8	0	1
nv	20	25	49	1	*

(Codes : as above, plus W/S=Wall/Scarlett)

in 1837 were, perhaps not surprisingly, largely (80%) still voting Wall/Mangles in 1841, whilst the Tory double-vote of 1837 (Wall/Scarlett) turned against Wall

by a ratio of three to one to remain Conservative voters in 1841.

The election of 1841, therefore, marks a definite change in the nature of Wall's support-base, in line with his party-switch since 1837 and comparable to the transformation in his vote between 1830 and 1831 (see Table 2.1). Whilst the implications of this will be discussed more fully below, as regards voting

Table 3.7 : Transition of Wall Vote, 1837-1841

1837 Vote:	1841 Vote:					
	W/M	W	W/C	W/S	N-W	nv
Wall	4	0	0	0	2	6
W/M	33	0	1	0	7	20
W/S	32	2	0	9	80	64
nv	88	0	0	3	78	*

(Codes : as above, plus W/C=Wall/Currie)

persistence and party identification, these results allow for a tentative first impression that the four-candidate contest of 1841 was more than merely symbolically distinct from previous elections, and did represent a new departure in voter behaviour in Guildford, within which the rôle of new voters and the effect of non-returning voters from the previous contest - who in both cases, as at the three previous contests, appear in significant numbers relative to the size of the electorate - was central.

In 1841, the question of electoral independence had been raised and discussed in Guildford in a form not experienced since 1832. Although it was not

customary in the borough for electors to accompany candidates on their canvasses, Scarlett and Currie had been in 1841 assisted by some of what Wall termed "the great Aristocrats of the Town", and also by William Holme Sumner.⁷⁸ After the election, there were also acrimonious exchanges between Wall's proposer, J.W. Hitch, and Scarlett's seconder, James Stedman, containing counter-allegations that there had been "undue influence" and intimidation attempted.⁷⁹ Moreover, it was reported that the Tories had asked Lord Onslow to mobilize whatever influence he still possessed "by sending his steward with his compliments to certain tradesmen, and wishing them to vote for Scarlett and Currie", and that this conduct had "created a feeling of disgust" amongst the voters.⁸⁰

Although Mangles and Wall greeted the result as a triumph for independence, the Conservatives - who had been considerably surprised to have been defeated - saw other forces at work. Scarlett stated his belief that "the victory we anticipated has been wrung from us by

⁷⁸ See Chapter 2. G.6108 (handbill), 16th June 1841 (G.M.R.); PF/GFD/108 (handbill), n.d. (1841) (S.A.S.), points out that the men canvassing with Currie and Scarlett were the same leading citizens who had rallied around Wall in 1835.

⁷⁹ PF/GFD/213 (Poster), 7th July 1841 (S.A.S.); BR/PAR/4/3(9), "30th June 1841. Notice Required by an Agent of a Candidate to be Read at Polling Booths"; BR/PAR/4/3(8), Minutes of Nomination, 1841 (both G.M.R.).

⁸⁰ Morning Chronicle, 15th June 1842.

means that will not bear inspection".⁸¹ Allegations of bribery had dogged Wall since 1830, lodged by Whig-Radicals for example to explain Mangles' defeat in 1837. Locke King, candidate for East Surrey, in an address to Radicals at Richmond, had condemned Guildford as a "horribly corrupt and dirty place".⁸² Wall had certainly been able to distribute a vast amount of electoral largesse, meeting voters' and non-voters' expectations of treating and employment during election-time, and providing them with the quality of communal entertainment that marked truly successful (in popular as well as political terms) elections: the celebrations following his return in 1832 were still fresh in the mind of one of the participants sixty-five years later.⁸³ Wall in 1832 had set out his attitude to the distribution of money at elections:

Any encouragement I can afford to your trade, any relief I can give to your poor may be called bribery by our opponents, if they so please. Your good sense, I know, will appreciate it ... to evince the deep and heartfelt sense of gratitude I entertain for the many obligations I owe to every class in the Town of Guildford ...⁸⁴

⁸¹ G.3371 (handbill), n.d. (July 1841) (G.M.R.).

⁸² Surrey Standard, 29th July 1837; PF/GFD/96(1), (2) & (3), n.d. (c.1830-1832).

⁸³ J.Mason, Guildford 1897 (Guildford 1897), p16. Large numbers of children were dressed in white to accompany the chairing, each of whom received 7s., a full dinner and "punch", as did the large crowd which also took part. See F.O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780-1860", in Past and Present, 135 (1992), pp79-115, for the social and electoral significance of such events.

⁸⁴ PF/GFD/99 (handbill), n.d. (1832) (S.A.S.).

Both James and Ross Donnelly Mangles appear to have had a particularly robust attitude to the rewarding of voters. James Mangles openly distributed printed "dinner tickets" to his supporters, which were exchangeable either for a place at the celebratory dinner or for an equivalent amount of food.⁸⁵ Ross Donnelly, whose return in 1852 was to be unsuccessfully petitioned against,⁸⁶ was complacent about bribery, acknowledging that in every small borough there were likely to be "between forty and fifty dishonest men who could turn the scale either way", and accusing his fellow M.P.s in 1847 of hypocrisy at appearing shocked whenever a case of bribery was revealed "for they are well aware that such conduct is pursued in almost every small borough".⁸⁷

In Guildford, the survival of a material aspect to electioneering appears as an example of the tenacity of some aspects of an older political culture, and equates well with the unwillingness of other remnants of political tradition - especially the concept and idiom of "independence" - to be completely subsumed by changing ideas as to the mutual relationships between

⁸⁵ G.23 (ticket), n.d. (either 1835 or 1837). A ticket entitled the bearer to "12 lbs. beef; 1 gallon of strong beer; 2 quartern loaves; 3 and a half lbs. of flour; 2 lbs. of suet; 1 lb. of raisins; 1 lb. of currants and two bottles of wine (port or sherry)".

⁸⁶ P.P. 1852-3 (349) XIII.7 ff..

⁸⁷ 3 Hansard 98, p838 (11th May 1847).

voters, candidates and parties.⁸⁸ Wall's movements between parties in the 1830s - away from the Whigs when they represented dangerous factionalization, and away from Peel's Conservatives when they seemed the prime movers in the rush towards a full, and therefore irrational, partisanship - epitomized in extreme form the difficulties experienced by those who were suspicious of "party" but yet had to operate politically within a system that was increasingly tending to party-based definitions of behaviour. It was indicative that, after the 1841 election, *The Times* found it possible to divide the newly-elected M.P.s cleanly into only two categories, Conservatives and Whigs.⁸⁹

Longitudinal analysis of voting patterns may demonstrate the practical impact of this in the voters' reactions. For Guildford, the paradox was that a party-based victory in 1841 for the Liberals stimulated the formation of a permanent local political organization for the Reformers, and not vice versa.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ This is not to down-play either the rôle of partisanship before 1832, or the degree of venality that remained after Reform. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp158-171; J.C.D.Clark, "A General Theory of Party, Opposition, and Government, 1688-1832", in *Historical Journal*, XXIII (1980), pp295-325; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour*, pp73-80.

⁸⁹ Heesom, "Two Perennial Groups", p85.

⁹⁰ PF/GFD/123 (handbill), 19th July 1841 (S.A.S.), Minutes of a meeting which resolved to form the Guildford Reform Association "to support the cause of Moderate and Progressive Reform, with a view to rendering the Institutions of the Country suitable to the wants of the present age".

The establishment of the Guildford Reform Association in late July 1841 in turn sparked the formation of "The Loyal and Constitutional Club of Guildford", a body whose name itself resonated to the more informal echoes of a past political age.⁹¹

⁹¹ The West Surrey Times: Our County Town (Guildford 1889), p.ii.

CHAPTER 4 :
A PARTISAN POLITICAL CULTURE - LEICESTER 1832-1841

The story of the transformation effected in the political balance of power in Leicester in the 1830s has been told, in detail, elsewhere.¹ This chapter aims not to re-run the events of the Liberal-Dissenting triumph over the Tory Anglican Corporation, and the subsequent Liberal hegemony in the town, but to examine the specific interactions between the politics of parliamentary elections and what was happening at other points in the spectrum of municipal political affairs. Parliamentary elections were but one aspect of the practically all-encompassing partisan battles in Leicester in the decade, and shared with other conflicts much of their language, personnel and ideological framework: they did, however, also possess unique features, both of structure and significance. In other words, Leicester conforms to the model described for Victorian cities by Fraser, in which "parliamentary elections did not represent the voters'

¹ Especially in A.T.Patterson's *Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester 1780-1850* (Leicester 1954), R.W.Greaves, *The Corporation of Leicester 1689-1836* (Leicester 1970 edn.), *Victoria County History of Leicestershire*, vol. iv, and (with rather less objectivity, since Searson was Secretary to Leicester Liberal Club) in G.R.Searson, *A Quarter of A Century's Liberalism in Leicester* (Leicester 1850).

total political diet, yet it was generally agreed that the parliamentary election was the cream of the political milk".²

With the passage of the Reform Act, combined with the long-term repercussions of the 1826 election (which included the Corporate Funds Act³), the Liberals⁴ possessed the greater momentum at the 1832 election. The Political Union was superseded by a permanent body, the Reform Society (with William Biggs as its Secretary), whose functions were "attending to the registration of voters, the return of members to Parliament, and a general superintendence and protection of the Liberal Interest".⁵ The Conservatives responded with an organization of their own, deciding not to depend, as hitherto, on the

² D.Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The Structure of Politics in Victorian Cities* (Leicester 1976), pp178-179, and passim.

³ See Chapter 2.

⁴ As Patterson (*Radical Leicester*, p176) points out (and is evident below), the Whig-Radical alliance had by 1832 already begun to refer to itself as "Liberals", the "Liberal Interest", or "liberals". The term "Conservative" appeared in Leicester with the formation of the Conservative Society: see, for example, *Leicester Chronicle*, 8th September 1832.

⁵ W.Biggs, *A Letter to the Leicester Reform Society on the Necessity of a Reformation in the House of Lords* (Leicester 1835), frontispiece; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p196.

electioneering of the Corporation.⁶ The Leicester Conservative Society announced its existence to be for the purposes of

supporting the prerogatives of the Crown, the authorities and independence of the two Houses of Parliament, and the liberties of the people, and for maintaining in their spirit and integrity the established institutions of the Country.⁷

As one Liberal scoffed, the name alone of the Conservative Society "conveys volumes of meaning".⁸

Both parties early appreciated the organizational demands implicit in the new registration procedure,⁹ and fashioned their Societies accordingly. The Conservatives justified their organization defensively, arguing that the Reform Act

⁶ Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, p36. This pattern of the Liberals being first with registration-based organization after 1832 was unusual: in many other constituencies, the Liberals were to be found responding to Conservative initiatives: see N.Gash, "The Organization of the Conservative Party 1832-1846: Part II, The Electoral Organization", in *Parliamentary History*, 2 (1983), pp131-152; I.Newbould, "Whiggery and the Growth of Party 1830-1841", in *Parliamentary History*, 4 (1985), pp137-156; R.E.McGowen and W.Arnstein, "The Mid-Victorians and the Two-Party System", in *Albion*, 11 (1979), pp242-258; R.Stewart, *The Foundation of the Conservative Party 1830-1867* (London 1978), pp130-136.

⁷ *Leicester Journal*, 19th October 1832.

⁸ "A Political Unionist", An Affectionate and Admonitory Letter to John Pinfold Stallard, Esq., Vice-President and Orator of the Leicester Conservative Society (Leicester 1832), p5.

⁹ For the actual procedures involved, see J.Prest, *Politics in the Age of Cobden* (London 1977), pp11-21.

has contrived that no party can hope for success without keeping up, as it were, a system of electioneering all the year round.¹⁰

The first registration saw frenetic activity, both in the revising barristers' court and in the press, as the parties strove hurriedly to inform voters of their new responsibilities. Liberal electors were requested not only to check the freemens' and householders' lists for their own names, but to inform the Reform Society if any individual was entered whose qualification could be challenged.¹¹ All three Biggs brothers - William, John and Joseph - found themselves disqualified because the Tory overseer had deliberately entered their mothers' name in the rate books (to which John Biggs retorted that he "did not much regret the temporary disfranchisement, as the Liberal interest could well afford to lose three votes").¹² Electors of both political hues who had not paid their rates were given the arrears by party agents in order to get them on to the register.¹³

The Liberals, however, had a clear advantage when the election commenced, the sitting members, William

¹⁰ Leicester Journal, 19th October 1832.

