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**ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BERWICK-UPON-TWEED,  
1832 - 1885**

**MICHAEL JOHN WICKHAM**

Submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of M. Phil.

History Department, 2002

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Electoral Politics in Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1832 - 1885**

**Michael Wickham**

The aim of this study is to paint a comprehensive picture of electoral politics during a period of significant historical change. By focusing on a small, open, two-member borough, it is hoped that an evaluation can be made of the various developments which took place in the English electoral system between the Reform Act of 1832 and the Redistribution Act of 1885. In order to achieve this, it was decided to examine five different aspects of Berwick's parliamentary representation during these years, namely, the candidates, the electors, election procedure, election issues and electoral corruption. At the same time it was necessary to refer to other investigations into electoral politics, so that the Berwick experience could be placed in a national context.

Chapter 1 takes account of recent work on electoral history and considers some of the methodological and conceptual problems involved in the study of nineteenth-century electoral politics.

Chapter 2 traces the development of the political press in the Victorian era and suggests that, despite the problem of political bias, newspapers can provide the historian with valuable insights into the conduct of nineteenth-century electoral politics.

Chapter 3 discusses the selection procedure for parliamentary candidates and examines the personal qualities that were considered desirable in a candidate. It then attempts to analyse the extent to which these qualities contributed to the electoral success of a candidate.

Chapter 4 examines the nature and voting behaviour of the Berwick electorate between 1832 and 1874. With the help of poll books, which recorded the way in which individual electors voted, it is possible to discover useful information on such features as the size and occupational composition of the electorate, electoral participation, the voting behaviour of occupational categories, cross-party voting, voting consistency and the voting preferences of freemen and ten-pound householders.

Chapter 5 examines the ceremonial aspects of elections, beginning with the registration of voters and ending with the post-election entertainments. Elections were a major event in the life of the community, involving electors and non-electors alike. However, by the end of the period electoral procedure had become less ritualistic, and the part played by the disfranchised had been severely restricted. The chapter discusses these changes and the legislation which brought them about.

Chapter 6 explores election issues, such as parliamentary reform, free trade and religion, and assesses their role in determining the outcome of elections at Berwick.

Chapter 7 discusses the nature of electoral corruption in the post-reform period and the principal steps taken to eliminate corrupt practices. It also examines Berwick's reputation for venality, paying particular attention to the report of the 1861 Royal Commission at Berwick, and evaluates the effect of corruption on voting behaviour in the borough.

"The only true history of a country is to be found in its newspapers."

Lord Macaulay.

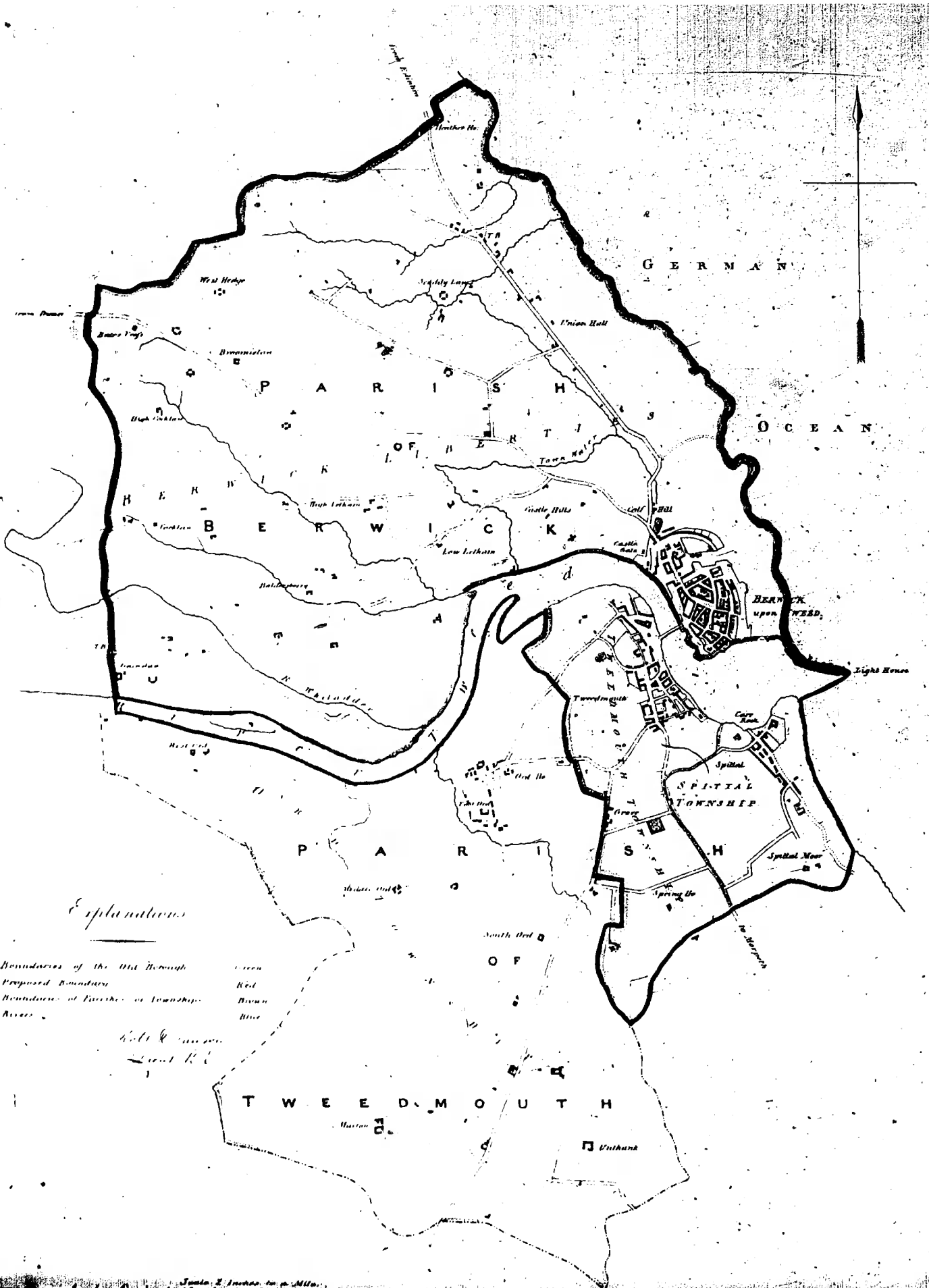
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my gratitude to the following people for their advice and assistance during the course of this research: Mr. Alan Heesom, my supervisor, whose wise counsel and extensive knowledge in the field of electoral politics has been essential to the completion of this thesis; the staff of the Northumberland Record Office, in particular Mrs. Linda Bankier at Berwick and Mr. Keith Gilroy at Gosforth; Mr. David Brenchley, who kindly allowed me access to his draft chapter on Berwick politics in the eighteenth century prior to the publication of his book, *A Place By Itself*, the staff of the British Newspaper Library at Colindale; and, finally, to my family and friends for their encouragement and perseverance throughout the period of my research.

# THE PARLIAMENTARY BOROUGH OF BERWICK-UPON-TWEED



## Explanations

- Boundaries of the Old Borough
- Proposed Boundaries
- Boundaries of Parishes or Townships
- Rivers
- Roads

Scale 2 inches to a Mile

T W E E D M O U T H

Unthank



**ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BERWICK-UPON-TWEED,  
1832 - 1885**

**MICHAEL JOHN WICKHAM**

Submitted to the University of Durham for the degree of M. Phil.

History Department, 2002

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## INTRODUCTION

This investigation into the electoral politics of Berwick during the nineteenth century has five objectives: first, to examine the process by which parliamentary candidates were selected, as well as the personal qualities considered essential to their electoral success; second, to analyse the nature and voting behaviour of the electorate; third, to look at the ritualistic aspects of elections and their significance; fourth, to assess the importance of election issues and their effect on voting behaviour; and, finally, to inquire into the nature of corruption and evaluate its impact on election results.

Recent studies of electoral politics have tended to focus on elections in a number of constituencies during a ten or twenty year period.<sup>1</sup> Such an approach obviously has its advantages. It allows, for instance, comparisons to be made between the constituencies involved. In contrast, this study concentrates on a single constituency over a fifty-year period. This method also has its merits. Most importantly, it enables the student of electoral politics to develop a comprehensive picture of one constituency over a prolonged period of historical change. The half-century which elapsed between the First Reform Act and the Redistribution Act saw significant developments in the English electoral system, with extensions to the franchise occurring in 1832, 1867 and 1884, and innovations in the conduct of elections taking place in 1854, 1868, 1872 and 1883. Other changes, such as the growing importance of national issues, also took place during these years. Yet, at the same time, many of the features of the old electoral system, such as corruption and locality, continued to exert their influence upon electoral politics. As with all historical eras, the story is one of change and continuity.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Mohamed Adel Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Lancaster, 1991); Paula K. V. Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence: Voting Behaviour in Four English Constituencies in the Decade After the Great Reform Act", (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Durham, 1992); and P. J. Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work: local politics and national parties, 1832 - 1841" (Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1997).



Crucial to this investigation was a thorough examination of local newspaper sources, which contain a wealth of information on the electoral process, election issues and on major figures in the political life of the borough. Some of these newspapers can be found in local record offices; some can only be located at the Newspaper Library at Colindale. Another invaluable source is the collection of poll books, which is also to be found locally and at the Institute of Historical Research. These poll books record how individual electors voted and are a vital source in analysing voting behaviour, especially if they are used in conjunction with other sources. Perhaps one area of weakness in this study is the lack of manuscript sources. This is indeed unfortunate, but it is also unavoidable. Apart from some valuable insights into the conduct of Berwick elections in the Cowen Papers, it has proved impossible to discover any further manuscript information specifically related to electoral politics in the borough.

Nevertheless, Berwick is a perfectly legitimate choice for an inquiry into politics at the constituency level. Apart from the ready availability of newspaper sources and the existence of most of the poll books of the period, there are other reasons for selecting Berwick. As England's most northerly constituency, it was the one which was furthest from the metropolis. Consequently, it was arguably less likely to be influenced by the events and ideas which emanated from London. As a border town, which during the middle ages constantly changed hands between the rival kingdoms of England and Scotland, Berwick can certainly claim to have had its own, unique character. In the eighteenth century Edmund Burke described the borough as "a place by itself".<sup>2</sup> This description holds good for much of the nineteenth century too. It might even explain why histories of that period have tended to ignore the town. A case in point is McCord and Carrick's account of

---

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, September 1786, cited in David Brenchley, *A Place By Itself: Berwick-upon-Tweed in the Eighteenth Century* (Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1997), p. ii.

Northumberland during the 1852 general election, which examines all the constituencies in the county, except Berwick.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in his examination of the region's newspapers during the "Golden Age" of the provincial press, Maurice Milne alludes to the various weeklies of Alnwick, Blyth, Hexham, Morpeth, Newcastle, Shields and Tynemouth, but makes no mention of any of Berwick's newspapers.<sup>4</sup> Such blatant omissions would suggest that a modern account of Berwick in the nineteenth century is long overdue.

In addition to its uniqueness, Berwick is a suitable choice because of its electoral nature. As a former freeman borough, not only did it combine the old with the new after 1832, but it also earned a name for itself as a volatile and a venal borough. Its volatility is a distinct advantage from a psephological point of view, because it means that every election between 1832 and 1881 bar one was vigorously contested by the major parties. Consequently, there is a great deal of material on electioneering in the borough. Its venality is of interest, because it invites an analysis of voting behaviour, in order to evaluate the impact that bribery, treating and undue influence had upon the outcome of elections. Recent research has suggested that this may have been less decisive than was once thought.<sup>5</sup> This investigation will endeavour to throw further light on that particular issue in the context of an individual constituency.

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<sup>3</sup> McCord, N. and Carrick, A. E., "Northumberland in the General Election of 1852", in *Northern History*, I (1966), pp. 92 - 108.

<sup>4</sup> M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham: A study of their progress during the 'Golden Age' of the provincial Press* (Newcastle).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, M. A. Manai, "Influence, Corruption and Electoral Behaviour in the Mid Nineteenth Century: a case study of Lancaster, 1847 - 1865", in *Northern History*, XXIX (1993), p. 161; and John Phillips, "Unintended Consequences: Parliamentary Blueprints in the Hands of Provincial Builders", in *Parliamentary History*, 17 (1998), part 1, pp. 92 - 105.

## THE BERWICK ECONOMY

Berwick lies on the north bank of the river Tweed, in the county of Northumberland, and on the border between England and Scotland. It is fifty-seven miles from Edinburgh and sixty-four miles from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. An old established seaport, Berwick had grown prosperous during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, because of the need to provide food for the expanding urban population of industrial Britain. Fish, especially salmon and herrings, and agricultural produce from North Northumberland and the Tweed valley, were exported in the town's fleet of sailing smacks down the east coast to London. At the end of the eighteenth century about 27,000 quarters of corn were exported from the port of Berwick. By 1820 this figure had risen to 62,000 quarters and by 1839 it stood at 85,000 quarters.<sup>6</sup> There was also a large exportation of eggs, which in 1816 was worth about £30,000. However, by the late 1820s Berwick's coastal trade was in decline. Competition from abroad and from the Scottish port of Leith destroyed much of the town's carrying trade, so that by 1828 there were only seven trading smacks in regular service.<sup>7</sup>

Berwick's commerce was further affected by the coming of the railway, which, although it provided some employment, tended to drain trade away to Edinburgh and Newcastle.<sup>8</sup> By 1861 the port's shipping was almost entirely confined to the importation of timber, manures and seeds.<sup>9</sup> A quarter of a century later, the local historian John Scott mournfully observed that, despite the building of a new dock at Tweedmouth and improvements to the harbour, "trade does not flow

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<sup>6</sup> J. Scott, *Berwick-Up-on-Tweed: The History of the Town and Guild* (London, 1888), p. 233.

<sup>7</sup> N. McCord, *North East England: The Region's Development 1760 - 1960* (London, 1979), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> C. Fraser and K. Emsley, *Northumbria* (Chichester, Sussex, 1989; first published 1978), p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Existence of Bribery at the Election for a Member to Serve in Parliament for the Town of Berwick-upon-Tweed; Together with the Minutes of Evidence* (henceforth referred to as *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*), p. v.

to the old town, and at no period in its history have the signs of decay been more largely written than in the year 1887."<sup>10</sup>

Although the town possessed some small-scale industry in the form of iron foundries and chemical works on the south bank of the Tweed and coal mining at Scremerston, the fisheries and its subsidiary trades continued to provide the principal source of employment throughout our period.<sup>11</sup>

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ELECTORAL HISTORY OF BERWICK**

The parliamentary borough of Berwick, which had enjoyed the privilege of returning members to Parliament since the reign of Henry VIII, comprised Berwick proper, the agricultural district known as the "Bounds", lying between Berwick and Scotland on the north side, and the townships of Tweedmouth and Spittal on the south side of the Tweed. Before 1832 the electorate consisted exclusively of the freemen of the borough, who in that year numbered about 1,100, of whom 600 were non-resident.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, it included only those freemen who lived within a seven-mile radius of the borough, as well as the ten-pound householders of the town. Despite the addition of these new voters, the size of the electorate declined after 1832 and did not rise above the pre-1832 figure until the Second Reform Act in 1867.

During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Berwick's Corporation increasingly lost the ability and will to secure the nomination of local candidates for election to Parliament. However, the landowning interest was still

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<sup>10</sup> Scott, *Berwick-Upon-Tweed: The History of the Town and Guild*, p. 233.

<sup>11</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. v.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. v - vi.

strongly represented. John Fordyce (Tory), Alexander Lockhart (Tory) and Admiral David Milne (Tory) owned estates in Scotland; while Francis Sitwell (Tory), Henry St. Paul (Tory), Charles Bennet, Lord Ossulton (Whig) and Sir Francis Blake (Whig) were members of families with substantial land interests in north Northumberland.<sup>13</sup>

In the years prior to reform Berwick's parliamentary representation had generally been divided between the Whigs and the Tories. In 1832, however, the Whigs upset this balance when both of their candidates, Sir Rufane Donkin and Sir Francis Blake of nearby Tillmouth Park, were returned by a narrow majority:

Sir Rufane Shaw DONKIN (Whig)	371
Sir Francis BLAKE, Bt. (Whig)	357
Lt. Col. Marcus Beresford (Tory)	345

Two years later the equilibrium was restored, when the Conservative James Bradshaw headed the poll by 60 votes. In 1837 the Conservatives displayed their growing strength by returning Richard Hodgson and William Holmes. This election marked the beginning of Hodgson's long, though not always happy association with Berwick.

The 1840s saw a return to shared representation with Matthew Forster winning and then retaining one seat for the Liberals and Hodgson and John Campbell Renton respectively winning the other seat for the Conservatives. The 1847 election was marred by Hodgson's desertion of the borough in favour of Newcastle, a decision which upset many of his supporters and was to rebound on him in subsequent years.

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<sup>13</sup> Sir L. Airey, Rt. Hon. A. Beith, M.P., D. Brenchley, J. Marlow and T. Skelly, *Berwick in Parliament: a history of the representation of Berwick in the House of Commons 1529 - 2001* (Berwick-upon-Tweed History Society, 2001), p. 24.

In 1852 the Liberals for the first time managed to take both seats in a landslide victory, accruing 747 votes to the Conservatives' 461. Although the election was later declared null and void on the grounds of Liberal bribery and treating, 1852 marked the beginning of a lengthy period of Liberal dominance. At the by-election in 1853 they scored another resounding victory by amassing 505 votes more than their opponents:

Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS (Lib)	473
John FORSTER (Lib)	385
John Campbell Renton (Con)	196
Richard Hodgson (Con)	157

Nevertheless, the Conservatives were always a force to be reckoned with and they won back the borough in 1859 with Charles W. Gordon and Ralph E. Earle. Although Earle's tenure was short-lived (he resigned three months after his election amid rumours of a corrupt compromise), the Conservatives managed to hold onto one seat until the two Liberals Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks and Alexander Mitchell were returned in 1865. The Liberals retained their supremacy until the local landowner David Milne Home (whose grandfather had briefly represented Berwick during the 1820s) regained one of the seats for the Conservatives in 1874.

In March 1880 the Liberals bounced back to gain both seats, but when their representative Henry Strutt succeeded to the peerage a few months later, they were unable to retain the second seat, their candidate, John McLaren, being defeated by only two votes by the Conservative Milne Home:

Captain David Milne HOME (Con)	584
Rt. Hon. John McLaren (Lib)	582

(After a scrutiny it was found that there were 581 votes for McLaren)

For the next four years the two parties once again shared the representation of the borough. However, this came to an end with the Redistribution Act of 1885, when Berwick lost one of its seats and was merged into the Berwick Division of Northumberland. Initially, the creation of the new constituency strengthened the position of the Liberals. Sir Edward Grey held the seat from 1885 until his retirement in 1916. Although he was succeeded by another Liberal, Sir Francis Blake, the party's fortunes began to change during the 1920s, when the appearance of Labour candidates divided the non-Conservative vote and led to a series of Conservative victories over the Liberals.<sup>14</sup>

The Liberal dominance during the second half of the nineteenth century owed much to the fact that Berwick was a stronghold of religious dissent. In 1832, for example, the town possessed eight Nonconformist meeting-houses and only one Anglican church, the principal denomination being Presbyterianism. Yet despite the numerical superiority of the Liberal dissenters, the alliance between the Anglican Church and the Conservative party was always a force to be reckoned with in the town's political life. Not only could the Conservatives rely on the support of the freemen, who until the Second Reform Act accounted for about half of the constituency, but they could also count on the backing of a sizable minority of the householders from Berwick proper. In contrast, the householders of Tweedmouth and Spittal were overwhelmingly Liberal in outlook.

Electoral irregularities had long been a feature of Berwick's political life. Before reform there had been election petitions in 1802, 1803, 1820, 1826 and 1830. Two of these (1820 and 1826) had been successful, resulting in a re-election. Despite hopes that the 1832 Reform Act would herald an age of electoral purity, corruption continued unabated. There were further petitions in 1837, 1852, 1857, 1859 (twice), 1863 and 1880. One of these (1852) led to a re-election, whilst

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<sup>14</sup> Airey, Beith, Brenchley, Marlow and Skelly, *Berwick in Parliament*, p.5.

the other (1859) resulted in the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into corrupt practices in the borough. Eventually, but only towards the end of our period, legislation for the elimination of electoral corruption began to take effect, and Berwick's longstanding notoriety as a venal borough was succeeded by a more wholesome image.

Berwick's reputation for venality could be a deterrent for any prospective candidate who did not possess sufficient funds to maintain an electoral interest in the borough. Consequently, those who possessed a substantial landed interest were always in a good position to contest a seat at Berwick. Local landowners from the borders like the Conservatives John Campbell Renton and David Milne Home and the Liberal Alexander Mitchell were generally successful. Career politicians had mixed fortunes. William Holmes, a Conservative Whip, was Berwick's member of Parliament for four years, while Ralph A. Earle, a former secretary of Disraeli's, prevailed for only three months before resigning. Not surprisingly in a garrison town, ex-military men usually did well. Lt. Col. Marcus Beresford (Conservative), Sir Rufane Donkin (Liberal), Captain Charles W. Gordon (Conservative) and Lord Bury (Liberal) all served Berwick at Westminster.

However, it was the commercial interest which became increasingly important in Berwick's parliamentary representation. Matthew Forster, who represented the borough for eleven years, and his son John (Liberal) had mining interests in south Durham as well as trade interests in West Africa. Richard Hodgson (Conservative) had commercial interests in Newcastle and was the Chairman of the North British Railway Company from 1855 to 1866. John Stapleton (Liberal), was the Deputy-Governor of the ill-fated Royal British Bank, and Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks (Liberal), who was the town's longest-serving member during our period, was a partner in the brewery firm Meux and Company



and a director of the East India Company.

**CHAPTER 1: ELECTORAL POLITICS IN ENGLAND  
BETWEEN THE FIRST REFORM ACT AND  
THE REDISTRIBUTION ACT:  
THE STATE OF THE INTERPRETATIVE DEBATE**

Recent historical scholarship regarding nineteenth-century electoral politics is divided into two schools of thought: the "politics of influence" and the "politics of opinion". Whereas the former sees patronage, deference, bribery and intimidation as significant determinants of voting behaviour; the latter assumes that voters were individuals who acted in an open-minded and politically-motivated manner when they went to the polls.

Those historians who have attempted to explain the electorate's political preferences in terms of external influence have tended to base their arguments on evidence garnered from investigations into class, occupation, religion, age group, family and community. Their emphasis on sociological factors has tended to deny the importance of other factors, such as party organisation, issues, personal appeal and locality.

Perhaps the leading proponent of the class-based approach to political allegiance is R. S. Neale, whose study of the shoemaking industry in Bath from 1831 to 1851 revealed that stratification based on the estimated gross rental of houses and property had an important bearing on voting behaviour. In his analysis of the 1847 election Neale found that the majority of shoemakers who voted for the Radical candidate Roebuck occupied houses with a gross rental of less than £19 per annum; whereas almost half of those who supported the Conservative candidate Ashley occupied houses with a gross rental of over £30 per annum. While Ashley's supporters included all the wealthiest shoemakers in the city, men

who were master shoemakers and employers of labour, most of Roebuck's supporters were probably journeymen, who barely qualified for the franchise.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to Neale, other historians are convinced that there was no real class basis for voting behaviour. J. R. Vincent, for instance, asserts that since the Victorian electorate was pre-industrial, there was no foundation for class conflict of a Marxist nature. Classes did exist, but they were "operational collectivities" seeking through the electoral system to achieve general changes in the structure of the political and religious order.<sup>16</sup> Thus Vincent's interpretation of voting behaviour is occupation-based. Occupational interests, such as shoemakers, rarely divided their political allegiances, because, regardless of wealth, "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."<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, T. J. Nossiter rejects the view that voting behaviour was class-based, observing that "There was much less basis for a class war between capital and labour at the polls than for a status struggle between the lower and upper middle class."<sup>18</sup> He found that when the electorate was analysed in terms of party support by occupation, there were "distinct signs that the major parties of Radical-Liberal, Whig and Tory attracted disproportionate support from occupational groups."<sup>19</sup> However, Nossiter also warned that occupation was "a rather imprecise category", and suggested that "the investigation of the importance of social determinants of voting can be sharpened by using more accurate indicators of

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<sup>15</sup> R. S. Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (London and Boston, 1972), p. 69 - 70.

<sup>16</sup> J. R. Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> T. J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England: Case Studies from the North-east 1832 - 74* (Hassocks, 1975), p. 167.

<sup>19</sup> T. J. Nossiter, "Voting Behaviour 1832 - 1872", in Michael Drake (ed.), *Applied Historical Studies: An Introductory Reader* (London, 1973), p. 254.

income and social standing, such as housing and servants".<sup>20</sup>

Andrew Phillips also emphasises the importance of occupation as a determinant of voting behaviour. In his study of Colchester elections in the mid-Victorian period, he takes issue with the notion of a class-based vote, pointing out that it was not possible to distinguish between master and man in the numerous crafts which still dominated the town in 1871. Besides, the small workshop was the norm and the number of large employers was very few, so that the characteristic relationship of most of Colchester's electors towards each other was that of buyer and seller, not of employer and employed.<sup>21</sup>

However, despite this emphasis on the importance of occupation as an indicator of political preference, more recent poll book analysis has questioned this apparent correlation. As Miles Taylor has remarked, the use of rate books has enabled historians to trace the ratable value of properties occupied by voters, resulting in the revelation of a wide discrepancy between different voters from the same trade.<sup>22</sup> For instance, Radice found a distinct lack of social homogeneity within the ranks of the householder electorate in both Leicester and Guildford and concludes that "It is in fact more difficult to perceive such occupational interests than Vincent suggested."<sup>23</sup> Phillips has expressed similar doubts. His research on occupational voting in six English boroughs over a twenty-three year period led him to the conclusion that "Neither occupation nor relative economic status was generally and systematically related to the political preferences of the enfranchised

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<sup>20</sup>Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 171.

<sup>21</sup> A. Phillips, "Four Colchester Elections: Voting Behaviour in a Victorian Market Town", in K. Neale (ed.), *An Essex Tribute* (London, 1987), p. 204.

<sup>22</sup> M. Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (ed.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> P. K. V. Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence: Voting Behaviour in Four English Constituencies in the Decade After the Great Reform Act", (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Durham, 1992), pp. 26 and 42.

either before or after Reform."<sup>24</sup>

The importance of religious affiliation in determining political allegiance has been stressed by a number of writers, although evidence is suggestive, rather than conclusive. In his study of popular Liberalism in Rochdale, Vincent claimed that during the period 1832 - 67 religious divisions "were the essence of the town's politics."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, R. J. Morris discovered that among high-status groups in Leeds in the early 1830s "sectarian loyalty was a powerful but by no means decisive influence on political behaviour."<sup>26</sup> Other studies only serve to confirm these findings. P. F. Clarke's analysis of voting behaviour among the dissenters of England and Wales showed that by the 1860s "the commitment of Nonconformity to the Liberal party was fairly firm";<sup>27</sup> whilst Andrew Phillips's study of Colchester found that by 1868 Anglican churchmen voted Conservative and Nonconformists, except for the Wesleyans, voted Liberal.<sup>28</sup> In his examination of school board elections in 1871, which were fought along religious lines, Nossiter discovered a significant correlation between religious affiliation and voting behaviour in the towns of Leeds, Newcastle and Sunderland, but concluded that religion "overrode other factors only where dissent and anglicanism was particularly strong."<sup>29</sup> And Patrick Joyce's inquiry into the voting habits of factory workers in the textile towns of northern England during the later Victorian period concluded that, "However nominal it was, a man's religion was the surest guide to his politics."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour 1818 - 1841* (Oxford, 1992), p. 240.

<sup>25</sup> J. R. Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857 - 1868* (London, 1966), p. 106.

<sup>26</sup> R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party* (Manchester, 1990), p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> P. F. Clarke, "Electoral Sociology of Modern Britain", *History*, 57 (1972), p. 46.

<sup>28</sup> A. Phillips, "Four Colchester Elections: Voting Behaviour in a Victorian Market Town", p. 214.

<sup>29</sup> T. J. Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", in E. Allardt and S. Rokkan (ed.), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York, 1980), p. 180.

<sup>30</sup> P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: the culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London, 1980), p. 240.

More recently, Radice's analysis of voting behaviour in four English constituencies during the decade after the First Reform Act produced some interesting results. In Guildford, for instance, she used nominal record linkage to compile a panel of Dissenting voters for the period 1830 to 1841 and found them to be "emphatically Liberal supporters."<sup>31</sup> In Durham City and the county division of North Durham she found that Anglican clergymen "were in 1837 overwhelmingly Conservative voters".<sup>32</sup> Finally, in Leicester an examination of the voting of the Anglican clergy and Dissenting ministers in 1837 showed that 85.7 per cent of the Anglicans voted Conservative, while 91.7 per cent of the Dissenters voted Liberal.<sup>33</sup>

Although most historians would undoubtedly accept that there was a correlation between religious denomination and electoral behaviour, it has recently been suggested that this link may not be as significant as some psephologists have claimed. Only in a handful of large boroughs (namely, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, Northampton and Rochdale) did Nonconformists outnumber Anglicans and consequently were able to exert their influence on the composition of the local parliamentary representation. Elsewhere Nonconformists were in the minority and therefore failed to make the kind of impact on the constituency politics of the large boroughs that poll book analysis would lead one to expect.<sup>34</sup>

Explanations of voting behaviour in terms of class, occupation and religion while allowing for the existence of some form of external influence, do at least allocate the voter an element of choice in the way he cast his votes. Some historians, however, have rejected the notion that voting was based on individualistic concerns. Instead, they have underlined the importance of influence

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<sup>31</sup> Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", p. 297.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", pp. 62 - 3.

and corruption as determinants of voting behaviour, suggesting that the aristocracy, the gentry, the Church, the universities, the legal profession, the civil service and commercial interests all continued to exert some form of control over electoral politics during the nineteenth century. D. C. Moore, for instance, investigated the impact of the First Reform Act in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire and found that by preserving the rural nature of these county constituencies, the Act had reinforced the deferential nature of the county electorate.<sup>35</sup> He admits that the relationships of rural society undoubtedly provided a stronger basis for influence than those of urban society, since in the countryside such relationships reinforced each other more frequently, and probably more intensively, than was the case in the towns. Nevertheless, the differences seem to have been more of degree than of kind.<sup>36</sup>

H. J. Hanham has also emphasised the importance of influence, arguing that the economic prosperity of the mid-Victorian period revived the attitude of deference, which was so characteristic of nineteenth-century English society and "which had the effect of prolonging the privileges of the aristocracy and the landed gentry."<sup>37</sup> According to Hanham, this deferential attitude was to be found not only in the counties, but also the boroughs, where:

The influence of employers over their own workmen was of such an all-pervading nature that there was rarely any question of bringing pressure to bear on them to force them to vote for their masters. The workman would normally vote for his employer because he knew him, because he respected him (or at least regarded him as a symbol of authority), because it was universally expected of him, because the livelihood of so many men depended on the employer that his interests seemed akin to theirs, and not infrequently because

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<sup>35</sup> D. C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System* (Hassocks, 1976).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (London, 1959), pp. xiv - xv.

the employer and employee shared the same political views.<sup>38</sup>

A more recent study by Patrick Joyce has applied the deference model to the factory workers of Blackburn and Bury. Joyce traced the street patterns of voting in these towns and found that they corresponded very closely with the siting of Liberal and Conservative workplaces. He concludes:

All this evidence strongly suggests that the factory functioned as a political force because it represented a common life. Factory voting expressed the allegiance of the entirety of a workforce and not that of a segment within it.<sup>39</sup>

However, there was a limit to the role of influence in determining electoral behaviour. In his examination of seven Aylesbury elections between 1847 and 1859, R. W. Davis was able to draw some interesting conclusions about the relative importance of influence, coercion and principle during this period. Working with a sample of about 45 per cent of the 570-strong electorate, Davis found that only about a hundred (18 per cent) were the tenants of great aristocratic landowners, squires and clergymen. There was no major landlord in the town, "and it was clear from the votes of their tenants that the numerous landlords who owned one to half a dozen houses did not make their own political opinions a condition of tenancy."<sup>40</sup>

Other writers have shown the limitations of influence by portraying the voter as a free agent and not merely the client of a powerful landlord or employer. Thus Frank O'Gorman has argued that in unreformed England the politics of deference was a two-way process: in exchange for his political loyalty, the voter demanded

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<sup>38</sup> Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, p. 77.

<sup>39</sup> Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, p. 210.

<sup>40</sup> R. W. Davis, *Political Change and Continuity 1760 - 1885: A Buckinghamshire Study* (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 173.



paternalistic services of many kinds from his landlord.<sup>41</sup> Any landlord who took his tenant's loyalty for granted did so at his peril.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the influence of the Earl of Yarborough over the tenant farmers of North Lincolnshire in the 1850s did not arise entirely from the fact that he was the largest landowner in Lindsey, but owed much to the large sums of money he subscribed to local causes and charities, his freemasonry, his investment in the Brocklesby Hunt and the major public undertakings to which he had devoted himself, such the passing of the General Inclosure Act of 1845, the creation of the port of Gainsborough and the building of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, David Eastwood has emphasised the participatory nature of electoral politics in rural county constituencies after 1832, pointing out that "Crucially . . . land did not, of itself, bestow significant influence. Influence was only real when carefully cultivated."<sup>44</sup> According to Eastwood, resident landowners who cultivated their interests "through careful public patronage and conspicuous expenditure on projects of public as well as private advantage, often attained a political authority far beyond that exercised by richer, grander absentee landowners."<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, in another recent analysis of county politics, Philip Salmon argues that rural electoral transactions can not be explained by the simple expedients of deference and dependence. "Rural elections were just as complex and just as

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<sup>41</sup> F. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734 - 1832* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 225 - 6.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 245 - 6.

<sup>43</sup> R. J. Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832 - 1885* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 43 - 4.

<sup>44</sup> D. Eastwood, "Contesting the politics of deference: the rural electorate, 1820 - 60", in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (ed.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, (Aldershot, 1997), p. 43.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

genuinely participatory events as their borough counterparts."<sup>46</sup>

Another determinant of voting behaviour which has been considered by historians is bribery. Evidence that this practice was widespread, even after the Reform Act of 1832, can be found in the accounts of nineteenth-century commentators; and modern scholars, like Norman Gash and H. J. Hanham, have shown unequivocally that venality was very much a part of the electoral process during this period.<sup>47</sup> However, as Gash himself observes, "bribery was rarely the only factor deciding the issue."<sup>48</sup> This point has been taken a step further by Mohamed Manai, whose investigation into corrupt practices in Lancaster in the mid-nineteenth century, and their impact on voting behaviour, has led him to the conclusion that, although bribery was endemic in the borough, it did not have a significant bearing on the way in which a voter disposed of his votes. Very rarely did a voter sell out to the highest bidder, choosing instead to take his bribe from the side he would have supported in any case.<sup>49</sup> Further research only serves to confirm Manai's findings. Vincent and Nossiter, for instance, both assign a limited role to bribery as an indicator of political preference.<sup>50</sup>

It has also been argued that election issues had a significant impact on voting behaviour. In other words, voters made a political decision when they went to the polls and voted, not as members of a social status group or clients of an economic power, but as individuals following the dictates of their own conscience. This is certainly the view of John Phillips, whose analysis of electoral behaviour in

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<sup>46</sup> P. J. Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work: local politics and national parties, 1832 - 1841" (Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1997), p. 280.

<sup>47</sup> *Politics in the Age of Peel: A study in the Techniques of Parliamentary Representation 1830 - 1850* (Hassocks, 1977; first published 1953); and H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*.

<sup>48</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 154.

<sup>49</sup> M. A. Manai, "Influence, Corruption and Electoral Behaviour in the Mid Nineteenth Century: a case study of Lancaster, 1847 - 1865", in *Northern History*, XXIX (1993), p. 161.

<sup>50</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, p. 11; and Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 170.

eight English boroughs between 1818 and 1841 reveals the varying impact of the issue of parliamentary reform. Phillips found that reform strengthened political awareness and heightened the polarisation of the electorate in Bristol, Maidstone, Colchester, Shrewsbury and Northampton, although it had little impact on Lewes and Great Yarmouth, since these boroughs were fiercely partisan before 1832.<sup>51</sup> There was, however, a limit to the impact of election issues. In Beverly, for instance, reform failed to change traditional non-partisan voting habits, and electors continued "to be dominated by considerations that had little, perhaps nothing, to do with the parliamentary parties, specific issues, or political principles."<sup>52</sup>

The importance of election issues as a determinant of voting behaviour has also been suggested by R. W. Davis in his study of Buckinghamshire from 1760 to 1885. Davis holds that issues such as municipal reform, church reform, the further easing of Dissenting disabilities and the Corn Laws all had a significant impact on electoral behaviour in Buckinghamshire during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>53</sup>

Mohamed Manai also asserts that issues and policies were, in their own right, powerful and occasionally decisive indicators of electoral behaviour. "Free Trade, reform and foreign policy all determined to some extent election outcomes in Lancaster, Oldham and Rochdale during the period 1847 - 1865".<sup>54</sup>

Even in the counties, where influence was more prominent than in the boroughs, election issues could have a telling impact on voting behaviour. J. R. Fisher's analysis of the South Nottinghamshire by-elections of 1846 and 1851

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<sup>51</sup> Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>53</sup> Davis, *Political Change and Continuity 1760 - 1885*, p. 103.

<sup>54</sup> M. A. Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Lancaster, 1991), p. 250.

shows the predominance of issues over aristocratic influence. In both by-elections the farmers' candidates defeated the candidates of the landed aristocracy. The two contests were seen by contemporaries as a protest against the effects of Free Trade and showed the farmers' rejection of their traditional leaders among the landed classes, because of the latter's inability to prevent the repeal of the Corn Laws.<sup>55</sup> This demonstration of the strength of rural opinion on the issue of agricultural protection is especially significant, because it occurred in one of the most aristocratic counties in England.

It has also been observed that party organisation had an impact on voting behaviour. After 1832 the newly enfranchised had to register their entitlement before they could vote. However, as Salmon has shown, the complexities and costs of registering a voter contributed to a high level of voter indifference in the immediate aftermath of reform. For every five votes who claimed the franchise in 1832, there were as many as three who failed to register their claim.<sup>56</sup> This indifference led to the establishment of local political associations and registration committees, whose main task was to attend to the registration of voters.

After the unexpected election of 1835, the enfranchisement of unregistered supporters by local party agents became critical. According to Salmon, at the 1835 registration revision the county electorate rose by as much as 22 per cent, while the borough electorate increased by 10 per cent.<sup>57</sup> Party organisation in general and voter registration in particular had become essential to a party's chances of electoral success. As one contemporary remarked, "Organisation and management will beat the strongest party that ventures to rely upon political

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<sup>55</sup> J. R. Fisher, "Issues and Influence: Two By-Elections in South Nottinghamshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century", *Historical Journal*, 24 (1981), p. 155.

<sup>56</sup> P. J. Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", Abstract.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

principle and personal zeal."<sup>58</sup>

In view of the contentious nature of some of the findings unearthed by research into the voting behaviour of the nineteenth-century electorate, it is perhaps not surprising that the whole concept of longitudinal poll book analysis has recently been called into question. According to Miles Taylor, one problem with poll book analysis is that in quantitative terms it offers only a microcosmic view of electoral behaviour, "in which definitive findings are only available for a small number of voters in a small number of constituencies, when what is also needed is a bird's-eye view of the Victorian borough electorate "in order to test the more general validity of pollbook analysis."<sup>59</sup> In attempting to provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of electoral politics, Taylor argues that the findings of the most recent research on Hanoverian and early Victorian parliamentary elections do not hold good for the quarter-century after 1841, since demographic change ensured that the borough electorate was less open and less popular during these years than in the period surrounding the 1832 Reform Act.<sup>60</sup> By the 1860s in most parts of the country the borough parliamentary electorate was middle-aged and middle-class.<sup>61</sup>

Another problem presented by poll book analysis is a qualitative one. Taylor maintains that from a modern perspective, poll books "create a world in which individual voter choice appears to be sacrosanct", when in fact late Hanoverian and early Victorian political opinion attached little importance to voting as an expression of individual choice. Contemporaries believed in the representation of interests and communities, not individuals. Consequently, in analysing the

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<sup>58</sup> E. W. Cox, *Hints to Solicitors for the Conduct of an Election*, reprinted in H. J. Hanham, *Introduction to C. R. Dod: Electoral Facts 1832 - 1853 Impartially Stated* (Hassocks, 1972), p. xlvii.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", p. 52.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

behaviour of the electorate through systematic examination of individual voter choice, psephologists are in danger of divorcing the act of voting from its historical context and investing it with an individualistic character which contemporaries denied.<sup>62</sup> For Taylor, a model of expressive voting, whereby the various occupational and religious interests of the electors were reflected in their voting habits, does not accord with the extensive evidence of borough elections being dominated by a reaction against self-interested voting and a desire to secure effective representation of the public or corporate interest.<sup>63</sup>

Another attack on the way in which historians have sought to explain voting behaviour has come from Jon Lawrence. Like Taylor, Lawrence is opposed to historical studies of electoral politics written under the influence of "electoral sociology", a methodology which has its intellectual roots in the pluralist political science of the 1950s and 1960s. The problem with such studies is that they insist on treating voting behaviour as a direct translation of divisions in the social structure. Political parties are depicted as the passive beneficiaries of shifts in voter preference, which are in turn assumed to be under the control of anonymous forces of social and economic change.<sup>64</sup> Lawrence insists that the importance of the contingent in politics needs to be reasserted, against the strong emphasis on social determinism characteristic of most accounts of nineteenth and early twentieth-century urban popular politics. In short, he calls for the restoration of questions of ideology and the mechanics of political mobilisation to the study of electoral behaviour.<sup>65</sup> However, he also advises that this approach should be tempered by a careful study of popular political culture, otherwise it runs the risk of destroying the old social determinism only to replace it with a new discursive

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<sup>62</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", pp. 52 - 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>64</sup> J. Lawrence, "The dynamics of urban politics, 1867 - 1914", in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (ed.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, p. 80.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

determinism, which ignores both the social context of politics and the whole question of how ordinary voters actually responded to the party discourses analysed by historians.<sup>66</sup>

In his analysis of urban electoral politics in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods, Lawrence contends that "The strong polarization of party politics along denominational lines at the close of the nineteenth century did not . . . reflect an intrinsic feature of 'pre-modern', status-bound and localist politics - it was more contingent than that, reflecting the specific state of party competition at that moment."<sup>67</sup> Likewise, the success of the Edwardian Liberal party was not so much its ability to adapt to the relentless growth of 'modern' class-based politics, but its ability to move the political agenda away from denominational issues without damaging its own power base among nonconformists.<sup>68</sup>

Not all studies of electoral politics have concentrated on voting behaviour. H. J. Hanham, for instance, was more interested in the development of party politics under Gladstone and Disraeli in the 1870s and 1880s. Hanham showed that, although personal and local factors continued to exert their influence, the two parties were beginning to organise on a national scale, mounting election campaigns which focused on single issues.

Another writer who is concerned with the changing nature of electoral politics is James Vernon. Drawing on recent postmodern critical theory, Vernon has attempted to provide us with a different reading of nineteenth-century political history. He argues that, despite extensions to the franchise in 1832 and 1867, English politics became progressively less democratic during the period as the

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<sup>66</sup> Lawrence, "The dynamics of urban politics, 1867 - 1914", p. 91.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

"public political sphere" became increasingly exclusive. A body of legislation, designed to regulate the occurrence of meetings, the contents of speeches, handbills and even the use of flags and banners, contributed to this process. So too did the privileges afforded to the use of print in political communication at the expense of more traditional oral and visual forms.<sup>69</sup> Even the development of party, which "disciplined, regulated, and disabled popular politics", can be viewed as part of this closure of the public political sphere.<sup>70</sup>

This decline of popular electoral politics in the years after 1832 has also been noted by Miles Taylor. However, unlike Vernon, Taylor does not explain this phenomenon in political terms, but attributes it to demographic change:

. . . by and large, in an age of rapid urban population growth and mobility, the size of the borough electorate went down, and although the number of contested elections remained high, overall participation decreased.<sup>71</sup>

This relative diminution in the size of the borough electorate was only one reason why the size of the electorate did not keep pace with population increase. The other was the fact that in the older boroughs many of the ten-pound householders enfranchised after 1832 were already entitled to vote through the possession of the freeman franchise. According to Taylor, "This factor alone accounts for the marked drop in the ratio of adult male voters in many older constituencies, as the new suffrages merged into one."<sup>72</sup>

Another point of departure between Vernon and Taylor is the latter's insistence that increases in the number of municipal voters more than

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<sup>69</sup> James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A study in English political culture, c. 1815 - 1867* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 8 - 9.

<sup>70</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 337.

<sup>71</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", p. 60.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.



compensated for the reduction of the parliamentary suffrage.<sup>73</sup> As the parliamentary electorate in the boroughs became less open and less popular, the substantial growth of the municipal electorate in the 1850s provided in many cases an important site of political struggle.<sup>74</sup>

One of the objects of this study of electoral politics in Berwick-upon-Tweed is to test some of the theories outlined above. In particular, consideration will be given to the impact on voting behaviour of occupation, religion, influence, bribery and election issues. It is hoped that this will be achieved by a detailed reading of two types of source material, namely, the Berwick poll books and the Berwick press, and by reference, where appropriate, to parliamentary papers. Between them, these sources contain much information on the conduct of elections in the borough. Although every election and every constituency was, in its own way, unique, it is only by an examination of each component of the electoral system that a true picture of the whole machinery of nineteenth-century English electoral politics can be created. This study of England's most northerly constituency is a small contribution to that undertaking.

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<sup>73</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72" p. 71.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE PRESS**

### **INTRODUCTION: A JUSTIFICATION OF HISTORICAL SOURCES**

The absence of manuscript sources relating to electoral politics in Berwick during our period has necessitated a strong dependency on printed material, especially in the form of the local press. A reliance on printed sources for the purpose of writing history has its disadvantages. First, it only allows us to gain access to information that was in the public domain. The private thoughts and clandestine actions of candidates, their agents and the local political elite, which one might expect to find in private letters, diaries and memoirs, are simply not available for historical investigation. This, of course, leaves a huge gap in the historian's understanding of what went on behind the scenes during an election. The unwitting testimony provided by private correspondence has always been an invaluable source to the historian. Secondly, printed sources, especially newspapers, are often characterised by political bias, misinformation, rumour and unwarranted speculation. Interesting as all of these features may be, they are not likely to lead to a "true" understanding of what really happened during the electoral process.

Nevertheless, these reservations aside, newspapers have much to offer the student of electoral politics. Their political news, always a significant part of their content, increased dramatically at election time. The candidates' speeches, the progress of their canvass, the arrival and reading of the writ, information about polling arrangements, news of public meetings, accounts of political dinners, stories of drunkenness and rowdy behaviour, accusations and denials of corrupt practices, reports of the nomination and declaration ceremonies, analysis of the poll and editorial comment all found their way onto the pages of the local press.