¹¹ Leicester Chronicle, 8th September 1832; Leicester Journal, 19th October 1832.

¹² Leicester Chronicle, 3rd November and 15th December 1832; the electoral dangers of having overseers appointed by partisan magistrates were discussed at the 1835 Select Committee inquiry into bribery and corruption: see, for example, P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.135-136.

¹³ Leicester Chronicle, 10th November 1832.

Evans and Wynn Ellis, benefiting from Conservative difficulties in finding a candidate. Their canvassing was extremely thorough, so that by polling day Ellis could claim to have "called upon every resident Elector".¹⁴ The Liberal campaign was, however, hampered, at least potentially, by Evans' refusal to allow the committee to pay his voters. As James Hudson later related:

I was one of [the] deputation sent to tell him he would lose his election without, and he said "very well then, I will lose it ... I will not consent to a single shilling being spent for the purchase of a vote" ...

This difficulty was only overcome by Ellis agreeing to put up all of the funds for the treating tickets.¹⁵

Having approached Sir Charles Hastings unsuccessfully, the Conservatives eventually brought forward only one candidate, Mr. Boughton Leigh of Brownsover, Warwickshire, whose lateness into the field allowed him only a week's canvass. The Conservative campaign was founded on attempts to split Liberal voting, by pointing up that Ellis was significantly more radical in his politics than Evans.¹⁶ There was apparently some hope, at least initially, that the Liberals might be negotiated into a compromise shared representation, as had been common before 1826, in

¹⁴ Leicester Chronicle, 10th November 1832.

¹⁵ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.126.

¹⁶ Leicester Chronicle, 14th December 1832.

order to avoid a contest.¹⁷ In both attempts - to split the candidates, or failing that, the Liberal voters - the Conservatives failed. Leigh did not pick up the votes of significant numbers of moderate Liberals, as the voting figures demonstrated (see Table 4.1). Only just over 150 voters split between Leigh and Evans, amidst polling that was overwhelmingly conducted along party lines.¹⁸ The Liberal double-vote accounted for nearly 54% of all vote combinations.

Table 4.1 : Voting, Leicester 1832

	No.	%
Leigh	1087	39.2
Evans/Ellis	1491	53.7
Liberal plumps	22	0.8
Splits	176	6.3
N=2776		

Perhaps most pertinent was the fact that this was the first contested election since 1768 at which no representative of the Corporation's politics had been returned.¹⁹ The solidarity of the Conservative plumping, however, was impressive.

The Conservatives attributed defeat to the effects of "want of generalship",²⁰ combined with mob violence and corruption. More than somewhat ironically, considering the events of 1826, they claimed that

¹⁷ Leicester Journal, 21st and 28th September 1832.

¹⁸ See Chapter 6; Leicester Pollbook 1832.

¹⁹ The Times, 15th December 1832.

²⁰ Leicester Chronicle, 19th January 1833.

it was reserved for the operation of the Reform Act to introduce practices of avowed bribery and venality into a town like Leicester.²¹

There had certainly been extensive corruption, aided by the new register which allowed for an unprecedented precision in the distribution of money and treating; it was, however, neither particularly novel nor restricted to one party. Examples of "exclusive dealing" by well-off customers and of intimidation by employers were reported on both sides.²² Treating of voters was prolific. The manufacturer James Hudson testified to an 1835 Select Committee, detailing the customs of Leicester elections and making it clear that, after thirty-five years of involvement in elections, he had been "so completely disgusted with the proceedings in 1832 that I determined to have nothing more to do with them".²³ District tickets were distributed to voters at the start of the canvass, which gave "free access to all the public-houses for eating and drinking the whole time", each of the parties having immediately on the commencement of the campaign "opened" a string of

²¹ Leicester Journal, 14th December 1832.

²² Eg. Leicester Chronicle, 30th March 1833; Leicester Journal, 14th December 1832.

²³ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.124 ("Report from the Select Committee Appointed to Consider the Most Effectual Means of Preventing Bribery, Corruption and Intimidation in the Election of Members to Serve in Parliament"). Given Hudson's obvious bitterness and disillusion with electoral politics, some allowance must be made for exaggeration in his testimony: on important points, however, he is corroborated by Joseph Parkes, who also had first-hand experience of Leicester elections.

public houses for the purpose.²⁴ These tickets were thought to be worth from 3s. 6d. to 5s. per day (at a time when the framework knitters' average weekly wage was perhaps seven or eight shillings).²⁵ They did not, however, apparently guarantee electoral loyalty. When the election was concluded, each voter - as long as he had polled the right way - was given a second ticket entitling him to a sum of cash, the exact value having been settled by negotiation (usually on the second day of polling, and determined by the state of the poll): this "head money" could range from 10s. to 30s., often taking the form of a sovereign.²⁶ The non-resident freemen were particularly prone to corrupt practices, partly because their concentration in the villages made them easily identifiable, and partly because of the greater need for parties to organize their conveyance to the poll.²⁷ According to Hudson, the "five, ten or fifteen in a place" were collected as quickly as possible by the parties into a public house,

²⁴ Ibid., pp125-127, 130-131.

²⁵ P.P. 1833 (450) XX.535; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p283; Thomas Cooper suggested that knitters in 1841 were living on as little as 4s. 6d. per week: T.Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written By Himself* (London 1874), pp138-139.

²⁶ Ibid., pp89 (Joseph Parkes' testimony), 125-126, 128.

²⁷ The voting behaviour of the non-resident freemen is discussed in Chapter 7.

where they are generally locked up ... during the canvass till the polling, and then they are corned pretty well; they are put into pretty good condition, have a good meal given them ... and carriages are sent from Leicester to bring them over to the hustings.²⁸

Hudson concluded that there were, of all the electors,

at least 600 marketable; if any gentleman wishes to represent Leicester, if he will give me a purse I will engage to return him, but I will not promise that he shall sit quietly afterwards.

There were, Hudson thought, also "400 or 500 that, though they make a boast of voting for their party, yet expect to be paid on the same terms as those 600 who made their bargain".²⁹

The Conservatives claimed in 1832 that Leigh's supporters, "all of whom were gentlemen and men of respectability" (compared to the "miserable ragamuffins" who had voted for Evans and Ellis)³⁰ had been intimidated from polling by the hostility of crowds of non-voters. To this the Liberals rightly replied that there had been many more ten pound householders among Liberal voters than in the Conservative camp. There was, however, obviously much commotion and implied (if not real) intimidation

²⁸ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.126-127.

²⁹ Ibid., p128; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp193-195; Idem., "Electoral Corruption in Early Victorian Leicester", in *History*, XXXI (1946), pp113-124.

³⁰ *Leicester Journal*, 14th December 1832.

involved in the physical process of getting to the polling booths.³¹

Having cemented their untested post-1826 hold on the borough's representation, the Liberals' attention swiftly reverted to their primary objective, reform of the Corporation. During the celebrations following the achievement of the Reform Bill, William Biggs had set out the reformers' immediate aims as "municipal reform and an elective magistracy within five years".³² In this context, *The Times* declared the return of Evans and Ellis in 1832 "a death blow to Corporation influence in this town".³³

Early in 1833, a public meeting was held to raise a petition for just these objects. Well over 5,000 signatures³⁴ were gathered for the petition, which complained (as was reflected in the speeches of the Rev. J.P. Mursell, James Hudson, William Biggs, Thomas Paget and of "many other gentlemen who usually take an active interest in public matters") of the Corporation's misuse of charity monies, the partisan

³¹ See Chapters 6 and 7; for the electoral rôles of non-voters, and in particular the effect after 1832 of the increased number of polling booths, see J.Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture and Communication 1808-1868* (Unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Manchester 1991), Chapter 2, especially pp160-163.

³² *Leicester Chronicle*, 25th August 1832.

³³ *The Times*, 14th December 1832.

³⁴ "five-sevenths of the adult male population of the town", *P.P.* 1835 (116) XXV.513.

distribution of school and hospital places, and the magistrates' political partiality.³⁵ J.F. Winks was amongst the most eloquent as to the political effect that Corporation activities were having. Charities, endowed for the poor

have by Corporate Bodies been used for party and political purposes; ... education, which ought to have flowed on all as free ... as the light of heaven, has been limited and confined to those children whose parents profess to be of the Established Religion, or to the offspring of those who at an Election stand ready to vote as the Corporate Body may dictate.

James Hudson elaborated on another aspect of local government of critical interest to middle-class Liberals, the growth in the borough rate in the preceding decades.³⁶

The meeting also, however, publicly demonstrated the beginning of division within the reformers' consensus, mainly along class lines. Whilst leading Liberals wanted the petition to be presented by Evans, as the senior of the M.P.s, working-class opinion was deeply resentful of his recent vote for the Irish Coercion Bill. Placards were in evidence "bearing in red letters the words: "Evans voted for Military Law for Ireland"",³⁷ and the working-class spokesmen Seal and Sansome moved an amendment that the petition should be presented by Ellis:

³⁵ Leicester Chronicle, 30th March 1833.

³⁶ Ibid., plus Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p38; P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.512; see Chapter 2.

³⁷ Leicester Chronicle, 30th March 1833.

It would be most inconsistent for a town in which nearly 5,000 signed a petition against the Coercive Bill, to place its next petition in the hands of a Member who had supported that measure.

Thomas Paget, who had himself as member for Leicestershire given an unpopular vote in the House of Commons,³⁸ spoke up for Evans, while expressing (as did all the speakers) his dislike of the Coercion Bill:

It is painful when a representative feels that he is voting against the opinions of many of his constituents, but an honest man will always act according to his conscience.

The Rev. Mursell (who had earlier urged those present not, in their opposition to the Corporation, "to indulge in party prejudices ... and not to cherish bitter feelings towards those who differed from them") called for moderation, asking

Does it become us despotically to rule the opinions even of our representatives?³⁹

There were several grounds for increasing working-class alienation from middle-class political campaigning throughout 1833. Disillusionment with Reform was quickly manifested in the nature of the dissolution of the Political Union at the end of 1832. Following William Jackson's call for working men to support the Reform Bill only "as the first step",⁴⁰ there were demands that the Political Union should conduct an inquiry into the demoralized state of the

³⁸ For the Russo-Dutch loan: Leicester Chronicle, 30th March 1833.

³⁹ Leicester Chronicle, 30th March 1833.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2; Leicester Chronicle, 12th March 1831.

working classes, and especially that of the framework knitters. When these calls were refused by the leaders of the Union (including William Biggs), its meetings were disrupted by angry claims that middle-class reformers represented only employers' interests, and the Political Union was disbanded to give way to the Reform Society.⁴¹ There was also in 1833 an upsurge in trade union activity which intensified the conflicts between masters and men, the main objects of contention being conditions in the spinning factories, but with framework knitters being drawn in when the hosiers combined to lower wages. From September 1832 to May 1833, spinners, combers and knitters, operating through lodges affiliated to the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, struck against their employers, amongst whom were numbered many prominent members of the Reform Society.⁴² The knitters also, unsuccessfully, attempted to implement a scheme whereby charitable donations and small subscriptions would provide 2,000 frames whose use could be regulated, to avoid both frame rent and the problem of surplus labour in the industry.⁴³ William Jackson's published address to the

⁴¹ Leicester Journal, 14th September 1832; Leicester Chronicle, 8th September 1832; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp288-289.

⁴² Leicester Journal, 3rd August 1832; Leicester Chronicle, 5th, 12th and 19th October 1833; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp284-289.

⁴³ Leicester Chronicle, 24th November 1832; Leicester Journal, 14th September 1832, 5th April 1833; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp285-286.

knitters in 1833 publicizing this scheme made much of the behaviour of the "higher classes":

the persons who are possessed of capital ... are watching every turn of the market, and employing all their skill and capital to secure to themselves the largest amount of profit possible to be obtained ... They are not content to dwell in miserable habitations, to be clothed in rags ...⁴⁴

Hostility to middle-class reform leaders was also expressed at the establishment, late in 1832, of the short-lived Leicester Union of the Working Classes, which criticised working class men like Sansome and Seal, who worked alongside the Pagets, Biggses and Brewins, for being overly moderate.⁴⁵ The founding of a Mechanics' Institute was also regarded with suspicion by members of the middle-class political élite: indeed, it proved impossible to prize out of radical working class control, despite a long-fought campaign.⁴⁶

A crucial blow was struck for Liberals, however, in 1833 with the coming of the Municipal Corporations Commissioners for the north midland circuit. Their partiality was immediately apparent. Throughout their stay in the town, Whitcombe and Cockburn resided and dined with the Corporation's leading opponents,

⁴⁴ W. Jackson, *An Address to the Framework Knitters of the Town and County of Leicester* (Leicester 1833), p3.