Even though much of this news was coloured by political bias, it is still possible to create a reasonably accurate picture of the salient features of any given election. This, of course, is facilitated by a judicious and detailed reading of newspapers at opposite ends of the political spectrum. It is the surest way of eliminating some of the more extravagant examples of politically biased journalism.

Editorial comment, readers' letters and rumour mongering notwithstanding, one is generally impressed by the objectivity of much of the reporting of election news. Candidates' speeches were reported accurately (often *verbatim*), although descriptions of audience reaction ("loud cheering", "general groaning", "hissing", etc.) were invariably flavoured by partisan feeling on the part of the reporter. Likewise, accounts of the various election rituals were, on the whole, presented in a non-partisan manner, although here again there was some divergence in the descriptions of the crowd's response to the utterances of prominent political figures. One characteristic of Victorian newspapers which distinguished them from the newspapers of today was the fact that they were dominated by news - as opposed to features, analysis, fiction, etc. And "news" in this period meant serious reports of public affairs, both local and national.<sup>75</sup> This explains why newspapers "consisted of transcripts of statements by public figures, reported with the minimum of intervention and explanation by the journalists", with reporters appearing to follow the dictum of C. P. Scott, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, that "Comment is free but facts are sacred".<sup>76</sup> Consequently, it is possible to look beyond the political bias of the local newspapers and discover a significant element of consensus in their coverage of elections.

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<sup>75</sup> L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), p. 111.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102 -103.

## THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE BERWICK PRESS

In 1808 Berwick had one weekly newspaper, the *British Gazette and Berwick Advertiser*. Sixty-two years later the town boasted four weeklies, the *Berwick Advertiser*, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, the *Illustrated Berwick Journal* and the *Berwickshire News*. This increase in the number of newspapers, both dailies and weeklies, was echoed throughout the land. Between 1855 and 1870 as many as seventy-eight new provincial dailies had appeared, mainly in densely populated areas that coincided with the major parliamentary boroughs.<sup>77</sup>

This prodigious growth of the newspaper industry was facilitated by improvements in printing technology and wider literacy.<sup>78</sup> Changes in the government's fiscal policy also helped.<sup>79</sup> Advertisement duty was reduced from 3s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. in 1833 and the stamp tax from 4d. to 1d. in 1836, while the newspaper duty went down from 3d. a pound to 1/2d.<sup>80</sup> Even then the remaining taxes made it difficult for a new provincial daily to cope. For example, the *Shields Gazette* in its first ten months in 1849 paid £195 13s. in advertisement duty and £442 4s. 11d. in paper and stamp duty, resulting in a loss in its first year of £872 4s. 7d. Although it managed to survive, there were others which were less fortunate.<sup>81</sup>

The turning point for the provincial press was the repeal of the stamp duty in 1855, which had been preceded by the abolition of advertisement tax two years earlier. Except for the less exacting paper duty, which was revoked in 1861, this marked the end of the financial burdens which the press had borne since the early

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<sup>77</sup> S. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (London, 1990; first published 1981), p. 121.

<sup>78</sup> For an account of the technological advances, see A. E. Musson, "Newspaper Printing in the Industrial Revolution", in *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., x, (1957 - 8), pp. 411 - 26.

<sup>79</sup> N. McCord, *British History 1815 - 1906* (Oxford, 1991), p. 354.

<sup>80</sup> Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

eighteenth century.<sup>82</sup> Thereafter the Victorian press began to flourish. This was especially so in the provinces, "previously a journalistic wasteland", where cheap morning and evening papers grew at a quickening pace.<sup>83</sup> In 1864 their aggregate daily circulation was estimated to be 438,000, far exceeding the 248,000 copies published in London.<sup>84</sup> Although Berwick, with a population of only 14,000 in 1861,<sup>85</sup> was never able to support a daily newspaper, it did add another two weeklies to the two it already possessed.<sup>86</sup> In the same month that the stamp duty was abolished, the first edition of the *Illustrated Berwick Journal* appeared. Fourteen years later, the *Berwickshire News* came into circulation. Although the mortality rate among the new provincial papers was predictably high, three of the four Berwick weeklies published in our period managed to survive into the next century.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, by the end of the 1870s one of these papers, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, was being published twice weekly.

## LITERACY AND READERSHIP

As mentioned earlier, the rise of the Victorian press was assisted by wider literacy. Although the overall literacy statistics contained in the Registrar-General's Report for 1861 are extremely difficult to interpret, Alan Lee has suggested that in England, after an initial faltering in the 1840s, the trend in literacy was steadily

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<sup>82</sup> Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, p. 121.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Census of England and Wales, Population Tables, Vol. I* (London, 1862), p. 90.

<sup>86</sup> According to the *Printer's Register*, a town needed a minimum population of 50,000 to support a daily newspaper. However, there were exceptions. Darlington, where the *Northern Echo* was published, had a population of only 35,000 in 1881, but the town had good railway connections. See Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> The *Berwick Warder* lasted until 1898, when it was incorporated in the *Berwick Mercury*. The *Berwick Journal* and *Berwickshire News* continued until 1957, when the two papers amalgamated. The *Berwick Advertiser* is still published today. Other weeklies founded in the nineteenth century were the *Berwickshire Gazette* (October 1885 - December 1895), the *Berwick Mercury* (February 1894 - March 1942) and the *Berwick Times* (May 1899 - May 1900), which was later incorporated in the *Berwick Mercury*.

upwards from a mean of about 61 per cent literate in the 1850s to 76 per cent in 1868. There was then a small plateau in 1870 before a final surge up to 97 per cent in 1888.<sup>88</sup>

Of course, literacy is not the same as readership. A literate person may not choose to read, or he may have no opportunity for doing so. By the same token, an illiterate person, as Schofield has pointed out, may participate effectively in the literate culture.<sup>89</sup> The practice of reading aloud to groups in offices and workshops was quite common and meant that each member, whether literate or illiterate, would hear from more than one newspaper a day.<sup>90</sup> Such forms of cooperation greatly increased the opportunities for reading newspapers. Benjamin Grime, for instance, describes how his father and a few of his neighbours jointly subscribed to the *Northern Star*, while Joseph Platt, landlord of the Bird in Hand public house in Oldham, subscribed to a paper for his customers, who discussed its contents over their beer.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, E. S. Chalk recounts how numerous provincial newspapers were brought by various routes to Tiverton and "tricked down" through the population of the town.<sup>92</sup> It is reckoned that "Each copy of a newspaper before repeal [of the stamp duty], and probably for a long time afterwards, was seen by perhaps half a dozen readers, either in pubs, or coffee houses, or sent free through the post after the initial purchase, or hired at a penny an hour, or read around country subscription circles at a halfpenny a day."<sup>93</sup> However, contemporary estimates of multiple readership vary. W. H. Smith, for instance, claimed that a London daily was read three or four times; whereas an article on weekly

<sup>88</sup> A. J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England 1855 - 1914* (London, 1976), pp. 32 - 3.

<sup>89</sup> R. S. Schofield, "The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England", in J. R. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 313, cited in Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 144 - 45.

<sup>92</sup> E. S. Chalk, "Tiverton Letters and Papers, 1724 - 1843", in *Notes and Queries*, clxx (London, 1836), pp. 117 - 18.

<sup>93</sup> Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, pp. 35 - 6.

newspapers in the *Westminster Review* in 1829 put the figure as high as thirty.<sup>94</sup> Yet despite these discrepancies, one thing is certain: by the end of the century newspapers were being generally read and afforded by even the poorest people.<sup>95</sup> For example, in his study of poverty in York, Seebohm Rowntree found that a number of his Class 1 cases (i.e., those whose total weekly earnings were under 26s. a week) included a newspaper in their budget. Rowntree specifically refers to the inability to buy a halfpenny newspaper as an example of real privation.<sup>96</sup>

### THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF NEWSPAPERS

Throughout our period political parties deemed it imperative to acquire prominent, sympathetic and accurate publicity for their views. As newspapers provided the cheapest, most effective and most convenient outlet for information, it was only natural that each political movement should wish to have its own publication to broadcast its slogans. It was also a matter of self-respect, for without adequate journalistic support a party could not expect to be taken seriously by its opponents.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, newspapers benefited from their association with a political party: as status symbols, they "augmented their own status; as an integral part of an elaborate system of party management, they were invested with a new vitality, and an implicit authority."<sup>98</sup> Thus in 1789 the *York Herald* was founded with the Whig party's blessing, though without party subsidy. Similarly, the Lambtons gave their blessing to the *Durham Chronicle* in the 1820s as part of their hereditary feud with the Lowthers, who themselves controlled three newspapers.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, p. 245.

<sup>95</sup> Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 48.

<sup>96</sup> B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty, a Study of Town Life*, (1902, 4th edn.), pp. 133 and 263 ff, cited in Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 48.

<sup>97</sup> Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 328; and Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 322.

The first Berwick newspaper to be established was the *British Gazette and Berwick Advertiser* in January 1808. Its inaugural declaration simply read, "In introducing our Paper to the world, we deem it unnecessary to offer any formal address or make any elaborate professions; our plan is before the public, and to it we shall as far as our information leads us strictly adhere."<sup>100</sup> However, as with most newspapers in the North East during this period, the *Berwick Advertiser*, as it became known in 1823, was a supporter of the Whig party. During our period the *Advertiser* had a number of publishers, including Catherine Richardson until 1853, Andrew Robson, Alexander Paton and Henry Richardson Smail, who began his proprietorship in 1868. Robson was a steadfast Liberal, but in 1852 he condemned the Liberal candidate John Stapleton for dividing the Liberal vote, believing that the party was not strong enough to return two parliamentary representatives.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, he plumped for the sitting member, Matthew Forster.<sup>102</sup> Once it had become clear that the Liberals were very much the dominant party in Berwick politics, Robson thereafter gave his votes to both of their candidates, whilst advocating in his editorial column that the electors of the town should do likewise.

Berwick's second newspaper was the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, which was founded in November 1835. In a region dominated by the Liberal press, its debut was warmly received by the Conservative *Newcastle Journal*, which proudly announced:

A new Paper, on constitutional principles, entitled the "Berwick and Kelso Warder," has just started, under high auspices, at Berwick-upon-Tweed. We hope for a long and a prosperous career for our

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<sup>100</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 2 January 1808, p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> John Stapleton became the Liberal MP for Berwick in 1852, but was unseated on petition in May 1853. He was MP again from 1857 to 1859 and 1868 to 1874 and a candidate in 1874.

<sup>102</sup> Matthew Forster was Liberal MP for Berwick from 1841 to 1853, when he was unseated for bribery, and a candidate in 1857.



able and respected contemporary.<sup>103</sup>

The *Warder* was printed and published by George Macaskie and represented the agricultural interest of the region, as opposed to the *Advertiser*, which championed the commercial interest. Macaskie consistently voted for the Conservatives, and it was to this party that his paper owed its political allegiance. Throughout our period these were Berwick's principal newspapers and it is to them that this study is most indebted for its understanding of the town's electoral politics.

Berwick's third newspaper was the *Illustrated Berwick Journal*, which began publication in June 1855. Six months later it became known as the *Berwick Journal*. The paper was initially printed and published by James Mills, who was later succeeded by George Turner. The *Journal* claimed to be impartial, but the facts do not bear this out. Although Mills split his votes between Stapleton (Liberal) and Gordon (Conservative) in 1859, his successor Turner always voted for the Liberal candidates. Furthermore, it was Turner who in 1868 invited Stapleton to come forward in the Liberal interest, without consulting the local party leadership. When the *Advertiser* rounded on Turner for having broken with convention by circumventing the the normal selection process, his rejoinder in the editorial column of his own newspaper was to applaud the fact that on this occasion the Liberal establishment had been outflanked.<sup>104</sup> During the 1870s and 1880s the *Journal* was published by Gibson Ferrier Steven, who was also responsible for the publication of the *Berwickshire News*, the town's fourth newspaper, which was launched in July 1869.

It may seem surprising that a small town like Berwick should have as many newspapers, albeit weekly ones. However, it must be remembered that these

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<sup>103</sup> *Newcastle Journal*, 21 November 1835, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 July 1868, p. 3.

publications served a large rural area. Frank O’Gorman has remarked on the enormously wide geographical circulation of even the smallest provincial newspapers. The *Cirencester Flying Post*, for example, circulated in Berkshire, Dorset, Glamorgan, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Radnorshire, Somerset, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Wiltshire.<sup>105</sup> More modestly, the *Berwick Advertiser* circulated in the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Berwick, Haddington, Selkirk and Roxburgh, which was still a sizable area.

Until the repeal of the stamp duty, the annual circulation figures of the stamped press were published by Parliament. The circulation figures for the *Berwick Advertiser* and the *Berwick and Kelso Warder* are shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1: Circulation Figures for Two Berwick Newspapers.  
1837 - 1843 (in 1000s)<sup>106</sup>

	<u>1837</u>	<u>1838</u>	<u>1839</u>	<u>1840</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1842</u>	<u>1843</u>
<i>Berwick Advertiser</i>	29	32.5	33	38	36	40	38
<i>Berwick Warder</i>	27.5	35	30	30	36	30.5	32.25

Table 2.2: Circulation Figures for Two Berwick Newspapers.  
1844 - 1850 (in 1000s)<sup>107</sup>

	<u>1844</u>	<u>1845</u>	<u>1846</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1848</u>	<u>1849</u>	<u>1850</u>
<i>Berwick Advertiser</i>	42	36	40	44	43.5	45	42
<i>Berwick Warder</i>	28.6	24	27	24	26	23	25

<sup>105</sup> O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 288.

<sup>106</sup> P. P. (1851) XVII, 586 - 7.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

The average annual circulation figure for the *Advertiser* for the period 1837 - 1850 was 38,500, the high point being in 1849 when the figure reached 45,000. The average annual circulation figure for the *Warder* was 28,490, the zenith coming in 1841 when, for the only time, the newspaper managed to equal the sales of its rival. After this the *Warder's* sales figures went into a steady decline, so that by 1849 its circulation was almost half that of the *Advertiser*.

Just as it is impossible to estimate exactly how much use was made of each copy of a newspaper, so too is it impossible to assess the impact of its political propaganda. There is no doubt that newspapers both reflected and encouraged a vigorous local political life and "acted as a general agency of electoral mobilization", but, as Lee observes, in an age before opinion polls and readership surveys were conducted, there is no way of knowing what influence newspapers may have had upon the political opinions and decisions of the electorate.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, it is tempting to assume that in constituencies where the press was of a particular political leaning, the majority of the electorate would vote accordingly. Even if this were not the case, it would seem probable that the press would at least reflect the voters' views. However, such assumptions are dangerous. For over a quarter of a century Berwick's sole newspaper was the Whig *Advertiser*. Yet during this time it was not the Whigs who dominated the town's politics: until 1832, the borough's parliamentary representation had been shared by both the Whigs and the Tories, with the latter generally gaining the upper hand. Such apparent contradictions only serve to emphasise the fact that the newspaper-reading public was not necessarily coterminous with the electorate. The political press undoubtedly had an important role to play at election time, but many contemporaries acknowledged that this was limited to the keeping rather than the winning of votes.<sup>109</sup> As Ostrogorski says:

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<sup>108</sup> Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, p. 184.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

If the voter does not take his party politics from the paper, it confirms him in his party preferences or prejudices, and by an action analogous to that of water dripping on a stone, keeps him loyal to the party; in any event the newspapers provided the parties and their organisations with a highly effective means of publicity.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties* (1902), p. 410, cited in Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England*, p. 187.

### CHAPTER 3: THE CANDIDATES

This chapter will concentrate on the parliamentary candidates for Berwick-upon-Tweed. First, it will discuss the process by which a candidate was chosen; second, it will examine the qualities that were regarded as desirable in a candidate; and, finally, it will endeavour to analyse the extent to which these qualities contributed to the electoral success of a candidate. Thus the emphasis is more on the personal attributes of a candidate than on his political principles. The latter, however, will be discussed in Chapter 6, which examines the major election issues of the period. A biographical note on each of Berwick's parliamentary candidates will be found in Appendix 2.

The process of choosing a candidate usually began with a meeting of the party election committee. It was the committee's job to consider the names of suitable candidates and then present one of them with a signed requisition, inducing him to come forward at the forthcoming election. The requisition was an essential part of the selection process, for it informed the prospective candidate of the kind of support he might expect if he decided to contest the election. It was, in the words of James Vernon, "a pre-canvass canvass".<sup>111</sup> Given the cost of contesting an election at Berwick, which was a notoriously expensive constituency, a candidate needed to be assured of his chances of success before parting with his money. In 1859 Sir Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks' declared election expenses alone amounted to over £440, and even this was insufficient to prevent his defeat.<sup>112</sup> These expenses comprised the following: professional agency; printing and advertising; messengers; sergeants, police constables and beadles; poll clerks and runners; under-sheriff's account; committee rooms; stationery; hotel account;

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<sup>111</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 80.

<sup>112</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 July 1859, p. 2. Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks was the Liberal MP for Berwick from 1853 to April 1859, August 1859 to 1868 and 1874 to 1881, when he was created Baron Tweedmouth of Edington.

auditor's fee and commission; and providing conveyance for voters. Unofficial expenses, which included the entertainment and bribery of voters, might be even higher than those presented to the election auditor. Consequently, the overall cost of an election could be exorbitant. At the Nottingham election in 1841, the four candidates between them paid almost £17,000; while at Yarmouth the average expense on each side was as much as £10,000. Norman Gash maintains that in the 1830s and 1840s, it was not abnormal for a borough election to cost each side from £2,000 to £5,000.<sup>113</sup> Thus a numerously signed requisition was, for many would-be candidates, a precondition for standing at a borough like Berwick.

Finding a suitable candidate was not always an easy task. Twice in the 1860s the Berwick Conservatives experienced difficulty in persuading a prospective candidate to come forward. In 1863 it was understood that Ralph Anstruther Earle would stand, but he withdrew, without any explanation, on the day of his expected arrival in the town.<sup>114</sup> No doubt his knowledge of the cost of contesting a seat at Berwick, where he was a successful candidate in 1859 but was forced to resign, had some bearing on his decision not to venture north again. After failing to find a replacement, the Berwick Conservatives were forced to turn to the Carlton Club in London, which recommended a political novice, William Walter Cargill.<sup>115</sup> Again in 1868 the Conservatives had problems, when "two gentlemen connected with the neighbourhood" declined the invitation to stand.<sup>116</sup> Their places

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<sup>113</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 130 - 1. Election expenses are also discussed in W. B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain* (London, 1962), pp. 21 - 92; and in K. T. Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland 1832 - 1885* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 83 - 5 and pp. 431 - 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2. Ralph Anstruther Earle was Conservative MP for Berwick in 1859, but accepted the Chiltern Hundreds three months after his election.

<sup>115</sup> The Carlton Club, founded in 1832, was the first political club organised for party and parliamentary purposes. It was followed a few years later by the foundation of the Reform Club, which, like the Carlton, combined the duties of central office and national party conference. For a detailed discussion on the development of club government, see Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 393 - 427; and Gash, "The Organization of the Conservative Party 1832 - 1846: Part II: The Electoral Organization", in *Parliamentary History Yearbook*, 2 (1983), pp. 131 - 52. William Walter Cargill was the Conservative MP for Berwick from 1863 to 1865 and was a candidate in 1865.

<sup>116</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 August 1868, p. 1.

were taken by the seasoned campaigner Richard Hodgson, who first stood for Berwick in 1837, and by the inexperienced George William Carpenter.<sup>117</sup>

The Liberals did not as a rule encounter such problems. However, in 1841 they did have difficulty in finding a candidate who was certain to come forward. Initially, William Massey Stanley, the eldest son of Sir Thomas Stanley of Haggerston and Hooton, announced his candidature. However, despite the *Berwick Advertiser's* assurance that he would soon be among the electors fighting for reform,<sup>118</sup> Stanley failed to appear owing to the illness of his father. It was then announced that Mr. Ricardo, "the eminent stock-broker", and Matthew Forster, "a wealthy and highly respected ship-owner and merchant", would be standing as the Liberal candidates.<sup>119</sup> In the event nothing more was heard of Ricardo, although Forster duly arrived and contested the borough in the Liberal interest. Nevertheless, 1841 was one of only three occasions during our period when the Berwick Liberals fielded a single candidate against two Conservatives.<sup>120</sup>

Berwick was not the only constituency where the Liberals were faced with a selection dilemma. In 1837 the North Durham Liberals had difficulty finding a suitable candidate to replace Sir Hedworth Williamson, when he announced his intention not to stand for re-election. In all, eight potential candidates declined the invitation to stand for the constituency, before Sir William Chaytor was finally chosen. The expense of a contested election and divisions within the ranks of the North Durham Liberals were just two of the problems which contributed to the

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<sup>117</sup> Richard Hodgson was the Conservative MP for Berwick from 1837 to 1847 and a candidate in 1847, 1853, 1859 and 1868. George William Wallace Carpenter was a Conservative candidate at Berwick in 1868.

<sup>118</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 19 June 1841, p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 June 1841, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> The others were in 1837 and 1847.

Liberals' selection difficulties.<sup>121</sup>

To avoid the embarrassment of finding themselves without a candidate on the eve of a contest, parties sometimes invited a prospective candidate well in advance of an election. This tended to happen whenever Parliament was approaching the end of its statutory term of seven years.<sup>122</sup> In such a case there was no excuse for dilatoriness. Thus at a meeting of Berwick Conservatives on 1 July 1864 it was resolved to invite Joseph Hubback to represent them at the general election, which took place the following summer.<sup>123</sup> Likewise Henry Strutt received his invitation from the Liberal Committee twelve months before the 1880 general election.<sup>124</sup>

However, even with ample warning of a pending election, things did not always run smoothly. In 1874, for instance, the Liberals already had three candidates in the field before a Conservative candidate had come forward.<sup>125</sup> The Conservatives also encountered difficulties in 1847, when their candidate, Richard Hodgson, suddenly withdrew in order to stand at Newcastle and recommended William Henry Miller to succeed him. Initially, Miller was rejected by the Berwick Conservatives, who asked a former candidate, Thomas Weeding, to stand.<sup>126</sup> However, Weeding declined and the Conservatives were obliged to adopt Miller as their candidate. Even so, a number of prominent Conservatives were so indignant at the way in which Miller had been thrust upon them that they declined to

<sup>121</sup> A. J. Heesom, "Lord Durham's 'Bowlby Letter': National Politics in their Local Context", in *Bulletin of the Durham County Local History Society*, 34 (1985), pp. 19 - 42.

<sup>122</sup> Of the twelve general elections between 1832 and 1880, four arose as a result of a request by the Prime Minister for a Dissolution on Parliament nearing the end of its statutory term of seven years. These were in 1847, 1865, 1874 and 1880.

<sup>123</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 9 July 1864, p. 2. Joseph Hubback was a Conservative candidate at Berwick in 1865.

<sup>124</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 19 March 1880, p. 3. Henry Strutt became the Liberal MP for Berwick in March 1880, but succeeded his father as second Lord Belper in June 1880.

<sup>125</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 January 1874, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas Weeding was a Conservative candidate at Berwick in 1841.



countenance his canvass, and induced a local man, John Campbell Renton, to come forward.<sup>127</sup>

Once the election committee had found a suitable candidate, the next step in the selection process was to obtain the electors' approval of the candidate. In most cases this tended to be a mere formality. A meeting of Liberal or Conservative electors would be called, and the candidate would address them in order to acquaint them with his political principles. He would then be nominated as a fit and proper person to represent the borough of Berwick in Parliament, and the assembly would register its approval or disapproval by a show of hands.<sup>128</sup> Liberal election meetings were usually held in the Red Lion Hotel, whereas Conservative meetings were generally held in the King's Arms Hotel. Following the establishment of a polling booth in Tweedmouth from 1868 and another in Spittal from 1874, candidates had to attend further meetings in these two townships in order to solicit the approval of the electors south of the River Tweed. The Tweedmouth Liberals met either at the Union Hotel in Tweedmouth, or at the Queen's Rooms in Berwick; while the Spittal Liberals met at the British Schoolroom in Spittal. The Tweedmouth and Spittal Conservatives held their meetings at the National Schoolrooms in Tweedmouth and Spittal respectively.

For the most part, this selection procedure worked well. If there were more candidates than required, the election committee simply chose the candidate or candidates they considered best qualified to represent their party's interests at the forthcoming election. At the 1880 by-election, for instance, the Conservative

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<sup>127</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 17 July 1847, p. 4 and 24 July 1847, p. 1. John Campbell Renton was the Conservative MP for Berwick from 1847 to 1852 and a candidate at Berwick in 1852 and 1853.

<sup>128</sup> The vote did not always go the candidate's way. After George Cornwall Lewis had addressed a meeting of Peterborough electors in 1852, a resolution declaring that he was *not* entitled to the support of the Liberal electors of the borough was adopted. See T. Bromund, " 'A Complete Fool's Paradise': The Attack on the Fitzwilliam Interest in Peterborough, 1852", in *Parliamentary History*, 12, part 1 (1993), pp. 52 - 3.

electors met at the King's Arms Assembly Rooms to consider whether to invite Captain David Milne Home or Sir George Elliot to represent the borough.<sup>129</sup> Both men were nominated, but when only twelve hands were raised in favour of the latter, Milne Home was declared to be chosen "amidst loud cheers" and a requisition was put on the table and signed by the whole meeting.<sup>130</sup> Likewise, at the 1881 by-election the Liberal election committee had to consider two letters from two men who had come forward in the Liberal interest. The first was from James George Minchin, solicitor, on behalf of Andrew Dunn, saying that he did not wish to appear amongst them as a candidate until he had been invited to do so, for he was anxious to avoid dividing the Liberal party in the borough. The second was from Sir Hubert Jerningham, who alluded to the fact that on more than one occasion he had not allowed his political aspirations to stand in the way of the Liberal cause in Berwick. Both candidates also gave a brief account of their political opinions. Their claims were then put to the meeting, the chairman asking if anyone was prepared to nominate either. Dunn was mentioned first, but no one would propose him, and consequently his candidature collapsed. Jerningham was then proposed as a fit and proper person to represent the borough in the Liberal interest, and when the motion was put to the meeting nearly everyone present voted in its favour.<sup>131</sup>

However, on occasions, the selection procedure could go awry. We have already seen how, in 1847, the Conservatives were annoyed at the way in which Hodgson tried to foist his replacement upon them. The problem here was that Hodgson, who was the Conservative member for Berwick, ignored the customary consultation process. The last thing the Berwick Conservatives wanted was a

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<sup>129</sup> David Milne Home was the Conservative MP for Berwick from 1874 to April 1880 and from July 1880 to 1885.

<sup>130</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 9 July 1880, p. 4.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 September 1881, p. 2. Hubert Henry Edward Jerningham was the Liberal MP for Berwick from 1881 to 1885.

candidate who had been recommended to them by a man who was prepared to desert them in order to stand for another constituency. Miller's candidature was endorsed only when Weeding refused the Conservative election committee's invitation to contest the seat.

The Liberals too had problems with candidates trying to circumvent the normal procedures. In 1852 a Liberal clique brought forward their own candidate, the Radical John Stapleton, without the agreement of the Liberal election committee. This was the first time since the reform fervour of the early 1830s that a second Liberal candidate had been bold enough to come forward at Berwick, for it was generally felt that there was insufficient support in the borough to return two Liberals.<sup>132</sup> As the Liberal *Berwick Advertiser* pointed out, the "every man for himself" attitude of the Liberals created dissension within the party and gave dangerous advantages to the Conservatives. It was, the *Advertiser* argued, inadvisable to risk the return of a tried and tested candidate like Matthew Forster even for the chance of returning two Liberals.<sup>133</sup> Of course, Stapleton denied that he had come to Berwick to put himself in competition with Forster. He said he had come to displace a Tory and was convinced that two Liberals could be returned.<sup>134</sup> He did, however, admit later that it was the first time he had been a political candidate and that it was possible he had not acted altogether accurately. He also acknowledged that he should probably have asked Forster's opinion, though certainly not his permission. Nevertheless, his own feeling was that he should ask the electors themselves, for "it was with them only that he had to do."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> The Berwick Conservatives had no such qualms, fielding two candidates at each of the last three elections. In 1837 they even won both seats.

<sup>133</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 April 1852, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 May 1852, p. 4. As it was, Stapleton's conviction proved to be right: both Liberals were returned, although the election was later declared void.

<sup>135</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, pp. 2 - 3.

In 1868 Stapleton again came forward without the approval of the Liberal election committee. This time the *Advertiser* was more scathing in its criticism:

It appears that two irresponsible persons [i.e. George Turner, the editor of the *Berwick Journal*, and Robert Rankin, a shoemaker] have, with a self-sufficiency that amounts to something like sublime impudence, taken it upon themselves to invite a gentleman [i.e. Stapleton] to come forward in the Liberal interest, without so much as consulting the Liberals of the borough. This extraordinary proceeding is naturally regarded as a deliberate insult to the Liberal electors, who have certainly commissioned none of their number to act for them in this matter, and the two persons who have so acted without their consent would, we have reason to believe, have been the last to whom they would have delegated so important a commission.<sup>136</sup>

What made the *Advertiser* so indignant was the manner in which Turner and Rankin, “for some time employed in inferior or not very well defined capacities in electioneering matters”, had “wantonly and inexcusably” disregarded “the proprieties and courtesies that usually characterise the proceedings of united Liberals”.<sup>137</sup> In other words, two relatively minor members of the Liberal party had offended the party leadership by not asking their consent to Stapleton being brought forward.<sup>138</sup> The result of this departure from the customary selection procedure was that “many of the most respectable members” of the party expressed their determination not to support Stapleton’s candidacy.<sup>139</sup>

Of course, not everyone shared the *Advertiser’s* view that the men bringing forward a candidate should be those possessing the respect and confidence of their fellow-townsmen. The *Berwick Warder* facetiously observed that as the “respectable section” of the Liberal party already had a member to themselves,

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<sup>136</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1868, p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> See Richard Hodgson’s nomination speech in the *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p.2.

<sup>139</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1868, p. 3.

"Why can they not allow the unrespectable and unwashed section to have also a member suitable to their tastes and feelings?" While the *Berwick Journal*, in a more serious frame of mind, rejoiced in the fact that "the old system" had been departed from, that instead of "a few so-called respectable people" taking the initiative in the matter, these people had in this instance been pushed unceremoniously aside and had nothing to do with it.<sup>140</sup>

The Liberals experienced further problems in 1874 when another of their candidates insisted on going over the heads of the election committee and making his appeal directly to the electors. Viscount Bury, who had been returned at Berwick in 1868, was rejected by the Liberal committee in 1874, because his address did not meet with their approval.<sup>141</sup> When Bury's agent, Douglas, advised him that his address was inconsistent with his former principles, Bury instructed him to issue it forthwith. Consequently, the committee selected Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks instead. However, Bury was not deterred by the disapproval of a few of the leading Liberals of the borough, insisting that no committee could say whether or not an address was acceptable, without appealing to the whole body of electors.<sup>142</sup> Yet when he put his case before the Liberal electors, Bury found that he had little support among his former followers. At a meeting of Liberal electors in Spittal, for example, only twelve people endorsed his nomination.<sup>143</sup> Rejected by the Liberals, Bury sought refuge in the Conservative camp, where, at a meeting at the King's Arms Hotel, it was unanimously resolved to adopt him as the second Conservative candidate.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Cited in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 July 1868, p. 3.

<sup>141</sup> William Coutts Keppel, seventh Earl of Albemarle and Viscount Bury, was the Liberal MP for Berwick from 1868 to 1874 and a Liberal-Conservative candidate in 1874. In his 1874 address Bury argued that Gladstone's legislation was too radical. See the *Berwick Warder*, 30 January 1874, p. 1.

<sup>142</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 January 1874, p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 January 1874, p. 3.

<sup>144</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 30 January 1874, p. 2.

The process of selecting a candidate could be fraught with difficulty even when the customary procedures were acknowledged. In 1853 three Liberal candidates came forward to contest the constituency after the two members, Matthew Forster and John Stapleton, were unseated for bribery and treating. Consequently, a meeting of Liberal electors was held in the Town Hall to select two candidates. At the meeting Patrick Clay proposed John Forster, son of Matthew Forster, and the motion was carried unanimously.<sup>145</sup> Captain William Smith then proposed James Clay, who was to occupy John Stapleton's seat until the latter was in a position to resume it. However, Dr. George Johnston was unhappy with James Clay, who was a stranger to them. Johnston also objected to the borough being made the *locum tenens* of any man, and suggested that the meeting should have the opportunity of considering the services of Andrew Edgar before Clay was proposed. Despite his sponsorship of Edgar, Johnston was more concerned about preserving unanimity in the Liberal ranks. He therefore proposed that a committee be appointed to consider the merits of the respective candidates.<sup>146</sup> Although Johnston's motion was carried by a large majority, the selection committee failed to reach a decision, leaving it to the candidates to decide when they should appear and to the good sense of all the Liberal electors to arrive at unanimity.<sup>147</sup> On top of such blatant indecision, the committee failed to consider the name of Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks, probably in the mistaken belief that he was standing as a Peelite. In the event, both Clay and Edgar withdrew in order to avoid endangering the Liberal cause. Nevertheless, such disorganisation was a serious threat to party unity and was not to be encouraged if the Liberals wished to maintain their dominant position in Berwick politics.

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<sup>145</sup> John Forster was Liberal MP for Berwick from 1853 to 1857.

<sup>146</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 April 1853, p. 3.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Disagreement over the choice of a candidate plagued the Liberals again during the 1880s. At the 1880 by-election the Liberal committee voted for John McLaren, the Lord Advocate for Scotland, who was seeking re-election on taking office, instead of Sir Hubert Jerningham, a local Roman Catholic. Although McLaren's candidacy was later endorsed at a meeting of Liberal electors,<sup>148</sup> there were many who thought Jerningham had the better claim. These included not only the Roman Catholics of Berwick, but also some members of the Liberal committee. Their annoyance at the way in which Jerningham had been snubbed found expression on polling day, when they voted for David Milne Home, the Conservative candidate, rather than for McLaren.<sup>149</sup>

Conservative electors too sometimes disagreed with decisions made by their party's election committee. In 1880 a number of Conservatives blamed their party's defeat on the committee's decision to bring in a second candidate, rather than enter into a compact with the Liberals to ensure the return of the two sitting members, Marjoribanks and Milne Home. The *Warder* tried to assuage the committee's critics by pointing out that it was the unanimous opinion of the committee that there was no possibility of returning a Conservative candidate unless two were in the field. As for the "compact", the *Warder* insisted there was no evidence that it was ever possible to enter into an agreement to return the two sitting members, or that the second Liberal, Henry Strutt, could be induced to retire.<sup>150</sup> Notwithstanding such assurances, it was obvious that many Conservatives were angry not only because they no longer had any representation, but also because the voters had seen fit to return an unknown Radical rather than their own tried and tested candidate.

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<sup>148</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 9 July 1880, p. 4.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 July 1880, p. 4 and the *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 April 1880, p. 2.

The notion of one member occupying a seat until another member was able to resume it has already been mentioned. In contemporary jargon, this was known as "keeping the seat warm". The practice was certainly not unknown in nineteenth-century electoral politics, but it was not a popular one. At Cocker mouth in 1808, for instance, Sir John Osborn had to give up his seat when William Lowther reached his majority;<sup>151</sup> while at North Durham in 1841 Lord Londonderry threatened to bring in a friend to keep the seat warm until his son, Seaham, came of age.<sup>152</sup> At Berwick in 1853 Dr. George Johnston objected to the suggestion that Andrew Edgar should keep Stapleton's seat warm until the latter was permitted to stand for Parliament again. Although Johnston appeared to be protesting against the *principle* of installing a *locum tenens*, in reality he was probably opposed to the fact that the Radicals were attempting to maintain Stapleton's interest in the borough. Johnston was perfectly happy to support John Forster's candidacy, even though the latter was clearly deputising for his father. Indeed Forster stood down in 1857, so that his father could contest the seat he had been forced to relinquish following the 1852 election petition.

The only other occasion when a member may have maintained another's interest in the borough was in 1868, when Marjoribanks had to stand down because his banking firm, Coutts and Co., had a government contract. His place was taken by Bury. However, when, in 1874, Marjoribanks was free to resume his parliamentary career, Bury was reluctant to vacate his seat, even though it was Marjoribanks who was adopted as the official Liberal candidate. Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not there was an agreement between the two candidates. According to Bury, Marjoribanks believed there was. On the other hand, Marjoribanks denied his colleague had been keeping his seat warm.

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<sup>151</sup> D. Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour: A Study of Elections in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, and Westmorland, 1760 - 1832" (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Manchester, 1980), p. 291.

<sup>152</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 75.



Considering the unpopularity of secret arrangements between candidates, it is hardly surprising that neither Bury nor Marjoribanks would admit to participating in such clandestine activities. Any attempt to control the representation of the borough without reference to the electorate was likely to rebound on the parties involved if ever their conduct became public knowledge. A case in point is the Hodgson - Miller compromise of 1847, which so angered Hodgson's supporters that one of them, William Dunn, even accused the former member of selling his seat to Miller for £1000.<sup>153</sup> There can be little doubt that Miller's association with Hodgson was partly responsible for his poor showing at the polls, where he won only 13.7 per cent of the total number of votes cast.

Hodgson was at the centre of another controversy five years later, when he returned to Berwick to contest the 1852 election. At the previous election he had given his word that he would not oppose Renton, or any other Conservative candidate who might stand for the borough. However, Hodgson broke his promise by suggesting to his friends that a requisition be organised, calling upon him to offer himself as a Conservative candidate.<sup>154</sup> By coming forward "At the solicitation of many old friends", he could at least claim to be acting for the public good, rather than out of personal interest.<sup>155</sup>

We have examined a number of instances where the traditional procedure for selecting candidates broke down. However, these appear to have been the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, the system seems to have run reasonably smoothly. Nevertheless, Berwick was an open borough, and there were always factions, both within the Conservative party and among the Liberals, who, from time to time, were prepared to bring forward their own candidate. Thus a

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<sup>153</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 August 1847, p. 4.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 April 1852, p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 May 1852, p. 1.

section of the freemen were always prepared to support a political adventurer like Hodgson, who contested the borough six times between 1837 and 1868. Likewise, the Radicals were constantly on the lookout for an alternative to the official Liberal candidate. They lent their support to Blake during the 1830s, Stapleton during the 1850s and 1870s, Mitchell during the 1860s and Strutt during the 1880s.<sup>156</sup> Although such candidates could rely on a wide degree of Liberal support, they always played second fiddle to the official Liberal candidate. The only exception to this was in 1857, when Stapleton headed the poll and became "senior" member for the borough. However, this was an anomaly caused by a coalition between the Conservatives and the Radicals, which itself was a rare occurrence in Berwick politics.

We shall now turn our attention to the attributes which electors considered desirable in a candidate. There were, however, two legal requirements that a candidate had to satisfy before any social requirements could be taken into account. First, a candidate had to be of the age of twenty one to stand. Second, he had to possess a property qualification of £600 per annum in freehold land for a county seat, or £300 per annum for a borough seat. The property qualification for members of Parliament continued until 1858, although a modification was made in 1838 to include personal as well as real property. However, the qualifications were not rigorously enforced, and there were various ways of avoiding them. One of these was to make an agreement with a relative or friend to confer a fictitious qualification for the period of the election.<sup>157</sup> There is a strong possibility that this happened at Berwick in 1837. When two electors, William Heron and John Cunningham, moved that the qualification oath be administered to each of the candidates, Richard Hodgson vigorously protested, contending that the law did not

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<sup>156</sup> Francis Blake was the Liberal MP for Berwick from 1827 to 1834. Alexander Mitchell was a Liberal candidate at Berwick in 1863 and MP for Berwick from 1865 to 1868.

<sup>157</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 105 - 6.

require the qualification to be sworn to. He then produced a letter from his brother's attorney, stating that he possessed a sufficient qualification on Elswick estate, and said he thought this was enough to satisfy the returning officer.<sup>158</sup> According to the *Advertiser*, Hodgson's hesitation to swear to his being in possession of the requisite qualification produced "considerable discussion" after the election, presumably because there was a suspicion that his qualification was an artificial one.<sup>159</sup> However, even if such doubts were justified, Hodgson would not have been the only member at Westminster with a dubious qualification. According to J. A. Roebuck, not one member in ten possessed the necessary qualification prior to the announcement of his candidature.<sup>160</sup>

The original intention of the property qualification was to restrict membership of the House of Commons to the landed classes and thus preserve the constitution from the moneyed interest.<sup>161</sup> However, the 1838 adjustment to the qualification reflected the economic changes which were taking place in English society: the moneyed interest was demanding a more prominent role in the nation's political representation. An analysis of the backgrounds of the twenty-five Berwick parliamentary candidates who stood between 1832 and 1881 reveals that candidates with professional and mercantile backgrounds dominated the representation of Berwick during this period (see Table 3.1). However, unlike boroughs such as Morpeth and Durham, Berwick had never really been controlled by the landed classes. While it is true that borough politics was dominated by two major family interests in the second half of the eighteenth century, neither of these interests exercised their control through their ownership of land. As David

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<sup>158</sup> Hodgson's qualification was described as a "Rent charge of £310 per annum arising from John Hodgson Hinde, Esq., issuing out of lands in the township of Elswick, county of Northumberland, and other lands." See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 July 1837, p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 July 1837, p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 105.

<sup>161</sup> F. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, p. 118.

Brenchley has observed, "Whilst both the Watson/Vaughan and Delaval families were landowners, this was important only insofar as it helped to produce their wealth, and in the case of Delaval the industrial and commercial sources were also important."<sup>162</sup> Consequently, any man who possessed comparable wealth was a potential candidate.<sup>163</sup>

Table 3.1: Analysis of the Backgrounds of Berwick's Parliamentary Candidates, 1832 - 81

<u>Background</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Aristocracy	2	8
Gentry	3	12
Professions	15	60
Merchants	5	20
Total	25	100

Wealth, however, was not only a legal requirement: it was also socially desirable. Thus in 1857 the *Berwick and Kelso Warder* assured its readers that Charles Gordon, the Conservative candidate, was "a gentleman of large property", who possessed "ample leisure as well as inclination to devote himself as a legislator to the service of his country."<sup>164</sup> Even after the abolition of the property qualification, wealth continued to be an important attribute for any man intent on going to Parliament. In 1868 Dr. Fluker, in nominating Major George Carpenter, said, "Major Carpenter had plenty of time at his disposal and had ample means."<sup>165</sup>

Wealth was thus synonymous with leisure, and leisure was essential if a man was to fulfil his parliamentary duties. However, wealth also meant stability. A

<sup>162</sup> D. Brenchley, *A Place By Itself: Berwick-upon-Tweed in the Eighteenth Century* (Berwick-upon-Tweed, 1997), pp. 119 - 20.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 20 March 1857, p. 2. Charles William Gordon was a Conservative candidate at Berwick in 1857, but withdrew from the contest, and was an MP for the borough from 1859 until his death in 1863.

<sup>165</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

man who owned property had a vested interest in the welfare of the country and was unlikely to entertain ideas which were inimical to the constitution. James Thomson Wilson was aware of this when, in 1865, he seconded the nomination of Alexander Mitchell. According to Wilson, Mitchell was "a gentleman of very considerable property, of irreproachable character, of refined intellect, and of excellent education." Such qualities made Mitchell a safe man, for "It was not men who had property in the country, or men of refined intellect, who were dangerous men; it was not likely that such men would bring in or support any measures which would be subversive to the best interests of the country."<sup>166</sup>

Allied to wealth were social standing and respectability. In 1853 Berwick's mayor, Thomas Bogue, in proposing Marjoribanks as a fit and proper person to represent the borough in Parliament, referred to "the high respectability" of Marjoribanks' family and to "his own distinguished position as a director of the East India Company".<sup>167</sup> At the same election the solicitor Stephen Sanderson alluded to the fact that Renton was "respected by the rich and loved by the poor".<sup>168</sup> Likewise, in 1881 the Conservative *Warder* admitted that the Liberal candidate, Jerningham, was "highly respected and popular for his personal character".<sup>169</sup> Perhaps the qualities expected of a candidate were best summed up by Dr. Alexander Kirkwood in 1863 when he said, "As far as he could understand it, the attributes which should belong to a member of Parliament were that he should be a man in a respectable position of society, and of good private character, that he should be in a position above that which would expose him to temptation, and he should be above being influenced by sordid jobbery and selfish

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<sup>166</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>167</sup> Nomination speech on behalf of D. C. Marjoribanks, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>168</sup> Nomination speech on behalf of J. C. Renton, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>169</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 September 1881, p. 2.

aggrandisement."<sup>170</sup>

The notion that a member of Parliament should be a man of integrity, who was more concerned with serving the public good than with promoting his private interests was of great importance to the electors. As Derek Fraser has observed:

. . . in addition to general parliamentary affairs the local electorate expected three essential functions from their representative. He was expected first to manage local business, second to act as a channel of patronage, and third to give a lead to local opinion, to create the right sort of image for the town.<sup>171</sup>

Consequently, those charged with the task of nominating candidates frequently alluded to the candidate's selfless motives in seeking public office. Thus in 1852 Dr. George Johnston said of Matthew Forster that in the eleven years he had represented the borough, he had sought no personal or party advantage by the attention he paid to those electors who solicited his assistance.<sup>172</sup> At the same nomination Dr. Clarke, in recommending John Campbell Renton, said, it was on public motives alone that he sought a seat in Parliament: he had no selfish views to serve and no personal or relational interest to advance.<sup>173</sup>

These abnegations of self-interest were often reiterated by the candidates themselves. In 1835 Sir Francis Blake said that when the previous government had been in power, he had sought nothing from them for himself, but had only been concerned with promoting the interests of the electors.<sup>174</sup> In 1857 Forster informed the electors that he had no personal objects to serve in going to Parliament. He

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<sup>170</sup> *Berwick Journal*, 3 July 1863, p. 3.

<sup>171</sup> D. Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England: The structure of politics in Victorian cities* (Leicester, 1976), p. 179.

<sup>172</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Nomination address, the *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 January 1835, p. 2.

sought none and he had got none, and he considered that few men attended more closely to their duties than himself.<sup>175</sup> Six years later Mitchell, answering Conservative criticism that, unlike his opponent, he was not a self-made man, insisted that his fortune would enable him to devote his whole time to public duties, for he was not connected with any commercial scheme. He said he came before them, "not so much to ask for their votes for himself, but with a sincere and heartfelt desire to benefit that Liberal cause which had done such good to this country."<sup>176</sup>

Despite such declarations of selflessness, there is no doubt that many candidates regarded a seat in Parliament as a means of furthering their own interests. Frank O'Gorman has shown how, in Hanoverian England, a parliamentary career was seen not only as a way of increasing social prestige and of seeking political office, but was also a route to advancement in a variety of other spheres, such as the law, the armed services and the civil service.<sup>177</sup> This continued to be the case throughout our period.

One Berwick representative who was especially successful in advancing his own interests was Sir Rufane Donkin, who, after his election in 1835, was appointed Surveyor-General of the Ordnance, a post which earned him £1200 a year.<sup>178</sup> Unfortunately for Donkin, he put his own political career before the interests of his constituents. Having promised to uphold the rights and privileges of the freemen of Berwick, he broke his word by voting with the Melbourne Government for the destruction of those rights and privileges. These included the freemen's voting rights, their right to admit new freemen and certain rights enjoyed

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<sup>175</sup> Nomination address, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5.

<sup>176</sup> Nomination address, the *Berwick Journal*, 3 April 1863, p. 4.

<sup>177</sup> O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, pp. 120 - 1.

<sup>178</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2. Sir Rufane Shaw Donkin was the Liberal MP for Berwick from 1832 to 1837 and a candidate in 1837.

by the children and apprentices of freemen.<sup>179</sup> Such conduct may have earned him the gratitude of his political masters, but it did nothing to enhance his reputation among the freemen of Berwick, who naturally felt they had been betrayed by their representative.<sup>180</sup> With the freemen forming 63 per cent of the Berwick electorate, a member of Parliament could ill afford to alienate such a substantial section of his constituency. Not surprisingly, Donkin paid the penalty for his failure to look after the interests of the freemen when, in 1837, he came bottom of the poll.

Another representative who placed his own political aspirations before the interests of his constituents was Richard Hodgson. First elected in 1837, Hodgson represented Berwick for ten years. However, on the eve of the 1847 election he unexpectedly announced his withdrawal from Berwick in order to stand at Newcastle, where his brother, John Hodgson Hinde, was retiring. Hodgson's claim that it was his concern for the maintenance of Newcastle's independence which prompted him to forsake Berwick did nothing to appease his supporters in the Border town, who naturally felt betrayed by their erstwhile member.<sup>181</sup> If Hodgson was looking for a more prestigious seat than Berwick, then he suffered for his political ambition. Not only was he defeated at Newcastle in 1847, but the electors of Berwick never forgave him for deserting them: on each of the four occasions when he again contested the borough he came bottom of the poll.

In pursuing their own interests at the expense of their constituents, both Donkin and Hodgson displayed a lack of integrity. Hodgson in particular appears to have been a disreputable character. Although he denied having nominated Miller as his successor, the facts do not bear this out. His defence rested upon his assertion that he had not learned of Miller's intention to stand for the borough until

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<sup>179</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2. See also Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. XXVIII, 1835, 1112 - 16 and Hansard, Vol. XXIX, 1835, 669 - 77.

<sup>180</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2 and 22 July 1837, p. 3.

<sup>181</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 August 1847, p. 4.



some time after he had announced his resignation. However, this was discredited when Berwick's mayor, George Johnston, pointed out that Miller's election address had been written *before* Hodgson had informed the electors of his retirement.<sup>182</sup> As we have seen, Hodgson's dishonesty was evident again in 1852, when he broke his promise not to come forward if there was already a Conservative candidate in the field. Later in the same year he was involved in a corrupt compromise with the Liberal candidate Matthew Forster. This will be discussed in a later chapter, but, suffice to say, Hodgson did not come out of the affair with any credit.

The fact that the political careers of Donkin and Hodgson were effectively curtailed because of their dishonesty serves to illustrate the importance of integrity in a parliamentary candidate. The electors did not want a representative who could not be trusted. One further case will bear this out. After the 1852 election, Matthew Forster, who had represented Berwick since 1841, was unseated for bribery. Forster had been a popular candidate, heading the poll at each of the three elections he contested. Although his son, John, was comfortably returned at the by-election in 1853, when Forster himself returned to Berwick in 1857 he was resoundingly defeated. The *Berwick and Kelso Warder* chastised Forster for having the effrontery to offer himself to the same constituency in which he had been found guilty of bribery, remarking that a stigma had been cast upon the borough by his proceedings in 1852.<sup>183</sup> Evidently, many electors agreed with the *Warder* and refused to support a candidate who had sullied both his own political reputation and that of the constituency.<sup>184</sup>

Forster may have considered himself unfortunate, for not everyone accused of dishonesty found his political career in ruins. John Stapleton first stood for

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<sup>182</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 August 1847, p. 4. In fact, Miller's address and Hodgson's resignation were both dated 10 July 1847.

<sup>183</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 March 1857, p. 2.

<sup>184</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 4 April 1857, p. 3

Berwick in 1852, where he was returned along with Forster. Like Forster, he was unseated, but for treating. However, unlike Forster, Stapleton managed to get back in at Berwick in 1857 and he did so by heading the poll. Obviously, his disqualification for treating had not harmed his election prospects in the slightest. It may well be that treating was regarded as a less serious offence than bribery, even though it carried the same punishment. It is also possible that the electors were more sympathetic towards Stapleton because, unlike Forster, he was a novice in electioneering matters and had, by his own admission, made mistakes.<sup>185</sup>

The electors' willingness to behave so charitably towards Stapleton is all the more perplexing when one considers that at the time of the election he was involved in the Royal British Bank scandal, which the *Warder* described as "one of the most atrocious swindles of modern times".<sup>186</sup> The fact that Stapleton was a director and Deputy-Governor of a bank which had perpetrated a serious fraud seems to have been ignored by the electors of Berwick.<sup>187</sup> As the *Advertiser* remarked after Stapleton's examination in the Bankruptcy Court:

Considering what a den of fools and thieves the Royal British Bank was, a Director and Deputy-Governor of it ought to have been regarded as suspicious, and under a very dark cloud, previous to any examination of him in the Court of Bankruptcy; for rarely are honest men found in such closets, and, to prove their honesty, it is necessary to show, very satisfactorily, what they have been doing there. This fact was not sufficiently taken into consideration by those electors of Berwick, who, on a kind of principle of honour, gave Mr. Stapleton their support at the late election;<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 March 1857, p. 3.

<sup>186</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 March 1857, p. 2.

<sup>187</sup> Stapleton became a director of the Royal British Bank on 31 July 1855 and Deputy-Governor in 1856. The bank stopped payment on 3 September 1856. The examination of the directors of the bank was concluded on Wednesday, 24 June 1857. Seven of the directors, including Stapleton, subsequently appeared before the Court of Queen's Bench, charged with conspiring to deceive and defraud the shareholders of the bank by false representations, and found guilty on 17 February 1858. Stapleton was fined 1s. 8d. and discharged. The other directors and the manager of the bank were given prison sentences ranging from three months to one year.

<sup>188</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 18 April 1857, p. 3.

So why did the electors choose to ignore Stapleton's association with a bank which had squandered the money of its depositors and shareholders? The *Advertiser* suggested it was out of a mistaken sense of justice.<sup>189</sup> The *Scotsman* was more forthright, declaring that the electors had been gullible and unscrupulous in the way they had accepted Stapleton's protestations of innocence and ignorance regarding the bank's nefarious transactions.<sup>190</sup>

Stapleton's success at Berwick is all the more remarkable when one considers the fate of the two other Royal British Bank directors who had political aspirations in 1857: Humphrey Brown was expelled from the seat which he had formerly occupied for Tewkesbury; while Richard Hartley Kennedy, who periodically presented himself as a parliamentary candidate, decided not to stand.

Apparently, not all candidates were as audacious as Stapleton, and not all constituencies were as naive as Berwick. However, if Stapleton was fortunate in 1857, his luck soon ran out: two years later he came bottom of the poll when he contested Berwick for the third time. Although a number of reasons lay behind his defeat in 1859, one cannot overlook the possibility that his conviction for fraud fourteen months earlier finally convinced the electors of his lack of integrity.

In view of the self-interest that motivated many candidates, it was important that the electors chose someone who would attend to the borough's interests. Thus it was an essential element in every candidate's address that he should promise to undertake this task. In 1832 Blake said he comprehended the interests of the town as well as those of the country.<sup>191</sup> In 1837 Hodgson told the electors that if they chose him as one of their representatives, he would endeavour to

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<sup>189</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 May 1857, p. 3.

<sup>190</sup> *The Scotsman*, 29 April 1857, p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, p. 2.

promote the general and local interests of the borough.<sup>192</sup> In 1880 McLaren promised that, if they returned him to Parliament, the electors' local interests, both corporate and individual, would receive his best attention.<sup>193</sup>

Sometimes these election promises were more specific. After his election in 1835, Bradshaw promised to attend to the protection and encouragement of the town's shipping and commercial pursuits.<sup>194</sup> In 1837 William Holmes said he would do everything in his power to promote the trade of Berwick.<sup>195</sup> In 1880 W. M. Macdonald said he hoped that his experience elsewhere of agricultural and fishing affairs might enable him intelligently to represent the local agricultural and fishing interests.<sup>196</sup> The following year Henry Trotter promised to use his influence with the North British Railway, of which he was a director, to obtain a new harbour for the fishermen of Berwick with half a mile of railway track to connect the harbour to the main line.<sup>197</sup> Such a scheme would help to increase the supply of fish to London and other populous centres, and so give a great impetus to the prosperity of the town.<sup>198</sup> Similar assurances were given elsewhere. At Coleraine in 1859, for instance, Dr. John Boyd promised land for a market; while at Kinsale in 1859 Sir John Arnott promised to erect a waterworks to supply the townsfolk with fresh water.<sup>199</sup> However, at Berwick such grandiose promises were rare, for few candidates were foolhardy enough to commit themselves to something they might be unable to accomplish.

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<sup>192</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 2.

<sup>193</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>194</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 January 1835, p. 2. James Bradshaw was the Tory MP for Berwick from 1835 to 1837.

<sup>195</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 3. William Holmes was the Conservative MP for Berwick from 1837 to 1841.

<sup>196</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 12 March 1880, p. 2. W. M. Macdonald was a Conservative candidate at Berwick in 1880.

<sup>197</sup> Henry John Trotter was a Conservative candidate at Berwick in 1881.

<sup>198</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 September 1881, pp. 2 and 3.

<sup>199</sup> Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland*, pp. 448 and 452.

In this respect it was a distinct advantage if a candidate could support his words with deeds. In 1859 Gordon reminded the electors that although he was not their member, he had laboured incessantly to promote their interests to the best of his ability.<sup>200</sup> Gordon had first stood for Berwick two years earlier and, despite his defeat, he had resolved to build a church for the fishing community of the Greenses. True to his word, Gordon donated £2,500 to the building of St. Mary's Anglican Church, which was consecrated on 23 November 1858. Such munificence was rewarded when Gordon was returned at the head of the poll in 1859.

However, it was generally candidates who had already represented the borough who were in the best position to boast of their achievements on behalf of the townsfolk. In 1852 Dr. Johnston said of Forster that even those who were opposed to him on public grounds admitted that his attention to the business of the borough and to the interests of the individual members of its community could not be surpassed. The Town Council had on more than one occasion passed a vote of thanks to him for his prompt attention to any request they had made to him.<sup>201</sup> One of the services that Forster had rendered to the community was that of giving an order for the building of a vessel to relieve distress at a time when employment was very scarce in the town.<sup>202</sup> In 1857 Alderman Bogue was equally lavish in his praise of Marjoribanks, stating that "There was not a single question which had come before the Town Council requiring a reference to London, but had received his most prompt attention, and the influence of his position and character had told powerfully in every instance of furthering the objects the Council had in view."<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, Marjoribanks had been especially munificent in his contribution to the

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<sup>200</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

<sup>201</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 May 1853, p. 1.

<sup>203</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5.

charities of the town, making donations to the poor, all the town's educational movements and "all the religious efforts of the town and neighbourhood."<sup>204</sup>

Such generosity was expected of a member of Parliament and could often pay dividends at election time.<sup>205</sup> In this respect, Renton was better placed than most, for he belonged to a local family "who had long been respected for their endeavours to provide for the amusements and sports of the town, especially in granting a piece of land for a racecourse."<sup>206</sup> However, even a stranger to the town could muster support with a prominent display of largesse. This happened in 1880 when Milne Home was pushed into last place in the poll by his Conservative colleague, Macdonald. According to the *Advertiser*, Milne Home's position "was much lower than it would have been had not the liberal patronage bestowed upon tradesmen and numerous favours granted to other classes of the community, obtained for Colonel Macdonald many votes that his own individual merits or his political opinions would have failed to secure."<sup>207</sup> Such patronage included the distribution of coals among the electors. This was not an uncommon practice. At Boston, for example, Parry dispensed 700 tons of coal among the electors;<sup>208</sup> while at Hertford in 1832 Duncombe provided flour and coal for the poorer voters.<sup>209</sup> Similarly, at Bristol in 1832 and 1835 the Conservatives distributed bread and beef amongst the freemen.<sup>210</sup> Of course, such generosity could easily be construed as treating, and, indeed, the *Berwick Advertiser* alleged that, by supplying coals,

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<sup>204</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5.

<sup>205</sup> This was certainly the case with George Hudson, who, though involved in corruption and bankruptcy, was re-elected at Sunderland repeatedly on the strength of having built the town's docks. See A. Heesom, "Parliamentary Politics 1830 to the 1860s", in G. E. Milburn and S. T. Miller (ed.), *Sunderland: River, Town and People: A history from the 1780s* (Sunderland, 1988), pp. 96 - 8.

<sup>206</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>207</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 3.

<sup>208</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 23 March 1880, p. 2.

<sup>209</sup> V. North, "The Hertford Borough Election 1832: A Study of Bribery and Corruption" (Unpublished B.A. Dissertation, Durham, 1985), p. 55.

<sup>210</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 128.

Macdonald was guilty of bribery.<sup>211</sup>

In contrast to Renton and Macdonald, Hubback in 1865 was considered “very shabby” in not answering the many applications sent to him for subscriptions and donations to the various institutions and charities in the town, even though he had previously subscribed to them.<sup>212</sup> Adopting a more scrupulous stance than Macdonald, he justified his niggardliness by saying that as a candidate he did not think it would be dignified on his part to seek support by giving to all who came forward. If he had given to one he should not know where to have stopped. He must have given to all, and therefore he gave to none.<sup>213</sup> Such honesty may have won him respect, but it most certainly lost him votes. At Sunderland Viscount Howick was similarly criticised for refusing to subscribe to the town’s lifeboat. His defence, which was the same as Hubback’s, did nothing to remedy the situation.<sup>214</sup> Quite simply, candidates were not expected to be so parsimonious.

The loss of his seat in 1880 was a bitter disappointment for Milne Home, especially since he believed he had served the borough well. Addressing a crowd from the coffee-room windows of the King’s Arms Hotel, he said that for six years he had often foregone his private occupations or his pleasures to serve them, and their local interests had ever been his first thought.<sup>215</sup> However, if such conscientiousness was no guarantee of electoral success, then failure to be diligent where local affairs were concerned could result in the ruination of a member of Parliament. Hodgson’s sudden withdrawal from Berwick in 1847 may have been the main reason for his inability to get back in again, but his popularity among the electors was in decline even before the announcement of his

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<sup>211</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 23 March 1880, p. 2.

<sup>212</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 June 1865, p. 2.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *The Times*, 22 December 1841, p. 5.

<sup>215</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 2 April 1880, p. 3.

retirement. This decline derived in part from his ineptitude in attending to matters of local importance. Even his own friends apparently preferred to entrust such matters to the Liberal member, Forster, rather than to Hodgson. One example of Hodgson's failure to look after the interests of the community occurred in 1845, when Thomas Winnington introduced the Salmon Fishery Bill. The object of the Bill was to amend the close season for salmon fishing so that it extended from 13 September to 1 February, instead of from 15 October to the 15 February, a change which would have resulted in a loss of at least one-seventh of the revenue. The fact that Hodgson took no interest in the Bill and offered no opposition to it did not endear him to those of his constituents who were involved in the local fisheries. It was left to Forster to fight the new proposals and so "avert the threatened evil".<sup>216</sup>

With local issues playing such a prominent role in electoral matters, it is not surprising that the electors should have such a high regard for candidates with a local connection. Indeed, locality was one of the most important attributes that a candidate could possess, for it was generally believed that a local man was more attuned to the needs of the community than an outsider. Consequently, election addresses abound with references to a candidate's local connections. Sometimes these connections could be somewhat tenuous. In 1868 Carpenter admitted to being a stranger to the town, but claimed a link with its political life on the ground that two of his ancestors had represented the borough during the 1790s.<sup>217</sup> An even more trivial local connection was that proffered by Trotter in 1881. He said that although he was not perhaps what would strictly be called a local man, he had a considerable connection with the locality by birth, residence and interest. He was a north countryman and for a number of years he had been a director of the railway which supplied Berwick. It had been his custom during those years, two or three

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<sup>216</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 17 July 1847, p. 4.

<sup>217</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2. Charles Carpenter represented Berwick from 1790 to 1796. George Carpenter, his brother and the son-in-law of Lord Delaval, represented the borough from 1796 to 1802.



times a month, to pass through the station of their town, but in future he hoped to pay more frequent visits to the town itself.<sup>218</sup> Not surprisingly, Trotter's "connection" with the borough was ridiculed by his opponent, Hubert Jerningham of Longridge Towers, who declared that the local gentry "knew better the wants of this neighbourhood than one who was constantly taking a bird's eye view of Berwick from the window of a railway carriage as it crossed that fine bridge which spanned the noble Tweed."<sup>219</sup>

Some candidates came to the borough as total strangers, but, realising the importance of locality, made it their business to establish a local connection as soon as possible. Hodgson in 1837 announced his intention to take up residence in the neighbourhood and after his election promptly moved into Carham Hall, a few miles up the Tweed near Wark.<sup>220</sup> In 1852 Stapleton was regarded by both the local newspapers with aversion, because he was an intruder.<sup>221</sup> In an attempt to counter this criticism, he announced that his family had been for generations connected with the county of Northumberland "by property lineally inherited from the ancient border family of Errington."<sup>222</sup> However, like Hodgson, Stapleton strengthened his links with the borough by moving into the neighbourhood, making his home at Spittal.<sup>223</sup>

Another stranger who established a local connection was Forster, who first came to Berwick in 1841 and successfully contested the borough three times. Unlike Hodgson and Stapleton, he never attempted to lay down any roots in the district. Indeed, he seems to have stayed well clear of the place, returning only

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<sup>218</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 September 1881, p. 3.

<sup>219</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>220</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2.

<sup>221</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 3.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 April 1852, p. 4.

<sup>223</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

once during the first six years of his parliamentary career,<sup>224</sup> and even absenting himself from Berwick on one of the town's most important civic occasions: the opening of the Royal Border Bridge by Queen Victoria in August 1850. However, Forster's local connection with the borough seems to have been his friendship with the influential Dr. Johnston, who was the town's mayor when Forster contested Berwick in 1841 and 1847. It is, perhaps, significant that Forster's only defeat at Berwick occurred in 1857 - two years after Johnston's death.

There were also candidates who could claim a genuine connection with the town. Blake resided at Tillmouth Park, about ten miles from Berwick. Renton lived at Mordington House, just over the Scottish border. Marjoribanks, although a stranger, was related to the highly respected Marjoribanks family of Berwickshire.<sup>225</sup> Mitchell resided at Stow in Berwickshire, had known Berwick ever since he was a child and had always taken "the deepest interest" in the town's prosperity and welfare.<sup>226</sup> Hubback was born and educated in Berwick, but had lived in Liverpool for thirty years.<sup>227</sup> Milne Home was a freeman of Berwick and lived at Paxton House in Berwickshire. He was also the grandson of Admiral Sir David Milne, who had been granted the freedom of Berwick because of his gallantry at the Battle of Algiers.<sup>228</sup> Jerningham was initially a stranger to the borough, but in 1874, seven years before he became a candidate, he married Annie Mather of Longridge Towers, thus establishing a local connection.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p. 2.

<sup>225</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>226</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 26 June 1863, p. 7.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 July 1865, p. 5.

<sup>228</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 January 1874, p. 2 and the *Berwick Warder*, 3 February 1874, p. 3. Admiral Sir David Milne was also the member for Berwick in 1820, but the election was declared void and he was replaced by Lt. Col. Henry Heneage St. Paul. Not surprisingly, Milne Home made no reference to his grandfather's brief political career.

<sup>229</sup> *The Times*, 27 October 1881, p. 11 and the *Berwick Journal*, 27 October 1881, p. 4.

Further evidence of the importance of locality can be found in the speeches of some of the town's political leaders. At a meeting of Liberal electors in 1853, Dr. Johnston declared that he was not happy with the prospect of James Clay as a Liberal candidate, because he was "a stranger of whom they knew nothing", unlike Johnston's own nominee, Andrew Edgar, who was "well known in the town and district."<sup>230</sup>

Similarly, in 1880 Andrew Thompson, the chairman of the Conservative election committee, attacked the Liberal candidate John McLaren, observing that "A Scotch man coming into an English borough was a thing scarcely known before."<sup>231</sup> When he was informed by a fellow-Conservative that it would be an honour for Berwick to have as its representative the Lord Advocate of Scotland, Thompson retorted by asking what the people of Berwick had to do with the Lord Advocate of Scotland: his presence in the borough was a direct insult to them.<sup>232</sup> The problem wasn't just that McLaren was Scottish. He was also an intruder, coming from Edinburgh, some fifty-seven miles away - unlike his rival and fellow-countryman, Milne Home, who was a freeman of Berwick and lived in the neighbourhood.

Locality could even transcend political differences. In 1865 the Liberal James Thomson Wilson complimented the Conservatives on the selection of Hubback as one of their candidates, for "he was a native of the town, and a man of undoubted respectability".<sup>233</sup> However, he took exception to their other candidate, the outsider Cargill, "who had again thrust himself upon the community of Berwick."<sup>234</sup> After the 1880 by-election the Liberal Jerningham wrote to the

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<sup>230</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 April 1853, p. 3.

<sup>231</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

Conservative candidate, Milne Home, congratulating him on his victory, and expressing his belief that a local man was the proper person to represent Berwick.<sup>235</sup> Evidently, Milne Home did not disappoint his political opponents, because the following year James Allan, the Chairman of the Berwick Liberal Association, admitted that he "was a first-class member of Parliament, who had attended most assiduously to his duties in the House of Commons as a legislator for this great Empire, and who had shown besides by his attention to the small affairs of the borough, that he had done his best for their little empire of Berwick-upon-Tweed."<sup>236</sup>

Research on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elections shows that Berwick was not unique in preferring local candidates to outsiders. David Stoker, in his study of electoral behaviour in the north of England during the period of the unreformed electoral system, observes that in the boroughs, as well as in the counties, "Few strangers stood as candidates, and fewer still were successful."<sup>237</sup> This preference for local candidates was not entirely the result of parochialism. "Apart from a desire to receive financial benefits, constituencies wanted local men to represent local interests."<sup>238</sup>

The electoral advantage to be derived from locality has also been stressed by more recent investigations. Frank O'Gorman, in his seminal work on the electoral system of Hanoverian England, asserts that before the late-nineteenth century, when a parliamentary candidate became "the local representative of a national political organisation", the personal qualities of a candidate were of particular significance: "The ideal candidate should be accessible, approachable, and sensitive to the wishes of the constituency. This meant that he should be a

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<sup>235</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 4.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>237</sup> Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 283.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

local man, of honour, reputation, and integrity, known to everybody."<sup>239</sup>

Likewise, in his study of electoral politics in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire, Mohamed Manai reveals that "the personal vote" of a candidate depended on several factors, the most crucial of which were "whether he had local connections", and "whether he had been a candidate at a previous election".<sup>240</sup> The old freeman borough of Lancaster, which was particularly sensitive to locality and personal appeal, elected only one outsider between 1818 and 1865; but even in the householder boroughs of Oldham and Rochdale, "where non-local candidates achieved some success, locality was important."<sup>241</sup> However, locality did not necessarily mean that candidates had to be natives of the borough they were contesting. "Having local connections or influences was a further asset for candidates. These connections were on several occasions much more profitable for non-local candidates than locality itself for local candidates."<sup>242</sup>

And James Vernon points out that in mid-nineteenth century Oldham, " 'Foreign' candidates were always at pains to emphasise their loyalty and devotion to the town, especially in response to attacks by competing local candidates." <sup>243</sup> If candidates were to be successful they had to show that they were prepared to promote and protect the constituents' many different interests. This included looking after the interests of local trade in the House of Commons, and, in some cases, affirming the well-being of local charities and institutions.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, pp. 122 - 3.

<sup>240</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 220.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223. Locality was also important in the household borough of Bradford, where "Most contemporaries felt that it was impossible for a stranger to the town to be elected." See D. G. Wright, "A Radical Borough: Parliamentary Politics in Bradford 1832 - 41", in *Northern History*, IV (1969), p. 149.

<sup>242</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", pp. 225 - 6.

<sup>243</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 81.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

Another quality that was prized in a candidate was that of parliamentary independence. Stoker discusses the importance of independence in the period prior to 1832, pointing out that it was "a much-used catchphrase", which "seems to have struck some sort of political chord, particularly with the rank and file elector." Even though the term became "increasingly anachronistic", it continued to be used by candidates, who obviously felt the need to emphasise their personal integrity and the fact that, though they may support the general principles of a political party, they were by no means incapable of exercising their own political initiative.<sup>245</sup>

The concept of independence continued to be important after 1832. In his analysis of politics in the age of Peel, Gash observes that in spite of the development of party and party organisation, "the highest respect . . . was reserved for the independent politician, in the sense not of one who was outside party but of one who was in party solely because of his conscientious opinion and perhaps traditional association." Members and candidates maintained they were independent in their opinions and votes "because it was the contemporary ideal of what a politician should be, however far removed from reality that ideal was." No constituency wanted to feel that its member was "the hired hack of either party or executive."<sup>246</sup>

Consequently, candidates often emphasised their independence in their election addresses. In 1832, for instance, Donkin told the electors that the leading feature of his character was independence. Throughout his life he had gloried in that independence, and he thought it may help to show that he was not unworthy to be the representative of their independent borough.<sup>247</sup> In 1847 Renton said that he was a Conservative in principle, but he was not a blind follower of any man or of

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<sup>245</sup> Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", pp. 280 - 1.

<sup>246</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 109.

<sup>247</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 Dec. 1832, p. 3.

any party.<sup>248</sup> And in the same vein, in 1853 Marjoribanks stated that he did not bind himself to be a blind and subservient follower of the Aberdeen or any other administration. If he did, the electors would be the first to despise him.<sup>249</sup>

Candidates who had already represented the borough could, of course, refer to their parliamentary voting record as proof of their independence. In 1880 Milne Home informed a meeting of electors that those of them who had taken the trouble to watch his career in the House of Commons would know that he had given a firm, though independent support to the Conservative Government; but, at the same time, he had reserved the right of every independent member of expressing his views and opinions by his vote, or by his voice, irrespective of party ties. He had not stuck to every opinion of the Government, or to every measure they thought fit to propose; but he had on several occasions gone into the lobby in opposition to the views expressed by the Government.<sup>250</sup>

However, if a candidate could allude to his parliamentary record, so too could his opponents. In 1852 the *Warder* poured scorn on Forster's performance at Westminster:

Can Mr. Forster point to one independent vote - one vote of any importance - which was not given in obedience to the behests of his chiefs? Has he not on all occasions proved himself to be the mere tool of Lord John Russell, and been obliged to vote solely in accordance with his wish?<sup>251</sup>

Similarly, the *Advertiser* was critical of Renton, observing that on the few occasions when he had found it convenient to attend Parliament, he had voted "as

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<sup>248</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p.2.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>250</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 23 March 1880, p. 3.

<sup>251</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 23 April 1852, p. 3.

he was bid by Major Beresford"<sup>252</sup>

Perhaps the most scathing rebuke was that delivered by Milne Home against John McLaren, the Lord Advocate, during the 1880 by-election. He told the electors that if an independent Liberal had come before the constituency, he personally would not have presumed to stand against him. However, the candidate whom he was opposing was not an independent Liberal. He was a member of the Government; he was a nominee of the Government. That was to say he had no independence about him whatever. He was obliged to vote in the House of Commons as he was told, and he was obliged to say what he was told.<sup>253</sup>

Independence, as Gash suggests, may have been an ideal rather than a reality, and there is little evidence, in Berwick at least, to indicate that a lack of independence was inimical to a candidate's election prospects - provided, of course, that, by following the party line, the candidate had done nothing to harm the interests of his constituents. Donkin's defeat in 1837 was, as we have seen, the direct result of his having voted with the Government to disfranchise the freemen. Likewise, in 1880 much of the hostility towards McLaren stemmed from the fear that, as a member of the Government, his ministerial duties would take precedence over his obligations to his constituents. However, not all constituencies adopted this attitude. At Kinsale and Tralee, for instance, holding office was a distinct electoral advantage. At Kinsale, where the townsfolk wanted a transatlantic telegraph station, the Attorney-General for Ireland, Thomas O'Hagan, was told "and through this you will be a more useful member particularly in advancing local interest (*and to this we all turn our eyes*), being a member of the government. . . . All other considerations are as nothing when there is a probability of such a thing . . .

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<sup>252</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 April 1852, p. 4.

<sup>253</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 13 July 1881, p. 2.



being obtained."<sup>254</sup>

Parliamentary independence was especially fashionable after the Peelites broke away from the Conservatives in 1846 and probably reached its zenith during the period 1846 - 67.<sup>255</sup> In Berwick, it certainly seems to have been in decline by 1874. That was the year that Bury failed to win the approval of the Liberal election committee, because he had been critical of Gladstone's policy. Although he was happy to be adopted by the Conservatives, Bury regarded himself as a Liberal. When an elector asked him which side of the House he would sit on if he was returned to Parliament, Bury replied that he would sit down where he thought he could find a comfortable seat. He would vote for Gladstone when he thought he was right and against him when he thought he was wrong. He would vote for any measure brought in by an independent member if he approved of it, and would also support anything which he approved of that was brought in by a member on the other side, but if he believed it was not conducive to the interests of the country he would vote against it.<sup>256</sup> Unfortunately for Bury, this defiant show of independence failed to strike a chord with the electors and he came fourth in the poll, winning only 17.4 per cent of the total number of votes cast.

Independence also worked against Trotter in 1881. At a meeting of electors held in the Corn Exchange, he said that the standpoint from which he regarded politics was one wholly removed from bigotry or partisan feelings. He admitted that he had never been much of a party man, and should not be willing to fight an

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<sup>254</sup> Cited in Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland 1832 - 1885*, p. 452.

<sup>255</sup> Gary Cox maintains that the importance of the private member was already in decline before the Second Reform Act. See G. W. Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, (Cambridge, 1987), p. 21. According to Derek Beales, the disorganisation of parties was over by 1859. By this date the Peelites had joined either the Conservatives or the Liberals, and the other party splits of the 1850s had been repaired. Beales also contends that even though parties were weaker and more numerous in the generation after 1845, "there was little sign of 'non-party' Members." See D. E. D. Beales, "Parliamentary Parties and the 'Independent' Member, 1810 - 1860", in R. Robson (ed.), *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain* (London, 1967), pp. 12 - 13 and 18.

<sup>256</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 January 1874, p. 3.

election contest on mere party issues.<sup>257</sup> Such an attitude might have won over the electorate in earlier times,<sup>258</sup> but in the 1880s it could well have been political suicide. The *Advertiser* certainly believed this to be the case, when it suggested that one of the reasons for Trotter's defeat was his renunciation of party politics, which may have prevented some Conservatives from voting for him.<sup>259</sup>

Although candidates continued to refer to their independence right up to the end of our period, it was a concept which had little to do with the reality of party politics in the 1870s and 1880s, as both Bury and Trotter found to their cost.

It has been suggested that the later decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a more party-oriented electorate, with voters more likely to be influenced by the party label of a candidate than by his personal appeal.<sup>260</sup> For instance, in his investigation of the general election of 1880, Trevor Lloyd compares the Berwick general election results of 1874 and 1880, observing that party solidarity was stronger in the later election. He attributes the change partly to "an increasing willingness to regard party affiliation as more important than the candidates' personal qualities," and partly to "the restoration of Liberal unity."<sup>261</sup> However, if Lloyd had looked at the result of the 1880 by-election, he would have seen that the picture was not so clear-cut. Three months after the Liberal victory at the general election of 1880, the representation of the borough was once again divided, when the Conservative Milne Home narrowly defeated the Liberal

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<sup>257</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 23 September 1881, p. 3.

<sup>258</sup> Charles Gordon, the Conservative member for Berwick from 1859 until 1863, frequently voted with the Palmerston Government and against the interests of his own party. Naturally, this did not go down too well with the Conservative *Warder*, but, as Gordon was unable to stand for re-election, it is impossible to gauge how the electors in general viewed his independent voting habits. See the *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2.

<sup>259</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>260</sup> Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 170 and T. Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880* (Oxford, 1968), p. 147.

<sup>261</sup> T. Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, p. 147.

McLaren. As far as the latter was concerned, the reason for his defeat was quite clear. In a post-election address at the Red Lion Hotel, he said that the Conservatives had been victorious, "because they had had as a candidate a man popular in the district, who was a member for the borough before."<sup>262</sup> He added that he regretted the Liberals had not possessed a candidate of stronger local claims, because if they had, he felt sure they would have succeeded, and the borough would have remained in Liberal hands.<sup>263</sup>

In fact, the Liberals did have a local man, Hubert Jerningham, who was willing to come forward, but he was passed over in favour of McLaren, a decision which alienated not only Jerningham's fellow Catholics, but also some of the Liberal election committee - both of whom switched their allegiance to Milne Home.<sup>264</sup>

There is no doubt that McLaren's presence in the borough caused resentment. Having been rejected by the electors of the Wigtown burghs following his appointment to office, he had been sent to Berwick "as a harbour of refuge".<sup>265</sup> However, the last thing the people of Berwick wanted was to have an outsider thrust upon them, especially when they had two suitable candidates of their own.<sup>266</sup> All of which appears to contradict Lloyd's argument that party affiliation was more important than a candidate's personal appeal. As for Liberal unity, there seems to have been little of this in the 1880 by-election, with many traditional Liberal voters,

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<sup>262</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 4. McLaren was not the only one to recognise the importance of his opponent's local connections. In 1881 James Allan, the Chairman of the Liberal committee, informed a meeting of Liberal electors that the Conservative victory in 1880 proved that "personal claims and local influence in some instances came before the claims of party." See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>263</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 4.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> Alderman Andrew Thompson, addressing a Conservative meeting on 7 July 1880. See the *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>266</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 2.

including the Catholics and even Liberal committee members, voting Conservative.

However, the 1880 by-election was not an isolated incident. Fifteen months later, personality once again played a crucial role in a Berwick by-election. On this occasion the Liberals did not repeat their mistake of underestimating the importance of locality, and chose Jerningham to represent their interest. As the *Warder* remarked:

The Liberal candidate is highly respected and popular for his personal character, and, as the owner of a large estate in the immediate vicinity, he possesses great local influence. Indeed, he makes it one of the chief grounds of his claim to the favour of the electors, that he is a 'local' candidate and will represent the local interests better than a stranger could do.<sup>267</sup>

After a hard-fought contest Jerningham defeated his Conservative opponent, Trotter, by 517 votes - the largest winning margin in the history of the borough.<sup>268</sup>

Not surprisingly, the size of Jerningham's majority provoked a good deal of comment in the press. Although the *Times* saw Jerningham's return as an unmistakable Government victory,<sup>269</sup> the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* emphasised the importance of personality, maintaining that the main political question of the day had had little to do with the result at Berwick, since "there was no material difference between the two candidates as to the current Irish question."<sup>270</sup> The Tyneside newspaper continued:

No doubt the well-deserved respect in which the people of the Border borough hold Mr. Jerningham has had its share of influence in securing his return. But, on the whole, the contest has been fought

<sup>267</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 September 1881, p. 2.

<sup>268</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>269</sup> *The Times*, 27 October 1881, p. 9.

<sup>270</sup> *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 27 October 1881, p. 2.

out on general issues; and Mr. Jerningham owes his success mainly to the liberality of his views on pending national questions, to the capacity for Parliamentary work he has displayed in the course of his canvass, and to the diversified political experience he has already gained in one of the best schools - that of the diplomatic service.<sup>271</sup>

The *Advertiser* also saw the result of the 1881 by-election in local terms, suggesting that Jerningham's success owed much to the fact that the Liberals were smarting from their defeat of the previous year, which "made them determined that on this occasion there should be no disappointment in the result by displaying too much confidence in their strength and thus neglecting to take proper precautions to secure a victory."<sup>272</sup>

While it would be unwise to claim that national issues played little or no part in the outcome of the 1881 Berwick by-election, it is nonetheless difficult to concur with the *Times*' assertion that in sending Jerningham to Parliament by so emphatic a majority the electors of Berwick had given a vote of confidence to Gladstone.<sup>273</sup> Such an assessment of the situation seems to ignore the fact that only fifteen months earlier, the Liberal candidate, a member of Gladstone's Government no less, was narrowly rejected by the Berwick electorate. Even in a constituency famous for its capriciousness this was a *volte-face par excellence*. If the men of Berwick were declaring their approval of the Gladstone administration at the 1881 by-election, why had they turned their backs on the Lord Advocate the previous year?

The *Times* was wrong to underestimate the importance of local factors, such as the personal popularity of the candidate, and the determination of local party officials to ensure that the election was a success. Just as local factors had been

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<sup>271</sup> *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 27 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>272</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>273</sup> *The Times*, 27 October 1881, p. 9.

crucial to the Conservatives' success at the by-election of 1880, so too were they vital to the success of the Liberals at the by-election of 1881, showing that personality continued to be a prominent element in Berwick elections up until the Redistribution Act of 1885.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Local connections could still prove decisive in other constituencies. Walter James' success at Gateshead in 1874 had a great deal to do with the fact that his mother was the heiress of Cuthbert Ellison, lord of the manor of Gateshead and the last in the direct line of an important local landowning family. See N. McCord, "Gateshead Politics in the Age of Reform", in *Northern History*, IV (1969), pp. 179 - 80.

## CHAPTER 4: THE ELECTORATE

### INTRODUCTION

From 1796 returning officers at contested parliamentary elections were legally obliged to maintain a written record of the poll for their constituency. Many of these documents have survived, and over the past thirty years their value as a source of information in the study of electoral politics has been increasingly recognised.<sup>275</sup>

The existence of such records makes it possible to analyse not only the voting behaviour of individuals, but also that of groups of individuals. Such analysis, especially when it is supported by evidence from other sources, can reveal a great deal about the determinants of voting behaviour.

Problems do, however, exist, not least of which is the fragmentary nature of this type of evidence: not all the poll books have survived. Berwick is, perhaps, more fortunate than many constituencies. Of the thirteen contests between 1832 and the end of open voting in 1872, poll books exist for ten of them, a 76.9 per cent survival rate. The poll books which are missing are those for 1837, 1841 and 1857, resulting in two significant gaps - one of twelve years and one of six years - in the continuity of information on voting behaviour at Berwick. Such losses are obviously inconvenient, for they prevent the creation of a continuous picture of the Berwick electorate at two important stages in the borough's political history: the early 1840s and the late 1850s.

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<sup>275</sup> During this period the following writers have made extensive use of poll books in their investigations: J. R. Vincent, *Pollbooks*; Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*; D. Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England*; Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour"; J. A. Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights* (Princeton, 1982); O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*; Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire"; and Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence".

However, missing poll books are not the only problem confronting the student of nineteenth-century electoral politics. Even in the case of existing poll books there are difficulties to be faced. One of these is the lack of uniformity regarding the information contained in the poll books. Of the ten Berwick poll books in existence only eight give the voter's residence and only five give his occupation. Furthermore, only four give the voter's residence *and* his occupation. Not surprisingly, record linkage becomes a vital tool in the attempt to overcome the problem of voter identification caused by such inconsistencies, although other sources also have their limitations.<sup>276</sup> Trade directories include information on only a minority of the electorate, and even then the details may well be out of date. Rate books also present problems. Because voters did not always reside at the property for which they claimed the franchise, especially where the property was a warehouse or a shop, it is difficult to make the linkage between addresses. However, a bigger problem is the erratic coverage provided by rate books. Radice, for instance, found that there were no surviving rate books for Durham before the 1850s,<sup>277</sup> and the present study has discovered that all the rate books for Berwick

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<sup>276</sup> Recognition of the value of record linkage as a means of gathering information about a person or event has generated a large amount of literature over the last twenty-eight years. See, for instance, W. A. Speck and W. A. Gray, "Computer Analysis of Pollbooks: An Initial Report", in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLIV (1970), pp. 64 - 90; I. Winchester, "The Linkage of Historical Records by Man and Computer: Techniques and Problems", in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, I (1970), pp. 107 - 24; I. Winchester, "On Referring to Ordinary Historical Persons", in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People in the Past* (London, 1973), pp. 17 - 40; E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, "Nominal Record Linkage by Computer and the Logic of Family Reconstruction", in Wrigley (ed.), *Identifying People*, pp. 64 - 101; 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), pp. 105 - 12; Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England*, pp. 312 - 20; J. A. Phillips, "Pollbooks and English Electoral Behaviour", in J. A. Sims, *A Handlist of British Parliamentary Poll Books* (Leicester, 1984), pp. ix - x; G. Buellens, "Computer Assisted Analysis of Hull Poll Books, 1774, 1780 and 1784" (University of Hull, M.A., 1987); S. W. Baskerville, "'Preferred Linkage' and the Analysis of Voter Behaviour in the Eighteenth Century", in *History and Computing*, I (1989), pp. 112 - 20; 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), pp. 2 - 15; and Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", Vol. 1, pp. 68 - 97.

<sup>277</sup> Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", Vol. 1, p. 92.



were deliberately destroyed during the First World War.<sup>278</sup> Faced with such obstacles, it was necessary to rely more on longitudinal linkage (of poll books) than on inter-source linkage.

Partly because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence, and partly because of the small size of the electorate,<sup>279</sup> it was decided that the most appropriate method of analysing the Berwick poll books was by manual comparison, rather than by delegating the task to a computer programme. However, a word processor was used to match up the electors' names in the case of the 1832 and 1835 elections, partly because the poll books for these elections are in manuscript form and cannot be photocopied, and partly because the names are recorded in the order in which the electors voted, rather than alphabetically, which renders voter identification a particularly arduous task. All the other poll books are in printed form, can be photocopied and the electors' names are arranged alphabetically, making manual comparison fairly straightforward. The obvious advantages of employing a database for poll book analysis - greater speed and greater accuracy - were deemed inapplicable in an investigation which covered only seven poll books and an electorate of less than 800.<sup>280</sup> Moreover, the manual approach to poll book analysis, because of its subjective nature, allows the researcher a necessary measure of discretion when identifying an individual elector through the process of record linkage.

The poll books used in this investigation were not studied in isolation from the elections themselves. Newspaper accounts of the elections, together with editorial comments in both the Conservative and Liberal press, formed a major part

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<sup>278</sup> Since the absence of rate books at Berwick precludes the possibility of tracing the ratable value of properties occupied by voters, there is no way of exploring the class dimension of voting behaviour as advocated by Miles Taylor in "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72".

<sup>279</sup> See 4.1.

<sup>280</sup> The average size of the electorate for the period 1832 - 1868 was 773.

of this research. Without the background knowledge provided by such sources, poll book analysis is likely to be an unsatisfactory exercise, for the information obtained from the poll books is insufficient by itself to enable the historian to produce a comprehensive account of the electoral process at work. However, when used in conjunction with other sources, the evidence acquired from poll books can guide the historian to a better understanding of some of the factors, such as occupation, social status, party influence and bribery, which affect voting behaviour. Poll book analysis can also provide important information on the size and structure of the electorate, electoral participation and voting consistency. Even if, as Jon Lawrence asserts, longitudinal poll book analysis provides only a microcosmic view of electoral behaviour, it does at least present us with a starting point in our quest to develop a more comprehensive picture of electoral politics.

## THE NATURE OF THE ELECTORATE

### The Size of the Electorate

Table 4.1 shows the size of the Berwick electorate at each of the seventeen elections during our period. All the figures, which were taken from the *Berwick Advertiser*, the *Berwick Warder* and the *Berwick Journal*, have been corrected for deaths, removals and double entries, and should therefore be an accurate assessment of the number of electors who were qualified to vote at each election. This is important when one considers that the number of electors on the borough register was generally well in excess of the number of electors who were qualified to vote. Table 4.2 highlights the discrepancy between these two figures by showing the decrease in the size of the electorate at six Berwick elections after adjustments have been made to allow for deaths since registration, freemen who were registered also as householders, householders who were registered in both

parishes (i.e. Berwick and Tweedmouth) and disqualifications from voting in consequence of holding office in the Customs, Excise or Post Office.

Table 4.1: Size of the Berwick Electorate, 1832 - 1881

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>
699	683	697	723	813	770	764	803	703
<u>1859</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1881</u>	
700	718	703	1270	1200	1224	1224	1820	

Table 4.2: Decrease in the Size of the Electorate at Six Berwick Elections after Adjustments for Deaths, Double Qualifications and Removals

	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1853</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>
No. on register	807	832	853	817	812	1415
Deaths, double entries and removals	110	109	89	114	109	145
No. qualified to vote at time of election	697	723	764	703	703	1270
Percentage decrease in size of electorate after adjustments	13.6	13.1	10.4	14.0	13.4	10.3

An examination of Table 4.1 shows that between 1832 and 1841 there was very little change in the size of the electorate, which averaged 701. However, in 1847 there was an increase of 11.1 per cent as the number of electors exceeded 800 for the first time. This increase in the size of the electorate can be explained by the rising population. In 1841 the population of the parliamentary borough of

Berwick was 12,578. In 1851 it was 15,094 - an increase of 16.7 per cent.<sup>281</sup> Between 1847 and 1857 the electorate averaged 788. In 1859 there was a drop of 12.5 per cent as the number returned to the 700 mark. This drop in the size of the electorate can again be accounted for by the shifting population figures. In 1861 the population of the parliamentary borough stood at 14,027 - a decrease of 12.1 per cent since 1851.<sup>282</sup> There was little change between 1859 and 1865, the average for this period being 706. After the introduction of household suffrage in 1867, the size of the electorate shot up by 80.7 per cent in 1868 - by far the biggest increase of our period. During the next twelve years it averaged 1230. The next significant increase occurred in 1881 when the registration of 496 new electors enlarged the electorate by 48.7 per cent.

Table 4.3 shows the percentage of increase or decrease in the size of the electorate in fifteen English towns from 1847 to 1865. With the exception of Preston, which was exceptional because of its wide freeman franchise before 1832, the industrial towns such as Birmingham, Bradford and Sheffield experienced a marked increase in the size of their electorates during these years. In contrast, the old market and cathedral towns like Berwick, Lancaster and Durham suffered a decline in the number of electors on their register.

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<sup>281</sup> *Abstract of the Answers and Returns, Enumeration Abstract, 1841* (London, 1843), p. 465 and *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables, Vol. II* (London, 1852), p. 68. This increase coincided with the construction of Robert Stephenson's railway viaduct (1847 - 50), which involved two thousand workers.

<sup>282</sup> *Census of England and Wales, Population Tables, Vol. I* (London, 1862), p. 90.