⁴⁵ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p289.

⁴⁶ See, for example, G. Holt, *A Complete Exposure of the Abuses of the Leicester Mechanics' Institute ... Containing a Detail of the Gradual Introduction of the Levelling Principle* (Leicester 1835); *Leicester Journal*, 6th December 1833; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp235-238.

including Paget, Brewin and the Rev. Berry.⁴⁷ As Greaves' detailed account of the downfall of the Corporation points out, political excitement had been maintained throughout 1833 by a series of events, including the Corporation's persecution of non-freemen beer-sellers, their failed prosecution of the radical printer, Albert Cockshaw, for libel, and the introduction by Evans into the House of Commons of an investigation into the Corporation's administration of Sir Thomas White's Charity.⁴⁸ The arrival of the Commissioners came, therefore, at a moment when partisan feelings were running high. The public proceedings⁴⁹ of the Commission, and especially their examination of the Town Clerk, Thomas Burbidge, also received national attention.⁵⁰ The Corporation attempted uncooperative tactics, with Burbidge first producing only "mere abstracts" of the information required, and finally refusing altogether to surrender the Corporation's account books, complaining that

⁴⁷ Leicester Journal, 20th September 1833; Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, p124ff.

⁴⁸ Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp124-125; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp41-42; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp199-200. See, for example, Leicester Chronicle, 27th April and 21st September 1833; Leicester Journal, 10th May 1833.

⁴⁹ The enquiry was held at the Castle, much to the annoyance of the Corporation and other Conservatives, Leicester Chronicle, 14th September 1833.

⁵⁰ For a full account of the Commission's activities in Leicester and the clash with Burbidge, see Greaves, Corporation of Leicester, pp124-139, and P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.477-514.

the further prosecution of this inquiry cannot tend to an impartial elucidation of facts, but is calculated to hold up ... the Corporation to the obloquy and ill will of their political opponents.⁵¹

The decision not to cooperate, however, failed to prevent a full picture emerging of the range of partisan activities undertaken by the Corporation and their recent financial mismanagements, whilst drawing on themselves widespread criticism.⁵² The events of the 1826 election were fully publicized.⁵³ One by one, the spokesmen of the Liberal élite testified against the Corporation. Cockshaw got his revenge by producing figures demonstrating the partisan misuse of charity money: of 117 recipients of Sir Thomas White's fund since 1800, seventy-six voted with the Corporation, and only four against them; of forty-seven of those with children at the Alderman Newton's school, forty-five voted for Corporation candidates. These favours were not only distributed politically, but were also used inappropriately. Of the 738 persons who had benefited

⁵¹ Corporation Hall Book, BR11/1/12, 24th September and 7th October 1833; P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.478-479 ("First Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Municipal Corporations of England and Wales"). For the partisan bias of the whole Commission, whose Secretary was Joseph Parkes, see G.B.A.M. Finlayson, "The Politics of Municipal Reform, 1835", in *English Historical Review*, 81 (1966), pp673-692; D.Fraser, *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester 1982), pp4-5; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p209, concludes that the resultant Report was "in short, a party document".

⁵² See, for example, the quotes from national newspapers reprinted in the *Leicester Chronicle*, 19th October 1833.

⁵³ P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.501-506; see Chapter 2.

from the charity, fifty-eight were members of the Corporation, two hundred were licensed victuallers, and many others were professional men and prosperous shopkeepers.⁵⁴ Moreover, it had been allocated in £100 portions, instead of the £50 loans to poor tradesmen for which it had been intended.⁵⁵ The Municipal Corporations' Report, when published in 1835, was forthright in its condemnation of the impact that this partisanship had on Leicester elections. It was no more than "a species of bribery", whose effect was "to destroy in the minds of the voters all sense of public spirit or political independence".⁵⁶

Ironically, in the period between the Commissioners' visit to Leicester and the publication of the Report in March 1835, the Conservatives experienced a revival of fortunes, generated both locally and nationally. Dissatisfaction with the Whig government, particularly over the Poor Law, grew in Leicester through 1834, strengthening the union between the Conservatives and some sections of working class opinion, and culminating in the establishment of "Operatives' Conservative Societies" as well as a

⁵⁴ Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, pp41-42; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp200-204.

⁵⁵ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.129-130; P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.508ff..

⁵⁶ P.P. 1835(116) XXV.509.

number of local branches of the Conservative Society.⁵⁷ Inspired by the leadership of Nathaniel Goldsmid, the Conservatives also organized conspicuously successful registrations in 1833 and 1834 despite a considerable number of Liberal objections to Conservative freemen.⁵⁸ Following also Peel's lead, Conservatives in Leicester were on the offensive for the first time since the 1826 débacle, whilst the Liberals found themselves increasingly on the defensive. Paget was to be found, after the dismissal of the Whig government, urging that

whatever differences of opinion existed among Reformers, they were bound together whether Aristocratic or Liberal Whig, or no Whig - whether Durhamite or Radical - ... at this important crisis to forget their points of disagreement and to unite ...⁵⁹

He was met, however, by very public dissension. From the same crowd to whom he addressed that rallying call,

a WORKING MAN rose to ask what the Reform Bill had done for the people, and what consequence it was to them whether the Tories or the Whigs were in office?⁶⁰

Moreover, when the election came, the Conservative candidates Thomas Gladstone and Edward

⁵⁷ Eg. Leicester Journal, 18th July and 1st August 1834. For the phenomenon of Operatives Conservative Societies elsewhere, see Fraser, Urban Politics, pp195-196; Idem. (ed.), A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester 1980), Chapter 10, pp270-300; Gash, Organization of the Conservative Party, pp145-146; Stewart, Foundation of the Conservative Party, pp166-167.

⁵⁸ Leicester Chronicle, 18th October and 1st November 1834; Leicester Journal, 24th October 1834; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p205.

⁵⁹ Leicester Chronicle, 29th November 1834.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Goulburn, presented a new face of moderate Conservatism, Gladstone in particular stressing that he "did not appear as the tool of the Corporation", and that the Conservatives stood for "moderation and intelligence".⁶¹ At the nominations, one experienced Liberal noted the "great peculiarity of the present crisis":

the election addresses of Messrs. Goulburn and Gladstone might have come from an Althorp or a Russell previous to the passing of the Reform Bill.⁶²

Both Conservatives made the new Poor Law central to their platforms: whilst supporting it in principle, they agreed on the need for its reform and associated its defects with Liberal hardheartedness, Goulburn, for example, saying that "those parts of it which bore hard upon, and ground down, the poor man, were exclusively Whig".⁶³ Evans and Ellis, defending their seats, had to support the Whigs' record whilst simultaneously being seen to criticize their legislation. Ellis, who had himself voted against the Poor Law,⁶⁴ recognized working mens' grievances against the government:

⁶¹ Independence from the Corporation was easier for Gladstone to claim than Goulburn, since the latter had been Recorder of the borough until he decided to stand, and had acted in an extremely partisan manner as one of the assessors at the 1826 election. *Leicester Journal*, 25th December 1834; *Leicester Chronicle*, 3rd January 1835; P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.504.

⁶² *Leicester Chronicle*, 10th January 1835.

⁶³ *Leicester Journal*, 9th January 1835.

⁶⁴ *Leicester Chronicle*, 10th January 1835.

We condemned the weakness which induced them to succumb so frequently to the advocates of every abuse. We deplored that want of energy which allowed their very best acts and intentions to be thwarted ...⁶⁵

It was true that leading Liberals had been early critics of the government's lack of enthusiasm for further reforms.⁶⁶ A manifesto "to the working classes" was published in the Chronicle, and circulated in the town, attempting to reaffirm the inter-class reform front by blaming the Tory Corn Laws for "all the calamities that have since come upon us", and pointing out that the Conservatives had both opposed the Reform Bill and supported the Poor Law Amendment Act: "What claim then ... can the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel and their supporters, have to the confidence of the working classes?"⁶⁷

As well as exploiting working-class anti-Whig sentiments (and the antipathy felt by framework knitters and others to their Liberal employers⁶⁸) the Conservatives also capitalized on Anglican fears of radical Dissent. The Church rates battle was joined in

⁶⁵ Leicester Chronicle, 27th December 1834.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Thomas Paget's calls for swift further measures of political reform in early 1833, eg. Leicester Chronicle, 9th March 1833.

⁶⁷ Leicester Chronicle, 27th December 1834; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p45.

⁶⁸ It is interesting to note, however, that William Jackson, the knitters' leader, voted Liberal in 1835, unlike in 1826: Leicester Chronicle, 3rd January 1835; Leicester Pollbook, 1835.

earnest in Leicester early in 1834,⁶⁹ and although the response from the government was not encouraging,⁷⁰ anti-Church activity allowed the Conservatives to put up the cry of "Church in Danger" and to brand the leading Unitarians (who included Paget, the Biggses, Brewin, Stokes and Whetstone) as "Socinians, infidels, and destructive democrats".⁷¹ The charge of destructive radicalism was also levelled at the Liberal candidates. Of the two M.P.s, Ellis was again singled out as the more radical, especially in his support for O'Connell.⁷²

Despite the onslaughts of the opposition party, especially since 1826, Conservatism in Leicester retained a firmness of grip. That there were still plenty of Conservative supporters of the Corporation had been demonstrated to the Municipal Corporations Commissioners, who had received a petition signed by 1,200 who declared their confidence in the impartiality of the magistrates in particular, and in the

⁶⁹ See, for example, Leicester Chronicle, 4th January and 29th November 1834.

⁷⁰ G.I.T.Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832-1868* (Oxford 1977), pp42-47; R.Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion and Reform 1830-1841* (Oxford 1987), pp13-15, 256-257; Idem., "The Whigs and Protestant Dissent in the Decade of Reform: the Case of the Church Rates 1833-1841", in *English Historical Review*, CII (1987), pp887-910; I.Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform 1830-1841* (London 1990), pp130-151.

⁷¹ Leicester Journal, 19th December 1834.

⁷² Leicester Journal, 2nd, 9th and 16th January 1835.

Corporation in general. As the Commissioners had concluded:

it would be wholly inconsistent with the power and influence which the corporation have been shewn to exercise, to suppose that they do not possess a numerous body of adherents in the town.⁷³

In 1833, the *Journal*, the stoutest of the Corporation's defenders in the 1830s, had a weekly circulation of 1,700 copies, double that of the *Chronicle*; an ultra-Tory paper, the *Leicester Herald*, sported a more scurrilous, radical, style that appealed to the borough's working-class Tories.⁷⁴ Conservatism was far from a spent force in the town, as the ferocity of the vestry battles over Church rates were also to show.⁷⁵ However, as in Manchester in the 1830s, local Toryism was electorally hampered by its inability to find appropriate local candidates who reflected the political and industrial culture of the borough.⁷⁶

The heights of partisanship exhibited at the election owed much to this evenness in the political balance in 1835.⁷⁷ On the part of the political activists, no trick was left untried. In the later

⁷³ P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.514.

⁷⁴ D.Fraser, "The Press in Leicester c.1790-1850", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, XLII (1966-7), pp53-75.

⁷⁵ Fraser, *Urban Politics*, pp49-53.

⁷⁶ Gatrell, "Incorporation", pp42-42.

⁷⁷ Note Hudson's attribution of the scale of corruption to the relative strengths of the parties: "... the balance of political feeling ... is so even": P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.128.

words of one participant, "the bribing was something horrible".⁷⁸ James Hudson thought the election saw almost unprecedented degrees of treating, and consequently drunkenness: "I think we were worse the last election than any other, except 1826".⁷⁹ Liberals claimed that the high Conservative costs of the campaign (which they put at £6,000 compared to their own expenditure of £2,500) was "laid on the Liverpool backbone", namely the Gladstone fortune, which they repeatedly pointed out had been derived from the West Indies and therefore slavery.⁸⁰ Corporation members, clergymen and even, some thought, members of the government (given that the Conservative candidates were "the brother of a Cabinet Minister, and the brother of a member of the administration") lent their influence to the Conservative campaign. The Liberals protested that

The Church, the Government, the Corporation, the tax-gatherers, the sexton, the grave-digger ... all, high and low, who held place and power were arrayed against them ...⁸¹

Manifestations of extreme partisanship abounded.

"Exclusive dealing" was widespread and vehement:

⁷⁸ J. and T. Spencer (eds.), *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries and Antiquarian Gleaner*. An Illustrated Quarterly Magazine, 11 (April 1891-1893), pp124-125.

⁷⁹ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.125, 130.

⁸⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, 5th January 1835; *Leicester Chronicle* 3rd, 10th and 17th January 1835.

⁸¹ *Leicester Chronicle*, 10th and 17th January 1835; Greaves, *Corporation of Leicester*, pp129-130; V.C.H., iv.202-203.

Tory aldermen and bankers declare they will no longer be shaved by Reforming barbers, and the wives of Tory parsons declare they would rather go to the wash-tub themselves than have their foul linen cleaned by a Whig laundress.⁸²

Children were said to have been forbidden to play with the offspring of voters for the opposite party. Non-voters played a central rôle on nomination and polling days, largely in the Liberal interest. For the first time, the Market Place (instead of the Town Hall) was used for the nominations, and a crowd of "many thousands" gathered to participate. When the show of hands went against the Conservatives, Gladstone comforted his supporters with the reckoning that

the Reform Bill had not given votes to the owners of those hands. Besides, the hands which appeared for them were clean, whilst those held up for their opponents were unwashed.⁸³

When polling began, Radicals positioned themselves at the polling booths to prevent Tory voters from gaining an early head-start, and gained by that stratagem a Liberal advantage of 250 in the first hour.⁸⁴ Voters of both parties had to endure a tumult of noise and jostling.

⁸² Morning Chronicle, 6th January 1835; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p206.

⁸³ Leicester Chronicle, 10th January 1835; Leicester Journal, 9th January 1835; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp45-46.

⁸⁴ Leicester Journal, 9th January 1835.

The distribution of votes reflected the fierceness of the partisanship (Table 4.2). Split votes and plumps were in a tiny minority.⁸⁵

Table 4.2 : Voting, Leicester 1835

	No.	%
Goulburn/Gladstone	1468	52.0
Evans/Ellis	1306	46.3
Non-Partisan (splits and "unnecessary plumps") N=2,820	46	1.6

The Conservatives, including those of the county, were jubilant, seeing in the result the evidence that "Conservatism still flourishes ... and [Leicester] affords as it were a centre for our Principles".⁸⁶ Liberals were intensely dismayed, and universally blamed the effect of corruption combined with Liberal disunity and apathy. Paget led the outcry:

On each side was ranged a body of honest conscientious voters, both Tories and Reformers, but ... between the two there stood a set of unprincipled wretches, of vile miscreants, ready to sell the liberties of their country for base and paltry bribes.⁸⁷

A Liberal petition against the result on the grounds of this alleged bribery (and also claiming that

⁸⁵ Leicester Pollbook 1835; for discussion of the structural impacts of partisanship, see Chapter 6.

⁸⁶ Halford Mss., DG24/1064/23, J.D.Schomberg to H.Halford, M.P., 22nd June 1835.

⁸⁷ Leicester Chronicle, 10th January 1835.

Goulburn was not properly qualified) was defeated on a technicality.⁸⁸

In the "very ill feeling"⁸⁹ that followed the election, both parties undertook a fundamental restructuring of their electoral organizations. For William Biggs, the 1835 defeat had an organizational basis: as he declared at the next election, the Liberals had allowed the Conservatives to make gains at the registrations.⁹⁰ The election had proved that

You must never be off your guard, or ever relax, as respects Registration. It is a matter that requires no excitement, or popular effort; but only steady and quiet perseverance, vigilance and industry.⁹¹

The lesson had been well learnt. There was noticeably more Liberal activity in the revising barristers' court in late 1835, and a particular consequence was the disfranchisement of those freemen living in Cosby with the ruling that the village lay outside the seven mile limit.⁹² A far more dramatic boost to Liberal electoral vigour, however, was given by the passing of municipal reform. Last ditch attempts by Leicester's Corporation, and more significantly by the House of Lords, to prevent its

⁸⁸ Leicester Journal, 13th March and 3rd April 1835; Leicester Chronicle, 4th April 1835.

⁸⁹ P.P. 1835 (547) VIII.131.

⁹⁰ See Prest, *Politics in the Age of Cobden*, pp23-24, for Conservative registraton activity, 1833-5.

⁹¹ Leicestershire Mercury, 5th August 1837.

⁹² Leicester Chronicle, 10th October 1835.

passage succeeded only in raising Liberal temperatures.⁹³ William Biggs drew up a discourse on "The Necessity of a Reformation in the House of Lords", in which he reassessed Liberal local strategies and laid out much of the groundwork for the improvements that were to be made to the Reform Society in 1836. As the best means of influencing the shape of future legislation, and especially those reforms dearest to the hearts of Leicester Liberals, the return of anti-Conservative (and by implication, anti-Whig) M.P.s was, according to Biggs, "one of the highest duties we are called upon to exercise":

Every elector, whether Freeman or £10 Occupier, whether Freeholder or Scot and Lot Voter, is, in fact a member of the government, and is able to influence one way or the other, by the intelligent and conscientious exercise of his franchise, the destinies of this country and the world.⁹⁴

Liberal resolve to return two representatives at the next election took two practical forms for Biggs. The first was attention to registration. Second was the careful choosing of candidates of "ability and integrity, ... and men of decided principles". The latter was heavily stressed:

⁹³ Corporation Hall Book, BR11/1/12, 24th July 1835, petition against Municipal Reform Bill; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp210-211; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, pp48-49.

⁹⁴ W. Biggs, *Letter to the Leicester Reform Society*, pp7, 15-16.

their principles ... must be decided.
Moderate politics in these times will not do
... these are not common times, a mighty
spirit is awake ...⁹⁵

Moreover, public meetings of the sort utilized by reformers in Leicester in the past as their chief tactic to secure government action should, argued Biggs, be superseded by the sending of such (preferably pledged) representatives to the House of Commons, their expenses paid for by the constituency.⁹⁶ In a statement whose ethos was to permeate the 1837 contest, Biggs concluded:

we must maintain our independence as a constituency ... We must not compromise ourselves by soliciting boons or favours of country gentlemen; We must be the choosers; we must have a distinct understanding as to the principles of our candidates, and invite, accept, or reject them, as we think they will really and truly represent us.⁹⁷

The "us" was implicitly but unambiguously defined: candidates were to be cast in the image of the Liberal, utilitarian, élite, and sent as the symbolic embodiment of their power and interests in Leicester. Through them, the views of the élite could be transmitted to the government, with less need for cumbersome, ineffective and (although Biggs did not make this

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp8-9.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p13.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p16.

point) increasingly politically dangerous public meetings.⁹⁸

Structural changes to organization were, for the Conservatives as well as for the Liberals, greatly stimulated by the first municipal elections. The revision of the lists of municipal voters was described in the press in great detail. Despite the abundance of mistakes in the ratebooks, which left many temporarily disfranchised, the Liberals professed themselves confident that their new ward-based organization for the election was "as perfect as human ingenuity can make it",⁹⁹ as befitted an event held to be "the most critical that had transpired in the social and political history of Leicester".¹⁰⁰ Although the Liberals had suggested to the Municipal Corporations Commissioners in 1833 that they desired a town council of "the most competent and respectable men of all parties", the municipal election was fought exclusively on partisan lines.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ As Biggs put it : "When we have our Public Meetings ... and ... we are carried away by the splendid eloquence ... all difficulties for the moment vanish ... but the meeting over, the state of affairs remains as it was, the petition is presented and done with, perhaps excites discussion or does not ... and no effectual or permanent impression is made upon the legislature": Ibid., p9. For a similar style of Liberal caucus politics in Manchester in the 1830s, see Gatrell, "Incorporation", pp22-23.

⁹⁹ Leicester Chronicle, 19th December 1835.

¹⁰⁰ Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p50.

¹⁰¹ P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.514 (1922); Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp220-221.

Whilst Liberals were naturally elated at the near-completeness of their victory - only four Conservatives were returned, all of them for East St. Margaret's ward, against thirty-eight Liberals¹⁰² - the election also had wide-ranging implications for non-municipal electioneering. Most importantly, the destruction of the Corporation's electoral influence was expected to "throw a prodigious weight into the Liberal scale".¹⁰³ With the removal of the Corporation's pressure on individual voters, "the inherent energies of the public mind" (according to the Liberals) were released: at the next parliamentary election, canvassers reported evidence of "the beneficial results of the Municipal Reform Bill":

The electors at large seem to be throwing themselves forward.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, some of the functions of the Reform Society had been taken up by the new Town Council (after some discussion, during which John and William Biggs had disagreed with Paget and Whetstone, amongst others, who felt that the Council should distance itself from such overtly partisan activity as petitioning Parliament),¹⁰⁵ leaving the Reform Society

¹⁰² S.Stone, A List of the Mayors, Magistrates, Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of Leicester since the Passing of the Municipal Corporations Reform Act (Leicester 1859).

¹⁰³ Leicestershire Mercury, 18th February 1837.

¹⁰⁴ Leicestershire Mercury, 15th July 1837; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p55.

¹⁰⁵ Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp58-59; Patterson, Radical Leicester, p222.

to concentrate on electoral matters. At the latter body's Annual Meeting in 1836, Biggs reported that there was now

nothing for the Reform Committee to do, but to attend to the Parliamentary Elections, and the Parliamentary and Municipal registrations,

and that a fully integrated electoral machinery was being implemented. Instead of the previous thirty-one District Societies, seven Ward Societies - following the structure of the new municipal divisions - would "manage the Elections and general business".¹⁰⁶ The ward organizations, headed by Liberal stalwarts, elected their own committees, and sent representatives to the central Reform Committee on an equal basis that aimed to be fairer and to

secure the co-operation of all the branches and ... obtain for it an extensive moral influence ...¹⁰⁷

The "continual agitation of the passions of the multitude, by means of the incessant excitement of Parliamentary, Municipal, and Parochial Elections"¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Leicester Chronicle, 6th February and 24th September 1836; for the post-1835 electoral organizational developments, and especially ward structures, in those other towns whose municipal boundaries coincided with parliamentary ones, see W.B.Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in England* (London 1962), pp70-71; Fraser, *Urban Politics*, pp188-195.

¹⁰⁷ Leicester Chronicle, 6th February, 19th and 26th October 1836. At the 1837 election, the Ward Committee Secretaries included Sansome, Billson, Viccars, Shepherd and Winks: *Leicestershire Mercury*, 29th July 1837.

¹⁰⁸ Annual Report of the Leicester Conservative Society, 1836 (Leicester 1836), p8.

was given by the Conservatives as justification for their own adoption of ward committees. For the first municipal election, a Central Constitutional Municipal Committee had been set up.¹⁰⁹ With the Liberals, the Conservatives acknowledged the need to exploit activists' local knowledge, at street level.¹¹⁰ Whilst, however, the Liberals looked to the next parliamentary election to complete their municipal victory, Conservatives looked ahead to the chance for some revenge, and played down the importance of municipal politics in comparison to those at Westminster:

The little vexations of our municipal thralldom should for a time be patiently borne with, rather than suffer them to divert us from the important object of again returning to Parliament our present excellent Representatives.¹¹¹

The Conservatives placed greater emphasis than did the Liberals on the establishing of District Committees to cover those villages which sent freemen to poll in Leicester. County gentlemen featured prominently among the officers of the Conservative Society, and the opening sentences of the 1836 report urged "a more intimate and general connection with the Conservatives of the County", in the interests of

¹⁰⁹ Leicester Journal, 25th December 1835.