Table 4.3: Percentage of Increase/Decrease in the Size of the Electorate in the Mid-Nineteenth Century<sup>283</sup>

<u>Constituency</u>	<u>1847 - 52</u>	<u>1852 - 57</u>	<u>1857 - 59</u>	<u>1859 - 65</u>
Berwick	-12.1	3.1	-12.7	0.0
Birmingham	12	14.3	1.4	62.6
Blackburn	12.2	20.6	6.5	17.1
Bolton	12.9	15.6	6.0	6.6
Bradford	28.8	22.2	9.7	44.1
Durham	-0.3	2.3	-3.1	-7.9
Lancaster	1.1	-4.6	-3.0	13.7
Leicester	-9.1	8.0	1.0	13.1
Manchester	8.4	29.6	1.6	17.4
Newcastle(Lyme)	1.4	-8.5	-0.3	8.3
Northampton	21.2	4.9	6.3	3.7
Oldham	11.7	11.0	2.5	6.2
Preston	-6.2	-2.1	-4.8	-3.5
Rochdale	13.0	8.1	6.7	1.3
Sheffield	7.8	29.1	7.3	15.9

Table 4.4 shows the Berwick electorate as a percentage of the population. The 1831 figure is for resident voters only. If outvoters are taken into consideration, the figure rises to 12.7 per cent. Traditionally, outvoters formed a high percentage of the Berwick electorate. Stoker estimates that in 1765 they comprised 43 per cent of the electorate,<sup>284</sup> and the *Berwick Advertiser's* calculation (see below) that there were as many 600 outvoters in 1831 would put this figure as high as 52.9 per cent. However, what we are concerned with here is not simply the size of the electorate, but the size of the electorate in relation to the population of Berwick. Consequently, it is the number of *resident* voters in which we are interested.

Table 4.4: The Berwick Electorate as a Percentage of the Population

<u>1831</u>	<u>1832</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1868</u>	<u>1881</u>
6.0	5.0	5.8	5.1	5.3	9.6	13.0

<sup>283</sup> Manai, 'Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire', pp. 60 - 1, except Berwick, which has been added to the original table.

<sup>284</sup> Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 326.

The most significant information that can be gleaned from Table 4.4 is the 1 per cent decrease in the size of the electorate as a percentage of the population, which occurred in 1832, and the increases in 1868 and 1881. These will be discussed below, when we examine the electorate as a percentage of the adult male population over 20, which is, arguably, a more significant method of measuring any changes in the relative size of the electorate during our period.

Table 4.5 shows the Berwick electorate as a percentage of the adult male population over 20 from 1831 to 1881. The calculations are based on the census population figures, which were recorded at ten-yearly intervals, for 1831 to 1881, and on the size of the electorate during the seven election years referred to in the table. As the census from 1841 onwards records the ages of the male and female inhabitants of towns, there is no difficulty in calculating the number of adult males over 20 as a percentage of the male population of a town. In Berwick between 1841 and 1881 this figure averaged 50.6 per cent. It is also a straightforward matter to calculate the electorate of a town as a percentage of its adult male population over 20. However, the age tables in the census are for registration districts, which were generally coterminous with the Poor Law Unions, but not necessarily with parliamentary boroughs. This is certainly the case with Berwick, where the Registration Sub-District of Berwick during the period 1841 to 1881 had on average 740 more inhabitants than the Parliamentary Borough of Berwick. Fortunately, the census also gives the male and female populations for each parliamentary borough, so it is possible to estimate the number of adult males over 20 living in a parliamentary borough by assuming it was similar in percentage terms to the adult males population over 20 of the registration sub-district in which that borough was situated. It was this estimated figure for the parliamentary borough, rather than the one for the Registration Sub-District of Berwick, that was used to calculate the electorate as a percentage of the adult males over 20 in the

Parliamentary Borough of Berwick. In this way, it is hoped a more accurate assessment of this sector of the population has been obtained.

Table 4.5: The Berwick Electorate as a Percentage of the Adult Male Population Aged Over 20

<u>1831</u>	<u>1832</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1868</u>	<u>1881</u>
26.9	22.2	25.1	22.0	23.5	40.1	52.2

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Before any conclusions are drawn from the data in Table 4.5, it should be noted that the figure for 1831 is for resident voters only. If outvoters are taken into consideration, the figure rises to 57.03 per cent. Unfortunately, the figure for 1831 is less reliable than the other figures in the table, because there are no precise numbers regarding the size of the electorate on which a computation can be made. According to Philbin, there were 1135 burgesses enrolled in 1831.<sup>285</sup> The *Berwick Advertiser* estimated that between 500 and 600 of these were non-resident voters.<sup>286</sup> If one takes the higher of these two figures, this leaves 535 resident voters.<sup>287</sup> It was this number that was used to calculate the electorate as a percentage of the adult population over 20.

Even with this most conservative estimate of the size of the 1831 electorate, it is plain to see that there was a decline in the electorate as a percentage of the male population over 20 after 1832. This can be explained, first, by the outvoters' loss of the franchise after the 1832 Reform Act; second, by the inclusion of Tweedmouth and Spittal in the Parliamentary Borough of Berwick, which increased the population of the borough by almost 56 per cent without dramatically increasing

<sup>285</sup> J. H. Philbin, *Parliamentary Representation, 1832: England and Wales* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1965), p. 143.

<sup>286</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 April 1831, p. 4.

<sup>287</sup> If the lower figure is taken, the electorate as a percentage of the adult male population over 20 rises by exactly 5 per cent to 31.9 per cent.

the number of inhabitants who were qualified to vote;<sup>288</sup> and, third, by the failure of many of the new electors to ensure that their name was on the voting register.

Between 1832 and 1859 the electorate remained at around 23 per cent of the adult male population over 20. If we look at Manai's figures for the three boroughs of Lancaster, Oldham and Rochdale in Table 4.6, we can see that in 1852 the Berwick electorate as a percentage of the male adult population was 11.6 per cent smaller than the electorate of Lancaster, but 11.9 per cent larger than that of Oldham and 15.9 per cent larger than that of Rochdale. As both Berwick and Lancaster were old freemen boroughs and Oldham and Rochdale were not enfranchised until 1832, we can deduce that in relative terms it was the older boroughs which boasted the larger electorates. Manai attributes Lancaster's dominant position to the fact that its electorate was augmented by the recruitment of new freemen. Such recruitment tended to be most marked during election years. Thus in the election year of 1852 as many as 82 freemen were created, compared to 40 in 1851 and 31 in 1853.<sup>289</sup> In a small borough like Berwick or Lancaster, the creation of freemen on this scale would certainly have a significant impact on the size of the electorate, and on its ratio to the adult male population of the borough.

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<sup>288</sup> The population of Tweedmouth and Spittal in 1831 was 4,971, while that of Berwick was 8,920.

<sup>289</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 62.



Table 4.6: The Electorate as a Percentage of the Adult Male Population Over 20 in Lancaster, Oldham and Rochdale, 1852 <sup>290</sup>

	<u>Adult Males Over 20</u>	<u>Electors</u>	<u>% Electors Among Males Over 20</u>
Lancaster (borough)	4145	1393	33.6
Oldham (borough)	18759	1890	10.1
Rochdale (district)	19094	1160	6.1

In Berwick the electorate as a percentage of the adult male population over 20 did not rise above the pre-1832 figure until 1867, when the Second Reform Act introduced household suffrage and increased the electorate by over 80 per cent (see Table 4.7). The next significant increase came in 1881, when 496 new electors found their way onto the register following the 1880 by-election. By this time it was not the recruitment of freemen that could have a dramatic impact on the size the electorate of a small borough, but the efficient registration of householders.

### **The Occupational Structure of the Electorate**

Analysis of the occupational composition of the electorate can help historians to understand the electorate's social and economic structure. Such analysis can be achieved by the use of poll books, provided they recorded the voter's occupation, and, to a more limited extent, by the use of rate books and trade directories. Unfortunately, one cannot always be certain of the accuracy of the occupational descriptions recorded in poll books, for some voters may have been tempted to give an exaggerated description of their occupation in order to enhance their status. Thus a cobbler might describe himself as a shoemaker, or a

<sup>290</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 61. As the number of electors was taken from F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Elections 1832 - 1885*, Manai's figures, unlike those in 4.5, are not corrected for deaths, double entries, or removals.

fishmonger as a provision merchant. However, in a small borough like Berwick this should not be a problem, because the voters would be known, and any exaggerated claims could be checked and rectified. Nevertheless, there still remains the lesser problem of inconsistent terminology. Voters did not necessarily use the same occupational description at each election. For instance, an examination of the Berwick poll books for April and August 1859 shows, amongst others, the following variations: draper for hosier, herring-curer for cooper, builder for architect, tanner for currier, farmer for miller, spirit merchant for innkeeper, carpenter for joiner, teacher for writing clerk, bookseller for stationer and tinsmith for plumber. However, in most cases these inconsistencies do not affect the occupational categories to which they are allocated (see below). Herring-curiers and coopers both worked in the salmon trade and both were craftsmen; while farmers and millers were both members of the agricultural community.

The large number of occupations listed in poll books makes analysis by occupation cumbersome. Consequently historians of electoral politics have made the task of analysis more manageable by categorising occupations. Nossiter in his study of voting behaviour in the North East of England during the reformed period led the way with the following classification system, based primarily on function: gentry and professional, manufacturers and merchants, craft trades, retail traders, drink interest and farming.<sup>291</sup> Other studies have tended to follow the guide laid down by Nossiter, making their own changes where they have deemed it appropriate. Thus Stoker omitted the drink interest, but added a category for the unskilled; Phillips likewise left out the drink interest, but included a category for labourers and a category for unclassifiable occupations; O'Gorman followed the Stoker model; Manai added a service category and a category for unclassifiable occupations, and included labourers in the same group as craftsmen; and Radice

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<sup>291</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, pp. 211 - 12.

omitted the agricultural interest, but added a category for the unskilled, and included public servants among the gentlemen and professionals.<sup>292</sup>

This study has also followed the Nossiter model, except that, as with Stoker, O’Gorman and Radice, a category has been added for the unskilled. Having decided on a suitable classification system, the next task was to allocate the various occupations (over 140 in total) to their appropriate category. This proved somewhat problematical. While most occupations are easy to classify, there are some which could qualify for more than one category. The fact that previous studies have failed to reach agreement on the classification of these occupations only serves to highlight the nature of the problem. Nossiter and O’Gorman, for instance, place iron founders amongst the manufacturers, whereas Stoker and Radice list them as craftsmen. The category to which iron founders are assigned would presumably depend on their scale of production: the owner of an ironworks would obviously be a manufacturer, whereas one of his employees would be a craftsman. Unfortunately, poll books tend not to differentiate between masters and journeymen, so, unless the researcher has specific knowledge regarding the voter’s status, it is necessary to place all iron founders in the same category. As all the iron founders listed in the Berwick poll books clearly did not own an ironworks, it was decided to classify them as craftsmen rather than as manufacturers.

A similar problem occurs with shoemakers. O’Gorman and Radice classify shoemakers as craftsmen, but Nossiter and Stoker see them as retailers. Even when the researcher follows Nossiter’s dictum that retailers sell and craftsmen make, shoemakers are still difficult to categorise. Like tailors, they make and sell their product. Consequently, it is tempting to place them in the same category. Presumably, O’Gorman’s and Radice’s refusal to do this was based on their belief

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<sup>292</sup> See Stoker, “Elections and Voting Behaviour”; Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England*; O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*; Manai, “Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire”; and Radice, “Identification, Interests and Influence”.

that shoemakers spent more of their time producing their goods than selling them. No doubt some shoemakers had little to do with their customers, whereas others had frequent contact with the public. Again, without intimate knowledge of the individuals concerned, it is impossible to say which shoemakers met their customers on a regular basis, and which ones spent most of their day in their workshops. In this study it was decided to place shoemakers among the craftsmen, if only to maintain continuity with more recent studies.

Another occupation upon which researchers have failed to find agreement is that of corn merchant. Whereas Nossiter classifies corn merchants as members of the agricultural interest, Stoker, O'Gorman and Radice place them in the merchants and manufacturers category. Although there is obvious justification for assigning corn merchants to the agricultural interest, it was felt in this study that they were more appropriately placed among the other merchants. There were two reasons for this. First, it was not always possible to identify which merchants were in fact corn merchants. In one poll book a voter may be listed as a corn merchant, whereas in another the same voter may be classed simply as a merchant, suggesting that the distinction between different types of merchant was not always stated.<sup>293</sup> Second, and perhaps more significantly, analysis of voting behaviour, in Berwick at least, in the elections of 1859 and 1865 suggests that corn merchants identified themselves more with other merchants than with the agricultural interest. Whereas the agricultural interest were relatively evenly divided between the Liberals and the Conservatives at the 1859 general election (55.9 per cent voted Liberal and 44.1 per cent voted Conservative), the corn merchants and meal dealers voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Liberals (90.9 per cent voted Liberal and 9.1 per cent voted Conservative). As the merchants and manufacturers also

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<sup>293</sup> See, for instance, the Berwick poll books for 1859. At the general election George and John Henderson are listed as corn merchants, whereas at the by-election they are referred to merely as merchants. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 May 1859, p. 2 and the *Berwick Warder*, 26 August 1859, p. 4.

voted predominantly in favour of the Liberals (65.1 per cent voted Liberal and 34.9 per cent voted Conservative), it seems fair to assume that the corn merchants and meal dealers identified themselves with the merchants and manufacturers, rather than with the agriculturalists. At the by-election of the same year, the agricultural interest was again relatively evenly divided between the parties (55.6 per cent voted Liberal and 44.4 per cent voted Conservative), while the corn merchants and meal dealers were strongly in favour of the Liberal candidate (87.5 per cent voted Liberal and 12.5 per cent voted Conservative). The merchants and manufacturers, on this occasion, were slightly more evenly divided than in the general election (59.3 per cent voted Liberal and 40.7 per cent voted Conservative). At the general election of 1865 there was a slight increase in the number of agricultural votes going to the Liberals (59 per cent voted Liberal and 41 per cent voted Conservative), while the corn merchants and meal dealers remained firmly Liberal (once again 87.5 per cent voted Liberal and 12.5 per cent voted Conservative). The merchants and manufacturers, however, were even more strongly Liberal than they had been in 1859 (83.3 per cent voted Liberal and 16.7 per cent voted Conservative).

Previous electoral studies show that there is also disagreement about ironmongers, hosiers, clothiers, tailors, gardeners, cordwainers and tallow chandlers. Such failure to reach a consensus with regard to these occupations reveals the subjective nature of the occupation classification process. However, as there is broad agreement in the case of the majority of occupations, these grey areas do not create a major problem. The only difficulty that might arise would be in the case of an occupation which boasted enough members to alter significantly the occupational structure of a constituency. For instance, in Berwick in May 1859 shoemakers accounted for 4.7 per cent of the voters. The occupational category in which these shoemakers are placed (retailers or craftsmen) will therefore increase

the size of that category to the detriment of the one from which they are omitted. Unless shoemakers are included in the same category in all studies, comparisons between the occupational structure of one constituency and another might be regarded as inappropriate. Nevertheless, such comparisons need to be made, and, provided one is aware of the imperfections created by the lack of a uniform classification system, there is no reason why they should not be made.

The subjective nature of the occupation classification system was not the only problem encountered during this study. Of the ten poll books in existence only five (1832, 1835, April 1859, August 1859 and 1865) contain the voters' occupation. This necessarily restricted the scope of this part of the study to those five elections. Moreover, even in those poll books which do contain the voters' occupation, some occupations are not listed, the voter's name being followed simply by the word "freeman", or the area or street where he lived. In a few instances the missing information can be obtained by record linkage, but this is not generally the case. However, in the elections studied, non-specified occupations never amounted to more than 2.4 per cent of the total number of votes cast. For the purpose of calculating each occupational group as a percentage of the electorate, non-specified occupations were excluded from the computation.

Another problem we encountered was that sometimes a poll book gives a voter two occupations. Thus a man may be both a brewer and a farmer.<sup>294</sup> This occurs infrequently, however, and where it does occur, the first listed occupation was taken as no voter can be considered more than once. More common is the fact that some voters are given different occupations at different elections. In some cases these voters may indeed have changed their occupation, as did the mariner

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<sup>294</sup> See, for instance, the case of William Lowrey in the poll book for the Berwick by-election of 1859. See the *Berwick Warder*, 26 August 1859, p. 4.

who became a grocer, or the fisherman who became an innkeeper.<sup>295</sup> However, in most instances, they were involved in the same activity. Thus a tallow chandler and a candle maker were one and the same, as were a twine spinner, a rope maker and a hemp dresser. Likewise, some occupational titles which might indicate different functions today, such as plumber and glazier, or a doctor and a surgeon, were used synonymously in the nineteenth century. These occupational variations, as we suggested earlier, have very little effect on the categorisation process. Whenever an occupational description differs from that of the preceding election, we have decided to allow the change, believing it is wise to adhere to the description given in the poll book actually under analysis. However, a certain amount of discretion needs to be used. For instance, an elector described as a "Pipe manufacturer" in May 1859 is described as a "Pipe maker" in August 1859.<sup>296</sup> As there is alternative evidence to show that this voter owned a pipe factory during this period, it is reasonable to assume that he was making pipes on a scale large enough to place him among the manufacturers rather than the craftsmen of the town.

An examination of Table 4.7 shows that there was little change in the occupational composition of the Berwick electorate during the period 1832 - 1865. The largest group throughout the period were the craftsmen, who comprised about a third of the Berwick electorate, although their share of the electorate declined by 2.6 per cent during the period. Behind them came the retailers, who formed just over a fifth of the electorate and remained fairly static throughout. Next were the gentlemen and professionals, who made up about a seventh of the electorate,

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<sup>295</sup> William Fairnell was described as a mariner at the general election of 1859 and as a grocer at the by-election four months later; while Thomas Heslop was listed as a fisherman at the general election and as an innkeeper at the by-election. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 May 1859, p. 2 and the *Berwick Warder*, 26 August 1859, p. 4. It was not uncommon for working men, especially those in the craft trades, to change their occupation by entering the drink business. See B. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians. The Temperance Question in England 1815 - 1872* (London, 1971), pp. 59 - 60.

<sup>296</sup> Charles Tenant of Tweedmouth. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 May 1859, p. 3 and the *Berwick Warder*, 26 August 1859, p. 4.

although their share of the electorate also declined (by 2.0 per cent) between 1832 and 1865. After the gentlemen and professionals came the unskilled and labourers, who comprised a tenth of the electorate, but were showing a slight increase (1.5 per cent) by the end of the period. Next were the agriculturalists, who also increased their share of the electorate - by 1.8 per cent. The penultimate group was the drink interest, which made up about 7 per cent of the electorate and was another of the groups which increased in size (by 2.3 per cent). Finally, there were the merchants and manufacturers, who at usually less than 4 per cent of the electorate were always the smallest group.

Table 4.7: Occupational Structure of the Berwick Electorate, 1832 - 1865 (%)<sup>297</sup>

	<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>
1. Gentlemen and professionals	18.5	20.2	14.6	16.5
2. Merchants and manufacturers	3.6	3.4	4.9	3.2
3. Retailers	20.2	19.8	20.5	19.6
4. Craftsmen	36.9	34.9	34.5	34.3
5. Drink interest	4.5	5.1	6.7	6.8
6. Agriculture	6.3	6.4	9.0	8.1
7. Unskilled and labourers	10.0	10.2	9.8	11.5

If we look at Table 4.8 we can compare the occupational structure of the Berwick electorate with Nossiter's average occupational structure of thirty-two two-member English borough electorates during the same period. Though allowances must be made for variations arising from the different classification systems employed by Nossiter and the present study, it can immediately be seen that there is little difference in the order of the three largest occupational groups. Craftsmen and retailers were the two largest groups, constituting between them over 50 per cent of the electorate; while gentlemen and professionals were the third largest

<sup>297</sup> Based on electors who actually polled. The 1859 figures are for the May election.



group, forming 17 per cent of the electorate. Differences, however, do occur in the lower half of the table. Merchants and manufacturers made up a much smaller proportion of the electorate in Berwick than they did in the "average" two-member English borough. However, it should be noted, as Nossiter himself observes, that this particular group varied greatly in its importance from one borough to the next. In towns like Manchester, Oldham and Leeds, for instance, merchants and manufacturers formed around 20 per cent of the electorate; whereas in towns like Cambridge, Maidstone and Durham they made up 3 per cent or less.<sup>298</sup> On the other hand, in a small rural borough like Berwick, one would expect that the agricultural interest would figure more prominently than in the "average" English borough, and indeed this was the case, as Tables 2.7 and 2.8 show. As for the drink interest, Berwick, at just under 7 per cent of the electorate, was only marginally below the "average" for the thirty-two two-member English boroughs.

Table 4.8: Average Occupational Structure of Thirty-Two Two-Member English Borough Electorates, 1832 - 1866 (%)<sup>299</sup>

1. Gentlemen and professionals	17
2. Merchants and manufacturers	10
3. Retailers	26
4. Craftsmen	30
5. Drink interest	9
6. Agriculture	2
7. Unskilled and labourers	6

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### **Electoral Participation**

Table 4.9 shows the percentage turnout at Berwick elections between 1832 and 1881. The figure for percentage turnout is calculated by dividing the number of

<sup>298</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 166.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.* The boroughs in Nossiter's investigation comprised 25 old boroughs and 7 new boroughs.

electors who voted by the number of electors on the electoral register (i.e. those entitled to vote). Electors who polled but whose votes were spoiled and therefore not recorded, were excluded from the calculation. In all cases, calculations are based on statistics taken from the Berwick press, namely, the *Berwick Advertiser*, the *Berwick Warder* and the *Berwick Journal*. An alternative method would have been to use the figures compiled by F. W. S. Craig for the number of electors registered at each election.<sup>300</sup> However, Craig's figures, unlike those of the local press, do not take into consideration those electors who had died or moved away from the borough since registration, nor those who were registered both as householders and as freemen. Consequently, figures taken from the local press are likely to produce a more accurate estimate of the percentage turnout at Berwick elections than are Craig's figures.

With an average turnout for the period of 88.9 per cent, we can regard anything over 93 per cent as a "high" turnout and anything under 83 per cent as a "low" turnout - although such terms, it should be emphasised, are relative. The first point to note is that there is very little difference between the turnout at general elections and the turnout at by-elections.<sup>301</sup> Although the by-elections of 1859 and 1880 had a lower turnout than the general elections of those years, on average the turnout at by-elections was actually 0.7 per cent higher than at general elections. Indeed, the turnout at the 1880 by-election was the third highest turnout of the period.

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<sup>300</sup> F. W. S. Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1832 - 1885* (London, 1977), pp. 41 - 2.

<sup>301</sup> There were by-elections in 1853, 1859, 1863, 1880 and 1881. The 1853 by-election was ordered by Parliament after the 1852 election had been declared void.

Table 4.9: Percentage Turnout at Berwick Elections, 1832 - 1881

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>
93.4	91.8	89.7	89.2	82.2	85.6	85.3	78.5	94.2
<u>1859</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1881</u>	
87.0	88.9	96.0	88.5	80.2	98.1	95.3	86.5	

Average: 88.9%.

Average for general elections: 88.7%.

Average for by-elections: 89.4%.

Table 4.10, which is taken from Nossiter's study of voting behaviour in the North East, shows the average percentage turnout for two-member boroughs in the six northern counties during the same period. As these figures, unlike those in Table 4.9, have not been corrected for deaths, double entries or removals, it is not surprising that, with one exception (1857), the turnout figures for Berwick are higher than those displayed in Table 4.10. However, if we compare Nossiter's own turnout figures for Berwick (see Table 4.11) with those in Table 4.10, we discover that for most of the period the turnout at Berwick was higher than the average for the two-member boroughs in the northern counties. Only in 1847, 1857, 1859 and 1874 was the turnout at Berwick lower than the northern average.

Table 4.10: Average Percentage Turnout for Two-Member Boroughs in the Six Northern Counties, 1832 - 1880<sup>302</sup>

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>1880</u>
86.2	82.4	76.8	80.6	81.2	82.8	81.0	81.6	79.5	80.9	78.9	84.5

Average: 81.4%.

<sup>302</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 217. To maintain continuity with my own figures, Nossiter's figures have been rounded up to the nearest decimal point.

Table 4.11: Percentage Turnout at Berwick Elections, 1832 - 1874 <sup>303</sup>

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	<u>1874</u>
92.6	91.1	77.5	90.3	75.2	84.4	78.1	81.0	82.7	87.7	77.7

Average: 83.5%.

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Returning to Table 4.9 and the notion of “high” and “low” turnout figures, it is not always possible to explain such fluctuations in the numbers of electors who decided to exercise their right to vote. However, one thing is clear: it is generally easier to identify the reasons for a high turnout than it is to identify those for a low turnout. A burning issue, such as parliamentary reform in 1832, might capture the public imagination and result in a high turnout. Intimidation and widespread and systematic bribery might also help to persuade an electorate to go to the polls in large numbers. This appears to have been the case in Berwick in 1859. Efficient party organisation at the local level, especially with regard to the registration of voters, could also play a prominent part in maximising the number of electors who turned out to vote - as happened in Berwick in 1880.

The only readily identifiable pattern in low turnout figures is the fact that by-elections which occurred within a year of a general election, tended to have a lower turnout than the general election which preceded them. This was true at Berwick in the by-election of 1853, which came ten months after the general election of 1852; and it was true in the by-elections of 1859 and 1880, which both took place within a few months of a general election.

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<sup>303</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 216. Nossiter's figures for Berwick only go up to 1874. As with 4.10, Nossiter's figures have been rounded up to the nearest decimal point.



## VOTING BEHAVIOUR OF THE ELECTORATE

### Voting Behaviour of Occupational Groups

Table 4.12 shows the voting behaviour of the seven occupational groups at the general election in 1832. While all groups favoured the two Reform candidates, the group most in favour of change was the drink interest, which cast 83.3 per cent of its votes for Sir Francis Blake and Sir Rufane Donkin. Vincent suggests it is possible that the Tory Beer Act of 1830 played some part in pitching the trade so firmly behind Reform.<sup>304</sup> This Act, by repealing the beer duty, introduced free trade in the sale of beer. Henceforth anyone who paid a two guinea fee could apply to the Excise for a beer retailing licence. Although the measure was generally popular, it was opposed by publicans and local common brewers, particularly in the north and west, who did not wish to see the loss of their monopoly.<sup>305</sup> Given the widespread hostility of the drink trade to the Beer Act,<sup>306</sup> it is perhaps not surprising that this occupational category should abandon its traditional allegiance to the Tories and support the opposition. Other boroughs where the liberalism of the drink interest was prominent included Ipswich, where 76.5 per cent of the votes cast by the brewers and publicans of the town went to the two Reform candidates, Morrison and Wason; and Liverpool, where 76.4 per cent of the votes cast by the local innkeepers went to the two Reform candidates, Ewart and Thornely.<sup>307</sup>

In Berwick, the merchants and manufacturers, agriculture and retailers were also firmly behind Blake and Donkin, each group casting over 78 per cent of its votes in favour of the Reform candidates. In fact, the Anti-Reform candidate,

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<sup>304</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, p. 17.

<sup>305</sup> See Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 74 - 80.

<sup>306</sup> While publicans and common brewers promoted 228 petitions against the Beer Bill, there were only 10 petitions, mostly from retail-brewers, in its favour.

<sup>307</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp. 115 and 137.

Marcus Beresford,<sup>308</sup> was especially disappointed with the lack of support he received from the merchants, believing he had some claim to their suffrages, because his family had once used their influence on the town's behalf.<sup>309</sup>

The most conservative of the seven occupational groups were the unskilled and labourers, who were fairly evenly split between the Reform and Anti-Reform candidates (51.0 per cent and 49 per cent respectively), and the craftsmen, who voted approximately three-to-two in favour of Reform. Many members of these two groups would, of course, have been freemen who possessed the franchise prior to 1832, and had no great desire to see their jealously cherished privilege extended to the ten-pound householders. The attitude of the freemen towards Reform would have also been coloured by the fact that the Whig administration had originally sought to deprive the freemen of their ancient voting rights.<sup>310</sup>

Table 4.12: Voting by Occupational Groups at the Berwick Election, 1832

	<u>No. of votes</u>	<u>% Reform</u>	<u>% Anti-Reform</u>
1. Gentlemen and professionals	176	69.9	30.1
2. Merchants and manufacturers	41	82.9	17.1
3. Retailers	235	78.7	21.3
4. Craftsmen	370	57.3	42.7
5. Drink interest	54	83.3	16.7
6. Agriculture	93	82.8	17.2
7. Unskilled and labourers	102	51.0	49.0

<sup>308</sup> Marcus Beresford was the Tory MP for Berwick from 1826 to 18332.

<sup>309</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, p. 3.

<sup>310</sup> The fight to retain the freeman franchise is discussed in C. Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: The Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise 1832 - 1885* (New Haven, 1915; reprinted Newton Abbot, 1970), pp. 27 - 35.

Table 4.13 shows the voting behaviour of the seven occupational groups at the general election in 1835. Those groups most in favour of the two Liberal candidates were merchants and manufacturers, retailers, agriculture and the drink interest - the very groups who most favoured Reform in 1832. Again, as in 1832, the most strongly Conservative groups were the unskilled and labourers, and the craftsmen. Both of these groups were split between the Liberals and Conservatives pretty much to the same degree as they had been split between the Reform and Anti-Reform candidates in 1832. As for the five other groups, their support for the same two candidates who had stood for Reform in 1832 (i.e. Donkin and Blake) was much less pronounced in 1835, suggesting that Reform fervour was well on the decline by the time of the later election. This decline continued at least until the end of the decade. In 1837 Donkin was beaten into third place by the two Conservative candidates, Richard Hodgson and William Holmes. However, the election of Matthew Forster, who headed the poll, in 1841 showed that the tide was beginning to turn against the Conservatives, although they were to retain one seat until 1852, when the Liberals once again seized control of the borough.

Table 4.13: Voting by Occupational Groups at the Berwick Election, 1835

	<u>No. of votes</u>	<u>% Liberal</u>	<u>% Conservative</u>
1. Gentlemen and professionals	213	63.4	36.6
2. Merchants and manufacturers	33	72.7	27.3
3. Retailers	217	70.5	29.5
4. Craftsmen	386	57.5	42.5
5. Drink interest	53	67.9	32.1
6. Agriculture	70	68.6	31.4
7. Unskilled and labourers	121	55.4	44.6

Tables 2.14 - 2.16 show the voting behaviour of the seven occupational groups at the general election in 1859, the by-election in 1859 and the general election in 1865. Gentlemen and professionals were fairly evenly divided between the two parties at all three elections, although there was a gradual swing towards the Liberals. Merchants and manufacturers were predominantly Liberal supporters in 1859 and were overwhelmingly Liberal in 1865, when four-fifths of their votes went to the two Liberal candidates. Retailers were evenly divided between the Liberals and the Conservatives in May 1859, but thereafter steadily moved towards the Liberal camp, so that by 1865 over 60 per cent of their votes went to the Liberals. The majority of craftsmen voted for the Conservatives in the two elections in 1859, but by 1865 they were much more evenly split, with a small majority of their votes (2.6 per cent) going to the Liberals.

There is nothing unusual about these voting figures. In English boroughs, professionals were most likely to be Conservative; gentlemen were usually fairly evenly split; merchants and manufacturers were inclined to be Liberal; and retailers and craftsmen provided the backbone of the Liberal vote.<sup>311</sup>

The drink interest was another category which moved more and more towards the Liberals during this six-year period, increasing its Liberal vote by almost 20 per cent. This was very much against the national trend. Vincent has shown that from the late 1850s the drink trade was decidedly Conservative.<sup>312</sup> However, he also points out that, although the trade operated as a pressure group opposed to the Temperance movement, it did so only in those constituencies where the Liberal candidate was thought to be "dry". Such was the case at Rochdale in 1857, where only 19.2 per cent of the drink interest voted for the Liberal Edward Miall; and at Leicester in 1859 and 1861, where the publicans

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<sup>311</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp. 16 and 19.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65 - 6.



boycotted the Temperance Liberal J. D. Harris, but voted for the other Liberal candidates.<sup>313</sup> In Berwick none of the Liberal candidates was prepared to support the Temperance movement, which might help to explain the party's ability to enlist the backing of the local drink trade during this period. In 1868, for instance, the Liberal Lord Bury declared his opposition to the Permissive Bill, which sought to authorise ratepayers with a two-thirds majority to ban drink shops in their locality.<sup>314</sup> Bury maintained that licensing should be left in the hands of the magistrates.<sup>315</sup> The trade could also be found rallying round Liberal members who were its lobbyists in Parliament, like F. H. F. Berkeley at Bristol in 1852.<sup>316</sup>

Agriculture also became increasingly Liberal, though in a less dramatic fashion than some of the other groups. In May 1859 the agricultural community favoured the Liberals by just under 12 per cent; by 1865 this figure had grown to 18 per cent. What is remarkable here, though, is the fact that the Liberals were able to recruit so much support from within this category in the first place. Vincent's analysis of the voting behaviour of farmers at borough elections reveals that they were overwhelmingly Conservative. Of the fifteen elections during this period (i.e. 1859 - 1865) where farmers' votes were analysed, only one (Lincoln in 1859) shows the Liberals winning the agricultural vote - by just under 12 per cent.<sup>317</sup> It is difficult to say why the agricultural community of Berwick went against the national trend. It may be that their religious allegiance took precedence over their occupational interests. In other words, in an area where Presbyterianism was the

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<sup>313</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp. 17, 166 and 127.

<sup>314</sup> The Bill was drafted by the United Kingdom Alliance, which believed that once prohibition was introduced locally, the benefits would be so apparent that other areas would not hesitate to adopt it. See Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 198.

<sup>315</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 October 1868, p. 2.

<sup>316</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp. 17 and 85.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71 - 193.

predominant religion,<sup>318</sup> the link between Nonconformity and Liberalism proved stronger than the bond between agriculture and Conservatism. The relationship between politics and religion is discussed later in the chapter.

Finally, the unskilled and labourers began in May 1859 by being by far the most Conservative of all the categories. Again, this followed the national trend.<sup>319</sup> However, by 1865 they were evenly divided between the two parties, showing the Liberals' ability to make inroads into a traditional bastion of Toryism.

Table 4.14: Voting by Occupational Groups at the Berwick Election, May, 1859

	<u>No. of votes</u>	<u>% Liberal</u>	<u>% Conservative</u>
1. Gentlemen and professionals	184	46.2	53.8
2. Merchants and manufacturers	63	65.1	34.9
3. Retailers	270	50.7	49.3
4. Craftsmen	430	40.2	59.8
5. Drink interest	81	55.6	44.4
6. Agriculture	118	55.9	44.1
7. Unskilled and labourers	124	30.7	69.3

<sup>318</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, Josiah Rumney, the vicar of Berwick, estimated that the Presbyterians of Berwick outnumbered the Anglicans by 2.5:1. See J. Fuller, *The History of Berwick-upon-Tweed* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1973; first published, Edinburgh, 1799), p. 267.

<sup>319</sup> J. R. Vincent, *Pollbooks*, pp. 16 - 17.

Table 4.15: Voting by Occupational Groups  
at the Berwick By-Election, August 1859

	<u>No. of votes</u>	<u>% Liberal</u>	<u>% Conservative</u>
1. Gentlemen and professionals	73	49.3	50.7
2. Merchants and manufacturers	27	59.3	40.7
3. Retailers	139	55.0	45.0
4. Craftsmen	209	45.5	54.5
5. Drink interest	42	64.3	35.7
6. Agriculture	54	55.6	44.4
7. Unskilled and labourers	52	38.5	61.5

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Table 4.16: Voting by Occupational Groups at the Berwick Election, 1865

	<u>No. of votes</u>	<u>% Liberal</u>	<u>% Conservative</u>
1. Gentlemen and professionals	211	54.5	45.5
2. Merchants and manufacturers	42	83.3	16.7
3. Retailers	254	63.0	37.0
4. Craftsmen	448	51.3	48.7
5. Drink interest	89	75.3	24.7
6. Agriculture	105	59.0	41.0
7. Unskilled and labourers	151	50.3	49.7

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### **Cross-Party Voting**

Table 4.17 shows the extent of cross-party voting at Berwick elections between 1832 and 1868. The figure for cross-party voting was calculated by dividing the number of split votes (i.e. those votes which were divided between candidates from opposing parties) by the total number of votes cast. As electors

were permitted to cast only one vote at a by-election, as opposed to the customary two votes at a general election, there was no possibility of splitting and therefore no cross-party voting. By-elections occurred at Berwick in 1859 and 1863.

There was a variety of reasons for electors to split their votes: financial gain, pressure from competing influences, the personal appeal of a candidate, strongly held beliefs about an issue, or even a desire to see the representation of the constituency divided between both parties. However, as Nossiter observes, the most common causes of split voting were tactical considerations and the diverse political alignments of the period.<sup>320</sup> In the English boroughs, party tactics generally took the form of the Whigs or Radicals making a compact with the Conservatives and therefore splitting the Liberal vote, or the Conservatives, who were the minority party in many towns, exercising a casting vote between the Liberal candidates in order to choose the most acceptable opposition candidate.<sup>321</sup> This generally meant a Whig candidate rather than a Radical, though there are cases when the opposite occurred, such as the 1857 Berwick election, where many Conservative supporters purportedly split their votes between their own candidate, Captain Charles Gordon, and the Radical candidate, John Stapleton, thus preventing the re-election of the Liberal member, John Forster. As for mixed political alignments, one only has to look at the numerous political groups of the period - Ultra-Tories, Tory-Radicals, Peelites, Liberal-Conservatives, Conservative-Liberals, etc. - to see the truth in Gladstone's assertion that after 1846 political differences lay *within* the parties rather than *between* them<sup>322</sup>, a view endorsed by the refusal of the Berwick Liberals to nominate Viscount Bury as their candidate at the 1874 election, because his opinions were too Conservative, even though five years earlier Bury had not only been an acceptable candidate, but had headed the

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<sup>320</sup> T. J. Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", pp. 165 - 6.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> Cited in Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", p. 166.

poll by sixty votes.

Table 4.17: Extent of Cross-Party Voting at Berwick Elections, 1832 - 1868 (%)

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	<sup>323</sup>
26.7	56.1	19.5	31.5	48.5	31.6	26.1	31.1	13.8	11.1	7.4	

Average: 27.6%.

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An examination of Table 4.17 shows that on two occasions, 1835 and 1847, about half of the electorate split their votes. This was well above the average for the six northern counties for these years.<sup>324</sup> In 1835 it would seem that most voters who split did so in to ensure the return of the Conservative James Bradshaw, and to prevent the election of the Radical Sir Francis Blake. In 1847 the high level of cross-party voting was probably a manifestation of the electorate's disenchantment with the Conservative member Richard Hodgson, who had deserted the borough in order to stand at Newcastle, and with his replacement William Miller, whom Hodgson had chosen without prior consultation with his supporters. On five other occasions, 1832, 1841, 1852, 1853 and 1857, over a quarter of the electorate voted across party lines. Indeed, it was not until 1868 that the level of cross-party voting fell below 10 per cent.

<sup>323</sup> Nossiter wrongly puts the figure for 1868 as low as 3.8 per cent. See Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", p. 164.

<sup>324</sup> See 4.18.

**Table 4.18: Extent of Split Voting in Twenty-Five Boroughs  
in the Six Northern Counties, 1832 - 1868**<sup>325</sup>

	1832	1835	1837	1841	1847	1852	1857	1859	1865	1868
No. of boroughs in 6 North counties										
N =	15	14	16	15	12	20	9	11	13	12
Mean (%)	20.8	26.8	13.8	10.7	26.7	19.5	22.4	26.7	16.1	8.1

So what is the significance of the high level of cross-party voting at Berwick elections? First, it endorses Nossiter's observation that in the six northern counties the party system had failed to mobilise the electorate before 1868.<sup>326</sup> As the Berwick figures are higher than the average figures for the six northern counties, at least up until 1859,<sup>327</sup> one might be tempted to conclude that this failure to mobilise the electorate was more pronounced in Berwick than in most other northern boroughs. This may indeed have been the case. However, one must exercise caution. The five Berwick elections up to and including 1847 were all three-cornered contests, where the rates of split voting were significantly higher than at

<sup>325</sup> Nossiter, 'Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868', p. 165. Nossiter's less comprehensive search for the rest of the country reveals that the level of split voting during the same period was also high, being on average only 1.9 per cent lower than that for the six northern counties. See Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", p. 165. Cox also found that split voting rates were generally higher in the north. See Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 106. However, Radice found that between 1826 and 1841 the level of split voting in Leicester was conspicuously low. See Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", Vol.2, p. 144.

<sup>326</sup> Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", p. 165. Cox's analysis of over a thousand election contests held between 1818 and 1918 seems to confirm Nossiter's observation. According to Cox, "the frequency with which English voters in double-member districts split their votes between the major parties declined considerably and permanently in the period 1857 - 68. Whereas nearly a quarter of all electors in double-member districts split their votes in 1847, and nearly a fifth in 1857, by 1868 only 5.5 per cent did so, and the figure never exceeded 5 per cent thereafter. Voting for the party rather than the man appears to be the dominant feature of English electoral behavior (sic) from 1868 onwards." (See Cox, *The Efficient Secret*, p. 136). However, Phillips has shown that in some boroughs partisan voting was the prevalent feature of electoral behaviour much earlier than this. At Bristol, Maidstone, Colchester, Shrewsbury and Northampton, the level of split voting began to decline significantly during the early 1830s; whereas at Lewes and Great Yarmouth it was in decline as early as 1818. See Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs*.

<sup>327</sup> See footnote 325.

four-cornered contests. Whereas the average rate of split voting at four-cornered contests at Berwick was 20.2 per cent, at three-cornered contests it was 36.5 per cent. The higher level of cross-party voting at three-cornered contests can be explained by the fact that three-cornered contests required plumpers for the side fielding a single candidate. However, most voters were reluctant to plump, preferring to use both of their votes. This way they would avoid the possibility of financial loss, while at the same time ensuring that neither party was offended.

When one looks at four-cornered contests at Berwick, a less conspicuous pattern emerges. Only in 1852 and 1857 was the level of cross-party voting at Berwick higher than the average for the six northern counties. In 1859, 1865 and 1868 the Berwick level was, in fact, lower than the northern average.<sup>328</sup> However, none of this detracts from the fact that the Berwick electors, like those of other northern boroughs, showed a clear disinclination towards party alignment during the period from 1832 to 1868, although it might well be argued that the sudden drop from 31.1 per cent to 13.8 per cent in the level of cross-party voting which occurred in 1859 was a turning point in Berwick politics: thereafter, with further falls in 1865 and 1868, the trend was towards increased partisan voting (see Table 4.17).

### **Voting Consistency**

A series of poll books covering consecutive elections is of enormous value to the student of electoral politics, for it enables him/her to evaluate the extent of

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<sup>328</sup> Cox has questioned Nossiter's findings regarding split voting in the northern counties, on the ground that he appears to have accepted the party affiliations given by Bean, some of which are incorrect (see W. W. Bean, *The parliamentary representation of the six northern counties of England . . . from 1603 to . . . 1886* (Hull, 1890)). Consequently, Nossiter's figures for split voting are higher than Cox's. However, the only significant discrepancy between the two sets of figures comes in 1859, for which Nossiter reported a split voting rate of 26.7 per cent, as opposed to the split voting rate of 11.6 per cent reported by Cox, which is more in keeping with the Berwick split voting rate for that year (i.e. 13.8 per cent).

voting consistency in a constituency. However, the poll books in question must contain not only the name of the voter, but also his address and, preferably, his occupation. Only in this way can one be reasonably certain of identifying an individual voter over a period of time. Even then problems of identification can arise. A voter might change his address, or his occupation, or worse, both. Unless the voter has an unusual surname, such changes can render the task of identification well nigh impossible. Only where a voter can be identified with a reasonable degree of certainty can his name be included in the data necessary for calculating voting consistency at consecutive elections. Poll book analysis is not an exact science: the psephologist tries to be as objective as possible, but there are times when a certain amount of intelligent guesswork has to be employed. Record linkage certainly aids the identification process, but the fragmentary nature of such evidence is bound to leave some gaps in the researcher's knowledge.

Although there are poll books for 1832 and 1835, the only significant run of poll books for Berwick is that which extends from 1859 to 1868, covering three general elections and two by-elections. Tables 2.19 - 2.23 give a breakdown of the votes cast at these elections.

Table 4.19 analyses the votes cast by those electors who voted in both 1832 and 1835. With traditional party labels meaning very little during the reform debate of 1831 - 32, it is not surprising that the most significant features of Table 4.19 are the wide range of voting alternatives and the relative lack of voting consistency across the two elections. If one identifies the Liberals as the party of reform, then the largest group of consistent voters was that which voted for the Reform candidates in 1832 and for the Liberal candidates in 1835 (33.1 per cent). Indeed, as these were the same candidates, perhaps one should wonder why this consistency rating was so low, compared to some of the figures in Tables 2.20 -



2.23. Moreover, if the Conservatives are seen as the opponents of reform, one might also ask why only 7.3 per cent of those electors who voted for the Anti-Reform candidate in 1832 plumped for the Conservative candidate in 1835.

The answer to these questions lies in the changed political atmosphere of 1835. The 1832 Election had been a straightforward contest between the advocates of reform and their opponents. Once reform had become a *fait accompli*, there was no turning back. Indeed, it was now expected that every administration, regardless of party nomenclature, would be a reforming one. Not only had the Liberals introduced major reforms in the four years they had been in office, but the Conservative leader Sir Robert Peel, in his Tamworth "Manifesto", had shown a willingness to embrace the spirit of the age by promising a judicious review of both civil and ecclesiastical institutions, in order to conserve the essential nature of the constitution. Consequently, in Berwick, as in numerous other constituencies, all the candidates espoused the principle of reform - although the concept was sufficiently vague to mean different things to different people. This helps to explain why the Conservative candidate James Bradshaw, who advocated moderate reform, was able to head the poll in 1835, whereas his predecessor Marcus Beresford had been beaten into third place by the two Reform candidates in 1832.

The mixed fortunes of the two Liberal candidates in 1835 also tells us something about the general attitude towards reform at this time. Once the middle-classes had obtained the franchise, their ardour for reform began to subside, so that by 1835 there was a preference for a more moderate approach to change. This approach was better exemplified by Donkin, who was re-elected, than by his more radical colleague Blake, who was defeated. However, with only thirteen votes separating the two Liberal candidates, it was hardly a resounding defeat for Blake, who as a local man could always rely on substantial support from the

Berwick electorate.

After the political excitement of 1831 - 32, it was possible to return to the tradition of the split vote. This accounts for the relatively large group of electors (21.1 per cent) who felt compelled to plump for the Anti-Reform candidate in 1832 and then, once the passion for reform had abated, were content to split their votes in 1835. However, Table 4.19 also shows that a group of voters of similar size (21.3 per cent) was that which split in both elections, suggesting that the political polarisation of the reform era was far from universal: there were still those electors who, for whatever reason, preferred to divide their votes between the parties even at a so-called single-issue election.