¹¹⁰ Annual Report, pp12-13.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp10-11.

mutual support.¹¹² Also in contrast to the tone of Liberal organization after 1835, much stress was placed by the Conservatives on the furthering of working-class involvement. The new ward committees, although they were to be headed by "gentlemen", were regarded as

a means of bringing together Conservatives of every class and situation in life. And your Committee wish anxiously to impress upon the minds of all present the vast importance of enlisting under constitutional banners the humbler classes of society. The honest shopkeeper, the industrious operative, the sober artizan, not less than the man of extensive commerce and large possessions, has an interest in the peace and safety of the country.¹¹³

Appeals to working-class Conservatism augmented increasing Conservative union with anti-Whig working-class radicalism, with the Liberals coming under criticism in 1836 for the introduction of the new Poor Law to Leicester. Attempts by Paget, who was now Mayor, and other Liberals to maintain their leadership of local criticism of government policies publicly backfired on several occasions, most notably at a public meeting in June, a month after the formation of

¹¹² Ibid., pp5, 11-13. Thomas Frewen Turner, previously M.P. for South Leicestershire, became President of the Society in 1836; Vice-Presidents included the President of the Conservative Society for the Northern Division, and the Chairman of the Committee for the Southern Division.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp13-14; see Fraser, *Urban Politics*, pp188-189, for the implications, for social relationships in the urban setting, of such localized electoral organizational work.

the Leicester Union.¹¹⁴ In response to a requisition (said to have originated with Liberals) for a petition to the King against the splitting up of families in the workhouses, the meeting - "the first ... especially composed of operatives ... which had been permitted to take place in the Town Hall" - degenerated into an all-out attack on Political Economy, much to the discomfiture of the Liberal élite, who were "to a man, utilitarian in their philosophy".¹¹⁵ The initial Conservative reaction to the meeting had been highly equivocal. A variety of handbills had been produced, some asserting that it was "all a Radical trick got up to influence the election of Guardians" whilst others encouraged Tories to attend the meeting "and assist its objects".¹¹⁶ Attendance was large, and Paget's difficulties were immediately obvious. His conscience, he said, would not allow him to sign any resolution produced by the meeting, so he was forced to decline its chairmanship. The Radical knitter George Hort insisted that the matter went beyond political partisanship:

¹¹⁴ K.Thompson, "The Building of the Leicester Union Workhouse 1836-1839", in D.Williams (ed.), *The Adaptation of Change: Essays upon the History of Nineteenth Century Leicester and Leicestershire* (Leicester 1980), pp59-76.

¹¹⁵ *Leicester Chronicle*, 25th June 1836; D.Freer, *Business Families in Victorian Leicester: A Study in Historical Sociology* (Unpubl. M.Phil. Thesis, Leicester 1975), pp11-20; Idem., "The Dynasty-Builders of Victorian Leicester", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, LIII (1977-8), pp42-54.

¹¹⁶ *Leicester Chronicle*, 25th June 1835.

Some had asked whether this was a Tory or a Radical trick. It was neither, it was a movement amongst the working classes ... As for throwing the blame on this or that party, it was all nonsense; Whigs, Tories and Radicals were all engaged in this nefarious transaction; it was an attack of the pounds, shillings and pence party, upon the working classes.¹¹⁷

Sansome, whilst decrying the Conservatives' exploitation of the issue for purely political purposes, and agreeing that "the bill belonged exclusively to no party", joined Hort's condemnation of class interest:

I don't like this new-fangled Political Economy that is so much spoken of; I always think there is enough for all to eat, if all had fair play.¹¹⁸

Paget's attempts to defend his actions as a magistrate, and to blame the framework knitters' poverty on drunkenness and gambling, were shouted down. John Biggs intervened to prevent John Timpson, a Tory framework knitter and ex-convict, from speaking.¹¹⁹

Shortly after this meeting, the election of the Board of Guardians provided the Conservatives with another front on which to oppose the Liberals' new municipal hegemony. Thanks to their concentrated power in St. Margaret's parish, and the multiple voting system, the Conservatives managed to capture a

¹¹⁷ Leicester Chronicle, 25th June 1835.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.; for George Hort's part in the framework knitters' strike of 1825, see Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp139, 149. The Chronicle in 1837 took to describing him as "an itinerant Poor Law agitator", eg. 20th May 1837.

¹¹⁹ All, Leicester Chronicle, 25th June 1835.

considerable, and enduring, majority on the Board, and were able until 1845 to use its authority to partisan ends,¹²⁰ to the extent that the Assistant Commissioner, Edward Senior, was driven in 1839 to complain that the Leicester Board had become "quite notorious for its political character ... there is not a single question mooted here, which is not made a political one".¹²¹

Working-class feeling against the Poor Law flared again in the second half of 1837, with the building of a new workhouse, and with proposals to withdraw out-relief and to enforce the separation of the sexes. Framework knitters, with their experience of a cyclically over-supplied industry, and accustomed to Tory magistrates who had granted them out-relief apparently as a matter of course,¹²² deeply resented these changes.

Ultimately, the scale of the distress in the hosiery industry at the time meant that the proposals could not be fully implemented, but they did further damage to inter-class relationships that were already under strain.¹²³

¹²⁰ Until 1845, Liberals were in the majority on the Board of Guardians only once, in 1838: Searson, *The Leicester Municipal, Borough and County Poll Book* (Leicester 1883), pp109-116; Thompson, "Building of Leicester Workhouse", *passim*; Fraser, *Urban Politics*, pp73-74; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp225-228.

¹²¹ *Leicester Herald*, 18th May 1839; for the similar politicization of the Poor Law elsewhere, see Fraser, *Urban Politics*, Chapter 3.

¹²² See P.P. 1835 (116) XXV.510.

¹²³ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp294-296; see, for example, *Leicestershire Mercury*, 12th August 1837.

The Poor Law was not the only source of tension within the ranks of the reformers. Almost immediately upon their municipal triumph, internal dissensions had become apparent. In particular, the minister of Harvey Lane Baptist Chapel, J.P. Mursell, and the Rev. Edward Miall of Bond Street Independent Chapel, the joint founders in 1836 of the Leicester Voluntary Church Society, emerged at the head of a body of radical Dissenting opinion aggrieved at the inability of the government to repeal Church rates, and increasingly out of step with the Unitarians who monopolized the highest municipal offices.¹²⁴ Conflicts between the Unitarian élite and radical Baptists and other orthodox Dissenters were in evidence nationally after municipal reform had been achieved; in 1836, a united front of Baptists and Independents forced the Unitarians out of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Deputies, Unitarians (as in Leicester) having proved generally less willing to countenance jeopardizing the survival

¹²⁴ Eg. see *Leicestershire Mercury*, 23rd July 1837. The first seven Mayors of the Town Council were Unitarians; of the 42 Councillors elected in 1835, 12 were Unitarian, 12 Baptist and 10 Independent: *Leicester Chronicle*, 9th January 1836; A.H. Thomas, *A History of the Great Meeting, Leicester, and its Congregation* (Leicester 1908), p49.

of the government.¹²⁵ In Leicester, Mursell took to preaching to his flock against "social intercourse ... with persons of dissimilar views in religion and politics", which was interpreted to mean mixing with Unitarians.¹²⁶

Politically symptomatic of this essentially denominational cleavage was the founding in 1836 of the Leicestershire Mercury, in protest against the moderate Pagetite line of the Chronicle. Mursell was, if not instrumental in its establishment, the moving spirit behind its politics, and encouraged it as the mouthpiece of radical nonconformity.¹²⁷ Anti-Whig and anti-moderate, the Mercury adopted Lord Durham,

¹²⁵ See, for example, D.G.Wright, "A Radical Borough in Parliamentary Politics: Bradford 1832-1841", in *Northern History*, 4 (1969), p134; J.Seed, "Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antimonies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830-1850", in *Social History*, 7 (1982-3), pp1-25; R.Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics*, pp254-257; Idem., "The Whigs and Protestant Dissent", pp887-910; W.R.Ward, *Politics and Society in England 1790-1850* (London 1972), pp204-205.

¹²⁶ DE619, *Diary of John Kirby 1813-1848*, p164, quoted in D.L.Wykes, "'Trade Flat, Money Scarce, Spirits Low': The Journal of John Kirby of Leicester, 1813-1848", in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, LXIV (1990), pp39-56.

¹²⁷ Eg. *Leicestershire Mercury*, 3rd and 10th September, and 5th October 1836; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp230-232; Fraser, *Press in Leicester*, pp64-65. It had to be denied that Mursell was the Mercury's editor: *Leicestershire Mercury*, 17th March 1838.

O'Connell, Brougham and Hume as its political pantheon.¹²⁸

Between the two anti-Tory groups, John and William Biggs moved cautiously. As Unitarians, Town Councillors and long-established reformers, their orientation was naturally towards the older-style radicalism headed by Paget and Brewin. This was particularly true of John Biggs, who, for example, was conspicuous in 1840 (during the crisis caused by William Baines' imprisonment for non-payment of Church rates) among those Liberals disagreeing with the policy of non-payment.¹²⁹ Because of his electoral duties, however, William was able to some extent to span the widening chasm between the Liberal groups. Particularly effective was his use of the Mercury at the 1837 election, through which he accomplished a more effective and enthusiastic mobilization of Liberal support than had hitherto been seen, in spite of the tendencies - denominational and class-based - to fragmentation that were visible in other spheres.

Crucial to the maintenance of Liberal electoral unity, as Biggs had foreseen, was the careful selection

¹²⁸ Leicestershire Mercury, 10th March 1838. The distinction between the Mercury's radicalism and that of what might be termed the Paget group can be exaggerated: Paget, for example, was in cordial correspondence with both Hume and O'Connell. See Paget Mss., DG47/DE1274/f.28b, Hume to T.Paget, 28th September 1837, and f.3 and f.13, O'Connell to Paget, 26th March and 1st August 1836.

¹²⁹ Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp248-249; Fraser, Urban Politics, p52.

of candidates. Evans, thought too Whiggish, did not intend to stand again, and after unsuccessfully soliciting the Radical Morris in Liverpool,¹³⁰ the Reform Society approached Edward Dawson, former M.P. for South Leicestershire, whose views, in particular those on an elected House of Lords, coincided with William Biggs'. Dawson, however, declined to stand unless the Liberals declared themselves "against the corrupt system which had given the place such a bad name", which they proved unwilling to do,¹³¹ despite Biggs' assertion in 1835 that Liberal candidates "must be returned on purity principles..the frequency of elections renders it utterly impossible that men can be laying out fortunes at every election ...".¹³² Instead, a Chancery barrister known to Dawson, Samuel Duckworth, was suggested, and came through examination successfully:

his tone in politics is precisely right, strong and firm, a Ballot man, but thoroughly ministerial, exactly a politician of the most useful description.¹³³

Most importantly for Paget and Biggs, Duckworth looked like a candidate who could maintain his independence

¹³⁰ Paget Mss., DG47/DE365/301, S.Kelly to T.Tertius Paget, 18th January 1837, Wm.Rathbone to T.Tertius Paget, 18th January 1837, and J.Paget to T.Tertius Paget, 31st February 1837.

¹³¹ Leicestershire Mercury, 12th November 1836.

¹³² Biggs, Letter to Reform Society, p15.

¹³³ Paget Mss., DG47/DE365/301, John Paget to T.Tertius Paget, 2nd February 1837; Leicestershire Mercury, 20th May 1837; M.Stenton, Who's Who of British Members of Parliament (Hassocks 1976), i.115.

both of radical Dissent, and of the Church Whigs like Isaac Hodgson.¹³⁴

The care taken in his selection was relayed in detail to the electorate, in a way not seen at previous contests:

The Deputation sought and obtained his opinion upon the Church Rate, the Irish Municipal Corporation and Tithe question, the extension of the suffrage, the duration of Parliaments, Free Trade, and the Vote by Ballot; on all of which questions they found him at once frank, explicit and satisfactory, and his views in accordance with those of the great mass of the Reformers at Leicester.

In the light of this, the Reform Society expressed itself confident that there was "no doubt of his being acceptable to the great body of the electors".¹³⁵

When Ellis also let it be known he would not be coming forward again, the procedure was repeated, producing a second candidate in the shape of John Easthope, proprietor of the Morning Chronicle (which the Mercury called "the most intelligent, consistent and liberal journal in the world").¹³⁶ Again, his political principles were examined, and reported, extensively.

¹³⁴ Paget Mss., DG47/DE365/301, John Paget to T.Tertius Paget, 2nd February 1837.

¹³⁵ Leicestershire Mercury, 18th February 1837.

¹³⁶ Leicestershire Mercury, 6th May, and 15th and 29th April 1837; Stenton, Who's Who, p121; Dictionary of National Biography, vi.329; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp232-233. See A.Aspinall, Politics and the Press c.1780-1850 (London 1949), pp239-241, 257, for Easthope's relationship with Parkes and Lord Durham.