Table 4.19: Analysis of the Votes Cast in 1832 and 1835 by the 465 Electors Who Voted in Both Elections

Reform 1832; Liberal 1835	154	33.1%
Reform 1832; Conservative 1835	3	0.6%
Reform 1832; Split 1835	60	12.9%
Anti-Reform 1832; Conservative 1835	34	7.3%
Anti-Reform 1832; Liberal 1835	3	0.6%
Anti-Reform 1832; Split 1835	98	21.1%
Split 1832; Split 1835	99	21.3%
Split 1832; Liberal 1835	10	2.2%
Split 1832; Conservative 1835	4	0.9%
Total	465	100.0%

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Tables 2.20 - 2.23 examine the votes cast in the five elections which took place between 1859 and 1868, a period which began with Conservative dominance, but which ended with the Liberals very much in control of the borough.

Table 4.20 analyses the votes cast by those electors who voted at the general election in May 1859 and at the by-election three months later. An examination of the table reveals that the vast majority of electors who voted along

party lines at the May election did likewise at the August election, producing a consistency rating of 95.4 per cent. Although twice as many Conservative voters as Liberal voters changed their allegiance in August, the numbers were relatively small (only 4.6 per cent of the total number who voted at both elections). What is more significant is the number of electors who split their votes between the Conservatives and the Liberals in May, but who were compelled to vote for one party or the other when it came to a two-horse race. Again, the Liberals were the main beneficiaries, winning almost twice as many of these votes as their opponents.

Table 4.20: Analysis of the Votes Cast in May and August 1859 by the 597 Electors Who Voted in Both Elections

Consistent Liberals	233	39.0%
Consistent Conservatives	269	45.1%
Liberal May; Conservative August	8	1.3%
Conservative May; Liberal August	16	2.7%
Split May; Conservative August	24	4.0%
Split May; Liberal August	47	7.9%
Total	597	100.0%

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Table 4.21 analyses the votes cast at the by-election in 1859 and at the by-election in 1863 by those electors who voted in both elections. Most electors voted for the same party in 1863 that they had voted for in August 1859, producing a consistency rating of 93.3 per cent. Whereas in August 1859 more Conservative voters than Liberal voters changed their allegiance, in 1863 the reverse was the case, although, once again, the numbers involved were relatively small.

Table 4.21: Analysis of the Votes Cast in August 1859 and 1863 by the 459 Electors Who Voted in Both Elections

Consistent Liberals	203	44.2%
Consistent Conservatives	225	49.0%
Liberal 1859; Conservative 1863	18	3.9%
Conservative 1859; Liberal 1863	13	2.8%
Total	459	99.9%

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Table 4.22 analyses the votes cast by those electors who voted in both 1863 and 1865. Unlike the two previous elections (August 1859 and 1863), the election of 1865 was a general election. Consequently, electors were able to cast two votes instead of one. As there were four candidates (two Liberals and two Conservatives), this gave the electors a wider range of voting options. Although sixty electors (11.1 per cent) who voted in 1863 and 1865 opted to split their votes between the two parties, the vast majority of those who voted in both elections continued to vote along party lines, producing a consistency rating of 83.2 per cent (93.6 per cent if the split votes are excluded - indeed, this would be necessary if one wished to make a fair comparison with the two previous elections, which, because they were by-elections, precluded the possibility of cross-party voting). It is interesting to note that over three times as many Conservatives as Liberals changed allegiance in 1865, although the numbers involved (31 or 5.7 per cent) were quite small. Thus voting consistency was more marked among Liberal electors than among their Conservative counterparts.

Table 4.22: Analysis of the Votes Cast in 1863 and 1865 by the 541 Electors Who Voted in Both Elections

Consistent Liberals	246	45.5%
Consistent Conservatives	204	37.7%
Liberal 1863; Conservative 1865	7	1.3%
Conservative 1863; Liberal 1865	24	4.4%
Liberal 1863; Split 1865	11	2.0%
Conservative 1863; Split 1865	49	9.1%
Total	541	100.0%

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Table 4.23 analyses the votes cast in 1865 and 1868 by those electors who voted in both elections. As in 1865, the election of 1868 was a general election. Once again there were four candidates, so the electors had a wider range of voting options than in August 1859 or 1863. Only 24 (5.7 per cent) of the electors who voted in 1865 and 1868 chose to split their votes, whereas the vast majority (335) who voted in both elections yet again voted along party lines, producing a consistency rating of 79.2 per cent (this figure is increased to 80.9 per cent when the number of electors who split their votes in both elections is added). It is worth pointing to the number of electors who changed allegiance in 1868. Whereas in 1865 most of those who changed sides were Conservatives, in 1868 it was the Liberals who made the switch: thirty-four electors who had voted Liberal in 1865 opted to vote for the Conservative candidates in 1868, compared to only one elector who had voted Conservative in 1865 choosing to vote for the Liberals in 1868. It is also interesting to note the pattern of split voting in 1865 and 1868. Whereas fifteen electors who voted Liberal in 1865 split their votes in 1868, only two electors who voted Conservative in the earlier election split their votes in 1868. Furthermore, of the twenty-nine electors who split their votes in 1865 but decided to vote along party lines in 1868, twenty-seven voted Conservative. Thus the number of electors who returned to the party fold in 1868 was much more marked among the Conservatives than it was among the Liberals. No doubt this was largely because of Gladstone's proposal to disestablish the Irish Church - an assault on a

national institution which would have been wholly unacceptable to the majority of Conservatives. It may also have owed something to the fact that the Conservative party agents were determined to win back as many voters as possible, in an attempt to counteract the electoral impact of the 1867 Reform Act on a constituency where the majority of new electors were expected to vote Liberal. This would explain why the Conservative party agents objected to “no less than 800 claimants”,<sup>329</sup> most of whom were householders. In the event, Conservative fears were justified: Tweedmouth and Spittal, where many of the new electors resided, voted overwhelmingly in favour of the two Liberal candidates.

Table 4.23: Analysis of the Votes Cast in 1865 and 1868 by the 423 Electors Who Voted in Both Elections

Consistent Liberals	188	44.4%
Consistent Conservatives	147	34.8%
Liberal 1865; Conservative 1868	34	8.0%
Conservative 1865; Liberal 1868	1	0.2%
Liberal 1865; Split 1868	15	3.6%
Conservative 1865; Split 1868	2	0.5%
Split 1865; Conservative 1868	27	6.4%
Split 1865; Liberal 1868	2	0.5%
Split 1865 and 1868	7	1.6%
Total	423	100.0%

So what conclusions can be drawn from the analyses in Tables 2.20 - 2.23? First, the level of voting consistency was impressively high, averaging 94.4 per cent at the two by-elections and 81.2 per cent at the two general elections. Of course, the period in question (1859 to 1868) was one which witnessed a sharp decline in cross-party voting and a corresponding increase in partisan voting. Consequently, one would expect to see high levels of consistency in voting behaviour. It is unfortunate that the lack of poll books for 1837, 1841 and 1857, and the absence of essential information regarding residence and/or occupation in the poll books for

<sup>329</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 August 1868, p. 3.

1847, 1852 and 1853, preclude the possibility of similar analysis for the earlier years of this study.

The second conclusion that can be drawn is that the high levels of voting consistency were applicable to both parties. No party could be said to have dominated this aspect of voting behaviour. On two occasions (1859 and 1865) more Conservatives than Liberals switched their allegiance, and on two occasions (1863 and 1868) more Liberals than Conservatives changed sides. However, it should be emphasised again that the number of voters who transferred their votes from one party to the other was always small, averaging no more than 6.15 per cent of the total number of votes cast at the four elections.

### **Freeman and Householder Voting**

Before 1832 the right to vote in parliamentary elections at Berwick was vested in the freemen of the borough. Freedom was acquired through inheritance or servitude. In the former, the sons of freemen obtained their freedom upon attaining the age of twenty-one; in the latter, any man who had served a seven-year apprenticeship to a freeman earned the privilege. Alternatively, the corporation could create freemen.<sup>330</sup> In 1831 there were 1135 freemen on the roll in Berwick, although between 44 and 53 per cent of these were non-resident. After the 1832 Reform Act the freemen of Berwick retained their right to vote, provided their qualification existed on the last day of July in the year for which they claimed, and provided they had resided for six months in, or within seven miles of, the borough, and their names were on the electoral register.

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<sup>330</sup> In 1835 the municipal corporations lost the right to create freemen. Although the right was revived in 1885, it was done so under conditions which ensured the protection of the parliamentary and municipal franchises.

The 1832 Reform Act also granted the franchise to all adult males who occupied, either as owner or tenant, any house, warehouse, counting-house, shop, or other building, either with or without land, of the clear yearly value of £10 within the borough, provided they had been in possession of the property for twelve calendar months before the last day of July in the year of the claim, and had paid before 20 July all the poor rates and assessed taxes charged on the property up to the preceding April. There was the further proviso that no claimant could be registered as a voter if he had been in receipt of parish poor relief during the previous twelve months. The franchise was also granted to lodgers if they shared with other lodgers and the value of the property divided by the number of lodgers came to £10 a year for each, provided the landlord did not occupy any part of the property.

Thus from 1832 there were two types of voters in Berwick: the freemen, the wealthier of whom also qualified as ten-pound householders but generally exercised their ancient voting right rather than their newly-acquired one; and the ten-pound householders. Until the 1850s the freeman voters were numerically superior to the ten-pound householders (see Tables 4.24 and 4.25), but by mid-century the two groups were about equal and remained so until the Second Reform Act in 1867 extended the borough franchise to all householders with twelve months' residence and to ten-pound lodgers, also with a year's residence. After 1867 the household voter was very much in the majority, forming over 70 per cent of the Berwick electorate at the general election of 1868.



Table 4.24: Freemen as a Percentage of the Berwick Electorate, 1832 - 1868 <sup>331</sup>

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>
62.4	63.3	62.9	52.0	58.3	53.6	50.9
<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	
49.4	51.2	50.9	51.1	52.2	29.1	

Average: 52.9%.

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Table 4.25: Householders as a Percentage of the Berwick Electorate, 1832 - 1868 <sup>332</sup>

<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>
37.6	36.7	37.1	48.0	41.7	46.4	49.1
<u>1857</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>	
50.6	48.8	49.1	48.9	47.8	70.9	

Average: 47.1%.

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Table 4.26 shows the percentage of freeman votes cast for each party for the elections of 1832, 1835, 1837, 1847, 1852, 1853, 1859 (April and August), 1863, 1865 and 1868. As there is no poll book for 1841 or 1857, there are no figures available for these years. There is also no poll book for 1837, but the *Berwick Advertiser* gives a detailed analysis of the poll for this election.

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<sup>331</sup> The figure for 1841 is based on the number of freemen on the register. All other figures are based on the number of freemen who voted. The figure for 1857 is for Berwick excluding Tweedmouth and Spittal, and is based on the number of freemen on the register rather than on the number of freemen who voted. All other figures are based on the number of freemen who voted in Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal. By-elections were held in 1859 and 1863.

<sup>332</sup> The figure for 1841 is based on the number of householders on the register. All other figures are based on the number of householders who voted. The figure for 1857 is for Berwick excluding Tweedmouth and Spittal. All other figures are based on the number of householders who voted in Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal. By-elections were held in 1859 and 1863.

Table 4.26: Voting Behaviour of Freemen by Party (%)<sup>333</sup>

Party	1832	1835	1837	1847	1852	1853	1859	1859	1863	1865	1868	
Cons.	50.1	46.2	82.4	65.7	46.9	40.1	77.9	72.6	76.6	63.3	83.4	
Lib.	49.9	53.8	17.6	34.3	53.1	59.9	22.1	27.4	23.4	35.7	16.6	
Average Cons.			64.2%.									
Average Lib.			35.8%.									

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It was a well-known fact that the freemen of Berwick, as in many boroughs, tended to vote Conservative, and this is certainly borne out by an analysis of the poll books, which shows that between three-fifths and three-quarters of the freemen generally supported the Tory party. Conservative candidates, especially Richard Hodgson, frequently presented themselves as the freemen's friend, asserting that it was the aim of the Liberals to disfranchise the freemen and also to deprive them of their property rights. Despite denials from Liberal candidates that this was indeed the case, it would appear that the vast majority of freemen, judging by their voting habits, were not convinced. The only occasions when the freeman vote was not predominantly Conservative were both in the early 1850s. In 1852 two Liberal candidates, Matthew Forster and John Stapleton, were returned with large majorities. On this occasion 53.1 per cent of the freeman vote went to the Liberals, as opposed to 34.3 per cent at the previous election in 1847.

So how does one account for this turnabout? The fact that the 1852 election was declared void on the grounds of treating and bribery, would perhaps indicate that some of the freemen changed sides for financial considerations rather than for political reasons. At the by-election in 1853 the two new Liberal candidates were returned by even bigger majorities. This time 59.9 per cent of the freeman vote went to the Liberals - an increase of 6.8 per cent on the previous election. However, it is difficult to imagine that bribery was a major cause of the Liberals'

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<sup>333</sup> There are no figures for the elections of 1841 and 1857.

overwhelming success in 1853. Having had one election declared void, it seems unlikely that either party would have exposed the borough to the risk of disfranchisement by once again indulging in illegal practices. It would be more feasible to suppose that the 1853 election backfired on the Conservatives because it was, after all, one of their candidates who had brought the petition the previous year. Petitions were not popular, especially if they were successful, for all they succeeded in doing was to bring the constituency into disrepute. The constituents of Berwick - freemen and householders alike - were always aware of the fact that any charge of corruption, if substantiated by a House of Commons investigation, could lead to the loss of their voting rights.

There were, of course, other factors behind the Liberal victories of 1852 and 1853. Liberal solidarity, Conservative disunity, the poor parliamentary record of the Conservative candidate Renton, the unpopularity of his colleague Hodgson and the Conservatives' espousal of protectionism at a time when public opinion favoured free trade - all of these contributed to the Liberals' success during the early 1850s.

If the majority of the Berwick freemen generally voted Conservative, then the householders tended to vote Liberal. Table 4.27 shows the percentage of householder votes cast for each party during the elections of 1832, 1835, 1837, 1847, 1852, 1853, 1859 (April and August), 1863 and 1865.

Table 4.27: Voting Behaviour of Householders by Party (%) <sup>334</sup>

<u>Party</u>	<u>1832</u>	<u>1835</u>	<u>1837</u>	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>
Cons.	7.9	20.9	35.9	39.8	27.6	18.1	30.5	26.4	25.2	18.6	25.0
Lib.	92.1	79.1	64.1	60.2	72.4	81.9	69.5	73.6	74.8	81.4	75.0
Average Cons.			25.1%.								
Average Lib.			74.9%.								

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Householder support for the Liberals never dropped below 60 per cent and indeed on three occasions, in 1832, 1853 and 1865, it rose to over 80 per cent. In 1832 the Tory candidate, Beresford, was surprised at the severity of the opposition he received from the householders. He blamed this opposition on the fact that it was rumoured - wrongly, according to Beresford - that he was violently opposed to the enfranchisement of the householders; but whatever Beresford's personal views on household suffrage might have been, his overall opposition to the Reform Bill - because of its disfranchising measures - was hardly likely to win him many friends among the new constituency of 1832.<sup>335</sup>

As we have already seen, the early 1850s was a particularly triumphant period for the Berwick Liberals. After the Conservative petition of 1852, which publicly questioned the Liberal victory of that year, the Liberals were determined to show that the 1852 result was an unequivocal rejection by the Berwick electorate of Lord Derby's administration. Thus the 1853 election was an even more emphatic victory for the Liberals, who recorded 70.9 per cent of the total number of votes cast. As for 1865, when the Liberals increased their share of the householder vote by 6.6 per cent, it seems certain that the popularity of Lord Palmerston's Government was the main reason for the resounding Liberal victory of that year.

<sup>334</sup> There are no figures for the elections of 1841 and 1857.

<sup>335</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, pp. 2 and 3.

## Religion

In his examination of voting behaviour in the North East of England during the period 1832 - 1874, T. J. Nossiter declares, "Few historians would doubt that religious affiliation was one of the determinants of voting behaviour after 1832, although they might disagree over the details."<sup>336</sup> This view has been endorsed by a number of other studies on electoral politics, including those of J. R. Vincent (Rochdale), R. J. Morris (Leeds), Andrew Phillips (Colchester), Patrick Joyce (the textile towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire), Paula Radice (Guildford, Durham City, North Durham and Leicester) and Mohamed Manai (Lancaster, Oldham and Rochdale).<sup>337</sup> However, it should be stressed that the evidence provided by these investigations is suggestive, rather than conclusive.

In order to examine the correlation between religious affiliation and political allegiance in Berwick, two investigations into voting behaviour were carried out. First, using poll books and Anglican and Nonconformist baptism registers, an attempt was made to identify the religious denomination of a sample of Berwick electors who voted in the 1865 general election. Secondly, with the help of poll books, church records and trade directories, a similar undertaking was made to trace the voting habits of Anglican clergymen and Nonconformist ministers in eight elections.

Discovering a link between religion and politics in the case of voters whose religion was also their occupation was a relatively easy task. However, establishing such a connection among secular voters was much more problematic, because of the difficulty of voter identification. Apart from the practical problems

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<sup>336</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 174.

<sup>337</sup> J. R. Vincent, *Pollbooks*; A. Phillips, "Four Colchester Elections: Voting Behaviour in a Victorian Market Town"; P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*; Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence"; and Mohamed Adel Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire".

involved in such an investigation, there are, of course, theoretical objections to this approach. As Nossiter observes, even if a voter's religious background can be traced, one can never be certain of its significance at a time "when religious attachments were generally so fluid."<sup>338</sup> The fact that someone was baptised in a particular church is no guarantee that he continued to worship there during the whole of his adult life. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to establish a link by using a sample of 360 partisan voters at the general election of 1865 (see Tables 4.28 and 4.29). 180 of these voted for the Conservative candidates, Cargill and Hubback; and 180 voted for the Liberal candidates, Marjoribanks and Mitchell. The sample was taken from the top half of the list of voters who polled, but is only roughly alphabetical.<sup>339</sup> It represents 62.5 per cent of the total number of partisan votes in an election where partisan votes accounted for 85.3 per cent of the votes cast.<sup>340</sup>

Using Anglican and Nonconformist baptism registers in conjunction with the poll book for 1865, it was possible to trace the probable religious background of some of the voters in the sample (55.28 per cent). The key word is, of course, "probable", for there is no way of being certain that the James H. Archbold who voted Conservative at the general election of 1865 is the James Hall Archbold (son of George Archbold) who was baptised at Shaws Lane Protestant Relief Church on 2 September 1835; or that John Stevenson Landles Paulin who voted Liberal is the same John Stevenson Landles Paulin (son of William Paulin) who was baptised at the Presbyterian Church in Golden Square on 28 August 1831. However, in the absence of any other voter using that particular name, it is reasonable to assume that in each of the two cases cited the persons are one and the same.

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<sup>338</sup> T. J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 174.

<sup>339</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 5.

<sup>340</sup> Of the remaining votes, 11.1 per cent were split between the two parties and 3.6 per cent were plumpers.

Of course, not all the names contained in the poll books are as unique as those of Messrs. Archbold and Paulin. Most voters do not, for instance, give their middle name, or middle initial. Furthermore, some voters, such as John Thompson and James Brown, have a fairly common forename and surname, which makes identification virtually impossible. However, this is not such a problem if all the persons bearing that name belong to a particular religious denomination. If, for instance, the two William Jacksons who could be found belonged to either the Low Meeting House or the Golden Square Congregation, then the chances of the William Jackson who voted in 1865 being a Nonconformist are fairly high. In such a case the voter would be classed as identifiable. On the other hand, if one of the three George Knoxs who were discovered belonged to the Anglican Holy Trinity Church, while the other two belonged to the Golden Square Congregation, then identification was deemed uncertain and the name of the voter was discarded as unidentifiable.

Table 4.28: A Sample of Conservative Voters at the Berwick Election of 1865

Number: 180  
 Identified voters: 110 (61.1%)  
 Unidentified voters: 70 (38.9%)  
 Anglicans: 74 (67.3%)  
 Nonconformists: 36 (32.7%)

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Table 4.29: A Sample of Liberal Voters at the Berwick Election of 1865

Number: 180  
 Identified voters: 89 (49.4%)  
 Unidentified voters: 91 (50.6%)  
 Anglicans: 17 (19.1%)  
 Nonconformists: 72 (80.9%)

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Of the 110 identified voters who voted Conservative 74 (67.3 per cent) were Anglicans; and of the 89 identified voters who voted Liberal 72 (80.9 per cent) were Nonconformists. Such figures suggest a remarkable correlation between religious persuasion and voting behaviour, seemingly endorsing the axiom that Anglicans voted Conservative while Nonconformists supported the Liberals.

Although only one election was analysed, voting consistency during the period 1859 - 1865 (see Tables 4.20 - 4.23) would suggest that the pattern was fairly typical of Berwick elections. Of the 172 voters from our sample who voted in two consecutive elections (i.e., the 1863 by-election and the 1865 general election) all but three (two Anglicans and one Nonconformist) voted for the same party at both elections, producing a consistency rate of 98.26 per cent.

The voting behaviour of Berwick's religious establishment is shown in Tables 4.30 - 4.36.

Table 4.30: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers.  
Berwick, 1852 (%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	50	25	4
Nonconformist Ministers	0	66.7	3

Note: One (25 per cent) Anglican clergyman split his votes.

Table 4.31: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers  
Berwick, 1853(%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	66.7	33.3	3
Nonconformist Ministers	0	66.7	3

Note: One (33.33 per cent) Nonconformist minister split his votes.



Table 4.32: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers,  
Berwick, May 1859 (%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	100	0	4
Nonconformist Ministers	0	75	3

Note: One (25 per cent) Nonconformist minister split his votes.

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Table 4.33: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers,  
Berwick, August 1859 (%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	100	0	3
Nonconformist Ministers	33.3	66.7	3

Note: The one Nonconformist who voted Conservative was a Roman Catholic priest.

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Table 4.34: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers,  
Berwick, 1863 (%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	100	0	4
Nonconformist Ministers	33.3	66.7	6

Note: Of the two Nonconformists who voted Conservative one was a Wesleyan minister and the other was a Roman Catholic priest.

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Table 4.35: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers,  
Berwick, 1865 (%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	100	0	3
Nonconformist Ministers	12.5	87.5	8

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Table 4.36: Voting of Anglican Clergy and Nonconformist Ministers.  
Berwick, 1868 (%)

	Conservative	Liberal	No.
Anglican Clergy	100	0	4
Nonconformist Ministers	12.5	87.5	8

Note: The one Nonconformist who voted Conservative was a Scotch Presbyterian minister.

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Analysis of the voting behaviour of Anglican clergymen and Nonconformist ministers at seven Berwick elections between 1852 and 1868 reveals the relationship between religious affiliation and political allegiance became especially significant at the 1859 general election. It was not until this election that all the Anglican clergy in Berwick voted Conservative. Prior to that date some Anglicans, like the Rev. Joseph Barnes, Vicar of Holy Trinity, had voted Liberal; while others, like the Rev. John Leach, Curate of Tweedmouth, had split their votes between both parties, with the result that the Conservative share of the Anglican vote never rose above 66.7 per cent (1853).

Similarly, the Nonconformist-Liberal nexus did not become marked until 1859, when 75 per cent of dissenting ministers voted for the Liberal candidates, Stapleton and Marjoribanks. The fact that the Nonconformists never achieved the same degree of partisanship as the Anglicans was due to the fact that for most of the period Wesleyan ministers, like Robert Totherick, and Roman Catholic priests, like William Markland, tended to vote Conservative. The high point of Nonconformist-Liberal solidarity occurred in 1865 and 1868 (87.5 per cent), by which time the Catholics, in the form of D.A. Buckley, had aligned themselves with the Liberals.

## CONCLUSION

Poll books are a useful addition to the researcher's more traditional sources of information. They can reveal much about the voting behaviour of electors. However, they do have their limitations. As Miles Taylor has observed, they provide only a microcosmic view of electoral behaviour. Given the fragmentary nature of the evidence, this is inevitable. Poll books are available for only a limited number of elections in a small number of constituencies. For instance, no poll book exists for any of the London boroughs after 1841, and the survival rates for several other large constituencies, such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Portsmouth, is low. Most poll book analysis that has been undertaken is confined to medium-sized English boroughs.<sup>341</sup> Consequently, one is compelled to ask how representative are these constituencies? The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that only a minority of voters actually cast their votes with any degree of regularity or consistency, which begs a second question: how can the voting behaviour of these voters be used to make meaningful generalisations about the electorate as a whole?<sup>342</sup> Such difficulties highlight the limitations of poll books as a historical source, but they do not make them ineffectual. As Taylor himself has said, "Such findings are of course better than none".<sup>343</sup>

Another problem with poll books lies in the very nature of the information they contain. They may tell us *how* an elector voted, but they do not tell us *why* he voted the way he did. As we have seen, studies of electoral politics in Hanoverian and Victorian England have generally taken the view that occupation and religion were major determinants of voting behaviour. Yet this assumption has recently been brought into question. According to Taylor, the notion that the

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<sup>341</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", p. 52.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

occupational and religious interests of voters were reflected in the way they cast their votes does not accord with widespread evidence of borough elections being characterised by a rejection of self-interested voting and a determination to secure effective representation of the public or corporate interest.<sup>344</sup> But what is this "widespread evidence"? No doubt most nineteenth-century voters, like those of today, would say that they always voted for the public good, or for the good of the community. Were the Nonconformist voters of Berwick acting out of self-interest when they supported a Liberal candidate who advocated the abolition of church rates? Or were they acting in the interest of a community which was predominantly Nonconformist? Were the tradesmen of the town behaving selfishly when they voted for the party which espoused the principle of Free Trade? Or were they voting for a policy which they believed to be of immense benefit to the nation at large? The difficulty in answering such questions stems from the fact that it is not always easy to separate self-interest from the good of the community, since the two are so often inextricably linked. Most modern-day voters would undoubtedly vote for the party which promised them a better education system and a more efficient national health service; but would their enthusiasm for such improvements remain undiminished if the increased taxation required to pay for them became too much of a financial burden on the taxpayer? Taylor's image of high-minded voters placing the interests of the community before their own personal concerns is therefore something of a myth. People are not as altruistic as he seems to suggest.

Influence (legitimate or otherwise), financial gain and political conviction all played their part in determining how the nineteenth-century electorate cast their votes. The degree to which each of these voting determinants influenced the electoral process varied from one election to the next, and from one constituency to another. If poll books can shed any light at all on the question of why electors

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<sup>344</sup> Taylor, "Interests, parties and the state: the urban electorate in England, c. 1820 - 72", p. 71.

voted the way they did, they can do so only when they are used in conjunction with other sources. If, for instance, newspaper accounts of a particular election allude to widespread corruption, then a close examination of the poll books may prove particularly instructive, if it can be shown that numerous electors who invariably voted for the same party suddenly and unaccountably changed their allegiance at that election. Yet even then the evidence is not conclusive: poll book evidence, by its very nature, can only be suggestive. This, however, does not detract from its value as a source of information.

## CHAPTER 5: ELECTION PROCEDURE

Nineteenth-century elections ritually followed a sequence of events, which began with the registration of electors and ended with post-election entertainments.<sup>345</sup> Such formalisation ensured that there was a remarkable similarity between one constituency and another, and between one election and the next. This fact has been well documented by, amongst others, Stoker, O'Gorman and Vernon.<sup>346</sup> However, it would be wrong to assume that constituencies did not add their own particular flavour to the electoral process, or that elections did not develop their own characteristics.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine election procedure in Berwick-upon-Tweed during the period under investigation, in order to ascertain which features of the electoral process were typical and which were unusual. It is hoped that, by focusing on certain elections, a clear picture of the changing nature of nineteenth-century election procedure will emerge, for there is no doubt that, as the century progressed, some of the more colourful election traditions gradually fell into disuse, or were abruptly replaced by alternative practices.

Although registration preceded the election proper, it was a vital stage in the electoral process, for unless an elector's name was entered in the electoral register he was not entitled to vote. The task of compiling the register fell mainly to the parochial overseer, who was the only official who knew which properties were occupied and which householders had paid their rates. The overseer's list was then sent to the town clerk, who published it, together with the list of freeman voters,

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<sup>345</sup> Electoral registration was introduced in 1832.

<sup>346</sup> Stoker, "Voting Behaviour", pp. 119 - 173; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, pp. 126 - 139; F. O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England 1780 - 1860", in *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), pp. 79 - 115; and Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 80 - 102.

which he himself had compiled from the freemen's roll.<sup>347</sup> After this, the lists were displayed, so that any unqualified electors could be identified and objected to. Since the person challenging a claim did not have to specify the reason for his objection, it was up to the claimant to prove his qualification. This was done before a revising barrister in the registration court.

Unfortunately, the registration process could be both time-consuming and expensive, and many potential voters were reluctant to go to the trouble of making a claim. It has been estimated that somewhere between one-quarter and three-eighths of those claimants who met all the necessary qualifications neglected to register their entitlement in 1832.<sup>348</sup> Furthermore, the system was open to abuse. In 1832 the *Advertiser* complained that many of the objections raised against the registration of voters were not only trivial and vexatious, but were motivated by party feeling:

In several parts of the country, the Tories in fact have objected by wholesale, both as regards the number of voters and objections. They stopped, not to consider whether any specific objection would apply, but they hurled a multitude promiscuously, hoping that some of them might suit their purpose, or if not they would at least harass and torment the new made voter, and put him to such a degree of trouble in order to assert his claim, that in some instances he would give it up in disgust, and in others he would find it unable to give the attendance upon the sitting of the sheriff or the barrister which had become necessary to establish it.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> For a detailed account of how the registration system worked, see J. A. Thomas, "The System of Registration and the Development of Party Organisation", in *History*, new series, xxxv, (1950), pp. 81 - 98.

<sup>348</sup> Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 16.

<sup>349</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 22 September 1832, p. 4. According to the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, at the Newcastle-under-Lyme revision of 1832 "no fewer than 54 of the 235 objections sustained were the result of the voter not appearing to defend his claim." (Cited in Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 15). Considering there was no provision for costs to be awarded to compensate a claimant for the time and expense involved in defending his claim against a "trivial" or "vexatious" objection, it is not surprising that so many claims were undefended. The power to award costs against unfounded objections was not introduced until 1843.

In Berwick, some of the tactics employed by zealous party agents included sending written objections to electors' claims after they had refused to vote for a particular candidate, and falsely persuading electors that they would have to pay extra taxes if they appeared in court to support their claims.<sup>350</sup>

Such behaviour may have been against the spirit of the law, but it was perfectly legal. After 1832 the registration courts became the first battleground in the electoral process, with party agents promoting the claims of their supporters and objecting to those of their opponents. The importance of the registration courts was acknowledged by Sir Robert Peel in 1839 when he wrote:

The Reform Bill has made a change in the position of parties and in the practical working of public affairs, which the authors did not anticipate. There is a perfectly new element of political power - namely, the registration of voters, a more powerful one than either the Sovereign or the House of Commons. That party is strongest in point of fact which has the existing registration in its favour. . . . We shall soon have, I have no doubt, a regular systematic organisation of it. Where this is to end, I know not, but substantial power will be in the Registry Courts and there the contest will be determined.<sup>351</sup>

However, the idea that the decision of the revising barristers would decide the issue of an election was suggested long before Peel's famous pronouncement. Five weeks before the 1832 election the *Advertiser* reported, "The registration courts have now been generally held throughout both England and Scotland, and the fate of the elections in most places may be considered as decided."<sup>352</sup> This belief was confirmed the following month, when the Conservative candidate Beresford blamed his defeat at Berwick on the revising barrister, who had rejected the claims of some of his freeman supporters.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 September 1832, p. 4 and 24 November 1832, p. 4.

<sup>351</sup> Quoted in Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 118.

<sup>352</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 November 1832, p. 4.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 December 1832, p. 3.



Despite this setback for the Conservatives, it was they who seized the initiative and were more adept at controlling the registration system in the years immediately after 1832. This was certainly the case in 1835. As the *Advertiser* observed:

In a great number of the instances where the tories [sic] have been successful at the late elections, they owe it entirely to the attention which they paid to the registration of voters, to the care which they took that none of their party should be left out, and that no claim against them should be admitted which they could by any possibility cause to be withheld.<sup>354</sup>

The *Advertiser* went on to commend the Conservatives for their zeal and exhorted the Liberals to imitate it and to fight their opponents with their own weapons. To this end, it recommended the formation of committees in every town and parish to watch over the registrations.<sup>355</sup> Throughout the spring and summer of 1835 the *Advertiser* published articles on the exercise of the elective franchise, urging Liberals to register as electors, to learn from the zeal, activity and union of the Conservatives and to form associations for the registration of voters and the selection of candidates.<sup>356</sup> At the beginning of August the editor happily announced that the "cause of reform" had been strengthened by a more alert attitude towards the registration, thanks largely to the formation of reform associations across the country.<sup>357</sup>

Registration continued to play a vital part in the electoral process throughout our period. At Berwick, this was never more so than in September 1880, when in the registration court, 496 householders were added to the register. These new voters comprised 27 per cent of the electorate, and most of them voted

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<sup>354</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 February 1835, p. 2.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 May 1835, p. 2; 9 May 1835, p. 2; 16 May 1835, p. 2; 23 May 1835, p. 2; 11 July 1835, p. 2; and 18 July 1835, p. 2.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 August 1835, p. 2.

Liberal.<sup>358</sup> It is therefore not surprising that in the 1881 by-election the Liberal candidate polled almost twice as many votes as his Conservative opponent.<sup>359</sup>

The next stage in the electoral process was the selection of the candidates.<sup>360</sup> After this, each candidate announced his candidature by issuing an address to the electors. This took the form of a letter, which was published in the local press, displayed on walls and distributed as handbills throughout the constituency. Clearly, it was the candidate's intention to reach the widest possible audience in the shortest possible time. It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout the campaign a great deal of effort was expended on printing. While newspapers remained the chief medium, and paid advertisements, such as addresses, could be placed in even unfriendly newspapers, handbills in large quantities were also issued, both to convey general messages and also to highlight individual issues during the course of the campaign, or to alert electors to the current state of the poll.<sup>361</sup> Consequently, the amount of printed material produced during an election campaign could be prodigious. At the Carlisle by-election in 1816, for instance, Curwen used 115 different handbills and altogether had 42,000 printed.<sup>362</sup> Such extravagance could be costly. At the Berwick election in 1859 printing and advertising accounted for 13.6 per cent of Earle's declared election expenses, 11.7 per cent of Gordon's, 7.0 per cent of Stapleton's and 4.2 per cent of Marjoribanks'.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>359</sup> Jerningham polled 1,046 votes, while Trotter polled 529 votes.

<sup>360</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>361</sup> Indeed, it was said that handbills were a more effective means of disseminating information than newspapers. Not only did they reach a wider audience, but they also had the ability to focus the reader's attention entirely on election matters. See Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 135.

<sup>362</sup> See Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 134.

<sup>363</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 July 1859, p. 2.

Addresses varied in length, but were usually between 200 and 500 words long. It was quite usual for a sitting member to issue a relatively short address, on the ground that his principles were already known to the electors. In contrast, the address of an unknown candidate was generally longer, for he felt the need to acquaint the constituency with his political sentiments. Such was the case in 1880, when Macdonald's address ran to over 1,000 words, taking up almost an entire column on the front page of the *Berwick Warder*.<sup>364</sup> However, the main function of the address was to inform the electorate of the candidate's decision to stand for election, without giving too much away about his political beliefs. The last thing a candidate wanted to do at this stage of the election was to alienate any potential supporters. Thus the address tended to be politically vague,<sup>365</sup> flattering to the electors and always contained the candidate's assurance that, if elected, he would attend to the borough's interests. This last point, as we have seen in Chapter 3, was especially important.

Before 1832, the timing of the address could be crucial to a candidate's election prospects. As O'Gorman has remarked:

Although election campaigns could last for several weeks or even months, it was none the less essential for a candidate to announce his candidature at the earliest possible moment, usually as soon as the returning officer had announced the election date. Declarations made before this announcement were much disliked as betokening a cavalier attitude towards the peace of the borough or county.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 12 March 1880, p. 2.

<sup>365</sup> James Farrer's address at South Durham in 1841 was probably more vague than most. He simply said, "The limits of an Address prevent my going fully into any of the interesting & important questions which now agitate the public mind; and it is the less necessary, as I purpose waiting personally on every elector, & publicly explaining to all, my political sentiments." See the *Durham Advertiser*, 25 June 1841, p. 1.

<sup>366</sup> O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, p. 128.

However, during the period of the reformed electorate the timing of the address appears to have become less significant. In 1865, for instance, Hubback refused to issue an address, because he had already announced his candidature the previous year.<sup>367</sup> Even more remarkable was the case of Holmes, who, in 1837, declined to issue any address at all. Such behaviour might have been perceived as the prelude to his withdrawal,<sup>368</sup> especially when he had also delayed his promised arrival in the borough for three months.<sup>369</sup> In the event, Holmes' failure to formally declare his candidature did no harm to his election prospects: he was returned together with his Conservative colleague, Hodgson, who defeated him by only three votes.

Nonetheless, these cases were exceptional, and most candidates published their address as soon as it was known that a dissolution was imminent. Thus in 1880 all four of the Berwick candidates issued an address eleven days before Parliament was dissolved. In contrast, in 1874 news of the dissolution took everyone, including Berwick's two representatives, by surprise. Yet within four days all three Liberal candidates had announced their candidature, while the Conservative candidate's address appeared within six days.<sup>370</sup> In such matters, no one relished the thought of being left at the starting line.

Although addresses were composed in such a way as to avoid giving offence to the electors, they were still a target for political opponents. In his 1863 address, Mitchell made a reference to the introduction of the ballot. He said he was fully aware of the abuses which the ballot sought to remedy, but there were strong

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<sup>367</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 June 1865, p. 2. His address appeared in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 9 July 1864, p. 2.

<sup>368</sup> On 28 May 1847, J. J. Wright wrote to Lord Londonderry, "Mr. [Henry Thomas] Liddell [the sitting M.P. for North Durham] has as yet issued no address, which every body thinks very strange." [See the *Londonderry Papers*, D/Lo/C 153 (200)]. Liddell's failure to issue an address was, in fact, the prelude to his retirement from the seat.

<sup>369</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 July 1837, p. 4 and 8 July 1837, p. 4.

<sup>370</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 30 January 1874, p. 1 and the *Berwick Advertiser*, 30 January 1874, p. 2.

arguments against it; and, in his opinion, the arguments on both sides were so nearly balanced, that on this question he would wish his vote to be guided by the general feeling of the constituency.<sup>371</sup> Yet even a seemingly innocuous statement like this could elicit a stinging rebuke from the *Warder*, which observed: "None but a Radical of dangerous tendencies would even name the ballot; and we can assure him that here the constituency do not trouble their heads about it."<sup>372</sup> However, such attacks were fairly routine, and even when a candidate managed to avoid making any political statements at all, he would invariably be chastised for his omission. The only occasion when an address aroused genuine hostility was in 1874, when Bury issued an address, which, because of its Conservative sentiments, lost him the backing of the Liberal committee and effectively ended his six-year association with the borough.

The address was followed by the public entries of the candidates.<sup>373</sup> These were usually carefully organised events, which were intended not only to demonstrate the candidate's popularity, but also to draw the whole community into the electoral process.<sup>374</sup> Sometimes they could be quite spectacular. This was certainly true of Sir Francis Blake's public entry in 1832:

Before seven o'clock on Monday morning the Trades of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal, began to assemble in Castlegate, with their numerous flags and banners in the line of procession. About eight o'clock they moved off in the same order as was observed on the Jubilee.<sup>375</sup> They were joined at the south end of the bridge by the

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<sup>371</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> In some constituencies the public entries were preceded by the reading of the writ, while in others they were regularly repeated throughout the campaign. See Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 85.

<sup>374</sup> The public entry was the first of a number of mass participation events which took place during an election. The non-electors were as much involved in these spectacles as were the electors. As most candidates were initially strangers to the town, the public entry also symbolised the acceptance of these outsiders into the community. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 84.

<sup>375</sup> The Berwick Reform Jubilee, which was held on Wednesday, 8 August 1832 to celebrate the cause of parliamentary reform. The entire day was observed as a holiday, with processions in the afternoon and illuminations in the evening.

Tweedmouth Reform Committee, the Fishermen, and others of the inhabitants and at the Highgate by a body of Pitmen [sic] and others from Spittal. They proceeded by the main road to Ord, where another body of pitmen from the Square, with their splendid silk banners, waited their arrival. Here also the procession was augmented by a number of gentlemen from Berwick who had taken the footpath through the fields. Immediately upon their arriving at Ord, they were met by Sir Francis, Major Orde, and others of his friends. The worthy Baronet immediately descended from his carriage, and walked along the lengthened line of the procession amidst the huzzas of the multitude. They then returned to Berwick in the following order: -

Trades Reform Committee with Banners,

Banner,  
supported by  
two men

Sir Francis Blake

Banner,  
supported by  
two men

Body of Gentlemen

The various Trades and their banners.<sup>376</sup>

As the procession proceeded to Berwick, the long line of gay and costly flags waving over the tops of the green hedges, presented a spectacle of striking and enlivening beauty. - There was no music accompanying them, and there was need of none, for upon that morn every man present had music in his heart; and the loud huzza that ever and anon broke forth from a thousand voices was not less inspiring than the bold anthem of our native isle. On arriving at Tweedmouth, Sir Francis was saluted by the firing of guns and the shouts of the populace, and on reaching the High Street, the Trades filed up in two lines, and a dense multitude crowded across the street in front of the Townhall, and upon the stairs, from whence Sir Francis was expected to address them.<sup>377</sup>

Although the triumphal nature of Blake's entry owed much to the reform fervour of the time, such extravaganzas were not unusual.<sup>378</sup> When Matthew

<sup>376</sup> The order of such processions was clearly important. Although they were arranged on occupational lines, they were also arranged to reflect and reinforce local patterns of status. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 107.

<sup>377</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 September 1832, p. 4. The firing of guns (cannon were fired during Forster's chairing procession in 1841) and the ringing of bells were commonly used to enhance the dramatic atmosphere of an election campaign. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 95.

<sup>378</sup> At Norwich in 1830, R. H. Gurney's carriage was welcomed by 15 - 20,000 people and by a procession a mile long. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 83.

Forster arrived in the borough in 1841 he was greeted by the sound of bells and a crowd of 3,000 people. Such a large turnout prompted the *Advertiser* to announce, "It is acknowledged by foes, as well as boasted by friends, that so large a multitude and so cordial and unanimous in their welcome, was never known to hail the entry of a candidate for Berwick on any previous occasion."<sup>379</sup> This was impressive enough for a man who was unknown in the borough, but, if anything, Forster's popularity seems to have grown. In 1852 he was met at the railway station by the chairman of his committee, his agent and other friends, who escorted him to the Red Lion Inn. During the evening the Berwick Band assembled before the inn and congratulated Forster on his arrival by playing "Auld Lang Syne" and other airs.<sup>380</sup> He was also greeted by a large number of townsfolk, who thronged the streets and showed their approval of the manner in which he had represented the borough. The following morning a peal of bells announced his presence in the town.<sup>381</sup>

However, not all public entries were spectacular. Richard Hodgson's arrival in 1837 was colourful enough, with the drivers and horses of his carriage bearing yellow favours, but the welcome that awaited him as he alighted at the King's Arms Inn was limited to "a cheer from a number of requisitionists who were gathered to receive him."<sup>382</sup> Hodgson's entry in 1841 was even more muted: scarcely a dozen people were there to greet him.<sup>383</sup> Yet even this was a warmer welcome than that extended to William Henry Miller in 1847. At seven o'clock in the evening the ringing of bells announced his arrival, although he had already been in the town for five and a half hours. Even then Miller did not appear in public until ten o'clock the

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<sup>379</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 26 June 1841, p. 3.

<sup>380</sup> The importance of music during election campaigns is discussed by O'Gorman in "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", pp. 95 - 7. Sometimes music was played purely for entertainment and sometimes it had a more political function.

<sup>381</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 April 1852, p. 3.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 March, 1837, p. 4.

<sup>383</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 26 June 1841, p. 3. Such lacklustre events were not restricted to Berwick. At Great Yarmouth in 1830 only 150 people turned out to witness the public entry of the Tory candidates. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", pp. 83 - 4.

next morning, when he left the King's Arms to begin his canvass.<sup>384</sup>

However, Hodgson and Miller were not alone in the way they were received into the town. In general, Conservative candidates were not able to muster the kind of popular support that their Liberal opponents could rely on. Any attempt to orchestrate a grand entry in a hostile environment was doomed to failure. Consequently, Conservative candidates tended to forgo the pageantry normally associated with such events, and upon arriving in the borough, simply proceeded to their lodgings, where they were welcomed by a few of their supporters.

Yet by the late 1850s even the Liberals were adopting a more subdued approach to the public entry. In 1857 the *Advertiser* complained that "The proceedings are characterised by great quietness. No peal of bells being allowed to greet the arrival of the respective candidates, nor the slightest demonstration of joy or gaitly [sic]."<sup>385</sup> Even a band of music was prohibited.<sup>386</sup> Of course, this was the first general election at Berwick since the void election of 1852, so, not surprisingly, the town was on its best behaviour. Even so, the preference for a more low-key form of public entry was to become a permanent feature of election procedure in the borough.

The public entry invariably terminated when the candidate reached his inn, where he usually made a short address before retiring to his committee rooms to prepare for his canvass. As the committee rooms were the candidate's campaign headquarters, public houses assumed a key role, both socially and politically at election time. Not only did candidates lodge at their inn during the election, they also entertained their supporters and planned their election strategy there.

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<sup>384</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 July 1847, p. 3.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 March 1857, p. 3.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*



Four of Berwick's public houses were employed as campaign headquarters during our period: the King's Arms, the Red Lion, the Hen and Chickens and the Salmon. The King's Arms was usually used by the Conservatives. The only exceptions to this rule were in 1832, when the Reform candidate Blake established his headquarters there, and in 1857, when the Radical candidate Stapleton, who formed a coalition with the Conservatives, resided at the inn. The Salmon too was a Conservative house, whereas the Red Lion and the Hen and Chickens were both consistently loyal to the Liberal cause.

On nomination day the flags of the various candidates were often displayed from the windows of their respective inns. In 1852, for instance, the Red Lion exhibited the buff and blue of Forster, the King's Arms the marine blue of Renton, the Salmon Inn the dark blue and bright yellow of Hodgson and the Hen and Chickens the buff, orange and blue of Stapleton.<sup>387</sup> The whole scene was extremely lively and colourful as the candidates were accompanied to and from the hustings by their friends and supporters. After the declaration the candidates would return to their inn for the last time and deliver a final address, usually from one of the upstairs windows, thanking their supporters for the loyalty they had shown throughout the campaign. Popular candidates, especially if they had been successful, invariably found themselves addressing fairly large crowds on these occasions.