Even with this care having been taken, however, the Liberal candidates could not meet all of the requirements of the crowds (composed only partially of electors) that they addressed. Duckworth and Easthope's joint platform, based on "justice for Ireland", household suffrage, the Ballot (unwillingly on Easthope's part¹³⁷), and repeal of the Corn Laws, touched little on disestablishment and reform of the Poor Law, incurring the criticism of radical nonconformists and working-class voters alike. Although Biggs in the pages of the Mercury had emphasized that both candidates fully supported amelioration of the Poor Law, especially repeal of the detested clause enforcing the separation of families, it was widely felt that insufficient attention was paid to the issue at the hustings. At one public meeting, the end of Duckworth's speech was greeted with cries of "Poor Laws! Poor Laws!", to which he completely inadequately replied that "his opinion was not really worth having, he being so uninformed on the subject".¹³⁸ Easthope, harassed by George Hort, could only explain to electors that "abuses had nothing more to do with the Poor Law Bill than any other wicked appendage to a good thing was the thing itself".¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Leicestershire Mercury, 29th April 1837.

¹³⁸ Leicestershire Mercury, 20th May 1837.

¹³⁹ Ibid.; Leicester Chronicle, 20th May 1837.

Faced with the Conservatives' use of the Poor Law as (in Dawson's words) "a stalking horse to delude the electors",¹⁴⁰ much of the Liberal campaign was spent condemning the "sickly sentimentality of the newly-appointed friends of the People".¹⁴¹ Biggs was typically forthright in the Mercury, producing lists of Tory abuses against working men and surmising that

Their affected sympathy for the poor, their newly-awakened and exquisite sensitiveness for their distresses, will impose upon no one above the mental level of an idiot.¹⁴²

Biggs had also, however, to work hard to recover the damage done to Liberal loyalty among working-class voters by Paget's ill-judged public remarks that the corrupt freemen were

a body of men - no, not of men, they are REPTILES, who will sell their birthright for worse than a mess of pottage - a bottle of gin!¹⁴³

Over these tensions, Biggs sought to impose a creed of party discipline, and to give the election the character of a military battle that would see the final resolution of the party conflicts of the last fifty years. The language of his campaign was martial and

¹⁴⁰ Leicestershire Mercury, 20th May 1837.

¹⁴¹ Eg., Leicestershire Mercury, 29th April and 7th June 1837; Leicester Chronicle, 7th July 1837.

¹⁴² Leicestershire Mercury, 1st July 1837.

¹⁴³ Leicester Journal, 19th May and 21st July 1837 ("he has gratuitously and insolently slandered the Freemen"); Leicestershire Mercury, 20th May 1837.

hyperbolic, verging at times on the ridiculous, gaining him, from Winks, the title of "our General":¹⁴⁴

There is a great battle to be fought - a battle more important in its consequences than all the victories of Bonaparte ... This trial decides the fate of Leicester.¹⁴⁵

In such a context, there could be no compromise, and no "waverers or neutrals",¹⁴⁶ whatever antagonism individual voters felt for either government policies or the local Liberals. Clearly responding to the anti-Poor Law rhetoric, Biggs insisted on the need for non-Tories to retain their reformist loyalties:

A man, to be useful as a politician, must act with a party; impracticable men who will not act with others because everything is not precisely as they could wish, are useless as politicians.¹⁴⁷

Marshalling this discipline was the task of the ward committees, who conducted continual street patrolling, to "watch the Tory parties ... thus depriving them of the opportunity of doing that privately which they dare not do publicly",¹⁴⁸ and to construct the most precise canvass ever achieved. Biggs and the Liberal candidates were full of praise for the work of the Committees:

¹⁴⁴ Leicestershire Mercury, 29th July 1837.

¹⁴⁵ Leicestershire Mercury, 15th July 1837.

¹⁴⁶ Leicestershire Mercury, 1st July 1837.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Biggs went on to ask: "What honest man would ... desert a true and old friend, who had given him a thousand instances of attachment and integrity, because he had committed one mistake?"

¹⁴⁸ Leicestershire Mercury, 22nd July 1837.

Their organization, their arrangements, their accurate knowledge of the voters, their residences and political opinions, is the most perfect we ever saw.¹⁴⁹

Voters were visited by the Liberal committees "again and again and again",¹⁵⁰ much to the disgust of the Conservatives, who later claimed that "armed gangs" of Liberal patrollers had exposed their agents to "personal risk and danger, of no ordinary character", and had intimidated electors by "wearing out [their] thresholds in daily, nightly, hourly endeavours to corrupt their votes".¹⁵¹ (The Conservatives were also highly active, canvassing working-class electors at "one and two o'clock in the morning").¹⁵² Biggs acknowledged the novelty of the Liberal tactics, but insisted that they were both necessary and morally justifiable:

If any of you feel any delicacy about incessant canvassing, banish such delicacy at once ... The man who relaxes in his exertion ought to be banished from civilized society.¹⁵³

On polling day,¹⁵⁴ the ward committees controlled the flow of Liberal voters ("a continual cannonade", in the Biggs terminology) and the Liberal rank-and-file

¹⁴⁹ Leicestershire Mercury, 8th July 1837.

¹⁵⁰ Leicestershire Mercury, 22nd July 1837.

¹⁵¹ Leicester Journal, 28th July 1837; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp233-234.

¹⁵² Leicestershire Mercury, 5th August 1837.

¹⁵³ Leicestershire Mercury, 22nd July 1837.

¹⁵⁴ For the first time, polling was restricted to one day: Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p77; Leicestershire Mercury, 22nd July 1837.

were exhorted to pay them "the most prompt and implicit obedience":

They must be dictators and absolute.
Subordination is indispensable to discipline,
and discipline is indispensable to success.¹⁵⁵

The strength of Liberal partisan feeling was matched by that of the Conservatives: voting was, with the exception of a solitary plump vote, along strict party lines (see Table 4.3), confirming Goulburn's prediction that

disguise it as we may, all minor Political distinctions ... are fast merging into one or other of the great Antagonist parties ...¹⁵⁶

Table 4.3 : Voting, Leicester 1837

	No.	%
Gladstone/Goulburn	1453	44.4
Easthope/Duckworth	1816	55.6
Plumps	1	0.0
N=3,270		

Activity on both sides had been unprecedented in scale: the return of each member was officially estimated to have cost the Liberals £3,500.¹⁵⁷ Numerous complaints were included in the Conservative petition against the result. Bribery, exclusive dealing, the misuse of Liberal magistrates' and J.P.s' powers, the

¹⁵⁵ Leicestershire Mercury, 22nd July 1837.

¹⁵⁶ Leicester Journal, 30th May 1837. Easthope's Morning Chronicle, 27th July 1837, thought Leicester's lack of cross-party voting "convincing proof that the contest as been throughout one of principle, uninfluenced in the slightest degree by personal feeling or predilection".

¹⁵⁷ Leicester Journal, 19th February 1847.

partiality of police officers during canvassing and polling, and of returning officers, were all alleged, as was Liberal election managers' encouragement of "bands of persons armed with sticks, bludgeons and other weapons" to intimidate Conservative canvassers.¹⁵⁸ Whether coincidentally or deliberately, William Biggs was on business in the United States at the time of the petition hearing - the petition was, however, dropped.¹⁵⁹

With the Liberal victory, all concerned had acknowledged the importance of the ward committees' activity: "The patrolling and district watching was most excellent, it saved us the election".¹⁶⁰ What had won the election, however, was the successful functioning of all of the stages of voter mobilization, taking impetus from the primary phase - registration. Contemporary calculations suggested that only ninety-eight of the Liberal voters in 1837 were Conservatives converted since 1835, and that Liberal success had been founded on an influx of new voters.¹⁶¹ The truth of this assessment will be demonstrated below, in Chapter 6. In his post-election summary, William Biggs

¹⁵⁸ Journal of the House of Commons, Vol. 93, pp111-112 (4th December 1837); Leicester Journal, 21st and 28th July and 26th August 1837.

¹⁵⁹ Leicestershire Mercury, 16th December 1837 and 7th and 14th April 1838; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp234-325.

¹⁶⁰ Leicestershire Mercury, 29th July and 5th August 1837.

¹⁶¹ Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd September 1837.

recognized the importance of the improved Liberal performance in the registration process:

In this borough, give me the party who will attend to the Registration, and I will answer for the result at an election. The Reform Society has attended to it for the last few years, and the success of the last election has proved its practical usefulness.¹⁶²

The ability of the Liberals, through the Reform Society, to effect a unified mustering of anti-Conservative feeling faced further challenges after 1837. Significantly, given the social conflicts which both generated and were generated by Chartism in Leicester, changes made to Liberal electioneering organization seem to have been clearly intended to tighten the leadership's control. Whilst the ward committees appeared to extend local involvement, Biggs warned against any over-dispersal of direction. His telling comment that

The mischief of our party is, that there are too many masters amongst us, too many captains, too many officers. Too many people give orders; and almost all are impatient of even wholesome control,¹⁶³

and his comparison of Liberal discord with the unthinking "monarchical and military" obedience of Tories to their organizers, is dramatically suggestive of the élite's growing unease. Biggs recommended that the political powers of the wards "should not be too widely diffused, but should be concentrated in the hands of a very small committee or directory" (or even,

¹⁶² Leicestershire Mercury, 5th August 1837.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

where possible, held "by a single mind"): the "army" of Liberals should pay these men "military discipline".¹⁶⁴ Biggs was evidently concerned, should schisms threaten Liberal unity (as they were seriously to do in the 1840s¹⁶⁵), that those in control of the electoral machinery should be Liberals of his tenor. If there was to be a Liberal caucus, it was to be carefully defined and limited, in the name of party unity. This was a far cry from the language of the popular/middle-class alliances of 1831-2, and even from the Conservatives' recent active encouragement of greater popular participation.

The trade depression which hit the hosiery industry in late 1837 brought an immediate increase in anti-Poor Law feeling, with a heightened campaign to prevent the ending of out-relief. A public meeting of working men in early 1838 raised a petition with 6,000 signatures.¹⁶⁶ The meeting, which brought John Markham to prominence, and saw him prompting his working-class colleagues to refuse to support middle-class political leaders who had turned their backs on the people's struggles for their rights, also was the catalyst for

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.: "In all matters in connection with the machinery of an election - in any distribution of power in the various wards - you cannot do better than copy the military discipline".

¹⁶⁵ For the Whetstone/Biggs schisms of the 1840s over town improvement, see Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp333-352; Fraser, *Urban Politics*, p166ff.; V.C.H., iv.214-223.

¹⁶⁶ *Leicester Chronicle*, 24th February 1838; *Leicestershire Mercury*, 24th February 1838.

the formation of an anti-Poor Law Society.¹⁶⁷ The anti-Poor Law meeting came only days after a middle-class-inspired meeting protesting at Russell's "Finality" statement had called on reformers to unite behind calls for the Ballot, annual parliaments and household suffrage: Edward Dawson had challenged anti-Poor Law shouts from the crowd with the accusation that the Conservatives were inciting inter-class suspicion for political ends.¹⁶⁸

Agitation against the Poor Law (which the Board of Guardians - the majority of whom were, for this one year, Liberals - met with undisguised enmity¹⁶⁹), combined with the political activities of the framework knitters who were fighting bitterly to curtail the abrupt falling of their wages, and those of the Leicester Working Mens' Association (led by Seal's brother, John), to form the core of the Chartist movement which came into being - with Markham at its head - in the late summer of 1838.¹⁷⁰ The founding in October of the Leicester and Leicestershire Political Union, and the formal adoption of the Charter a month

¹⁶⁷ Leicester Chronicle, 7th April and 9th June 1838.

¹⁶⁸ Leicester Chronicle, 17th February 1838; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p297.

¹⁶⁹ Leicester Chronicle, 9th June 1838.

¹⁷⁰ J.F.C.Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", in A.Briggs (ed.), *Chartist Studies* (London 1959), pp99-146; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp295-297; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, p66.

later, "marked a break with the middle classes",¹⁷¹ following as it did a drawn-out but ultimately unsuccessful series of attempts to find some form of conciliation between employers and workmen, Liberals and radicals. Mursell, Markham and John Seal put forward a number of schemata for compromise - including a joint hosiery union of masters and men, the provisional list of whose officers was drawn up irrespective of party politics¹⁷² - but were conspicuously cold-shouldered by leading Liberals, to the knitters' disappointment and disgust.

Duckworth's appointment to a Mastership in Chancery in 1839, and the consequent prospect of a by-election, came therefore at a particularly unfortunate time for the Liberals.¹⁷³ Although the early months of Chartism had proved peaceful, and the Liberal magistrates had shown themselves relatively tolerant of

¹⁷¹ Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", p105. See Leicester Chronicle, 13th October and 24th November 1838.

¹⁷² The list included the Conservative hosier Rawson and Liberals John Biggs and Cortman. Leicestershire Mercury, 31st March, 14th and 21st April 1838.

¹⁷³ Leicester Chronicle, 16th March 1839; Melbourne Mss., Box 49, 71, Duckworth to Melbourne, 21st January 1838 and Box 51, 73, Duckworth to Melbourne, ? March 1839 (in which Duckworth confirms suspicions that he sought a parliamentary seat largely to gain legal advancement).

mass meetings,¹⁷⁴ anti-middle-class rhetoric was fierce. Markham had accused the Reform Society's leaders of having "no use" for the people "once they had got municipal honours and privileges",¹⁷⁵ stinging William Biggs into indignant reply. Frightened at the prospect of Tory-radical alliance, following the Conservatives' public empathizing with working men's distress,¹⁷⁶ Biggs had charged working-class reformers with disloyalty, and with making impracticably excessive demands.¹⁷⁷ Matters worsened with O'Connor's arrival in Leicester, and his speech at the meeting at which the Charter was adopted. Rounding on the middle-classes, O'Connor had singled out "the Whigs" of the Town Council as "defrauders of the people", indistinguishable, in their promotion of their own class interests, from the Tories.¹⁷⁸

Liberal organization had deteriorated since the last election, partly because of the enforced withdrawal (because of illness) of William Biggs from

¹⁷⁴ Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", pp105-107; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp302-303, 309. See Markham's speech, mid-1839, in which he compared the Leicester magistrates to those in other towns (especially Birmingham), *Leicester Chronicle*, 25th May 1839.

¹⁷⁵ *Leicester Chronicle*, 13th October 1838; *Leicestershire Mercury*, 13th October 1838.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, *Leicester Chronicle*, 17th November 1838.

¹⁷⁷ *Leicestershire Mercury*, 20th and 27th October and 3rd November 1838.

¹⁷⁸ *Leicestershire Mercury*, 24th November 1838; *Leicester Chronicle*, 24th November 1838.

almost all political activity;¹⁷⁹ several of the ward committees had fallen into disuse.¹⁸⁰ In contrast, the Operatives' Conservative Societies had been revived.¹⁸¹ The Liberals noted grimly the "communication" between Markham and the Conservative election manager and banker, Joseph Phillips.¹⁸² Moreover, when Wynn Ellis again stepped forward as the Liberal candidate,¹⁸³ he was immediately challenged by Markham as to his views on manhood suffrage, the payment of M.P.s and the Poor Law. Having, in his published addresses to electors, referred only to "Extension of the Suffrage" (together with the traditional middle-class objectives of the Ballot, abolition of Church rates and repeal of the Corn Laws),¹⁸⁴ Ellis was forced by Markham to elaborate:

The elector must be an honest and independent man ... I think there should be no harm, and no risk in giving a vote to a man who has a house over his head.¹⁸⁵

Markham declared himself "perfectly disgusted" with this and the other answers he received, and at a subsequent Chartist meeting it was resolved that Ellis was "unworthy of the support of the Chartists", and

¹⁷⁹ Leicestershire Mercury, 3rd November 1838.

¹⁸⁰ Leicestershire Mercury, 19th and 26th January 1838.

¹⁸¹ Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd February and 23rd March 1839.

¹⁸² Leicester Chronicle, 23rd March 1839.

¹⁸³ Leicester Chronicle, 16th March 1839.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., and Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd March 1839; Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, p87.

that Chartist voters were to be advised "for the present to abstain from taking any part during the present election."¹⁸⁶ Markham laid out his position:

I may be told of two evils I should choose the least, but I answer there are two thieves beside me, and I ought to take care of both.¹⁸⁷

The Conservatives were not, however, in a position to take the maximum advantage from Liberal difficulties, since they were finding it almost impossible to find a candidate. At almost the last possible moment, they produced a country gentleman with no political experience, Charles Hay Frewen, whose political statements (almost exclusively on the subject of the Poor Law) were characterized by the Chronicle as "an amusing mixture of candour, naiveté, and originality".¹⁸⁸

Markham's aloofness from both parties was maintained. At the nominations, he proposed an independent Chartist candidate in the form of the Radical Colonel Peronnet Thompson. A number of Chartists, including Richard Seal, who as reformers had worked in conjunction with middle-class Liberals, had previously objected to the written approaches which had been made to Thompson and to J.A. Roebuck.¹⁸⁹ It soon

¹⁸⁶ Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd March 1839.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Leicester Chronicle, 23rd March 1839.

¹⁸⁹ Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd March 1839.

became clear, however, that Markham had not received Thompson's permission to propose him, and the Colonel was withdrawn.¹⁹⁰

In the end, the Liberal victory was relatively straightforward (see Table 4.4), Ellis, on a reduced turnout,¹⁹¹ gaining a share of the total poll only very slightly lower than that given to Duckworth and Easthope in 1837. The Chronicle concluded that the

Table 4.4 : Voting, Leicester 1839

	No.	%
Ellis	1666	54.9
Frewen	1371	45.1
N=3,037		

Chartists "generally voted for Mr. Ellis" (which entitled them "to a more favourable construction of their actions" during the election), whilst denying that any great number of them possessed a vote.¹⁹² One estimate put the number of enfranchised Chartists at around eighty-five, but Thomas Cooper believed at the 1841 election that the number of Chartists entitled to vote might have been fewer than twenty.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ According to Searson (p87), "much to the vexation and disappointment of the Tories"; Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd March 1839; Leicester Chronicle, 23rd March 1839.

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 6, especially Table 6.1. Leicester Pollbook 1839.

¹⁹² Leicester Chronicle, 23rd March and 25th May 1839.

¹⁹³ Leicester Journal, 12th February 1841; Life of Thomas Cooper, p150.

Whatever their voting power, the Chartists - by 1841 led by Cooper, who was in the process of supplanting John Markham¹⁹⁴ - were at the centre-stage again during the 1841 election. Cooper was far less disposed than Markham to seek common ground with middle-class Liberals. As a devout follower of O'Connor,¹⁹⁵ Cooper denounced middle-class attempts to distract working men with campaigns for household suffrage, and especially, for repeal of the Corn Laws. Attempts at reconciliation, however, were fairly constant between 1839 and 1841, before Cooper's arrival in Leicester and accession to power, many of them instigated or encouraged by Mursell, and a number of genuinely-meant attempts to relieve the knitters' distress emanated from Liberal leaders.¹⁹⁶ During a period in which the Chartists had been relatively quiescent, the activity of the middle-class élite had increased. The two years after the 1839 by-election saw them preoccupied with the Church rates battle in St. Margaret's vestry, and the imprisonment of William

¹⁹⁴ Life of Thomas Cooper, p163; Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", pp109-110; S.Roberts, "Thomas Cooper in Leicester 1840-1843", in Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, LXI (1987), pp62-76.

¹⁹⁵ G.D.H.Cole, Chartist Portraits (London 1941), p198.

¹⁹⁶ V.C.H., iv.210; see Patterson, Radical Leicester, p311, for the depths of the economic despair among Leicester's working-classes in the winter of 1839-40, when a quarter of the population was receiving relief. Leicester Chronicle, 22nd February 1840.

Baines.¹⁹⁷ A deliberate effort to regain working-class involvement in middle-class-directed campaigning was also undertaken through anti-Corn Law agitation. Markham and other local Chartist leaders (for example, Swain) had demonstrated some willingness to work with the middle-class against the Corn Laws, although always voicing their doubts that repeal would fundamentally alter the problems of the working-classes.¹⁹⁸ However, a proposal early in 1840 to establish an operatives' branch of the Anti-Corn Law Association aroused Chartist suspicions that the working-classes were being manipulated away from the Charter to work for middle-class interests.¹⁹⁹ As John Mason told a Chartist meeting in 1840:

when we get the Charter we will repeal the Corn Laws and all the other bad laws. But if you give up your agitation for the Charter to help the Free Traders, they will not help you to get the Charter ... "Cheap Bread!" they cry. But they mean "Low Wages".²⁰⁰

At the following meeting of the Anti-Corn Law Association, the Chartists attempted, unsuccessfully, to carry a manhood suffrage amendment, John and William

¹⁹⁷ See Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp247-255 and Fraser, *Urban Politics*, pp49-53.

¹⁹⁸ Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p312.

¹⁹⁹ *Leicestershire Mercury*, 15th, 22nd and 29th February 1840; Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", pp137-138; L.Brown, "The Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League", in A.Briggs (ed.), *Chartist Studies*, pp342-371.

²⁰⁰ *Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp136-137; Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", p137. Mason was a lecturer for the Chartist Association of the Midland Counties: it was at this lecture, which he attended as a *Mercury* reporter, that Cooper was converted to Chartism.

Biggs were shouted down, and Paget, furious, put "a most direct and positive accusation" to Markham that he was in the pay of the Conservatives.²⁰¹ When the Leicester Working Men's Anti-Corn Law Association was founded - with a Chartist and knitters' leader, Finn, as Chairman, and William Jackson as Secretary - it attracted 750 members; their independence from the Liberals was a matter of considerable debate.²⁰²

A common feature of all of the failures to effect a political compromise between middle-class Liberals and working-class Chartists was the ideological chasm between those respectively advocating household and manhood suffrage.²⁰³ William Biggs, whose attack on manhood suffrage at the Anti-Corn Law Association meeting had incensed the Chartists,²⁰⁴ published late in 1839 his own "Plan for the Further Extension and Better Distribution of the Suffrage", in which he reiterated his (and the other Liberals') belief that manhood suffrage - and even complete household suffrage - was

²⁰¹ Leicester Chronicle, 29th February 1840; Leicestershire Mercury, 29th February 1840; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp312-313; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp90-91.

²⁰² N.McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846 (London 1968), pp97-98; Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester", pp137-138.

²⁰³ See G.Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", in Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982 (Cambridge 1982), pp90-178.

²⁰⁴ Leicester Chronicle, 29th February 1840.

not practicable.²⁰⁵ By early 1840, however, Biggs was apparently reconciled to full household suffrage,²⁰⁶ and called a meeting of the Reform Society: by adding the redistribution of seats and a lowering of the property qualification, to the more traditional middle-class objectives of the Ballot and triennial parliaments, Biggs was clearly looking to bridge some of the gap between his own politics and those of the Chartists.²⁰⁷ Markham and other Chartist leaders were divided as to how to respond, although Markham did recommend to Chartists that they support Biggs' petition, to encourage further cooperation and understanding.²⁰⁸ A meaningful coalition was not, however, forthcoming, and with Cooper's succession to the Chartist leadership in 1841 became much less likely.²⁰⁹

Cooper, as editor of the *Midland Counties Illuminator*, launched early in 1841 a full-scale assault on political economy and its apologists, and singled out leading Liberals as directly responsible for working-class distress in Leicester: they had, he

²⁰⁵ W. Biggs, *A Plan for the Further Extension and Better Distribution of the Suffrage (Leicester 1839)*. The pamphlet was addressed to Hume. *Leicester Chronicle*, 2nd November 1840.

²⁰⁶ *Leicester Chronicle*, 4th April 1840; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, pp313-314.

²⁰⁷ *Leicestershire Mercury*, 11th and 18th April 1840; *Leicester Chronicle*, 18th April 1840.

²⁰⁸ *Leicester Chronicle*, 18th April 1840.

²⁰⁹ Brown, "Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League", pp344-5, 357.

argued forcibly, deserted their former political allies of 1831-2 as soon as they had achieved their real aim, municipal reform:

Paget and Brewin might talk ... but their aristocratic bearing forbade a hearty reliance on them by the People ... Who can wonder at the exuberant gratitude of men who have been created Magistrates and Town Councillors ... Finality²¹⁰ knew that such men as the Pagets and Brewins and William Biggses ... would be transformed in a trice into sticklers for "law" and "order" and all that when transformed with the magic wand of "honour" ...²¹¹

To this the Liberals angrily retorted, led by William Biggs in the pages of the Mercury.²¹² Their dismay deepened when it became clear, for instance in the continuing disruptions of Anti-Corn Law Association meetings,²¹³ that some Chartists were working more closely with the Conservatives. At one meeting, Cooper, cheered by both his own supporters and Conservatives, moved an amendment

²¹⁰ I.e. Russell.