The only other public houses used purely for political purposes during the election were the Union Hotel in Tweedmouth and the Red Lion in Spittal, which during the 1860s provided the outdoor venue for candidates, generally Liberal,

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<sup>387</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2. Local party colours played an important part in election campaigns. Not only were they worn by the candidates and their supporters, but they also adorned buildings, trees, monuments and animals. At the 1881 Berwick by-election, Roman Catholic children sported the red and white favours of Jerningham. (See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 2). "The wearing of colours", observes O'Gorman, "at once defined one's loyalties and proclaimed them to others." See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 95.

who wished to address the electors who lived south of the Tweed. Conservative candidates, who drew little support from Tweedmouth and Spittal, tended to shy away from these townships - at least until after 1867, when the enfranchisement of a large number of householders on this side of the river made electioneering there unavoidable. After 1868 the Union Hotel and the Red Lion were both replaced as election venues by the National and British Schoolrooms of Tweedmouth and Spittal.

The public entry was followed by the canvass. This allowed the candidate the opportunity to make personal contact with the electors, in order to extract promises of support. These were regarded as morally binding. Consequently, any attempt to persuade an elector to abandon his pledge was roundly condemned, as Lord Howick discovered at Sunderland in 1841, when he was chastised by Matthias Attwood for suggesting that circumstances might occur during an election which would justify a voter breaking his promise.<sup>388</sup> This is not to say that promises were never broken. Although it has been claimed that Berwick electors were renowned for adhering to their pledges,<sup>389</sup> there is plenty of evidence to indicate that this was an unwarranted reputation. In 1837, for instance, Donkin alleged that forty-three electors "who had solemnly promised their support shamefully turned to the opposite side".<sup>390</sup> Likewise, in 1868 Carpenter maintained that his canvassing books revealed that "no less than one hundred and sixty-eight persons" had "deviated from their plighted word".<sup>391</sup> In addition, there were allegations of broken

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<sup>388</sup> According to Attwood, "if such a principle were adopted the whole proceedings of an election would be exposed to every malignant calumny and violent action that the warmth and excitement of partizanship might suggest and attempt. Such a principle would be held to be totally inadmissible in the transactions of private life, nor was it less to be repudiated on public grounds in political and public proceedings." See *The Times*, 20 September 1841, p. 6.

<sup>389</sup> See J. Fuller, *The History of Berwick Upon Tweed*, pp. 244 - 5 and Brenchley, *A Place By Itself*, p. 113.

<sup>390</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 July 1837, p. 2.

<sup>391</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 4.

promises in 1852, 1859 and 1865.<sup>392</sup> However, it was not only the behaviour of the Berwick electors which cast doubt on the accuracy of canvassing returns. At the North Devon by-election of 1839, 253 voters who had pledged support for the Liberal candidate failed to poll for him; while at Hertford in 1835 Lord Ingestre lost his seat, even though his canvass books showed a majority of more than fifty promises.<sup>393</sup>

Not everyone approved of canvassing. In 1832 Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote to Joseph Lees, saying:

The practice of begging for votes is, as it seems to me, absurd, pernicious, and altogether at variance with the true principles of representative government. The suffrage of an elector ought not to be asked or to be given as a personal favour. It is as much for the interest of constituents to choose well as it can be for the interest of a candidate to be chosen. To request an honest man to vote according to his conscience is superfluous. To request him to vote against his conscience is an insult. The practice of canvassing is quite reasonable under a system under which men are sent to Parliament to serve themselves. It is the height of absurdity under a system under which men are sent to Parliament to serve the public.<sup>394</sup>

Macaulay's views were shared by John Stapleton, who at Berwick in 1868 reluctantly entered upon a personal canvass after informing the electors, "If I were to follow my own inclinations, I should rely entirely on the effect of written and printed addresses and abstain altogether from personal canvass. I think it is much more fitting that a free people should give their votes spontaneously than that they should yield them to the solicitations of candidates backed by numerous friends." The *Berwick Advertiser* concurred with his sentiments, saying it would welcome the day when canvassing "with its debasing and demoralising consequences" was

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<sup>392</sup> See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 22 May 1852, p. 4; the *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4; and the *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 5.

<sup>393</sup> Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 97.

<sup>394</sup> T. Pinney (ed.), *Letters of Macaulay*, II, (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 162 - 3.

utterly abolished.<sup>395</sup>

Opposition to canvassing appears to have gathered momentum after the introduction of the ballot. During his canvass in 1880 David Milne Home was told by some of the electors that they disapproved of canvassing. Although he had defended canvassing at the 1874 election, he now found himself in agreement with those electors. At a meeting in Tweedmouth he observed that under the Ballot Act a voter was entitled to keep his opinions to himself. Therefore it did not seem appropriate and in accordance with the intentions of the Act, "that a candidate should be going round from house to house craving promises of a vote." Rather, he thought a candidate should be at home for a certain period of the day, like a doctor or a minister, "where those who wished to consult him upon his political views might see him, and talk with him upon those matters."<sup>396</sup>

Yet despite the occurrence of broken pledges and the fact that many candidates and electors disapproved of canvassing, the accumulation of these promises of support were generally regarded as invaluable, for they enabled the candidate and his agent to assess the potential chances of success,<sup>397</sup> and, if necessary, adopt appropriate tactics. At worst, this might involve retiring from the contest if it was felt that there was insufficient support to justify going to a poll. Thus at the Yorkshire county election in 1784 Fitzwilliam's candidates withdrew when the canvass showed that they stood at a 4:1 disadvantage among the voters.<sup>398</sup> Likewise, at the Durham City by-election in July 1843 Robert Ward decided it was not worth standing, when he was informed that all attempts to bring in a

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<sup>395</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 18 September 1868, p. 3

<sup>396</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 3 February 1874, p. 2 and 23 March 1880, p. 3.

<sup>397</sup> A recent study has suggested that during the second half of the 1830s, the canvass became more concerned with mobilising support, rather than assessing it, the latter function being increasingly carried out by the annual registration revision. See Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 92.

<sup>398</sup> O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, p. 90.

Conservative candidate in opposition to Thomas Purvis would be utterly useless.<sup>399</sup>

The candidate on canvass therefore had to go out of his way to flatter the electors and their families if he was to win their pledges. This could be extremely tedious. Anthony Trollope described his canvass at Beverley in 1868 as "the most wretched fortnight" of his manhood:

From morning to evening every day I was taken round the lanes and by-ways of that uninteresting town, canvassing every voter, exposed to rain, up to my knees in slush, and utterly unable to assume that air of triumphant joy with which a jolly, successful candidate should be invested. At night, every night I had to speak somewhere, - which was bad; and to listen to the speaking of others, - which was much worse.<sup>400</sup>

Canvassing could also be very tiring. At Berwick in 1880 David Milne Home complained to the electors of Tweedmouth that canvassing was a great inconvenience to the candidates, for "After going through a house to house visitation it was really quite impossible to prepare any very great speech to deliver in the evening."<sup>401</sup> Milne Home's exasperation is not surprising. Arthur Elliot's diary account of his canvass of Durham City in 1895 reveals that a typical day started at 10.00 a.m. and finished at 5.00 p.m. This continued for twelve days with only two days' rest. One day he was out canvassing from 9.00 a.m. until 9.00 p.m. with a break for tea and eggs at 5.30 p.m.<sup>402</sup>

The candidate on canvass also had to be prepared to accept a certain amount of rudeness from his social inferiors, who at election time were often full of their own self-importance. At Berwick In 1837, for instance, one elector had the

<sup>399</sup> *Durham Advertiser*, 15 November 1844, p. 2

<sup>400</sup> A. Trollope, *An Autobiography*, ch. xvi (London, 1962 edn; originally published 1883), p. 237.

<sup>401</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 23 March 1880, p. 3

<sup>402</sup> *Elliot Papers*, MS. 19521, pp. 66 - 70.

effrontery to offer his vote to any candidate who would assent to a list of measures, which included the ballot, annual Parliaments, the repeal of the Corn Laws and payment to members of Parliament by their constituents. Although the proposal was clearly designed as a form of ridicule, this did not prevent Donkin from accepting it - much to the amusement of the other electors.<sup>403</sup> However, this was nothing compared to the indignity suffered by one of Sir James Duke's canvassers at Boston in 1837. Upon entering the shop of a respectable tradesman of the town, the wretched fellow was seized by the collar and booted back onto the street by the irate mistress of the house.<sup>404</sup> Insults and complaints from electors and non-electors alike were a prominent feature of the canvass.

The canvass was a well organised event which left nothing to chance. Consequently, handbills would be distributed, stating which areas of the constituency the candidate intended to canvass and on which day. The order of canvassing seems to have been important. In boroughs, for instance, it was customary to canvass the electors in the town before those in the surrounding districts. At the Newcastle election of 1830 Sir Matthew White Ridley was even advised to canvass the most respectable streets first, because those were the areas of his greatest strength.<sup>405</sup> Sometimes a canvassing day would begin with a breakfast attended by the candidate and his committee, or by those who were to canvass with him. The canvassing party consisted of influential figures,<sup>406</sup> such as magistrates and members of the corporation, as well as those employed to perform

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<sup>403</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 2.

<sup>404</sup> Cited in Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 86.

<sup>405</sup> Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", pp. 68 - 9.

<sup>406</sup> However, this was not always the case. On 12 February 1846 the Earl of Lincoln wrote to Peel from Nottingham, informing him that " . . . no persons of influence will go round with my agents to canvass the voters. I have two or three volunteers out of this town, but otherwise the whole work has to be done by paid agents." See the *Newcastle Papers*, Ne C 12157/5.

specific tasks, like agents and clerks.<sup>407</sup> As it was necessary to create a big impression, the party would occasionally be accompanied by a band of musicians,<sup>408</sup> or its progress would be announced by the sound of church bells.

Although the canvass, like the public entry, was not supposed to commence until after the reading of the writ, in practice this convention was rarely observed. Nevertheless, a balance had to be struck. If a candidate began his canvass too early he ran the risk of being accused of disturbing the peace of the constituency. In May 1852 Renton had to interrupt his canvass in order to return to his parliamentary duties in London. Before leaving, however, he issued an address saying he regretted the great excitement that the borough had been thrown into during the previous three weeks.<sup>409</sup> With a further seven weeks to go before the dissolution of Parliament, Renton's concern about the effects of a long canvass were understandable. A protracted contest not only brought unnecessary disruption to the daily routine of the borough, but it also generated more expense, anxiety and work for the candidate.<sup>410</sup> It was for this reason that Serjeant Cox, in his manual on the conduct of elections, advised his readers, "Unless an early election is certain, all parties should defer the canvass for as long a time as possible."<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> The size of the canvassing party, like its social composition, was also important. Large parties were obviously impressive. At Newcastle in 1768 Sir Walter Blackett "was generally attended by about five hundred gentlemen, tradesmen, and others". This was unusual, however. More normal would have been the size of Ralph Gowland's party at Durham City in 1761, which comprised twenty-three gentlemen. Even with attendant helpers, the number in Gowland's party would not have exceeded fifty. See Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", pp. 61 - 3.

<sup>408</sup> At Chester in 1818 the Grosvenor canvassing party included a band of sixty musicians. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 84.

<sup>402</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 22 May 1852, p. 1.

<sup>410</sup> The length of a general election contest could vary greatly. The shortest contest in Berwick was in 1841, when canvassing began on the day of the dissolution. The longest was in 1837, when over four months elapsed between the start of electioneering and the dissolution of Parliament. The mean average was just under five weeks.

<sup>411</sup> E. W. Cox and S. G. Grady, *The New Law and Practice of Registration and Elections*, 10th edn. 1868, pp. cxlvii - clxxxv, reprinted in H. J. Hanham, *Introduction to C. R. Dod: Electoral Facts 1832 - 1853 Impartially Stated* (Hassocks, 1972), p. lv.

A premature canvass might be undesirable for other reasons. In the 1863 by-election, occasioned by the death of the Conservative candidate Gordon, Mitchell was severely criticised by his opponents for commencing his canvass before Gordon had been laid to rest.<sup>412</sup> Mitchell's explanation was that even though the Conservatives were without a candidate, he had learned that their agent had started canvassing and he was only following the agent's example.<sup>413</sup> This cut little ice with those who believed his hastiness indicated a lack of respect for the dead, although one cannot help suspecting that the Conservatives' indignation owed more to the fact that they had been caught on the hop than to any genuine sense of moral outrage at Mitchell's lack of propriety.<sup>414</sup> Either way, such incidents always provided valuable ammunition in the war of words that preceded an election.

On the other hand, if a candidate left his canvass too late he might be regarded as being over-confident and taking the electors for granted. In 1837 Donkin was warned by his friends that he was risking his seat by remaining at Westminster to vote for the Church Rates Bill instead of returning to Berwick to commence his canvass when two Tories were already in the field. Donkin's response was to issue an address saying he did not believe he would be deprived of the electors' votes because he was at his post to discuss "a measure for the relief of the Community at large and the Dissenters in particular from the charge of Church rates"; and even if he did believe that he risked his seat by being at Westminster instead of at Berwick, he would rather run that risk "than desert his bounden and important public duty and look after his personal interest elsewhere."<sup>415</sup> Noble sentiments indeed, but it was a foolhardy candidate who

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<sup>412</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 June 1863, p. 2.

<sup>414</sup> This is borne out by the fact that the *Berwick Warder* blamed the party managers in London for the Conservatives' delay in finding a candidate to contest the vacant seat. See the *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2.

<sup>415</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 18 March 1837, p. 1.



ignored the advice of those who were much better acquainted with the feelings of the borough, than a member of Parliament who spent most of his time away from his constituency.

At least Donkin returned to Berwick to assist his friends who had begun to canvass the electors without him.<sup>416</sup> This is more than could be said of Holmes, who resolutely refused to do any canvassing in the borough, preferring to send his son to canvass on his behalf while he promoted the Tory cause in other parts of the country.<sup>417</sup> In the event, Donkin lost his seat, and Holmes was elected. However, candidates who avoided personal contact with the electors generally did so at their peril. Sir James William's failure to canvass Carmarthenshire personally in 1837 was severely criticised by his agents and contributed significantly to his defeat.<sup>418</sup>

Perhaps the best strategy with regard to canvassing was that adopted by Stapleton in 1857. Having assured the electors in an address that he was not willing to be the first to disturb their borough by a premature canvass, he affirmed that should any other candidate do so, he would come down at once in order to institute a canvass.<sup>419</sup>

On the completion of their canvass, candidates published an address, making the ritual claim that their canvass had been an unqualified success. Not only had they been promised numerous votes, but they had been well received throughout the borough, experiencing no ill-humour on the part of the electors.

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<sup>416</sup> Sometimes there was insufficient time to make a regular canvass. At North Durham in 1835 Hedworth Lambton and Sir Hedworth Williamson toured the district, addressing the electors at the different polling stations. See the *Morning Chronicle*, 6 January 1835, p. 4.

<sup>417</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 May 1837, p. 4; 20 May 1837, p. 4; 1 July 1837, p. 4; and 15 July 1837, p. 4.

<sup>418</sup> Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 100. In contrast, the Radical Cuthbert Rippon's refusal to visit Gateshead during the general election of 1837 did not prevent his re-election. His wife and two children appeared in his stead, and he was able to beat off the challenge of the local Whig candidate, J. W. Williamson, by eighty-five votes. See McCord, "Gateshead Politics in the Age of Reform", pp.174 - 5.

<sup>419</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 March 1857, p. 2.

Donkin's 1832 address was typical of the genre:

GENTLEMEN, - Having finished my Canvas [sic], during which I have endeavoured to see and to solicit each of you personally for your vote, it remains now for me to express my gratitude for the flattering reception I have met with here. The number of Votes which have been promised to me is very great, and exceeds, I am assured, what has usually occurred on similar occasions. Refusals I have had scarcely any - and, in those instances where an immediate promise has been withheld, it has been done with a courtesy and expressions of good will towards me, which I am bound respectfully to acknowledge, and I indulge in the fullest hope of ultimately obtaining very many of those Votes the promises of which are now suspended.<sup>420</sup>

Such optimism was part and parcel of electioneering, and even if a candidate had had a disastrous canvass, he was hardly likely to undermine his election prospects further by publicly admitting it. Besides, his opponents were perfectly capable of doing this for him. Local newspapers regularly carried reports of unsuccessful canvasses. In 1857, for instance, the *Warder*, in an attempt to weaken Liberal morale, declared:

The Liberal candidates, Messrs. Marjoribanks, Stapleton, and Forster, have been prosecuting a diligent canvass during the week, and by all accounts with indifferent success. Indeed, it was at one time reported that one of them, disgusted with the coolness of his reception on this occasion, had bolted altogether; but he appears to have been persuaded to finish, whatever the result, the game he has entered upon.<sup>421</sup>

Ironically, it was not one of the Liberals who was about to quit the field, but the Conservative candidate, Gordon, who announced his retirement the day before the nomination, much to the surprise and disapproval of his friends and supporters, and promptly fled to Edinburgh.<sup>422</sup>

<sup>420</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 September 1832, p. 1.

<sup>421</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 20 March 1857, p. 2.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 March 1857, p. 2. Gordon was, in fact, persuaded to return to Berwick to contest the election.

As the size of the electorate grew, especially after 1867, door-to-door canvassing began to give way to mass meetings. These were held at various locations throughout the constituency: the Town Hall; the assembly rooms of the King's Arms and the Red Lion; the Corn Exchange; the Queen's Rooms; the National Schoolrooms in Castlegate, Tweedmouth and Spittal; the British Schoolroom in Spittal; and on temporary platforms erected outside the Union Hotel in Tweedmouth and the Red Lion in Spittal. Initially, these meetings were open to the public, but by the late 1850s they began to become party affairs, with admission by ticket. The first private meeting of Conservative electors was held at the Corn Exchange during the 1859 by-election. The Liberal electors began to hold private meetings in the Red Lion Assembly Room during the same election.<sup>423</sup> However, according to Vernon, the use of ticketing to regulate audiences was becoming increasingly common from the late 1830s. He cites the acrimonious Oldham election of December 1852, where the Liberals were forced to protect themselves from gangs of roughs by holding ticketed meetings in the Working Man's Hall. Similarly, during the 1868 election in Tower Hamlets, the Conservatives used ticketing to suppress the disruption of their meetings by their Radical opponents.<sup>424</sup>

The election officially started with the writ, which was sent to the constituency's returning officer. In Berwick this was the sheriff,<sup>425</sup> who then appeared with various civic leaders in front of the Town Hall to read the writ and announce the election arrangements.<sup>426</sup> These included the day appointed for the nomination of the candidates, which had to take place not earlier than four days

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<sup>423</sup> See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 20 August 1859, p. 2.

<sup>424</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp.225 - 30.

<sup>425</sup> The sheriff took over from the mayor, who last presided over an election in 1835.

<sup>426</sup> The reading of the writ always took place at the constituency's ceremonial centre. Thus in Boston it was read by the mayor from the balcony of the assembly rooms, while in Devon the ritual was performed by the sheriff inside Exeter Castle. At Tower Hamlets the sheriff and his entourage travelled around the boundaries of the borough reading the writ over fifteen times. See Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 82.

after the sheriff's announcement and not later than eight; the day set aside for the taking of votes, if a poll should be required; and the organisation of polling booths.

Until 1837 general elections at Berwick took place over four days, with a day for the nomination, two days for polling and a day for the declaration. From 1837 until 1865 they lasted for three days, unless polling day fell on a Saturday (as it did in 1857), in which case the declaration occurred immediately after the poll. No electioneering took place on a Sunday.<sup>427</sup> From 1865 onwards general elections were reduced to two days, bringing them in line with by-elections.

The nomination was the focal point of the election. In Berwick it was always held in the Town Hall and generally lasted about two and a half hours. It began with the candidates leaving their inn, accompanied by a party of friends and sponsors. As they made their way towards the Town Hall, they would be greeted by supporters waving ribbons and banners from the windows of buildings along the route. Upon their arrival, the candidates and their companions would take their place on the hustings, where they were joined by the sheriff, his officers in livery, the mayor, assessors, deputy-sheriffs and the constables of the town and county.<sup>428</sup> The body of the hall would be packed, with electors and non-electors downstairs and women in the gallery.<sup>429</sup> The under-sheriff would then ceremonially read the writ and the Acts against bribery and corruption.

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<sup>427</sup> The Quaker John Bright was said to have lost support in July 1843, because his representatives canvassed on a Sunday. See the *Durham Advertiser*, 15 November 1844, p. 2.

<sup>428</sup> The scene is vividly described in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 July 1837, p. 2.

<sup>429</sup> The part played by women in the electoral process is discussed by Vernon in *Politics and the People* (p. 92). Not only were they involved in the public entry and other processions, but they were also employed as canvassers and occasionally attended electoral dinners. At Ipswich they even had their own hustings constructed. Candidates frequently appealed to women to use their influence over male voters. No one was more adept at this than William Holmes' son, Thomas Knox Holmes, who in 1837 canvassed Berwick on behalf of his father and earned the sobriquet "The Pet of the Petticoats [sic]", after he had referred to the ladies of the town as "the most interesting portion of the inhabitants of Berwick". See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 April 1837, p. 4.

Once these formalities had been dispensed with, the sheriff would address the meeting, calling for each candidate to be given a fair and patient hearing. After 1832 it was standard practice for the returning officer to stress the need for "fair play" and "peaceable conduct". "Such appeals", Vernon suggests, "no doubt helped to create the (mis)conception of an English electoral system characterised by 'fair play' and 'honour' . . ." Yet, despite their fine words, returning officers themselves often failed to live up to this image by behaving in a vindictive and partisan manner.<sup>430</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that Berwick's returning officers failed to behave in a neutral fashion, except, perhaps, in the case of the 1863 by-election, when Alderman Thomas Allan and Dr. Alexander Kirkwood, the sponsors of the Liberal candidate, Alexander Mitchell, formally protested to the returning officer, Dr. David Cahill, who was a prominent Conservative, against the return of Walter Cargill, on the ground that the polling booths were closed prematurely. However, the fact that the incident was not mentioned in Mitchell's petition suggests it was not a severe complaint.<sup>431</sup>

As returning officer, it was the sheriff's job to ensure a peaceful election. Of prime concern was the behaviour of the non-electors, who, although denied a political voice, saw the nomination as an opportunity to make their own particular contribution to the electoral process.<sup>432</sup> In 1853, the sheriff, Robert Ramsay, said he trusted the non-electors would show by their good behaviour that they were worthy of receiving the franchise.<sup>433</sup> However, such appeals rarely had the desired effect, for the speeches of the candidates and their sponsors were littered with interruptions of one kind or another: cheers, laughter, hisses, moans, wisecracks

<sup>430</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 101.

<sup>431</sup> See the *Berwick Warder*, 3 July 1863, p. 8

<sup>432</sup> The popularity of the nomination owed much to the fact that it was one of the two events during an election (the other being the poll), where the disfranchised could assert their rights "to influence the course of the election and be included within the official political nation." See Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 90 - 1.

<sup>433</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 4.

and even missiles.<sup>434</sup>

After the sheriff's address, each candidate would be nominated and seconded by two eminent supporters, whose speeches would extravagantly extol the virtues and achievements of the candidate they were proposing. The candidates were proposed in rotation according to the length of time they had been before the constituency, either as representatives or candidates. Sometimes candidates were nominated *in absentia*. This happened three times at Berwick. In 1847 Miller abandoned his canvass and left the borough three days before the nomination. Although he returned on the morning of the nomination, he did not attend the ceremony and was nominated from the floor by two freemen.<sup>435</sup> In 1857 Gordon was nominated in his absence by Dr. David Cahill. Cahill then read out Gordon's election address, adding that he did not know why his nominee had retired, but that he would return if wanted.<sup>436</sup> The other occasion when a candidate was not present at his nomination was in 1831, when Samuel Swinton was proposed in order to produce a contest. Swinton later arrived in town to withdraw his candidature, observing that those who had nominated him had done so without his authority.<sup>437</sup>

The only other controversy surrounding the nomination of candidates at Berwick occurred in 1859, when the Conservatives criticised the mayor, Thomas Bogue, for wearing the chain and seal of the Corporation when he nominated the Liberal candidate Marjoribanks, "thus to some extent using his official influence for a factious and party purpose".<sup>438</sup> A few months later, during the 1859 by-election, the *Warder* again took Bogue to task for his participation in electoral affairs:

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<sup>434</sup> Mud and dead cats were favourite missiles, especially at open air hustings.

<sup>435</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p. 2.

<sup>436</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5.

<sup>437</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 May 1831, p. 4.

<sup>438</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

It may be well to remind Mr. Bogue also, that though accidentally the Mayor of the borough on the present occasion, among the duties of the office are not included those of an electioneering agent; nor are we aware that sergeants-at-mace, gold chains, and the other paraphernalia of municipal pomp, are maintained for the purpose of promoting the election of the Mayor's political partisans.<sup>439</sup>

Although Bogue may have been contravening election etiquette by using the symbols of his office to add authority to Marjoribanks' candidature, it was by no means unusual for a mayor to become involved in electioneering. A mayor took part in the nomination of a Conservative candidate in 1837 and 1863, and in the nomination of a Liberal candidate in 1847, 1852, 1853, 1859 (twice) and 1865.<sup>440</sup>

In contrast, there is no evidence that the clergy ever became involved in the nomination process at Berwick, although they did so in other constituencies, despite the fact that the practice was generally frowned upon. However, the Berwick clergy did participate in other aspects of electioneering. In 1857, for example, the vicar of Berwick played a prominent role in the Radical-Conservative alliance by sitting in a public house on polling day, "urging the Tories who could be induced to enter it to split for Stapleton."<sup>441</sup> Also, in 1859 the vicar was criticised for canvassing the wives of electors in the hope that they would persuade their husbands to vote Conservative.<sup>442</sup> Such behaviour was not uncommon. In North Northumberland clergymen canvassed on behalf of the Liberal candidate Sir George Grey;<sup>443</sup> and in 1835 one witness told a parliamentary committee that he found clergymen "the most persevering and unscrupulous canvassers".<sup>444</sup>

<sup>439</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 19 August 1859, p. 2.

<sup>440</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 29 July 1837, p. 2; *Berwick Journal*, 3 July 1863, p. 3; *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p. 2; 10 July 1852, p. 2; *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 4; and the *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4; 26 August 1859, p. 2; and 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>441</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 18 April 1857, p. 2.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 May 1859, p. 2.

<sup>443</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 10 April 1857, p. 5.

<sup>444</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 176. For an account of the involvement of Nonconformist ministers in electoral politics, see M. Cragoe, "Conscience or Coercion? Clerical Influence at the General Election of 1868 in Wales", in *Past and Present*, 149 (November, 1995), pp. 140 - 69.

Once they had been nominated, the candidates themselves addressed the assembly. In what was generally a courteous and magnanimous speech, the candidate would thank his supporters, explain his political principles, answer attacks made by his opponents and promise to do his duty if elected. It has been suggested that nomination speeches not only gave the candidates the opportunity to acquaint the townsfolk with their political opinions, but they also "served to generate commitment to the constitution, to the monarchy, the parliamentary system, and, indeed, the representative process in general."<sup>445</sup> Candidates, like Cargill at Berwick in 1863, frequently depicted themselves as guardians of "the constitution of their much-loved country."<sup>446</sup>

Occasionally, a candidate would respond to interruptions from the audience, but only in a good-humoured way. If he did otherwise, things could only go from bad to worse, as happened to Bradshaw in 1835. After he had praised the Duke of Wellington, who was especially unpopular at this time,<sup>447</sup> the crowd began hissing and yelling, whereupon Bradshaw "appeared to become violently excited" and exclaimed vehemently that Wellington was both a great soldier and a great politician, who would neither "truckle to an Attwood, the blood-stained O'Connell, nor the demagogue Durham!"<sup>448</sup> At this point the uproar and yells of disapproval became so loud that Bradshaw became almost inaudible, but, continuing in the same agitated manner, he said that he "despised the shout or approbation of the

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<sup>445</sup> O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 87.

<sup>446</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 July 1863, p. 3.

<sup>447</sup> During Peel's visit to Italy in 1834 Wellington had formed a caretaker administration, in which he assumed four major ministerial posts. Not surprisingly, this gave rise to the accusation that he was setting up a military dictatorship.

<sup>448</sup> Thomas Attwood (1783 - 1856), the Birmingham banker and extra-parliamentary reformer, who founded the Birmingham Political Union (1830); Daniel O'Connell (1775 - 1847), founder of the Catholic Association, which campaigned for Catholic Emancipation, and the leader of the Irish Nationalist movement; John George Lambton (1792 - 1840), 1st earl of Durham, who was Lord Privy Seal (1830 - 1833) in Earl Grey's administration and one of the framers of the 1832 Reform Bill. In 1834 "Radical Jack", as he was known, led a campaign aiming at household suffrage, vote by ballot and a maximum duration of Parliament of three years.



*ad captandum vulgus*," and that if anyone had any question to ask him, he would give him "a downright and straight-forward answer."<sup>449</sup>

Bradshaw was no political novice, so his loss of control was somewhat surprising, especially in view of the fact that Berwick audiences were notoriously hostile to Conservative candidates.<sup>450</sup> Most candidates had their own preferred method of dealing with difficult crowds. In 1852 Hodgson's speech was interrupted by a "running fire of derisive epithets" and "frequent recommendations to 'go to Newcastle' ", all of which he received "with the most imperturbable coolness".<sup>451</sup> And in 1841, in a speech reminiscent of Mr. Brooke's in *Middlemarch*, Weeding stubbornly ignored the crowd's exhortations to speak about the Corn Laws and the sugar duties, and spoke instead about the size and location of India and the civilising effect that commerce had had on the savages of the Sandwich Islands.<sup>452</sup> Throughout his address he spoke fluently and with "smiling self-complacency", apparently not caring whether the assembly laughed at him or with him.<sup>453</sup> Unless a candidate was a quick-witted and accomplished orator, such an approach was likely to prove far more effective than entering into a dialogue with members of the audience.

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<sup>449</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 January 1835, p. 2.

<sup>450</sup> Bradshaw was MP for Bracknell from 1825 to 1832.

<sup>451</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

<sup>452</sup> In his election address, Mr. Brooke rambled on about international commerce, the importance of observing the world "from China to Peru", and his own peregrinations in the Baltic and the Levant, when the only topic of interest to his audience was the Reform Bill. See G. Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London, 1994; first published 1872), pp. 483 - 4.

<sup>453</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 July 1841, p. 2. Cox's advice to novice candidates making a nomination speech was "not to be angry nor frightened, but to fall in, as it were, with the fun of the moment." See Cox and Grady, *The New Law and Practice of Registration and Elections*, p. lxi.

When all the candidates had finished speaking, the sheriff would call for a show of hands. It has been suggested that a good performance at the show of hands could have a discouraging effect on the opposition.<sup>454</sup> This happened at Lewes in 1812, where Colonel Macaulay withdrew from the contest after Shiffner's supporters had "packed the hall" to ensure that the show of hands appeared to be greatly in favour of their candidate.<sup>455</sup> On the other hand, Cox saw no value at all in this aspect of the electoral process. "Make no account of the show of hands", he advised, "it affords no indication whatever of the result of the election, and this is so well known that it would not influence a single voter."<sup>456</sup> As the hall would be full of both electors and non-electors, with no way of distinguishing between the two, Cox was probably right. In Berwick, as in other constituencies, the losing side invariably demanded a poll. This was always granted by the sheriff, who then swore in the poll clerks and adjourned the meeting until the following day.

The fallibility of the show of hands as a means of gauging a candidate's support is well illustrated by an examination of Berwick's thirteen election results between 1832 and 1868. Candidates who won the show of hands went on to win the election on six occasions: 1832, 1847, 1852, 1853, 1865 and 1868. Those who lost the show of hands went on to win the contest on seven occasions: 1835, 1837, 1841, 1857, 1859 (April), 1859 (August) and 1863. In 1835 Bradshaw lost the show of hands, but went on to head the poll; and in April 1859 both Gordon and Earle lost the show of hands, but found success at the polling booths. Consequently, it is safe to assume that, as far as Berwick was concerned, the show of hands was an archaic custom with little relevance to the outcome of most elections. The disfranchised, who by sheer numbers tended to dominate the

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<sup>454</sup> O'Gorman cites the case of one of Lord Milton's agents, who, in 1807, informed his lordship's election committee that if they met the show of hands with vigour, it would demonstrate their spirit, support their friends and dishearten their adversaries. See O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*, pp. 130 - 1.

<sup>455</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 91.

<sup>456</sup> Cox and Grady, *The New Law and Practice of Registration and Elections*, p. lxii.

nomination, seem to have had only a limited influence on the result of the election. Nevertheless, in some constituencies, such as Oldham, the belief still persisted that those who got a good majority at the show of hands stood a good chance of receiving a majority of votes on polling day.<sup>457</sup>

In 1872 the public nomination was replaced by the written nomination, which must have been a welcome relief to those who had suffered at the hands of a belligerent crowd. In Berwick the candidates were nominated in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall in the presence of the sheriff and under-sheriff. The proposer and seconder of each of the candidates, with one person assenting to the nomination, would present their nomination paper, duly signed, to the sheriff, and once it had been ascertained by reference to the electoral register that those persons were entitled to participate in the nomination of a candidate, the nomination was accepted, and the party retired.<sup>458</sup> The nominations were then posted on the Town Hall. In contrast to the public nomination, the proceedings were purely formal and excited little interest.<sup>459</sup>

In Berwick polling always took place on the day after the nomination. Three polling booths were erected: one in the outer chamber of the Town Hall and two in the Exchange. In 1868 one of the Exchange booths was closed, when a polling booth was opened in Mr. Sidey's shop in Tweedmouth. In 1874 this was moved to a shop near Low Toll Gate and in 1880 to the Reading Room in Main Street, Tweedmouth. In 1874 Spittal was given its own polling booth, which was situated in a tenement in Middlemiss Buildings. In 1880 this was relocated in the Reading

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<sup>457</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 91.

<sup>458</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 February 1874, p. 3. Although only one assenter attended the nomination, the names of many more were included on the nomination paper. It was usual to have 8 assenters, although at the 1880 by-election Milne Home had 13 assenters for Berwick. In addition, he had a proposer and seconder and 8 assenters for Tweedmouth and the same for Spittal. See the *Berwick Warder*, 16 July 1880, p. 3.

<sup>459</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 4.

Room.

Each polling booth would be occupied by a representative of the sheriff, a polling clerk, who recorded the votes in official poll books, a number of constables and the agents of the various candidates. The latter included a check clerk, who kept an unofficial record of the poll, an inspector to ensure that the proceedings were conducted fairly, and half a dozen messengers to convey the check clerk's voting lists to the candidate's committee room. These were used to monitor the state of the poll, which was published every hour.<sup>460</sup> In this way the candidate's committee could organise their voting tactics for the remainder of the poll.

The poll opened at 8.00 a.m. and closed at 4.00 p.m. During this time the streets would be thronged with electors and non-electors, all of whom listened anxiously to the returns of the poll. Sometimes, as in 1857, interest was so intense that business in the town, "beyond what was occasioned by sheer necessity", was suspended until the final result was known.<sup>461</sup> As the voters entered the polling booths, they would be cheered or mocked by the disfranchised, depending on the way they recorded their votes. As the popular candidates were invariably Liberals, this meant that voting could be an intimidating experience for those who voted Conservative. In 1859, for instance, the non-electors from Tweedmouth and Spittal ironworks descended upon the polling booth in the Town Hall, where they cheered all the Liberal voters and hissed at all the Conservatives. Some of the ironworkers even made forcible attempts to prevent Conservative voters from making their way to the polling booth. In one instance they succeeded in their object, the men whom they had mistreated being allowed to escape only after they had promised to plump for Stapleton. During the final hour of polling scarcely a single Conservative elector was permitted to leave the building without being hustled, and as a result of the fighting several were prevented from voting altogether.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> In some elections the state of the poll was announced at half-hourly intervals.

<sup>461</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5.

<sup>462</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p.4.

Violent outbreaks at the poll were not uncommon. At Coventry in 1832, electors who had voted for the Tory candidate were dragged backwards by the hair, kicked and beaten and had their clothes torn off. Other Tory voters were pulled back from the polling booths and were unable to vote. Also, at Wolverhampton at a county by-election in 1835, numerous Tory voters were knocked down, had their clothes torn and were pelted with mud and stones.<sup>463</sup>

Intimidation of voters at Berwick continued throughout the 1860s. The 1865 poll, vividly described by the *Warder*, was typical of the period:

Towards twelve o'clock the hall became gradually filled by non-electors, who expressed their notions of freedom of election by hooting and yelling at the Conservative voters. One individual named Marshall, a cooper, and a non-electer, made himself very remarkable by his obstreperous conduct, and impudence to the Sheriff for rebuking him; and he was so far affected with a sense of his own importance that he walked out of the body of the Hall and on to the platform in order to shake hands with Mr. Mitchell and his friends. Ere he could get through his congratulations he was ignominiously dragged by the police from his exalted position. The scene created a good deal of amusement among the onlookers. Another remarkable feature of the crowd gathered in the Hall was a large collection of our Hibernian countrymen, who kept up a perpetual howling at those parties who chose to record their votes for the Conservatives. As the hour for declaring the poll drew nigh, although it was well known the Liberals must win, the utmost excitement prevailed.<sup>464</sup>

Such scenes show that the poll was indeed "the great leveller", for it allowed the non-electors the chance to ridicule "those placed above them in the official political hierarchy."<sup>465</sup> Deprived of the vote, they could at least derive some satisfaction from being able to express their political sentiments at the expense of their more privileged neighbours.

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<sup>463</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 148 - 9.

<sup>464</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 5.

<sup>465</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 93.

In 1868 special constables were placed at the polling booths, in order to help electors to get through the hostile crowds. This certainly alleviated the problem at the Town Hall polling booth, which had been the scene of so much trouble in 1859. However, it appears to have had little effect in Tweedmouth and Spittal, where, according to the *Warder*, the atmosphere was so charged with intimidation that "Timid people dare not vote for Conservatives."<sup>466</sup>

In view of these difficulties, the arrival of secret voting in 1872 was undoubtedly a blessing to the Conservative electors of Berwick. The first election after the Ballot Act was in 1874, and the contrast with previous elections was striking:

The proceedings commenced at 8 a.m. and did not terminate until 4 p.m., when all the booths were closed, and the boxes at Tweedmouth and Spittal brought across to the Council Chamber, where the voting papers were mixed and then counted up. Few of the electors recorded their votes early, and in fact it seemed probable that many would not go to poll unless persuasive eloquence or pecuniary influence was used. One individual pathetically exclaimed that he could not get a glass of whiskey for his vote now, and others said the election resembled a funeral more than anything else. Certainly there was little or none of that revelry which characterised former polling days, and a more monotonous or tedious ceremony than that performed by the presiding officers could scarcely be imagined. Cabs were employed for the conveyance of infirm and distant voters to the various stations, but no colours were worn by either party.<sup>467</sup>

Together with the introduction of written nominations, the advent of secret voting severely curtailed popular electoral participation, and ended the influence wielded by the disfranchised over the electors.<sup>468</sup>

<sup>466</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 4.

<sup>467</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 February 1874, p. 3. Not all post-1872 elections were as dull: "In 1873 political excitement in pre-election Blackburn was described as obliterating all other considerations, and causing men to leave their work and businesses. Election day itself was both a celebration of allegiance and a popular sport of the greatest participatory intensity." See P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: the culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (Brighton, 1980), p. 273.

<sup>468</sup> For an interesting account of the gradual regulation of popular electoral participation between 1832 and 1872, see Vernon, *Politics and the People*, chapters 2 and 3.

Another, though less dramatic legacy of the ballot was the effect it had upon attempts to keep track of the state of the poll. The 1880 by-election provides a perfect example of the difficulties facing election committees after 1872. During the day both the Liberals and the Conservatives issued an approximate estimate of the state of the poll. At one o'clock the Liberal committee claimed their candidate had a majority of from twenty to twenty-five, while at the close of the poll they calculated upon a majority of seventy-three.<sup>469</sup> On the other hand, at one o'clock the Conservative committee maintained their candidate had a majority of sixteen, which at the close of the poll they estimated had risen to thirty.<sup>470</sup> In fact, the Conservative candidate finished the day with a majority of two.<sup>471</sup>

Such confusion regarding the true state of the poll reveals the futility of attempting to maintain the tradition of issuing hourly voting figures up to the close of the poll. After the introduction of the ballot in 1872, such figures could only be estimates, so the custom became somewhat meaningless, but it is interesting to note that party agents still considered it worth their effort to continue with it. In the 1881 by-election the Liberals were more cautious, attributing all doubtful votes to their opponents. Although throughout the day they were confident of victory, the size of their candidate's final majority took them completely by surprise. If anything, the uncertainty of the returns must have increased the sense of anticipation in what was already a highly charged atmosphere.

Once the poll had closed the sheriff would compile the results from the different polling booths. In a small borough like Berwick this must have been a fairly straightforward task, which could be done reasonably quickly. Even so, for most of our period, the declaration of the result was held back until the following

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<sup>469</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 4 and the *Berwick Warder*, 20 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>470</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>471</sup> At Sunderland in 1847 Wilkinson's committee put out handbills deliberately giving a misleading state of the poll. See the *Sunderland Times*, 6 August 1847, p. 2.

morning. Vernon has suggested that delaying the declaration in this way served no practical purpose and was only done to heighten tension and the ceremony's impact.<sup>472</sup> No doubt this was true, but, in small constituencies, with each candidate's committee keeping a record of the poll, there can have been few surprises about the outcome - at least not until the introduction of secret voting.

Although the declaration was never as popular as the nomination, it nevertheless generated a great deal of excitement. Crowds would gather outside the Town Hall to await the arrival of the candidates and the sheriff. After the under-sheriff had broken open the seals of the poll books, the sheriff would announce the result, and the candidates would deliver a final address, thanking the electors for their courtesy. The victorious candidates, who always spoke first, would express their gratitude at being elected and promise to discharge faithfully and diligently their parliamentary duties and to promote the interests of the borough. The losing candidates would thank their supporters, politely express their disappointment at not being elected and extend their best wishes to the inhabitants of the town.

In general, the keynote of these addresses was reconciliation. The election may have been a hard and bitter struggle, but it was over, and now it was time for the opposing sides to settle their political differences. At the 1837 declaration Holmes told the assembly that he did not wish to triumph at the price of discord and dissension; therefore, as their member, he implored them to dismiss all feelings of political animosity the moment they left the room.<sup>473</sup> Similarly, in 1868 the victorious Lord Bury said he honoured his gallant opponents, and he hoped he may be allowed to ask that before parting they shook hands over their differences.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 93.

<sup>473</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 3.

<sup>474</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 5. The shaking of hands at the end of an election campaign was a common practice. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 106.



Of course, it was easy to be magnanimous in victory, yet convention also dictated that the losing candidate should bear his defeat manfully. In 1853 Hodgson said he would abstain from saying one word which could disturb the harmony of the meeting, or cause a single moment's pain to any individual, adding that though his friends in the crowd might be pleased by his whiling away the time with some entertaining observations, it was not the part of a defeated candidate to take up time uselessly, but to sit down quietly with his defeat.<sup>475</sup>

Needless to say, not all candidates were able to accept their defeat with such grace. In 1832 Beresford said that although he harboured no envy against his opponents, he felt he had been forsaken by many electors who owed obligations to him. He could only hope that the new members would be better treated than he had been.<sup>476</sup> Sometimes the bitter pill of defeat was just too hard to swallow. In 1835 Blake refused to attend the declaration, but sent a letter berating those electors who, despite professing Liberal principles, had forsaken him at the poll.<sup>477</sup> Likewise in 1837 Donkin left town immediately after the poll and did not return for the declaration the following day.<sup>478</sup> Such behaviour may appear churlish, but it did at least provide a peaceful conclusion to the proceedings. When Hudson and Barclay appealed for an end to party strife at Sunderland in 1847, the defeated candidate, Wilkinson, launched a bitter attack on them, which resulted in mob violence.<sup>479</sup>

After the candidates had finished addressing the meeting, the returns would be signed and one of the candidates would propose a vote of thanks to the sheriff

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<sup>475</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 20 May 1853, p. 8. In some constituencies losing candidates were not permitted to make speeches after the declaration. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 89.

<sup>476</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, p. 3.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 January 1835, p. 2.

<sup>478</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 3.

<sup>479</sup> *Sunderland Times*, 6 August 1847, p. 2.

for his impartial conduct during the election. This would be be duly acknowledged, and the assembly would cheer the sheriff and the successful candidates before breaking up for the chairing ceremony.

The chairing was the grand finale of the election and "supposedly represented the constituency's symbolic acceptance of their newly elected representatives."<sup>480</sup> It was a popular event, which frequently attracted large crowds. In 1830 the chairing of Boston's Radical candidate Wilks was witnessed by an estimated 10 - 12,000 people.<sup>481</sup> In the original chairing ceremonies the victorious candidate would be placed in a beautifully decorated chair, hoisted onto the shoulders of his supporters and paraded through the town.<sup>482</sup> Crowds would line the streets, cheering vociferously, cannon would be fired, ladies would enthusiastically wave handkerchiefs from open windows and a band of music would march in front of the procession.<sup>483</sup> The chairing of Hodgson in 1837, although more low-key than some, clearly shows the sense of occasion associated with such events:

Whilst the declaration of the Poll was being made in the Guild-hall, a chair, covered with blue silk and richly decorated with buff and blue ribbons, prepared with great taste by Mr. Bowhill of High Street, was brought to the stairs, at the entrance, and as soon as the proceedings terminated, Mr. Hodgson took his seat there, and was carried shoulder height, his banners being carried before, up High Street, and back to the King's Arms, Hyde Hill, where a carriage and four was in readiness, and in which he immediately afterwards took his departure. The crowd, which was immense, behaved in the most

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<sup>480</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 95.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>482</sup> In some places even the defeated candidates would be chaired round the town. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 90.

<sup>483</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 July 1841, p. 3 and 14 July 1865, p. 2.

orderly manner.<sup>484</sup>

However, the tradition of carrying the candidates around in a chair was already in decline by this time. At the 1835 by-election Donkin "perambulated the town, Tweedmouth and Spittal, in an open carriage drawn by four horses instead of, as was the ancient practise [sic], being carried in a chair".<sup>485</sup> Similarly, at the Durham County election of 1832 Hedworth Lambton and Sir Hedworth Williamson, "instead of being chaired, were drawn by four horses, in an open phaeton, from the County Courts round the Market-place, and then back to Mr. Alderman Robson's."<sup>486</sup> As the charring ceremony was a rumbustious affair, with the chair-carriers being subjected to constant jostling by the crowd, there can have been few candidates who were sorry to see demise of this custom. At Berwick after 1837 the chair was permanently replaced by a carriage and four.<sup>487</sup> Sometimes, however, the horses would be unyoked and the carriage dragged around the streets by the candidate's supporters, in an attempt to recapture the spirit of the original charring ceremonies. This happened in 1865, when the carriage carrying Marjoribanks and Mitchell was "slowly dragged by many able and willing fellows" from the steps of the Town Hall to the Red Lion Hotel.<sup>488</sup> This was a relatively short journey, but in 1881 a crowd intercepted Jerningham's carriage at the High Toll Gate, unyoked the horses, attached ropes to the carriage and dragged it all the way to Jerningham's

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<sup>484</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 3. It was traditional to decorate the chair in the candidate's colours, and satin appears to have been a frequently used material. Sometimes the decorations could be extremely elaborate. At Durham prior to 1812, a frame was erected at the back of the chair with laurel branches fastened to it, in order to represent a bower. Such embellishments could be expensive. At Carlisle in 1796, Curwen and Vane's committee paid twelve guineas to have the chair lettered, ornamented and gilded. See Trueman, "Election Favours and Chairs in Durham", *Archaeologia Aeliana*, new ser., v (1861), p. 163 and Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 166.

<sup>485</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 2 May 1835, p. 2.

<sup>486</sup> Trueman, "Election Favours and Chairs in Durham", p. 164.

<sup>487</sup> The charring ceremony was also dying out in other constituencies. The last charring at Liverpool was in 1831 and the last one at Dover was in 1852. At Dover in 1865 the candidates the candidates simply strolled away from the hustings. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 114.

<sup>488</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 July 1865, p. 2.

home at Longridge Towers, three and a half miles away.<sup>489</sup> Occasionally, such endeavours went unrewarded. In 1874 some members of the crowd made several attempts, but without success, to take the horses from Milne Home's fly and drag it through the streets. Nevertheless, the crowd was determined to have its fun and followed Milne Home and the other three candidates to the railway station, where it cheered them almost incessantly until the train had departed.<sup>490</sup>

However, chairings did not always generate such enthusiasm. An unpopular candidate might be well advised to forgo his victory ceremony. In 1841 Hodgson's "chairing" consisted of a walk through the streets with a few friends in solemn silence. Feeling the absurdity of their situation, they soon abandoned their procession and returned to the King's Arms.<sup>491</sup> There was a similar occurrence at the Chester election of 1826, when the Tory candidate's cavalcade found that all the blinds had been pulled down and that there was no one to greet them as they passed through the streets.<sup>492</sup> Such indifference on the part of the townsfolk casts doubt on the romantic notion that the chairing ceremony represented the unification of the community after weeks of political rivalry.<sup>493</sup> Political animosity continued to flourish long after the election was over, as the almost obligatory allegations and denials of corruption clearly demonstrate.

The chairing ceremony was followed by closing dinners in honour of the candidates. These took place at the candidate's inn and would be attended by his

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<sup>489</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 February 1874, p. 3.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1841, p. 3.

<sup>492</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 98.

<sup>493</sup> O'Gorman maintains that the chairing ceremony meant that "The community was coming together, binding its wounds, purging its partisanship, preparing to return to social and political normality." While there may have been constituencies where the chairing was a non-partisan event (O'Gorman cites Nottingham in 1802, Warwickshire in 1818 and Norwich in 1807 and 1831), Berwick does not appear to have been one of them. See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 91.

friends and supporters, who would make speeches, drink toasts and sing songs.<sup>494</sup> In 1835, for instance, Donkin's friends invited him to a dinner in the Red Lion assembly room in celebration of his re-election. The guests sat down at four o'clock, with Dr. George Johnston in the chair. During the festivities Donkin delivered two addresses and over thirty toasts were drunk.<sup>495</sup> Amongst those honoured were the King, prominent Liberals such as Lord Melbourne, Earl Grey, Lord John Russell, Lord Howick, Lord Brougham and Lord Auckland, the navy and the army, the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, the Mayor and Corporation, Donkin's committee, the local clergy and the town's erstwhile Liberal representative, Sir Francis Blake. There were further toasts to the liberty of the press, the education of the people and law reform.<sup>496</sup> In addition, five songs were sung, including *The Death of Abercrombie* [sic], *Old England Shall Weather the Storm* and *The Land of Red Heather and Thistle So Green*. Donkin left shortly after 8 o'clock, "the company rising to enthusiastic cheering."<sup>497</sup> As always on these occasions, the speeches, toasts and songs were patriotic and extremely partisan.<sup>498</sup> Like the chairing ceremonies which preceded them, the public dinners served to emphasise the political differences which existed within the community, rather than the

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<sup>494</sup> Sometimes there were so many electors to be entertained that a number of inns would be used, with the candidate briefly visiting each one in turn. Alternatively, the electors would be treated over several evenings. After the Newcastle election in 1812, Ridley entertained the freemen at their respective guild houses. See Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 167.

<sup>495</sup> The toasts at such dinners were carefully planned, and there was often a programme which listed the toasts in advance. It was not unusual to drink more than forty toasts during the course of the evening. See P. Brett, "Political Dinners in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain: Platform, Meeting Place and Battleground", in *History*, lxxxi (October 1996), p. 536. Brett's article probably provides the most detailed analysis of the nature and structure of early nineteenth-century political dinners.

<sup>496</sup> According to O'Gorman, assembling the countless toasts at election dinners almost makes it possible "to reconstruct the entire system belief of those present." See O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies", p. 113.

<sup>497</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 2 May 1835, p. 2.

<sup>498</sup> For an interesting variation on the traditional political dinner, see J. Epstein, "Radical Dining, Toasting and Symbolic Expression in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire: Rituals of Solidarity", in *Albion*, xx, no. 2 (Summer 1988), pp. 271 - 91. Instead of toasting the monarch and prominent statesmen, Lancashire Radicals drank toasts to "The People, the source of legitimate power" and to the heroes of Radicalism, like Henry Hunt, Tom Paine, Feargus O'Connor and William Cobbett. (See pp. 271 and 287). In addition, they sang songs such as "Liberty Tree", "Manchester Massacre", "Patriots be Ready" and the "Marseillaise". (See p. 283).

similarities.<sup>499</sup>

This analysis of election procedure at Berwick shows that the electoral process was remarkably similar to that of other English constituencies. In time, many of the more ritualistic features of the electoral process experienced some kind of change. Sometimes this was gradual, as in the case of the chairing ceremony, where attempts were made to retain some vestige of the old tradition; sometimes the change was sudden and irreversible, as exemplified by the nomination and the poll. Where changes did occur, they were invariably related to those of election procedure which were amongst the most colourful and popular of election rituals. Such ceremonies as the public entry, the nomination, polling and the chairing of the victorious candidates involved the whole constituency - electors and non-electors alike. Indeed, they seem to have been designed for this purpose.

However, once these ceremonies had gone into decline, elections became more restrained and less ritualistic.<sup>500</sup> They also became more restrictive with regard to the part played by the disfranchised. Both the nomination and polling, the two occasions when the non-electors could exert their influence upon the electoral process, were taken out of the public domain. After 1872 nominations were attended by only a handful of people: election officials, the candidates and their sponsors; at the same time, access to polling booths was restricted to election officials and voters. The non-electors were thus excluded from the last of the traditional election ceremonies.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 99.

<sup>500</sup> The reasons for the decline of election rituals is discussed by O'Gorman in "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies". He suggests that "The increased respectability of the 1832 electorate, the growth of literacy and the development of party organisations all played their part in stifling local spontaneity and festivity." (p. 114).

<sup>501</sup> The public entry and the chairing ceremony had disappeared in most constituencies by the mid-1860s.

Yet this course of exclusion was accompanied by one of inclusion. Just as the disfranchised were being forced to relinquish their supporting role in the electoral process, they were being offered the opportunity to play a more prominent part in that process. The extension of the franchise in 1867 and 1884-5 incorporated into the political nation many who had hitherto been denied an official voice.

## CHAPTER 6: ELECTION ISSUES AND THEIR IMPACT ON ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

### INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 it was suggested that, despite the growth of a party-orientated electorate, locality and the personal qualifications of candidates continued to have an impact on electoral behaviour - even as late as 1881. However, after the political ferment over parliamentary reform in 1830 - 2, the electorates of many boroughs became less concerned about local issues than about issues of national importance.<sup>502</sup>

Throughout our period there arose a series of political, economic and religious issues which captured the public imagination. As each political party became associated with a particular standpoint on each of these issues, it is possible to ascertain how the adoption of that standpoint affected their electoral fortunes. It is thus the aim of this chapter to examine these issues, in order to evaluate their impact upon electoral behaviour at Berwick. At the same time, reference will be made to other constituencies, so that the Berwick experience can

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<sup>502</sup> Phillips' analysis of electoral behaviour in eight English boroughs between 1818 and 1841 reveals the varying impact of parliamentary reform. Reform strengthened political awareness and heightened the polarisation of the electorate in Bristol, Maidstone, Colchester, Shrewsbury and Northampton. However, it had little impact on Lewes and Great Yarmouth, since these boroughs were fiercely partisan before 1832. In Beverley reform failed to change traditional non-partisan voting habits, and electors continued "to be dominated by considerations that had little, perhaps nothing, to do with the parliamentary parties, specific issues, or political principles." (See Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs*, p. 211). As far as Berwick is concerned, it has been suggested that partisan voting preceded the reform era by some years. Stoker found that partisan voting was as high as 71 per cent in 1818, only two per cent lower than it was in 1832. Comparing his own figures for the period 1768 - 1832 with those of Nossiter for the period 1832 - 1868, he concludes that there was little change in the level of partisan voting between the unreformed and the reformed electoral system in the constituencies of the four northern counties. (See Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", pp. 187 - 9). However, this study has discovered that the level of partisan voting at Berwick in 1832 was slightly below the borough's average for the period as a whole (i.e., 72.4 per cent), and did not reach the levels achieved in the 1830s by the boroughs in Phillips' study (i.e., 88 per cent or higher) until almost thirty years later (see Chapter 4).



be placed in a wider context.

## PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

Parliamentary reform was the dominant electoral issue in Berwick during the 1830s and although it went into decline in the 1840s, it reappeared on the local political agenda during the 1850s and 1860s. As it was essentially a Liberal concern,<sup>503</sup> parliamentary reform was an issue which divided the Liberals and Conservatives throughout our period.<sup>504</sup> Moreover, it was an issue which often gained the Liberals a decisive electoral advantage.

As far as Berwick politics was concerned, there were two principal facets to the reform question: the survival of the freeman vote and the extension of the franchise.

Prior to the Reform Act of 1832 Berwick was a "freeman borough", where the right to vote in parliamentary elections was vested in the freemen of the town.<sup>505</sup> In March 1831 the Whig administration proposed the complete abolition of all the ancient rights of franchise in the boroughs, including that of the freemen, who, it was argued, were corrupt.<sup>506</sup> However, there was strong resistance, both from the Tories and from many of the Government's own supporters, to the disfranchisement

<sup>503</sup> This was the case until 1858, when Derby and Disraeli embraced reform in order to revive the sagging fortunes of the Conservative party.

<sup>504</sup> Party labels are often problematic. When referring to the period as a whole, the names "Liberal" and "Conservative" are used. Prior to the general election of 1835, the term "Tory" is used to denote the party which, under Peel, was to become the "Conservative" party. The origins of the Liberal party are a little more complicated. However, for the purpose of simplification, the term "Whig" is used to describe the party until the general election of 1837, which is when Reformers in Berwick began to refer to themselves as "Liberals".

<sup>505</sup> The manner in which the freemen were created is discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>506</sup> See, for instance, C. O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections 1868 - 1911* (Oxford, 1962), p. 14; Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 32; Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 160; and P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vi. For an alternative view of the freemen, see Manai, "Influence, Corruption and Electoral Behaviour in the Mid Nineteenth Century: a case study of Lancaster."

of the freemen. Consequently, when the third Reform Bill was introduced by Russell in December 1831,<sup>507</sup> provision was made for the continuation of the freeman franchise.<sup>508</sup>

As the 1832 election was the first to be fought under the reformed electoral system, it was only natural that some of the questions that had arisen during the reform debates of 1831 - 32 should figure prominently in the subsequent election. One of these was the freeman franchise - an issue which was of particular concern to the Tory candidate, Marcus Beresford. In December 1832 Beresford told the Berwick electors that he had opposed the Reform Bill, because he disapproved of the disfranchisement measures contained in the Bill.<sup>509</sup> Accordingly, in August 1831 he had proposed that the disfranchisement of the Berwick outvoters was "improper and unjust".<sup>510</sup> He had also objected to the seven mile residency limit, on the ground that it would disfranchise "a numerous class of respectable voters", without giving them a vote elsewhere, and had suggested that as Berwick was "a peculiar borough", in its case the limit should be extended to fifteen miles.<sup>511</sup>

Beresford's insistence that Berwick was "peculiar" stemmed from the fact that such a high proportion of its voters lived outside the borough. He observed that there were 1143 freemen, of which 500 were residents and so would retain their franchise. 250 ten-pound householders would bring the figure to 750. However, he calculated that in forty years' time the franchise would be reduced to 350 householders, thus transforming Berwick from one of the most open boroughs in

<sup>507</sup> The Bill received the royal assent on 7 June 1832.

<sup>508</sup> For a detailed account of the debate concerning the freeman franchise, see Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, pp. 27 - 35.

<sup>509</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, p. 2.

<sup>510</sup> Non-resident voters formed a significant proportion of the Berwick electorate. According to the *Berwick Advertiser*, there were 600 outvoters in 1831. If this figure is correct, it would mean that over 50 per cent of the Berwick electorate lived outside the constituency. See Chapter 4.

<sup>511</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. VI, 1831, 888 - 9.

the country to a close borough. Since the principle of the Bill was to extend the franchise, this principle was "grossly violated in the case of Berwick."<sup>512</sup>

Beresford was not alone in his views regarding the seven-mile limit. At a public dinner held at the Red Lion Inn on 11 May 1831, Sir Francis Blake, the Liberal member for Berwick, had told his audience that he believed that a fifteen-mile borough radius would have been preferable to a seven-mile radius and promised to suggest this to the Government.<sup>513</sup>

Notwithstanding such objections, the measure regarding the disfranchisement of the outvoters and that relating to the seven-mile residency limit were to remain an integral part of the Reform Bill. Nevertheless, Beresford's efforts to preserve the freemen's voting rights did not go unrewarded. At the 1832 election 41 per cent of the remaining freemen resolved to plump for him. Yet not all the freemen were prepared to show their gratitude in this way. Beresford's share of the total number of freeman votes was only 0.2 per cent greater than that of the two Whig candidates,<sup>514</sup> which suggests that there were important factors other than the Tory candidate's defence of their rights affecting the freemen's voting behaviour.

The freemen's rights and privileges were again threatened in 1835, when the Melbourne administration introduced their Municipal Reform Bill. Although the Bill proposed to preserve the pecuniary and personal rights and privileges of all existing freemen for their lifetime, all the traditional ways of obtaining the freedom of a corporation were to be abolished.<sup>515</sup> Thus all the freemen's rights and

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<sup>512</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. VI, 1831, 888 - 9.

<sup>513</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 May 1831, p. 3.

<sup>514</sup> See Table 4.26 in Chapter 4.

<sup>515</sup> Under the provisions of the Bill, no person could become a burgess unless he was an inhabitant ratepayer of three years' standing.

privileges, including the parliamentary franchise, would terminate on the death of the existing freemen, since there would no longer be any freemen to exercise them. Such a proposal aroused indignation among the Tories, who regarded the Bill as an underhand attempt by the Whigs to obtain what they had failed to achieve in 1832. As it was, the Government accepted the Lords' amendments with regard to the freemen's property and electoral rights, thus ensuring the continuation of the parliamentary freeman franchise, though in future freemen could no longer be created by gift or purchase.<sup>516</sup>

This second attempt by the Whigs to deprive the freemen of their voting rights was to prove costly. One of those who had voted with the Government on the question of the freeman franchise was the Whig member for Berwick, Sir Rufane Donkin. On 30 June 1835 Donkin had written to the mayor of Berwick, assuring him that he would protect the freemen's interests.<sup>517</sup> Yet only a week earlier he had voted against Sir William Follett's amendment to the Municipal Reform Bill to preserve the voting rights of the freemen.<sup>518</sup> During the 1837 election Donkin's voting record became the centrepiece of a campaign mounted by the *Warder* to draw the electors' attention to the fact that their representative had failed to fulfil his promise to safeguard their interests.<sup>519</sup> The success of this campaign was acknowledged by the Conservative candidate William Holmes, when, at a post-election dinner, he declared that next to the exertions of his committee, he attributed his victory to the efforts of the *Warder*.<sup>520</sup> With 82.4 per cent of the

<sup>516</sup> G. B. A. M. Finlayson, "The Politics of Municipal Reform, 1835", in *English Historical Review*, lxxxi (October, 1966), pp. 679 and 686.

<sup>517</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2.

<sup>518</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. XXVII, 1835, 1112 - 16. On 16 July 1835 Donkin also voted against Winthrop Praed's motion to save the political rights of the freemen. See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. XXIX, 1835, 669 - 72.

<sup>519</sup> See, for instance, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2 and 22 July 1837, p. 3.

<sup>520</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 29 July 1837, p. 3. At Durham City in 1837 the *Durham Advertiser* waged a similar campaign against William Harland for his vote against the freemen in 1835, but with less success (Harland was re-elected, albeit by a much smaller majority than in 1835). See Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", Vol. 2, pp. 202 - 3.

freeman vote going to the Conservative candidates, Hodgson and Holmes, it is clear that Donkin's support for the Government in 1835 had become an electoral liability in 1837.<sup>521</sup>

Of greater significance than Donkin's defeat, however, is the fact that after the Municipal Reform Act, and the thwarted attempt to abolish the freeman franchise, the Whigs, except in 1852 - 3, were never again able to rally the support of a majority of the Berwick freemen.<sup>522</sup> This phenomenon was repeated in numerous other former freeman boroughs. In Canterbury, for instance, the freemen, who formed over half of the city's electors, were not Tory voters in 1835. However, after the passage of municipal reform, they were.<sup>523</sup> The same was true of Newcastle, where at the 1836 by-election the freemen dramatically switched their allegiance from the Whigs to the Tories and continued to show a preference for the Tories at the general election in 1837. St. Albans, York and Durham all displayed a similar pattern of behaviour.<sup>524</sup>

The Berwick Conservatives attempted to exploit the freemen's fears of disfranchisement again during the early 1850s. Thus in 1852 Richard Hodgson observed that it had been the object of the Whigs since 1832 to disfranchise the freemen. Such a scheme, he argued, would reduce the electors of Berwick from 800 to 400, and in that case the borough would be placed in Section A of the

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<sup>521</sup> The result of the poll in 1837 was: Hodgson (C) - 357; Holmes (C) - 354; Donkin (W) - 328.

<sup>522</sup> Prior to 1837 the freeman vote had been divided fairly equally between the Whigs and the Tories. See 4.26 in Chapter 4. It is interesting to note that a number of witnesses, including Richard Hodgson and Robert Home, the town clerk, told the 1861 Royal Commission at Berwick that the Conservative feeling among the freemen resulted from the decrease in revenue they received from the freehold corporate property because of the Municipal Corporation Reform Act of 1837. The Commission, however, was doubtful about this, saying that they could perceive no change in the political sentiments of the freemen since corporation reform: both before and after the Act, they claimed, the majority of the freemen had voted Conservative. See P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vi.

<sup>523</sup> Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 254.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254 - 5.

Reform Act and would henceforth be without a representative.<sup>525</sup> Such an outcome was, of course, highly unlikely. Nearly all the boroughs listed in Schedule A had had a small population, whereas that of Berwick in 1851 was over 15,000.<sup>526</sup> Besides, even with 400 electors, Berwick would still have had 100 more than the prescribed minimum.<sup>527</sup>

Hodgson adopted the same tactics at the by-election in 1853, warning that the approaching Reform Bill "would totally annihilate the privilege of the freemen", and pledging himself, if returned to Parliament, to give such a measure his most strenuous opposition.<sup>528</sup> Not surprisingly, the Liberals refuted Hodgson's assertion. John Forster, for instance, said there was no precedent in the history of recent reforms of any man's rights or privileges being taken from him. Conveniently overlooking the original Whig proposals of 1832 and 1835, he maintained that existing possession was always respected. The freemen, therefore, need not be alarmed. The new Reform Bill would give votes, not take them away.<sup>529</sup>

At both elections Hodgson's scaremongering failed to rally sufficient freemen to the Conservative cause,<sup>530</sup> and the Liberal candidates were returned with large majorities.<sup>531</sup> Parliamentary reform was only one of a number of issues in 1852 and 1853 and it was one which came a long way behind the main issue -

<sup>525</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

<sup>526</sup> *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population Tables, Vol. II* (London, 1852), p.68.

<sup>527</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 59.

<sup>528</sup> Russell's 1854 Reform Bill proposed to extend the vote to ten-pound householders in the counties and six-pound householders in the boroughs. It also proposed to disfranchise sixty-six small boroughs and transfer their seats - forty-six to the counties, seventeen to the boroughs, two to the Inns of Court and one to London University.

<sup>529</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 May 1853, p. 4.

<sup>530</sup> The Conservatives captured only 46.9 per cent of the freeman vote in 1852. This was reduced to 40.1 per cent in 1853. In comparison, they won 82.4 per cent of the freeman vote in 1837 and 65.7 per cent in 1847.

<sup>531</sup> The result of the poll in 1852 was: Forster (L) - 412; Stapleton (L) - 335; Renton (C) - 251; Hodgson (C) - 210. However, the election was declared void on petition. The result of the poll in 1853 was: Marjoribanks (L) - 473; J. Forster (L) - 385; Renton (C) - 196; Hodgson (C) - 157.

free trade. The electors' desire for cheap bread overshadowed any concerns they may have had about the franchise.

Nevertheless, the threat of disfranchisement continued to be a cause for concern among the freemen, and the Conservatives continued to take full advantage of their anxiety. In 1859 R. S. Earle warned the freemen that since Russell had tried to disfranchise them in 1832 and 1854, he most certainly would do so again if he were returned to power.<sup>532</sup> The *Warder* endorsed this prediction, pointing out that Liberal reform measures would result in "the abolition of the rights and privileges of the ancient guilds of freemen, who, in earlier times, have rendered such signal service in the acquisition of the liberties we now enjoy".<sup>533</sup>

With the freemen accounting for over half the Berwick electorate,<sup>534</sup> no candidate, whatever his political persuasion, could afford to alienate such an important sector of the community - as Donkin had found to his cost in 1837. Hence the Liberals were at pains to refute Conservative allegations that it was the Liberals' intention to disfranchise the freemen. At a public meeting held in the Town Hall John Stapleton assured his audience that Russell intended to preserve the freemen's voting rights. The freemen, Stapleton observed, had shared in the progress of education like other classes. Therefore the argument which advocated the extension of the franchise to the six-pound occupant, advocated the continuance of the right of the freemen.<sup>535</sup>

Stapleton's attempt to reassure the freemen that their fears were unfounded was applauded by the *Advertiser*, which rounded on the Conservatives for their

<sup>532</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>533</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 22 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>534</sup> In 1859 the freemen accounted for 55.70 % of the electorate and for 51.21 % of the total number polled.

<sup>535</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1859, p. 2.

scaremongering:

Throughout the late canvass no device has been more pertinaciously resorted to than the assertion of the danger to be apprehended by the Freeman. Their rights and privileges it has been represented are in danger. By whom, then, are they endangered? We know of no movement, of no intention in any quarter to deprive the Freeman of their privileges. If danger is to be feared at all, it is from those very persons who are so continually crying out that the danger exists. These parties must certainly think there is something wrong in the possession of privileges on the part of the Freeman. If they do not think so why should they so pertinaciously call danger. If no intention is entertained of destroying those privileges, certainly the pretended friends of the Freeman are doing their best to create the danger they cry out about.<sup>536</sup>

Yet, despite these reassurances on the part of the Liberals, the Conservatives' exploitation of the freemen's fears appears to have had the desired effect, for both of their candidates were returned, bringing an end to seven years of Liberal domination in the borough.<sup>537</sup> An analysis of the poll shows that, as in 1837, the main source of support for the Conservatives was the freemen: between them Gordon and Earle won 77 per cent of freeman votes cast, while gaining only 30.19 per cent of the householder votes.

However, it would be wrong to attribute the Conservatives' success in 1859 entirely to their ability to persuade the freemen that Russell's reform proposals were inimical to their best interests. Although the Berwick result did not go against the grain,<sup>538</sup> other factors need to be taken into account. Reform may well have been "the Question of the Day",<sup>539</sup> but it may not have been the deciding issue. The Berwick election of 1859 was notoriously corrupt, and, as we shall see in a later chapter, it is possible that bribery and intimidation played a prominent part in

<sup>536</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 April 1859, p. 3.

<sup>537</sup> The result of the poll in 1859 was: Gordon (C) - 366; Earle (C) - 348; Marjoribanks (L) - 330; Stapleton (L) - 257.

<sup>538</sup> The Conservatives won many of the smaller English boroughs in 1859.

<sup>539</sup> D. C. Marjoribanks' election address, the *Berwick Warder*, 15 April 1859, p. 1.



the Conservative victory of that year.

The continuation of the freeman franchise ceased to be an issue after 1859. At the 1863 by-election both candidates, Alexander Mitchell and William Cargill, said that they supported the preservation of the freemen's rights,<sup>540</sup> but the Conservatives no longer resorted to the issue as a rallying cry for their supporters. As Stapleton had pointed out in 1859, it was the intention of the Liberals to extend the franchise, not to curtail it.<sup>541</sup> With the lowering of the franchise by a Conservative Government in 1867, the future of the freeman franchise was no longer in doubt. Nevertheless, a majority of the freemen of Berwick continued to support the Conservatives. At the general election in 1868, 83.4 per cent of the freeman vote went to the Conservative candidates. In earlier times this would have secured a Conservative victory. However, after the introduction of the householder franchise in 1867, the political importance of the freemen declined. Whereas in 1865 they had formed over half of the Berwick electorate, in 1868 this figure had been reduced to less than a third.<sup>542</sup>

If the existence of the freeman vote divided the parties for much of our period, so did the question of extending the franchise. The efforts of the Grey administration to lower the franchise in 1831 - 32 had been vigorously resisted by the opponents of reform. This point was pressed home by the Whigs during the general election in 1832. Thus at Berwick Marcus Beresford found that his opposition to reform was being used by the Whigs as an argument with the ten-pound householders: would they vote for the man who had done all in his power to prevent them acquiring the franchise? The Tory candidate was rightly concerned and responded by pointing out that he had not objected to the enfranchisement of

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<sup>540</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2.

<sup>541</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>542</sup> See Table 4.24 in Chapter 4.

the householders, but to the disfranchisement of the outvoters.<sup>543</sup> However, his protestations were in vain. Having represented Berwick since 1826, during which time he had successfully contested three elections, Beresford was finally ousted - and it was his failure to attract the newly-enfranchised householders that caused his defeat (see Table 6.1). Although he managed to win 50 per cent of the freeman vote, he obtained less than 8 per cent of the householder vote. In 1832 the householders constituted 37.6 per cent of the Berwick electorate, so Beresford's inability to make any serious impression upon this sector of the electorate was decisive. On the other hand, the two Reform candidates, Sir Rufane Donkin and Sir Francis Blake, captured 92.1 per cent of the householder vote between them, while still managing to obtain a respectable percentage of the freeman vote.<sup>544</sup>

Table 6.1: Voting Behaviour of Freemen and Householders, 1832 (%)

	<u>Freemen</u>	<u>Householders</u>	<u>All</u>
Donkin	29.7	41.2	34.6
Blake	20.2	50.9	33.3
Beresford	50.1	7.9	32.1

The success of the Whigs at Berwick was repeated elsewhere in the North East: they won every seat in County Durham and all but one on Tyneside.<sup>545</sup> At Durham City, as at Berwick, the household voters rallied round the Reform candidates, Harland and Chaytor, and their support was enough to place both candidates ahead of an opponent of the measure.<sup>546</sup> It would therefore seem that parliamentary reform played a major part in the Liberal victory of 1832. The issue had dominated British politics during the spring and summer of 1832, and six

<sup>543</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, p. 2. See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. VI, 1831, 888 - 9.

<sup>544</sup> The result of the poll in 1832 was: Donkin (W) - 371; Blake (W) - 357; Beresford (T) - 345.

<sup>545</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 24.

<sup>546</sup> Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p.225.

months after the passage of the First Reform Act, a grateful electorate swept the Liberal administration back into office with a massive majority.<sup>547</sup>

Although the campaign for parliamentary reform subsided after 1832, it rose to prominence again during the early 1850s.<sup>548</sup> In 1852 Russell brought in a measure to extend the vote to twenty-pound householders in the counties and five-pound householders in the towns, but the Bill was abandoned following a change of ministry. Russell introduced another Bill in 1854, which proposed that the vote be extended to ten-pound householders in the counties and six-pound householders in the towns. However, this time the Bill was withdrawn because of the outbreak of the Crimean War.

Despite this renewed interest at a parliamentary level, most Reformers lamented the fact that, at the constituency level, there was general apathy towards parliamentary reform. At the 1852 election Russell's Bill provoked a somewhat muted response at Berwick. Matthew Forster barely mentioned reform in his speeches, while John Campbell Renton simply said that the extension of the franchise was a subject which needed "to be watched and discussed, adopted neither hastily nor with violence."<sup>549</sup> The other two candidates did at least discuss Russell's proposals. With regard to the extension of the franchise, John Stapleton said that he was not prepared to name any exact rental at which the suffrage should be fixed and he would not pledge himself, if returned to Parliament, to support Russell's measures. His support for extending the suffrage would depend upon the state of education, any preliminary information he might receive and his

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<sup>547</sup> The Whigs won 483 of the 658 seats. See Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832 - 1885*, p. 622.

<sup>548</sup> Although there were various attempts to lower the franchise between 1839 and 1850, they attracted very little parliamentary support. See Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, pp. 239 - 41.

<sup>549</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

confidence in the Government which proposed it.<sup>550</sup> Richard Hodgson made no reference to the lowering of the franchise, preferring to concentrate on the question of disfranchisement. He said that he would oppose any measure of reform which would result in the confiscation of the freemen's rights and the transference of representatives from the smaller boroughs to more populous constituencies.<sup>551</sup>

There were, of course, many eminent members of Parliament who, like Hodgson, defended the small boroughs. Disraeli, for instance, believed they provided variety and facilitated the representation of different interests; while Russell thought they occasionally returned to Parliament "men of the greatest ability, and fitted to render the greatest service to the country".<sup>552</sup> However, as we have seen, the crucial issue in 1852 was not reform, but free trade.

Parliamentary reform was discussed again in 1857, but it was no more significant as an election issue than it had been five years earlier. The defeat in February of Locke King's motion for leave to introduce a Bill to make the franchise in the counties the same as that in the boroughs<sup>553</sup> prompted Stapleton to say that there was no demand for parliamentary reform,<sup>554</sup> a view which was not shared by his fellow-Liberal Matthew Forster, who said it was evident that in the House there was a very general opinion in favour of reform, and that some measures may be expected before long.<sup>555</sup> Considering the lack of parliamentary support for the numerous reform proposals which appeared during the 1850s and the failure of

<sup>550</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 4.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 May 1852, p. 1.

<sup>552</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 331 and Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CLVI, 1860, 2059.

<sup>553</sup> Locke King's motion was defeated by thirteen votes. The two members for Berwick, D. C. Marjoribanks and John Forster, voted in favour of the motion. (See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXLIV, 1857, 841 - 63). A similar proposal by Locke King in 1851, though defeated, had prompted Russell's Reform Bill the following year.

<sup>554</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 March 1857, p. 3.

<sup>555</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5

Russell's Bill of 1860, it would seem that Stapleton's evaluation of the mood regarding reform was more accurate than that of his colleague. However, Stapleton's scepticism did not deter him from advocating the enfranchisement of the five-pound householder.<sup>556</sup> The third Liberal candidate, D. C. Marjoribanks, who had voted for Locke King's motion, stated that he was in favour of extending the franchise to ten-pound householders in the counties and five-pound householders in the towns.<sup>557</sup> As ever, the Conservative candidate was more circumspect. In his nomination address Charles Gordon said he would not oppose a safe and judicious extension of the franchise, "when the advancing education, and high moral and intellectual status of the community would warrant their being intrusted [sic] with the privilege"; but he would not at present, considering the condition of the masses, disturb existing institutions.<sup>558</sup> Of course, Gordon's reservations about "the condition of the masses" was not universally shared. Three years later Russell said he believed that every member of the House of Commons, although he may not wish to see the enfranchisement of the working classes, would admit that so far as their intelligence and conduct were concerned, they deserved the highest praise.<sup>559</sup>

Although the outcome of the 1857 Berwick election was influenced more by other issues than by the question of parliamentary reform,<sup>560</sup> the battle lines had been drawn in readiness for the 1859 election. As this election was precipitated by the defeat of Lord Derby's Reform Bill in March, it is not surprising that reform was

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<sup>556</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 3 April 1857, p. 5.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>559</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CLVIII, 1860, 199 - 200.

<sup>560</sup> The popularity of Palmerston and the Radical - Conservative coalition were mainly responsible for the outcome in 1857.

the dominant issue.<sup>561</sup> At Berwick the debate centred on the limitations of each party's reform proposals. Stapleton, for instance, called the Conservative Reform Bill a retrogressive measure and said that he had voted for Russell's resolutions, which pointed out the principal objections to the measure. These were the transfer of those freeholders whose freeholds were situated in boroughs from the county to the borough constituency, and the omission to extend the franchise to the occupiers of houses at a lower rent than £10.<sup>562</sup> The former, he observed, would take the freeholders of Berwick, who had returned Sir George Grey for the Northern Division of Northumberland, and place them in the borough.<sup>563</sup> Although this would benefit the Liberals in the borough, it would make the Northern Division of Northumberland a rotten borough, "a pocket piece to the Duke of Northumberland."<sup>564</sup> As for the latter, Stapleton maintained that since 1832 the working classes had so increased in intelligence, in their knowledge of and interest in the politics of the country, that they had become well entitled to have the franchise extended to them.<sup>565</sup>

Despite the generality of his argument, one must assume that Stapleton was referring to the "labour aristocracy" of skilled and responsible workers, whose adoption of the middle-class attitudes of thrift, self-reliance and self-improvement set them apart from the residuum of unskilled workers. Although Russell made no

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<sup>561</sup> In February 1859 the Government introduced a Reform Bill, which was drafted with a view to improving the Conservative party's electoral chances. The Bill proposed the following measures: the extension of the franchise to ten-pound householders in counties; the introduction of a lodger franchise of £20 per year; the provision that forty-shilling freeholders living in a borough should vote in that borough and not in the adjacent county; the disfranchisement and transference of seventy small boroughs - eighteen to large boroughs and fifty-two to counties; and the extension of the vote to certain professions, government pensioners, university graduates and those with deposits of at least £60 in savings banks. Such measures were too obviously in the Government's party interest, and in March opposition groups combined to defeat the Bill by thirty-nine votes. Derby's request for a dissolution was followed by a general election in May.

<sup>562</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 9 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>563</sup> The aim of the Conservatives was to rid the counties of the Liberal-inclined freehold voters.

<sup>564</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*

distinction between skilled and unskilled workers in his 1860 speech, few, if any, members of Parliament would have advocated the enfranchisement of the masses at this time. Even Gladstone, in his famous 1864 declaration that "every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger is morally entitled to come within the pale of the Constitution", was at pains to point out that he was referring to "a select portion of the working class".<sup>566</sup>

Marjoribanks was also critical of Derby's Bill, because he perceived in it the principle of "identity of suffrage". Should this principle prevail, he warned, then universal suffrage and single-member constituencies must inevitably follow. However, he was especially scathing about the clause which allowed the non-resident forty-shilling freeholder to vote in a borough by means of a proxy on the day of election "without stirring from his own fireside".<sup>567</sup> The consequences of such a measure, he argued, would be that the election of Berwick and of nearly every other borough in the kingdom would merely be a matter of arrangement either at the Reform or the Carlton Club - indeed, some of the London banks might be tempted to keep the keys of a few of the boroughs for themselves and their friends.<sup>568</sup>

The Liberal candidates' attack on the Conservatives' reform proposals shows just how effective Derby's Bill was in uniting the Liberals. Only two years earlier, the Radical Stapleton had entered into a coalition with the Conservative Gordon in order to gain an electoral advantage over his two Liberal colleagues, Marjoribanks and Forster. For the first time since 1853 the Berwick Liberals were able to find a common cause. Yet it was not only the Berwick Liberals who were

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<sup>566</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CLXXV, 1864, 324 - 5.

<sup>567</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 22 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*

brought together. Throughout the country parliamentary reform was uniting the Liberals after their electorally damaging divisions over foreign policy earlier in the decade.<sup>569</sup>

However, the Liberal voters were not alone in their opposition to the Conservative Reform Bill. At a large meeting of non-electors held in the Town Hall on 21 April, the following resolutions were carried: that Lord Derby's Government had insulted the people and the majority of the House of Commons by their sham Reform Bill; that the two Conservative candidates for Berwick, having declared their adherence to the principles of Lord Derby's Government, were unfit to represent the borough; that Marjoribanks and Stapleton, being supporters of the ballot and a more popular suffrage, were entitled to all the aid the meeting could give towards securing their return as representatives of the borough; and that a committee of non-electors be formed to assist the Liberal party in securing the return of the present members at the forthcoming election.<sup>570</sup>

Similar meetings were held all over the country. In Lancaster, for instance, the non-electors resolved that "the question of reform being the great issue to be decided by the country . . . that they were in favour of a large comprehensive extension of the franchise, the ballot, shorter parliaments and a more equal distribution of seats."<sup>571</sup> In addition, they voted in favour of the Liberal candidates, Gregson and Fenwick.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 244. The disparate elements that constituted the Liberal party at this time are discussed by John Vincent in *The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857 - 1868* (London, 1966).

<sup>570</sup> *The Berwick Advertiser*, 23 April 1859, p. 3.

<sup>571</sup> Cited in Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", pp. 245 - 6.

<sup>572</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 246. Despite such displays of popular enthusiasm for reform, the defeat of Russell's 1860 Bill prompted him to complain about the country's apathy towards reform. See D. G. Wright, *Democracy and Reform 1815 - 1885* (London, 1979; originally published 1970), p. 64.



The Conservatives, for their part, were equally critical of the Liberals' reform proposals. Gordon, for instance, maintained that it was impossible for Russell to prepare a Reform Bill likely to command the support of the Liberal party, unless he adopted many of the views of Bright and the Radical party.<sup>573</sup> If he did not introduce them into his Bill in the first instance, they would ultimately compel him to do so. The democratic appetite, warned Gordon, would not easily be satisfied. The Reform Bill of 1832 had placed political power in the hands of the middle classes. Since that time, the middle classes had been dominant, and under this system the country had been wisely governed. It was now proposed to take the power out of the hands of the middle classes and transfer it to the lower classes; but if the working classes were indiscriminately admitted to the suffrage, they would, by their numbers, swamp all other classes. It would not be merely giving them a share of political power, but it would be giving them absolute and exclusive power.<sup>574</sup>

This fear of one class predominating over the others lay at the heart of Conservative opposition to the Liberals' reform measures. Whereas the Liberals advocated a vertical extension of the franchise, which meant lowering the property qualification established in 1832, the Conservatives preferred the principle of lateral extension, which meant giving the vote to men with savings and to men of education, such as schoolmasters, curates and university graduates. The former gave rise to a class electorate, whereas the latter allowed for a varied electorate. Thus in 1865 the Liberal candidates, Marjoribanks and Mitchell, were in favour of Baines' proposal of a £10 franchise in the counties and a £6 franchise in the boroughs.<sup>575</sup> Conversely, the Conservative candidates were not. Cargill had

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<sup>573</sup> Bright's 1858 Reform Bill proposed to extend the franchise to all ratepayers, to ten-pound lodgers in boroughs and to ten-pound occupiers in counties. In addition, the ballot was to be introduced for the protection of voters and there was to be a redistribution of seats.

<sup>574</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p.4.

<sup>575</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 June 1865, p. 1 and the *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4. In 1864 and again in 1865 Baines introduced a Bill to reduce the borough franchise to £6. However, on both occasions the Bill was thrown out on the second reading.

voted against Baines' measure, but hoped that in the next Parliament someone would introduce a measure for readjusting the franchise for the benefit of all classes of the community, "and put an end to all those constant agitations which . . . if carried out, would lead to a pure democracy, as in America."<sup>576</sup> Hubback was also opposed to Baines' Bill, saying he wished to extend the franchise, but not to lower it.<sup>577</sup>

However, despite all the rhetoric about the manner in which franchise extension should be achieved, parliamentary reform was not the crucial factor at any of Berwick's elections during the 1860s. Bribery and intimidation (1863), the popularity of Palmerston (1865) and religion (1868) all arguably had a greater impact on the way the electorate voted.

Parliamentary reform was clearly an issue which divided the Conservatives and the Liberals. While the Conservatives tended to be evasive about parliamentary reform, the Liberals embraced the issue in such a way that they became inextricably linked with it. However, by the late 1850s the Conservative leadership finally accepted that their opposition to reform was an electoral liability, and they began to adopt a more positive attitude towards the issue, producing their own proposals in 1859 and 1867. In Berwick parliamentary reform was the predominant election issue during the 1830s, although, as we have seen, it did not always work to the electoral advantage of the Whigs. After a period of decline, the issue became important again in the 1850s and 1860s. However, it never achieved the same prominence as it had done formerly and was usually superseded by other issues.

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<sup>576</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>577</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 June 1865, p. 2.

## FREE TRADE

Like parliamentary reform, free trade was essentially a Liberal issue and it was one which proved to be electorally advantageous to the Liberals during the 1840s and early 1850s.

The first election to revolve around the free trade issue was that of 1841. The Melbourne administration's decision to cut indirect taxes in the hope that this would stimulate trade and promote economic recovery had met with resistance. First, in April, there was the defeat of Baring's proposal to decrease the duty on imported sugar, and then, in early June, there was the Government's defeat in a vote of no confidence, which prompted the Whigs to appeal to the electorate.

Although the two Conservative candidates at Berwick, Hodgson and Weeding, avoided any discussion of the issue, the Liberal candidate, Forster, made free trade the focal point of all his addresses. In his nomination speech, for instance, he asserted that the present economic crisis was one which rendered it the duty of every commercial man who had a stake in the general prosperity of the country to come forward and support the principles of free trade. He said that twenty-five years ago Britain was safe from world competition, but that this was no longer the case. One third of the nation's manufacturing population was out of manufacturing employment, and most of the mills were working only four days a week. He warned that unless there was a rapid change in the country's commercial legislation, it would be impossible to preserve peace in such a crowded population as Britain's.<sup>578</sup>

Forster's insistence on the importance of free trade was reiterated by the *Berwick Advertiser*, which declared that the election was a matter concerning the

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<sup>578</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 July 1841, p. 2.

prosperity of all, for it was about how to remedy the country's financial situation. The Liberal newspaper argued that there were two approaches to the problem. The first was to modify some of the monopolies which taxed the people. This would not only provide the people with cheaper bread, sugar and timber, but would also raise money for the Exchequer. The second was to raise revenue by increasing taxation and making the people suffer even more than they already did.<sup>579</sup>

There was little doubt which approach the Berwick electorate preferred. Forster was returned at the head of the poll - the first time since 1832 that a Liberal candidate had achieved this distinction at a general election at Berwick.<sup>580</sup> The success of the Liberals at Berwick may have gone against the national trend,<sup>581</sup> but in a town so heavily dependent on commerce it is perhaps not surprising that the free trade issue should prove decisive. In agricultural areas, of course, free trade had the opposite effect. In North Northumberland, for instance, the ex-Whig minister Viscount Howick lost his seat.<sup>582</sup> According to the *Advertiser*, Forster's supporters included all of the town's principal merchants, the majority of the corporation, three-quarters of the town's shopkeepers and the "unbought working classes."<sup>583</sup>

The 1847 election, which was called because Parliament was nearing the end of its statutory term of seven years, was held in an atmosphere of general

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<sup>579</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 26 June 1841, p. 4.

<sup>580</sup> The result of the poll in 1841 was: Forster (L) - 394; Hodgson (C) - 344; Weeding (C) - 335.

<sup>581</sup> In general, the smaller boroughs were opposed to free trade, and in these constituencies the Conservatives were able to make a gain of thirteen seats over their 1837 total. (See McCord, *British History 1815 - 1906*, p. 155). Overall, the Conservatives won 367 of the 658 seats in 1841. See Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832 - 1885*, p. 622.

<sup>582</sup> Further significant Whig reverses occurred in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where Viscount Morpeth and Viscount Milton were defeated, and in West Sussex, where Lord Surrey lost his seat.

<sup>583</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 July 1841, p. 4. Unfortunately, no poll book survives for the 1841 election, so it is not possible to substantiate this claim by poll book analysis. Likewise, it is impossible to ascertain how Berwick's agricultural community voted.

indifference.<sup>584</sup> Although there was no particular issue at stake as there had been in 1841, some candidates still insisted upon placing free trade on the political agenda. At Berwick, for instance, Forster referred to the measures affecting the commercial interests of the country which had been passed in the late Parliament,<sup>585</sup> insisting that they had not yet had a fair trial. However, he said he had great confidence in the principles upon which those measures were framed, and that he would be surprised if they did not realise the advantages which their promoters relied on them to effect.<sup>586</sup> As to future legislation, he believed that one important question which would have to be addressed was the Excise Laws. He said that he deplored the existence of these laws, for not only were they a burden to the people, but they were harmful to trade and expensive to collect.<sup>587</sup>

Having avoided the free trade issue in 1841, Renton came forward in 1847 as an avowed protectionist. He said that he was an advocate for the maintenance of the Navigation Laws, now exposed following the repeal of the Corn Laws, because he considered them conducive to the honour and glory of Britain's naval power, and it was on this superiority that the supremacy of Britain and her colonies depended.<sup>588</sup> He wished to have Britain's commerce and manufactures extended and protected from the encroachments of foreign powers; and he desired to have

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<sup>584</sup> E. Halevy, *A History of the English People, Vol. 4: The Age of Peel and Cobden, 1841 - 1852* (London, 1947), p. 155.

<sup>585</sup> In 1842 Peels' budget made significant reductions of tariff duty, and the 1845 budget abolished all export duties and reduced the number of import duties. In 1846 the Corn Law, introduced in 1815 and amended in 1828 and 1842, was finally abolished.

<sup>586</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p. 2.

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>588</sup> In March 1847 the Government had consented to an inquiry into the operation of the Navigation Laws, which prevented the importation of goods in ships not belonging to the country of their origin. These laws gave a monopoly to the British merchant service. Although for the past twenty years there had been relaxations in the strict application of the laws, there was mounting pressure, both at home and from abroad, to abolish them altogether. While the advocates of free trade saw the Navigation Laws as a barrier to free trade, the protectionists viewed them as essential to the preservation of Britain's naval and commercial supremacy. The laws were repealed in June 1848, though British vessels retained a monopoly of the coastal trade, and the crews of British merchantmen were still compelled to be at least two-thirds British.

that commerce prosecuted by means of ships built on their own shores, manned by their own seamen and protected by their own flag.<sup>589</sup>

Although Forster had a reduced majority, he was once again returned at the head of the poll, showing that his espousal of free trade had given him a distinct electoral advantage over his Conservative opponents.<sup>590</sup>

Free trade continued to be a key issue in 1852, even though the Conservatives entered the election with no clear indication of their policy regarding protection. Lord Derby, for instance, wished to postpone a decision on free trade until after the election,<sup>591</sup> while Disraeli alluded to the benefits the country had derived from free trade.<sup>592</sup> Not surprisingly, many Conservative candidates, convinced that there was no turning back after the repeal of the Corn Laws, refrained from placing protection on the electoral programme. Much depended on the nature of the constituency for which the candidate was standing. Indeed critics remarked that a Derbyite was a protectionist in an agricultural constituency, neutral in a small town and a free trader in a large town.<sup>593</sup> Free trade, on the other hand, was the one issue on which the Whigs and the various Radical groups could find common cause.