²¹¹ Midland Counties Illuminator, 10th April 1841 ("Union of the Middle Classes and Working Men - Is It Probable?"), quoted R.Barnes "The Midland Counties Illuminator", in Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, XXXV (1959), pp68-77. Despite his clashes with them, Cooper was in general an admirer of John and William Biggs - see Life of Thomas Cooper, p144 and Evans, "The Biggs Family", p34.

²¹² Eg. Leicestershire Mercury, 3rd April 1841. Cooper had been sacked from his job as reporter for the Mercury: see Life of Thomas Cooper, pp131-145.

²¹³ Cooper later denied (against the evidence) that he had ever disrupted an anti-Corn Law meeting in Leicester: Life of Thomas Cooper, p181.

That this meeting avows its hearty detestation of the base and deceitful Whigs, and declares that the nation will regard their overthrow as a great national deliverance.

Amidst the clamour, John Biggs, who was now Mayor and also Chairman of the Anti-Corn Law Association, was heard exclaiming that he "was sick to death of hearing the middle classes accused of insincerity", and that the Chartists were being duped by the Tories.²¹⁴

Cooper and Markham were among those Chartists who supported the Conservative John Walters' successful candidacy (fought largely on an anti-Poor Law platform) at the Nottingham by-election early in 1841, both speaking for him, although Cooper later explained that he had told Walter

Don't have a wrong idea of why you are to have Chartist support. We mean to use your party to cut the throats of the Whigs, and then we mean to cut your throats also.²¹⁵

When the general election followed three months later, the Leicester Liberals therefore had good reason to fear a Chartist-Conservative alliance. Cooper had previously approached both O'Connor and Colonel Thompson as potential Chartist candidates (although Thompson's invitation may have been a means of soliciting a contribution towards the costs of the

²¹⁴ Searson, *Liberalism in Leicester*, pp97-98.

²¹⁵ *Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp148-149; Cole, *Chartist Portraits*, p196; B.Kemp, "The General Election of 1841", in *History*, XXXVII (1952), pp146-157.

ailing Illuminator): both had declined.²¹⁶ The Conservatives again had a great deal of difficulty in finding candidates,²¹⁷ but eventually produced Captain Forester, a nephew of the Duke of Rutland.²¹⁸ Leicester was apparently suggested as an alternative seat to Maidstone for the Conservative Benjamin Disraeli; he, however, declined it in favour of Shrewsbury when Leicester's Conservatives informed him the cost was likely to be £2,500.²¹⁹ Forester, it seems, had come forward only in the knowledge that an agreement had already been reached with Cooper. With O'Connor urging Chartists nationally to support Conservatives,²²⁰ the Leicester Chartists, who had negotiated payment with Phillips, were to crowd the hustings and hold up their hands for Forester, who would then withdraw before the poll.²²¹ Cooper agreed to this plan, he later argued, because the Conservative money would "do our poor fellows good" and because he told Phillips

²¹⁶ Leicestershire Mercury, 28th December 1839; Roberts, Thomas Cooper, p65.

²¹⁷ Morning Chronicle, 14th and 21st June 1841.

²¹⁸ Thomas Cooper was convinced that "Captain Forester" was a "dummy" candidate, since he was not present at the nominations: Life of Thomas Cooper, pp152-153.

²¹⁹ J.A.Phillips and C.Wetherell, "The Great Reform Bill of 1832 and the Rise of Partisanship", in Journal of Modern History, 63 (1991), pp621-646 (p639n.).

²²⁰ Kemp, "Election of 1841", pp155-156.

²²¹ Life of Thomas Cooper, pp150-153; Leicestershire Mercury, 19th and 26th June 1841; The Comical Jugglers: A New Comic Drama (Leicester 1841).

the greater number of Chartists will do that for the sake of revenge on the Whigs, without my asking them.²²²

A second Conservative candidate, Spencer Horsey de Horsey, as improbable a politician as his name suggested, appeared at the very last moment.²²³ Easthope and Ellis both defended their seats. At the nominations, Markham proposed Thomas Cooper, who accepted and then immediately withdrew.²²⁴ What happened between the nominations and polling day is far from clear: the Liberal version of events was that Forester and Horsey had been misled by the Conservatives, and, having discovered that they were after all expected to stand a contest (and more importantly, bear the expense), hastily withdrew themselves.²²⁵ The withdrawal, however, more likely followed the original plan as agreed with Cooper. Cooper's decision to take "a considerable sum" (said to be several hundred pounds, although Cooper argued it was no more than thirty pounds), and to accept personal payments from individual Conservatives, opened further divisions within Leicester Chartism: Cooper himself

²²² Life of Thomas Cooper, p150.

²²³ Patterson, Radical Leicester, p322 gives his name as "Hussey de Hussey": all of the papers (including the Morning Chronicle) referred to him as "Horsey de Horsey".

²²⁴ Life of Thomas Cooper, p151; Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, p100.

²²⁵ Morning Chronicle, 30th June 1841; Leicestershire Mercury, 3rd and 10th July 1841; Leicester Journal, 2nd July 1841.

later acknowledged that alliance with the Conservatives had been a tactical error.²²⁶

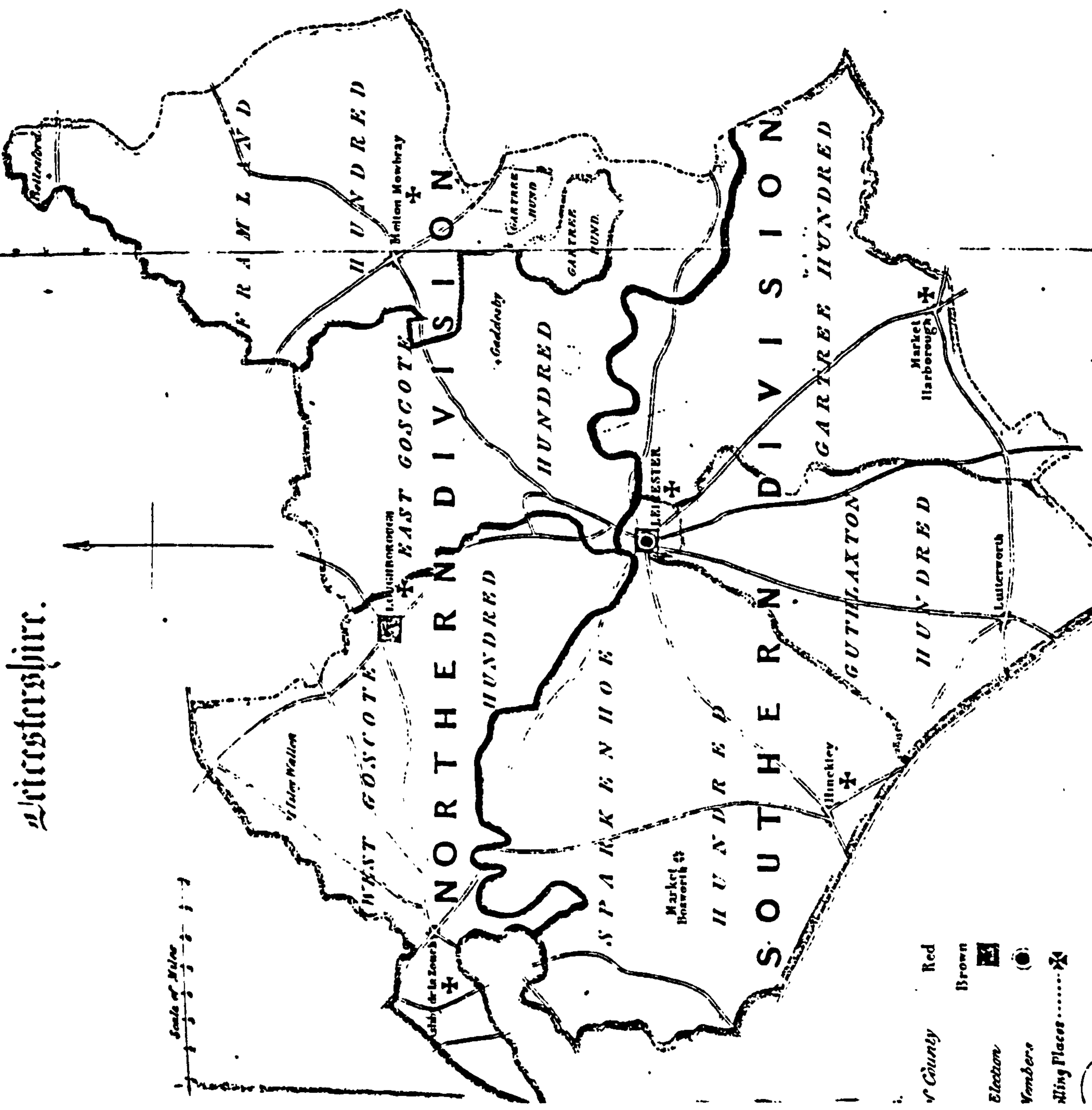
The Chartists were also highly visible, and vocal, at the nominations for the South Leicestershire contest,²²⁷ which saw Leicester Liberals, headed by John Biggs, mounting their first post-Reform challenge to the Conservative's domination of the county division. John Biggs had advocated greater Liberal involvement in county registration for some time, and was Chairman of the Liberal Registration Association for the southern division,²²⁸ but the chief reason given for the unexpected urban intervention into county politics was a desire for revenge against the Conservatives for their forcing of the borough contest in 1839 "without a chance or hope of success".²²⁹ The ideological divide between Tory county and radical borough politics pervaded the contest, Biggs pinning his hopes for the Liberal candidates, Gisborne and Cheney, on the number of urban residents (in the other polling towns of Lutterworth, Hinkley, Market Harborough and Market Bosworth as well as in Leicester) with county votes.

²²⁶ Life of Thomas Cooper, p153; Roberts, Thomas Cooper, p66; Leicestershire Mercury, 11th March 1843.

²²⁷ Searson, Liberalism in Leicester, pp100-101. Cooper was also nominated in the county election.

²²⁸ Leicestershire Mercury, 30th March 1839; D.C.Moore, The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System (Hassocks 1976), pp259-260.

²²⁹ Leicestershire Mercury, 30th March 1839; Moore, Politics of Deference, pp259-260.



Leicestershire.

MAP 5 : North and South Divisions of Leicestershire, 1832. P.P. 1831-2 (141) XXXIX.136

Despite Biggs being proved right as to the Liberalism of urban-dwelling county freeholders in comparison with their rural counterparts,²³⁰ the Conservative M.P.s, Halford and Packe, were comfortably returned.²³¹

From 1841, the parliamentary politics of Leicester and South Leicestershire were set. The Conservative hold on the county division went unopposed until 1867, whilst the borough between 1837 and 1900 returned only one Conservative M.P.²³² Yet the nature of the Liberal support-base in the borough, particularly given the degrees of conflict within and between anti-Conservative groups, remains, from the above account, obscure. Structural and social effects on party support require fuller analysis, if the Liberals' victories of 1837 and 1839 are to be explained in the light of tensions (of various types) within Liberalism after municipal reform, and especially with the economic slump which began in 1837. How was it that the model of political behaviour propounded by William Biggs was so dominant - to the extent that strictly party-based definitions of

²³⁰ See Chapter 7.

²³¹ The South Leicestershire Election of 1841 (Leicester 1841); Leicestershire Mercury, 26th June and 3rd and 10th July 1841; Leicester Chronicle, 3rd, 10th and 17th July 1841; Moore, Politics of Deference, pp260-262; Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp322-323.

²³² The one Conservative M.P. for Leicester was returned at the 1861 by-election, as a result of inter-Liberal conflicts: V.C.H., iv.205; M.Stenton and J.Vincent (eds.), McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book of All Elections 1832-1918 (Brighton 1971), pp167-169 (Part I), pp148-149 (Part II).

partisanship had eradicated structurally non-partisan forms of electoral behaviour from the pollbooks by 1837? A longitudinal view of electoral participation, showing the mechanics of the Liberal (and Conservative) vote, will be required to complement the picture given here of the contexts within which voting took place.²³³

²³³ See Chapter 6.