<sup>589</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p. 2.

<sup>590</sup> The result of the poll in 1847 was: Forster (L) - 484; Renton (C) - 463; Miller (C) - 151. Similarly, at Lancaster free trade was largely responsible for the Liberal victory in 1847. Indeed, the local Conservatives were so badly damaged by the issue that they continued to be adversely affected by it until the borough's disfranchisement in 1868. See Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 234.

<sup>591</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXIX, 1852, 898 - 9.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. CXXI, 30 April 1852, pp. 21 - 5.

<sup>593</sup> McCord, *British History 1815 - 1906*, p. 173.

At Berwick the Liberals made free trade the main issue, whereas the Conservatives, mindful of the Radical "programme" of 1852,<sup>594</sup> maintained that the preservation of the country's institutions was a more important consideration. Nevertheless, free trade was an issue which could not be avoided, and all four candidates referred to it in their election addresses. Thus Stapleton discussed the benefits which had flowed from free trade, such as the improved conditions of the agricultural labourers and the increased revenue which had been generated, especially in the items of Customs and Excise.<sup>595</sup> He also warned that free trade was not safe, for its crippling would be attempted by every means. He said this view was corroborated by Lord Derby himself, who had stated in effect that if he were powerful enough in the next Parliament he would restore protection. Therefore the electors must support the Liberal candidates, otherwise candidates such as Renton and Hodgson would be returned, and Lord Derby would be furnished with the power he required.<sup>596</sup>

In contrast, the other Liberal candidate, Forster, believed the reversal of free trade was impossible and insisted that protection was a subject dead and buried.<sup>597</sup> This was also the view of the two Conservative candidates. Renton, despite announcing in his election address that he was still in favour of a "fair and reasonable Protection to Native Industry",<sup>598</sup> admitted in his nomination address that protection had been dead since 1846;<sup>599</sup> whereas Hodgson maintained that the Conservatives' departure from their protectionist principles had occurred in

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<sup>594</sup> During the spring of 1852 Radical motions were tabled by Hume (parliamentary reform and the ballot), Berkeley (the ballot) and Locke King (the assimilation of the county and borough qualification and the limiting of the poll to one day). See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXX, 1852, 86 - 171; 406 - 39; 1200 - 27.

<sup>595</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 4.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 July 1852, p. 3.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 May 1852, p. 4.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

1848 - the year that free trade had become irreversible.<sup>600</sup>

Although Hodgson claimed to be a convert to free trade, he insisted that free trade had not brought all the benefits that its advocates had predicted. Indeed, he even suggested that they had not got free trade. Rather they had got a free importation of corn from foreign countries, and not even that, because some of their neighbours had passed laws prohibiting the exportation of corn for Britain. Those countries would not take British goods in return for their corn. Furthermore, he argued, they did not have a free trade in the staple articles of the manufacturers of Sheffield, Birmingham and Manchester, for the members of these places stoutly opposed all efforts to obtain such an extension of the free trade principle. Many of the articles produced in these towns were protected by a duty on similar articles of foreign produce. If the men of Manchester desired free trade in corn and cattle, they should have it in everything. They should give the people not only cheap bread, but cheap buttons.<sup>601</sup>

Such an attack upon the free traders must have cast doubt on Hodgson's professed conversion to free trade. Indeed, the *Advertiser* had been sceptical about his apparent *volte-face* on protection ever since the day he announced his candidature, suggesting that neither he nor his party knew what to do on the subject of protection.<sup>602</sup> These suspicions were confirmed six weeks later, when Hodgson made a protectionist speech at Wooler during Sir George Grey's canvass of North Northumberland. The *Advertiser* pointedly asked why a copy of the speech had been sent to the Conservative *Newcastle Journal*, but not to the local Conservative organ, the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*.

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<sup>600</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 May 1852, p. 4.



Was it because Mr. Hodgson is afraid to appear as a protectionist before the constituency he is courting for himself - because he wishes to show *them* only one of the faces which he carries under his hood? A very nice trick, certainly, but one which will scarcely be successful.<sup>603</sup>

With such uncertainty regarding the Conservatives' position on free trade, it was easy for their opponents to suggest that, if elected, Hodgson and Renton would vote for the return of protection.<sup>604</sup> Such a measure, Stapleton informed the electors of Tweedmouth and Spittal, would result in more expensive flour and bread.<sup>605</sup>

Despite the Conservatives' attempts to divert public attention away from the free trade debate by alluding to other issues, such as the preservation of the Constitution and the endowment of Maynooth College, the Berwick Liberals succeeded in making free trade the principal issue of the 1852 election. Although corruption may also have played a part in the outcome of the election,<sup>606</sup> the scale of the Liberal victory at Berwick, both in 1852 and again in 1853,<sup>607</sup> seems to suggest that the Conservatives' election prospects were dealt a serious blow by their adherence to protectionism.

Although free trade ceased to be an election issue after 1853, it was resurrected at the Berwick by-election of 1881 - a time when Britain was suffering

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<sup>603</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 26 June 1852, p. 3.

<sup>604</sup> Stapleton, the *Advertiser* and the mayor of Berwick all declared that a Conservative Government would abandon the principles of free trade. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 4 and 10 July 1852, pp. 2 and 4.

<sup>605</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 7 May 1852, p. 2.

<sup>606</sup> The 1852 Berwick election was declared void after a parliamentary inquiry declared that Stapleton was guilty of treating and that Forster was guilty of bribery. However, Berwick was not the only constituency to suffer this fate. In all, thirty-one elections were declared void in 1852. This was considerably more than in other election between 1832 and 1885. See Craig (ed.), *Parliamentary Election Results, 1832 - 1885*, p. 631.

<sup>607</sup> The result of the poll in 1852 was: Forster (L) - 412; Stapleton (L) - 335; Renton (C) - 251; Hodgson (C) - 210. The result of the poll in 1853 was: Marjoribanks (L) - 473; J. Forster (L) - 385; Renton (C) - 196; Hodgson (C) - 157.

from a depression in trade and agriculture. The Conservative candidate, Henry Trotter, said there was no question more interesting than that connected with the expressions "free trade" and "fair trade".<sup>608</sup> He observed that the fastest growing economies were those of protectionist countries, like America and France. In comparison with these countries, Britain, because of her reliance upon free trade, was falling behind. While America sent more and more manufactures to Britain, Britain's trade was getting worse: their imports were exceeding their exports, and they were drawing on the capital of the nation to pay for this excess. Therefore some remedy must be found if they were to retain their national prosperity. He believed there were three options: an extension of the reciprocity system; a special arrangement with the colonies; or a moderate import duty on manufactured goods which competed with their home trade. He did not know which was best, but he wanted an inquiry into the subject. He said that he did not advocate protection; rather he wished to get universal trade, so that they might discover a way to force other countries to accept British manufactures as Britain accepted theirs - free.<sup>609</sup>

In reply, the Liberal candidate, Jerningham, said that what Trotter meant by universal trade was, in fact, trade universally protected; and maintained that as long as Britain produced as cheaply as she did and as long as they kept to sound doctrines of free trade, their home market would not be flooded by American goods, as Trotter suggested was happening. He criticised Trotter for not using statistics to support his argument that their imports were exceeding their exports, and pointed out that if they returned to protection, food and clothing would become dearer.<sup>610</sup>

After three decades of free trade, the people of Britain had grown accustomed to the idea of cheap food and clothing. Consequently, any talk of a

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<sup>608</sup> "Fair trade" was another term for protection.

<sup>609</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 23 September 1881, p. 3.

<sup>610</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

return to protection was unlikely to strike a chord with the vast majority of the British electorate. Although the Liberal victory at Berwick in 1881 probably owed more to local factors than to national issues,<sup>611</sup> it would be wrong to assume that the latter, especially in the case of free trade, had no bearing on Jerningham's success. This was certainly the opinion of the *Times*, which suggested that in sending Jerningham to Parliament by so emphatic a majority, the electors of Berwick had given a vote of confidence to Gladstone:

They have declared their approval of the Irish policy and the commercial policy of the Government; of the Land Act, of the measures lately taken for the restoration of order, and for uncompromising freedom of trade. On the last point especially the meetings which the Liberal candidate addressed were singularly unanimous, and his own declarations were thoroughgoing. The men of Berwick would not have a word to say to the sophisms of fair trade, and were delighted with their candidate's demonstration of their hollowness.<sup>612</sup>

Although the Conservatives had flirted with protection in 1879, it had not been a serious issue at the general election of 1880.<sup>613</sup> At Berwick none of the candidates had referred to protection in their addresses, either at the general election in March or at the by-election four months later. However, by 1881 the issue was back on the political agenda, and both Trotter and Jerningham entered into a full discussion of the relative merits of free trade and fair trade. Even so, free trade, now a well established principle, was not the dominant issue it had been during its incipient years.

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<sup>611</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>612</sup> *The Times*, 27 October 1881, p. 9.

<sup>613</sup> Lloyd, *The General Election of 1880*, pp. 49 - 50.

## RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Religious issues played a prominent part in electoral politics at Berwick. Of particular importance were church rates, the Maynooth grant, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the Bradlaugh case and Sunday closing. Such issues were frequently seized upon by the Conservatives as a means of diverting the electors' attention from issues, such as parliamentary reform and free trade, which were associated with the Liberals and opposed by the Conservatives.

Church rates were annual levies to provide for the maintenance of Anglican churches. As the rate was charged to all property owners, regardless of their religious persuasion, it was vehemently opposed by dissenters, who naturally objected to the compulsory support of a church to which they did not belong. Although a national campaign for the abolition of church rates was mounted in the early 1830s, it was not until 1841 that church rates became an election issue at Berwick. In that year the Liberal candidate Matthew Forster announced that, although he himself was a member of the Church of England, he believed it would be beneficial to the Church itself if dissenters were relieved from the onerous burden of paying for the repairs of the Establishment's churches, while having also to pay for the the repair and construction of their own places of worship.<sup>614</sup> In a stronghold of dissent like Berwick,<sup>615</sup> such sentiments were bound to find popular support, so it is not surprising that Conservative candidates were always at pains to steer clear of this particular religious controversy.

<sup>614</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 3 July 1841, p. 2.

<sup>615</sup> In 1832 there were eight dissenting congregations in the town: the Low Meeting House (erected in 1719) and the High Meeting House (1724), both belonging to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; the Middle Meeting House (1756), belonging to the Relief Establishment; the Burgher Meeting House (1770); the Methodist Chapel (1797); the Baptist Chapel (1810 - 11); the Anti-Burgher Meeting House (1812); and the Primitive Methodists' Church (1829 - 30). There was also a Presbyterian Meeting House in Tweedmouth (1783) and another in Spittal (1752). As we saw in Chapter 4, Josiah Rumney estimated that the proportion of Presbyterians to Anglicans in the parish of Berwick was 2.5:1.

However, it was the Radical John Stapleton who became the most persistent and vociferous opponent of church rates. In 1852 he told a meeting of electors that it was indisputable that it was a galling thing for a man to be forced to contribute to the support of a church from which he dissented. Church rates, he said, were the cause of much heart-burning and dissension, and the Church in many places obtained no benefit from them, because they created such general discontent that vestries hesitated to impose them.<sup>616</sup> He was thus in favour of their abolition and was sure that the members of the Church of England would liberally provide for all the proper ornaments and necessary repairs by voluntary subscription.<sup>617</sup>

Ten weeks later, during his nomination speech, Stapleton said that in a community like Berwick, which contained so large a proportion of Protestant dissenters, he was surprised that so little effort had been made to get rid of church rates. He was sorry that the electors of Berwick had had no representative to support the motion to abolish church rates. Renton had been present at the division to vote for their continuance, but he wondered why Forster had not been present to vote for their abolition.<sup>618</sup>

Although Stapleton continued his opposition to church rates in 1857, the issue was eclipsed by foreign affairs.<sup>619</sup> However, in 1859 church rates once again came under the spotlight. As Stapleton stated in his election address, "The

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<sup>616</sup> The vote for a church rate took place at the churchwardens' vestry meeting. As these meetings were open to all denominations, it was possible in towns with a high concentration of nonconformists to pack the meeting and vote down the proposed rate. During the 1820s Bradford and Dewsbury refused to set a church rate. Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Nottingham all followed suit in the 1830s. See W. Gibson, *Church, State and Society, 1760 - 1850* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 126 - 8 and D. Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England*, p. 49.

<sup>617</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 1.

<sup>618</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 10 July 1852, p. 3. Presumably Stapleton was referring to J. S. Trelawny's motion for the abolition of church rates in March 1849. If so, according to Hansard and the *Berwick Advertiser*, neither of Berwick's representatives was present at the division to vote on the motion, which was defeated by 119 votes to 84, although it is possible that Renton paired off. See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CIII, 1849, 681 - 4 and the *Berwick Advertiser*, 17 March 1849, p. 4.

<sup>619</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 March 1857, p. 3.

question, of those under discussion in the present Session, next in importance to the so-called Reform Bill, has been the question of Church Rates."<sup>620</sup> He later told a public meeting that in voting against the Government's Bill he felt he was acting in accordance with the wishes of the majority of his supporters. However, he was glad to see that they had settled the question pretty well for themselves. When he had first become acquainted with the town, their church was a rather unsightly building, but it had been vastly improved, and this had been done not by church rates, but amongst themselves. The plan they had adopted was a good one and one that he would like to see generally acted upon, for he believed that "not Church Rates, but the religious feelings of the members of the different churches should be relied upon for the means necessary to carry out the forms and to maintain the places of worship."<sup>621</sup>

Marjoribanks also referred to church rates, saying his votes upon the subject had been consistent. He had voted in favour of the abolition of church rates in 1855 and 1856,<sup>622</sup> and ever since, and he should continue to do so until they were abolished, believing, as a true Churchman, that the sooner they removed such a contemptible bone of contention the better.<sup>623</sup>

As in previous years, neither of the Conservative candidates was prepared to be drawn into the controversy surrounding the payment of church rates. However, the *Warder* entered the debate by publishing a letter signed "FIAT JUSTITIA", which was highly critical of Stapleton's stance on the issue:

<sup>620</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 9 April 1859, p.2.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>622</sup> In April 1855 William Clay introduced a Bill to abolish church rates, which was discharged in July 1855. In February 1856 C. W. Packe and William Clay both introduced Bills. Packe's Bill did not get beyond the first reading, while Clay's was abandoned in June 1856. See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXXXIX, 1855, 1374 - 5; Vol. CXL, 1856, 1926; and Vol. CXLII, 1856, 2090.

<sup>623</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

He [Stapleton] thinks he shall catch the votes of Dissenters by parading his vote in Parliament for the entire abolition of Church Rates. I have more confidence in the honesty of Dissenters in general than to believe they will approve of an act so clearly opposed to every honest principle.<sup>624</sup>

The anonymous correspondent also denounced the argument that the ratepayers, assembled in vestry, had a right to refuse to set a church rate, because the law empowered them, observing:

The amount required being variable and uncertain, they are entrusted with a voice in deciding the amount required from time to time. This is entrusted to them, as the most effectual check against wasteful expenditure, confiding in their honesty that they will not pervert the power so given them into a means of withholding altogether the funds committed to their charge, for important public purposes, by founders, out of sight indeed, but still probably witnesses of their conduct, and sure to meet them one day before an infallible Tribunal, from which there is no appeal.<sup>625</sup>

However, as the *Advertiser* observed, "FIAT JUSTITIA" was rather late in coming forward with his argument about church rates, as the people of Berwick had settled the question for themselves by abolishing church rates some twenty years previously.<sup>626</sup> In this respect, they were not alone. In 1851 J. S. Trelawny had informed the House of Commons that "in large and populous towns Church Rates are practically obsolete. Indeed, wherever the Dissenters were in a majority, or wherever they could command the assistance of a majority, Church rates could generally be successfully resisted."<sup>627</sup> In his own constituency, Tavistock, he believed that no church rate had been levied for many years, and yet the church,

<sup>624</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 15 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>626</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 April 1859, p. 3. The strength of local opposition to church rates is well illustrated by the church-rate meeting of 1845, which was held in Berwick parish church. Over 200 were present, yet only six voted for the churchwarden's proposed rate of 1/2 d. per pound. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 June 1845, p. 4.

<sup>627</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXV, 1851, 1230 - 1.

like that in Berwick, had been restored and improved.<sup>628</sup>

Yet, despite these local solutions to the question of church rates, the campaign for their abolition continued. Following Stapleton's defeat in 1859, the dissenters' cause was taken up by Alexander Mitchell. In 1863 he told a meeting of electors that he should always consider it one of his duties to defend and uphold on all occasions the rights and interests of that great and important body, the dissenters of England. To them and to their efforts he considered that much of the progress of this country, both religious and political, was due; and with them and their opinions he sincerely sympathised. Not only on their account, but on the broad principles of justice, he wished to see the abolition of church rates.<sup>629</sup>

Again, it was the Conservative press which rallied to the defence of the Anglican Church. The *Warder*, referring to Mitchell's proclamation of his attachment to and sympathy with the dissenters of England, observed that since he had said nothing of any rights or sympathy due to the Established Church:

We may conclude, therefore, that Mr. Mitchell would be a warm adherent of that active and mischievous party in Parliament known as the 'political Dissenters,' attacking at once the the foundations, the walls, and the roof of the ancient edifice. No conscientious Churchman can support such a candidate;<sup>630</sup>

However, not all Conservatives were blind to the injustice of church rates. In his nomination speech, William Cargill said that, like Mitchell, he too desired to see church rates abolished, but he should be very sorry to see such an Act without due compensation being given to those who would suffer by such a change. Nevertheless, he thought the time was approaching when a compromise of that

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<sup>628</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXV, 1851, 1230 - 1.

<sup>629</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 26 June 1863, p. 7.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



question could be affected by a mutual agreement among those who represented different opinions in Parliament on the subject.<sup>631</sup>

Elsewhere Conservative candidates had shown a growing sensitivity towards the injustice of church rates. At Oldham, for instance, J. M. Cobbett declared his support for their abolition as early as 1847; and at Rochdale in 1865 W. B. Brett said he would always agree, "so far as it could be done consistently with the union of church and state, to the relief of any sincere objection, and more particularly at this time to the relief from the payment of church rates of all who are not members of the Established Church of England."<sup>632</sup>

At Berwick the church rates question was raised for the last time in 1865. Once more, it was left to the Liberals to state the case for their abolition. Mitchell, for instance, said that, practically, church rates could hardly be maintained and he could only look upon the determined resistance to their abolition "as a desperate battle for a remnant of intolerance";<sup>633</sup> while Marjoribanks said that, if he were returned to Parliament, he would continue to vote for their unconditional abolition, because he believed that they had inflicted great injury to the Church of England, of which he was an honest member, and because he thought their imposition was most irritating and unjust to conscientious nonconformists.<sup>634</sup>

Church rates were finally abolished in 1868. As an election issue they had generally united the Liberals, while dividing the Conservatives,<sup>635</sup> although at Berwick, at least until 1865, the Conservatives could be said to have adopted a united front by avoiding the issue altogether. Although Liberal candidates

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<sup>631</sup> *Berwick Journal*, 3 July 1863, p. 4.

<sup>632</sup> Cited in Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 239.

<sup>633</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 June 1865, p. 4.

<sup>634</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>635</sup> See Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 239.

undoubtedly won some electoral support by advocating the abolition of church rates, in many towns, especially those with a high concentration of dissenters, the issue had already been settled by the ratepayers' refusal to levy a rate. This was certainly the case at Berwick. Compared to other religious controversies of the period, the church rates question did not excite the passions of the Berwick electorate, although their continued existence was always a bone of contention amongst the dissenters of the town.

The Maynooth grant was an issue which came to prominence at the general elections of 1847 and 1852. In 1845 Peel's administration decided to increase the aid given to the Catholic seminary at Maynooth, County Kildare, where young men were trained for the Catholic priesthood. The Colleges (Ireland) Bill, popularly known as the "Maynooth Bill", increased the parliamentary grant from £9,250 to £26,000 a year and made the grant permanent and not, as it had been, dependent upon an annual vote of Parliament. The measure was part of the Government's policy to develop higher education for Irish Catholics and so detach the moderate Catholics from Daniel O'Connell's movement for the repeal of the Act of Union. The Bill provoked great opposition throughout the country. This opposition was partly the result of anti-Catholic feeling and partly the result of deeply-held beliefs about the relationship which ought to exist between the State and religion.<sup>636</sup> By the time that the debate on the second reading had begun, the House of Commons had received 2,400 petitions against the Bill, including one from Berwick, which contained 523 signatures.<sup>637</sup> Opposition to the Maynooth grant was to be found among both Anglicans and dissenters. The Anglicans, for their part, believed the State should support only the established religion of the country; the dissenters, on the other hand, opposed the grant, because they believed in the separation of

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<sup>636</sup> A detailed account of the hostility towards the Maynooth Bill, especially on the part of the dissenters, can be found in G. I. T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the Dissenters and Disestablishment, 1845 - 1847", in *English Historical Review*, LXXXII, 322 (1967), pp. 61 - 85.

<sup>637</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 12 April 1845, p. 4.

Church and State - a belief which formed the basis of their quest for the abolition of church rates and disestablishment.

According to the Berwick petitioners, the Government's proposal to grant additional endowments to the Roman Catholic college at Maynooth was "bad in principle, mischievous in tendency, and likely to prove injurious to Morality, Religion, and Freedom."<sup>638</sup> Their Liberal representative, Matthew Forster, who did not receive the petition until after he had voted in favour of the second reading of the Bill,<sup>639</sup> was quite unprepared for the sudden manifestation of public hostility towards the measure, considering that Parliament had been annually voting money for the same purpose for the past fifty years.<sup>640</sup> In a forthright reply to the petitioners, Forster not only rebuked them for their shortsightedness and intolerance, but also justified the increased grant to Maynooth on religious as well as political grounds:

You have deprived the Catholic population of Ireland of the means of educating their priests, and you now complain of their Superstition and Idolatry. You bandage their eyes and then reproach them with walking in darkness! Not only must we look to education for cleansing the Roman Church of the errors that disfigure it, but we must also found upon it our best hope of winning the Catholics over to our own purer faith . . . . And if the grant is defensible on the ground of religious policy, I consider it equally, if not more, defensible on the ground of state policy. You cannot safely, if you could justly, leave seven-eighths of a whole people without religious teachers, and you cannot forcibly impose upon the Irish Catholics teachers belonging to your own church. What course then are you to pursue? Will you leave them in darkness, a hopeless prey to that superstition you deprecate, and the victims of a system of political agitation which renders them a source of national weakness in place of a bulwark of national strength.<sup>641</sup>

<sup>638</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 12 April 1845, p. 4.

<sup>639</sup> According to the *Advertiser*, Hodgson appears to have been absent from the division on the second reading of the Bill. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 26 April 1845, p. 4.

<sup>640</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 19 April 1845, p. 4.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the *Liberal Advertiser* was opposed to the Maynooth grant, it was prepared to respect Forster's decision to vote with the Government on the issue:

We differ entirely from Mr. Forster in the view which he takes of the grant to Maynooth - but, let our readers mark this, and the remark applies not only to his case but to that of all the Liberal Members in Parliament - we think he is perfectly justified in acting as he has done. Our opposition to the grant is not a new thing; year after year we have protested against it; the sum voted, whether £9,000 or 9,000,000, makes no alteration in the principle; and we object to it simply because we object to all ecclesiastical endowments whatsoever from the property from the country. Mr. Forster, however, and the Liberals in the House of Commons generally do not agree with us, and they are certainly just as well entitled to hold their opinion as we are to hold ours.<sup>642</sup>

At the 1847 election Forster again had to justify his support for the Maynooth grant. In his nomination address he told the electors that he had to claim their indulgence in the matter. If the question was simply about religion, he believed there would be little difference of opinion about it. However, it was so mixed up with considerations of state policy that it was impossible to deal with it merely on religious grounds. He could only say that in all the votes which he had given upon the question, he had not only made it his object to promote the public good, but he had also endeavoured to conciliate the religious feelings of all classes of the people, because the religious prejudices of the people were entitled to respect when connected with religious subjects. He maintained that he felt satisfied that when the people of the country could give a cooler consideration to the measure to which he alluded, they would conclude that Parliament had judged wisely in passing it.<sup>643</sup>

In contrast, the Conservative candidate, Renton, said that as an admirer of the Protestant institutions of the country, he should resist any attempt to endow the

<sup>642</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 19 April 1845, p. 3.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 July 1847, p. 2.

Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland out of the taxes paid by the Protestants of Britain;<sup>644</sup> whereas his colleague, William Miller, simply alluded to his "uniform support of Protestant and Conservative Principles" during the five successive Parliaments in which he had represented Newcastle-under-Lyme.<sup>645</sup>

Judging by their election addresses, it would seem that in 1847 Forster and Renton were much more concerned with free trade than they were with religious matters, which no doubt explains their almost perfunctory references to the Maynooth affair.<sup>646</sup> In particular, it is surprising that Renton did not attempt to capitalise on the religious issue. For many Conservatives the defence of the Established Church took precedence over free trade in 1847.<sup>647</sup> After all, the former question was still very much alive, whereas the latter had been decided in the previous year. On the other hand, given that Renton was a resolute protectionist, his preoccupation with the free trade issue is perfectly understandable. As for Forster, it is conceivable that his reduced majority in 1847 was in part a manifestation of the disappointment felt by those electors who had failed to persuade him to oppose the Maynooth Bill two years earlier.<sup>648</sup> Unfortunately, the absence of a poll book for 1841 precludes the possibility of analysing the voting consistency of Forster's supporters over the two elections in question. However, in a not dissimilar case, Thomas Greene, the Conservative member for Lancaster, lost votes in 1847 because of his refusal "to resist the endowment of popery, and all its advanced claims." Greene actually opposed the

<sup>644</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 24 July 1847, p. 1 and 31 July 1847, p. 2.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 July 1847, p. 1.

<sup>646</sup> In contrast, there were those who believed that religion played a more prominent role in the election than free trade. F. R. Bonham, for instance, informed Peel on 2 August 1847 that Maynooth had lost the Peelites more seats than free trade had done. This view was endorsed three weeks later, when the Peelite Thomas Wood told Peel that his defeat at Middlesex owed more to Maynooth than to the Corn Laws. See Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the Dissenters and Disestablishment, 1845 - 1847", p. 83.

<sup>647</sup> See Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the Dissenters and Disestablishment, 1845 - 1847", p. 78.

<sup>648</sup> Forster's majority in 1841 was fifty-one, whereas his majority in 1847 was only twenty-one.

1845 Maynooth endowment, though he was against the complete withdrawal from the scheme.<sup>649</sup> In many constituencies nonconformists who opposed the endowment of religious establishments by the State<sup>650</sup> refused to support members of Parliament who had voted for the Maynooth Bill.<sup>651</sup> In May the *Advertiser* carried a report from the *Spectator*, which stated:

The prominence in some constituencies, the almost exclusive preference given to the topic of the Maynooth endowment, is astounding. At Edinburgh and Glasgow, a pledge to support the repeal of the endowment has been made the indispensable, apparently the only indispensable test of a candidate's fitness.<sup>652</sup>

In some cases special efforts were made to secure the rejection of those members who had been particularly contemptuous of the Voluntaryists. Macaulay at Edinburgh and Roebuck at Bath were both ousted as a result of their opposition to Voluntaryism.<sup>653</sup>

Although free trade was again the dominant issue in 1852, things were very much different from what they had been in 1847. Whereas Forster ignored the Maynooth grant altogether and Renton merely reiterated his pledge to oppose it, the other two candidates placed the issue high on the political agenda. Stapleton said he objected to the grant on two grounds.<sup>654</sup> First, it was unjust to call upon Protestants to contribute to the support of a church in which they did not believe; and second, it was unjust to other classes of dissenters. No grant was conferred

<sup>649</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", pp. 238 - 9.

<sup>650</sup> These dissenters, known as Voluntaryists, advocated the maintenance of all denominations by voluntary means alone.

<sup>651</sup> See Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the Dissenters and Disestablishment, 1845 - 1847", p. 78.

<sup>652</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 8 May 1847, p. 2.

<sup>653</sup> Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the Dissenters and Disestablishment, 1845 - 1847", p. 81.

<sup>654</sup> The fact that Forster and Stapleton disagreed over the grant to Maynooth was by no means unusual. Throughout the country the issue caused a split in the Liberal ranks. While Sharman Crawford at Rochdale and John Fielden at Oldham opposed the grant, Samuel Gregson and R. B. Armstrong of Lancaster both supported Peel's policy towards the Catholic seminary. See Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 237.

upon the Wesleyans in Wales or the free Churchmen in Scotland.<sup>655</sup>

While Stapleton's attitude towards the Maynooth grant was informed by the spirit of Voluntaryism, Hodgson's was unashamedly anti-Catholic. In his nomination speech he said he did not profess to be a bigot, but he was always jealous of the progress of the Roman Catholic Church. He had always opposed the grants made of public money for the endowment of that Church and would continue to do so. He asked what would be the policy of the Whig Government when it came into power? Would the endowment of Maynooth suffice? He said that when the scheme was introduced the Whigs hailed it as the healing unction for the differences between the religious sects in Ireland, as the symbol and forerunner of further concessions to the Catholic Church. The endowment of the Catholic priesthood and the admission of the Catholic prelates to the House of Lords had long been the darling scheme of the Whigs. Indeed, he said it was the wish of the Whigs to see on the benches of the House of Lords "an equal number of Catholic Prelates with those of the Protestant Church."<sup>656</sup>

However, according to Hodgson, it was not only the House of Lords that was in danger. In a written address he expressed his alarm at the efforts to influence the election of Irish representatives in the new Parliament "by the dangerous and irresponsible agency of the Roman Catholic Priesthood," warning that:

The large accession of power which will undoubtedly accrue to that Section of the House of Commons devoted to ultramontane principles and purposes, can only be held in check by the firm and united Voice of the Constituencies of Great Britain, in the face of which no Statesman may dare, for the interests of party, to combine with those whose avowed object is the extinction of the Protestant Faith.<sup>657</sup>

<sup>655</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 4.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 July 1852, p. 2.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 May 1852, p. 1.

Of course, it was not the Maynooth controversy alone which was responsible for this expression of anti-Catholic sentiment. The Vatican's reintroduction in September 1850 of a diocesan system for the Roman Catholic Church in Britain had caused a Protestant outcry, which was officially sanctioned when Russell's Ecclesiastical Titles Act was passed in August 1851.<sup>658</sup> At the 1852 election many Conservatives, like Hodgson, fully exploited Protestant fears that their religion was threatened by the rising tide of Catholicism. An anonymous letter from "A TRUE CONSERVATIVE" to the editor of the *Berwick and Kelso Warder* even questioned Stapleton's suitability as a candidate on the ground that he was the brother of the Catholic peer Lord Beaumont,<sup>659</sup> despite the fact that he had declared himself to be a "staunch Protestant".<sup>660</sup>

Yet despite the prominence given to religious issues in 1852, there is no doubt that the crucial question was still free trade. Conservative attempts to win votes by raising the old slogans of "Church in Danger" and "No Popery" appear to have had a very limited impact on the Berwick electorate. If Forster lost votes in 1847 because of his support for the Maynooth Bill, the damage had been repaired by 1852. His majority of seventy-seven is ample proof of this.<sup>661</sup> With the Liberal candidates winning 61.8 per cent of the votes, it is clear that Hodgson's concerns about the spread of Catholicism under a Whig Government were not shared by the electors.

By the late 1860s Gladstone had come to the opinion that the privileged position of the minority Church of Ireland was morally untenable and that

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<sup>658</sup> The Act made it illegal for any church other than the Established Church to adopt territorial titles in Britain.

<sup>659</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 30 April 1852, p. 3.

<sup>660</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 17 April 1852, p. 4. When he first stood for Berwick in 1852, Stapleton informed the electors that he was a member of the Church of England. However, by 1874, when he last contested the borough, he admitted to being a dissenter. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 4 and 30 January 1874, p. 2.

<sup>661</sup> Forster's majority over the leading Conservative candidate was 161.



disestablishment was a necessary step towards the amelioration of Anglo-Irish relations.<sup>662</sup> Consequently, disestablishment became the primary objective of the Liberals' policy of reform in Ireland. Not surprisingly, the Conservatives viewed such a measure with alarm: not only was disestablishment a direct assault on the Anglican Church, but it also sent out an ominous message about the security of property as a whole. The situation in Ireland, so often overlooked by the English electorate, was brought into sharper focus by the acts of terrorism committed by the Fenian Brotherhood on mainland Britain in 1867.<sup>663</sup> As a result of these developments, Irish affairs, particularly the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, became a major issue at the general election in 1868.

At Berwick all four candidates placed disestablishment at the top of the political agenda. Lord Bury, for instance, said that the first subject of importance which would arise in the new Parliament would be the Irish Church. He was himself a member of the Church of England, and as such he protested against the unfairness of the argument which alleged that the Irish and English Churches were bound up together and would stand or fall together. The Irish Church was the Church of a small minority of the population. It was established partly as a Missionary Church and partly to afford religious instruction to the victorious Protestant garrison of Ireland. However, it had failed as a garrison and it had failed as a Missionary Church. The conquerors and conquered now formed one nation. Every other disability had been done away with, every penal law repealed, almost every grievance remedied, except the greatest of all: the Church of a small minority was still supported in a position of supremacy by the power of the State, in the midst of a people bitterly hostile to it. The Church of England afforded no parallel to

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<sup>662</sup> In 1861 there were 700,000 members of the Anglican Church of Ireland. In comparison there were 4.5 million Roman Catholics. The Catholics thus outnumbered the Anglicans by more than 7:1. See E. J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early industrial Britain, 1783 - 1870* (London, 1989), p. 357.

<sup>663</sup> An unarmed policeman was killed at Manchester and twelve people were killed in an explosion at Clerkenwell in London.

this in any respect, and English churchmen were unwise as well as inaccurate when they attempted to bind together the English Church, which could be defended, with the Irish Church, which could not. He should, if elected, vote for the disestablishment of the Irish Church and the application of its revenues to purposes of national utility in Ireland.<sup>664</sup>

Stapleton likewise advocated disestablishment. He said that Ireland had long been a mismanaged country. He did not claim that the only grievance that existed in Ireland was that of the Church, but he did believe that until that grievance was removed they would not get the people in Ireland to discuss other matters in an impartial and conciliatory manner. Before all things they must be just, and when a strong and populous country like England dealt with one so much weaker in numbers, wealth and influence, they should be especially careful in their dealings to be just. His opinion was, if they put it on a footing of justice, that they used an argument to which there was no reply. He was one of those who thought that a remedy was not only demanded by justice, but that it could be done with safety. He did not believe that the Church would suffer from this proposed disendowment. It was not likely that in a country where the rich nearly all belonged to the Irish Church, that it would be allowed to starve because its state endowments were taken away from it. He was not one of those who thought that the power of Rome would be augmented by the disendowment of the Irish Church, for they might rely upon it that the Church of Rome would have agitated for such a vote long ago, if it had thought that such would be the case. He said it was suggested that if they shook the Irish Church, they shook the Church of England. He did not believe it. When he was told that if they disendowed the Church of Ireland, they would have to disendow the Church of Scotland, of Wales and of England, his answer was that if they did not disendow the Irish Church, they would give an argument so strong that

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<sup>664</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 August 1868, p. 1.

in the course of time it would prevail. At the present time the Church of England had nearly half of the community in its body, while the Church of Ireland was in a very insignificant minority.<sup>665</sup>

In contrast, Carpenter said that although he could be no party to any project for the dismemberment of the Protestant Church,<sup>666</sup> he was not unprepared to give the most earnest consideration to any honest plan that would deal fairly with the difficulties of the case, provided it did not militate against the rights of property.<sup>667</sup> He also said that he considered the attempt which was being made to disestablish the Irish Church was only an attempt to insert the thin end of the wedge which would separate all the established churches from the State.<sup>668</sup>

However, it was Hodgson who proved to be the most resolute champion of the Irish Church. Addressing a public meeting of the electors in the Corn Exchange, he announced that he was there to uphold to the utmost of his power the Established Protestant Church of Ireland, because he believed it was the safeguard of liberty of conscience in that country, as opposed to the unlimited restriction of the free will of the people. He upheld the Protestant Church in Ireland because, as Mr. Gladstone said, it was an emblem of Protestant ascendancy.<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>665</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 4 September 1868, Supplement.

<sup>666</sup> Carpenter refused to use the term "disestablishment", preferring the word "dismemberment", explaining, "... as there is no such word in the English language as *dis-establishment*, I am content to leave that, to the people who coined it, in order to cover the unworthy spoliation and robbery it was intended to conceal." To which Lord Bury replied, that the question was not the dismemberment, but the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The Liberal party did not want to dismember; they wanted to disestablish. To dismember the Irish Church "would be to despoil it of its revenues, to turn over its churches to other denominations, to turn out its clergy to starve, to take away from it that self-government which every Church ought to possess"; whereas disestablishment "meant that among all the various denominations of Christians which existed throughout Ireland, the State should not select the one which represented the smallest portion of the people of Ireland." See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 4 September 1868, Supplement.

<sup>667</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 August 1868, p. 1.

<sup>668</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

<sup>669</sup> Gladstone had used the term in a derisory sense, and this had offended Hodgson. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 November 1868, p. 2.

For what was Protestant ascendancy in the proper sense of the term? Was it not the representative of the principle upon which the Reformation was enacted?<sup>670</sup>

Hodgson's strong Protestant stance was the exception rather than the rule. Except in Lancashire, where there was intense hostility towards the Irish, only a few candidates pursued a distinctly Protestant line in 1868. One of these was Sir Henry Edwards at Beverley, who ludicrously claimed that Gladstone was a Roman Catholic in disguise. Most candidates who defended the Irish Church, like Carpenter, did so because they feared that Irish disestablishment would lead to English disestablishment.<sup>671</sup>

Hodgson also castigated those who were in the habit of representing the Irish Church as a grievance, intolerable to the majority of the Irish nation and a source of discontent. He said that he himself had travelled a great deal in Ireland, and so far as his experience and knowledge of the Irish peasantry went, he could see no symptoms whatever of the feeling of that intolerable grievance. Where was all the agitation about this alleged grievance of the Irish Church? Was it in Ireland? It was not in Ireland; very little was heard of it there. It was in England. But all the inflammatory speeches they heard in England failed to evoke a single echo in Ireland; and he should not be surprised if the Irish constituencies added members to the Ministerial side of the House of Commons, instead of to the side of the Opposition.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 November 1868, p. 2.

<sup>671</sup> H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (London, 1959), pp. 215 - 16.

<sup>672</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 November 1868, p. 2. As it was, Hodgson's hopes were not realised: the Liberals had won fifty-eight Irish seats in 1865 compared to the Conservatives' forty-five. In 1868 these figures were sixty-six and thirty-seven respectively, showing a Liberal increase of 7.8 per cent. See Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832 - 1885* (London and Basingstoke, 1977), p. 622.

The importance of the Irish Church as an election issue is further emphasised by the attention given to it by some of Berwick's leading political figures. Dr. Robert Fluker, a prominent local Conservative, said he was sorry that that matter had been brought into the political arena. It had, however, been so well ventilated and was now so well known and understood by the electors that he was certain every elector would be able on polling day to come forward and record his vote on the question. They would all now be perfect masters of the subject. He concluded by telling his audience that the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland "would be at the price of the destruction of the respected and venerated Church of their fatherland."<sup>673</sup>

The Berwickshire landowner David Milne Home<sup>674</sup> saw disestablishment as the route to even greater upheaval. He told his fellow electors that he believed the prosperity and even the safety of the country depended upon three cardinal rules, namely, the maintenance of the constitutional monarchy; the supremacy of the Protestant religion; and the non-confiscation of Church property. He warned:

If the robbery of the Church succeeded in Ireland, it would not stop there. The levelling process would be extended to England, the battering ram would be applied to the walls of Scotland and England. And it would shake to the foundations every matter of vested right. It would not be confined to the Church, but it would extend to the other Corporations of the land.<sup>675</sup>

On the Liberal side, Alderman Thomas Bogue said that there were two measures of great importance, which were certain to occupy much of the attention of Parliament, and to which he would urge Lord Bury's earnest attention and support. The first was the Irish Church question. He was strongly in favour of disestablishment and disendowment, and he felt sure that this measure would tend

<sup>673</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

<sup>674</sup> The father of David Milne Home, who became the Conservative member for Berwick in 1874.

<sup>675</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

greatly to the extension of the Protestant faith and make way for peace in their sister island.<sup>676</sup>

On the eve of the 1868 election the *Berwick Warder* announced, "The contest is one of principles, rather than of men; for on each side are two candidates well fitted to represent their respective schools of politics."<sup>677</sup> According to the *Warder*, it was a contest:

to decide whether we are to abide permanently by the ancient lines and ways of the constitution, or to commence a career of demolition, of every English structure and institution, that will end in a state of social and political chaos, undoing all the work of two thousand years.<sup>678</sup>

There is no doubt that the disestablishment of the Irish Church was the major issue in the Berwick Election of 1868. Not only did the four candidates and other leading political figures speak at length on the question, but there were several lectures on the subject during the period leading up to the election. One of these, which purported to give "the truth about the Irish Church", was delivered in the Town Hall on the evening of Tuesday, 18 August, by the Rev. T. Campbell, M.A., chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; and the *Advertiser* reported that, "The attendance was unusually large, and not confined to the friends of the Irish Church".<sup>679</sup> However, not all the talks were as well attended. At a lecture delivered by the Rev. D. A. Buckley, in the King's Arms Assembly Room, on Monday, 14 September, the audience was small and "consisted for the most part, of the rev. gentleman's own congregation".<sup>680</sup> Interestingly, Campbell was opposed to disestablishment, whilst Buckley was in favour of it.

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<sup>676</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 November 1868, p. 4.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 21 August 1868, p. 3.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 September 1868, p. 3.

In any event, it was the Liberals who won the disestablishment debate in 1868. Nationally, the party was returned to power with a larger majority than in 1865;<sup>681</sup> while at Berwick the Liberals captured 57.8 per cent of the votes, which was marginally more than they had gained three years earlier.<sup>682</sup>

At the general election in 1880 the borough of Northampton returned the Radical candidate Charles Bradlaugh as one of its two members of Parliament. Bradlaugh was an avowed atheist and an advocate of birth control, and his unorthodox beliefs so outraged members on both sides of the House that he was prevented from taking his seat, on the ground that an atheist could not be bound by the statutory religious oath of allegiance. In order to solve the problem, Gladstone introduced a measure which would allow Bradlaugh to affirm allegiance, instead of offering the customary religious oath. However, a hostile cross-party majority rejected this, and during the course of the 1880 Parliament Bradlaugh made repeated attempts to take his seat.

The Bradlaugh case was a constitutional issue which aroused men's passions both inside and outside Parliament. On the one hand, there were those who felt a genuine revulsion against Bradlaugh on account of his atheism, and were determined to secure his exclusion from the legislature; while on the other hand, there were those who, while disapproving of his unorthodox views, believed sufficiently in the concepts of religious and political toleration to argue for his admission.<sup>683</sup> During the early 1880s these opposing viewpoints found expression in a number of by-elections, two of which were at Berwick.

<sup>681</sup> The Liberal majority was 116 in 1868 as against about 82 in 1865. See Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results 1832 - 1885*, p. 622.

<sup>682</sup> In 1865 the Liberals won 57.5 per cent of the votes.

<sup>683</sup> For a detailed account of the Bradlaugh controversy, see W. L. Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case: A Study in Late Victorian Opinion and Politics* (Oxford, 1965). See also E. Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791 - 1866* (Manchester, 1974); and E. Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular freethought in Britain, 1866 - 1915* (Manchester, 1980).

As was often the case in matters of a religious nature, it was the Conservatives who made the Bradlaugh controversy a major election issue. At the 1880 Berwick by-election the Conservative candidate, David Milne Home, addressing a meeting of the electors at the Town Hall, said that during the three months that Mr. Gladstone had been in power, the Government had made a succession of mistakes. The greatest of these was that concerning Mr. Bradlaugh, who had been allowed to take his seat after making an affirmation, instead of taking the oath like most of the members of the House of Commons did. Milne Home pointed out that they were a Christian country and that the House of Commons was a representative assembly of that Christian country. The affirmation that he had spoken of was introduced by the House of Commons for the purpose of giving in to those who had some religion, whether they were Wesleyan, or Jewish, or Catholic. It was in deference to their religious scruples. Yet Mr. Bradlaugh boasted he had no religion. Therefore it was in defiance to the Constitution that he was permitted to make this affirmation. And the Government gave their full support to enable him to make this affirmation, and in doing so they said that atheism was permissible in the House of Commons.<sup>684</sup>

Although the Liberal candidate, John McLaren, did not allude to the Bradlaugh case during his campaign, his membership of the Government<sup>685</sup> would have left the electors in no doubt about his position on the issue.<sup>686</sup> Indeed, his tacit support for Bradlaugh may have been his undoing, both at the Wigton by-election in May and at the Berwick by-election two months later. While a number of

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<sup>684</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 13 July 1880, p. 2.

<sup>685</sup> He was the Lord Advocate for Scotland.

<sup>686</sup> If there was any doubt, this would have been dispelled by McLaren's election address, in which he stated that the Government measures of the present session "had his hearty concurrence". See the *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 2.



other factors influenced the outcome at Berwick,<sup>687</sup> one cannot discount the relevance of the Bradlaugh issue. This was definitely the view of the *Warder*, when it sought to explain the sudden and dramatic shift in Berwick politics between the general election in April and the by-election in July:<sup>688</sup>

We are inclined to think that these considerations [i.e., the admission of an atheist into the House of Commons and the disrespect shown to religion by Liberalism] have been the main cause of the defeat of the Lord Advocate and of the Government which he represents. A good many Liberals have not voted at all,<sup>689</sup> while others have given their votes to the Conservatives. Even among those who voted for the Lord Advocate, many have expressed their satisfaction at the result of the election, and their hope that the Government will take to heart the lesson it teaches, for no Government can long withstand the offended religious feelings of a Christian people.<sup>690</sup>

The *Warder's* contention that some Liberals switched their allegiance because of the Bradlaugh affair is certainly sustainable. First, there is the *Advertiser's* report that the Catholics, who generally supported the Liberals, "voted almost in a body for Captain Milne Home."<sup>691</sup> This was probably because they had taken umbrage at the Liberal committee's decision to select McLaren as their candidate, instead of Jerningham, who was a fellow-Catholic; but it is possible that their voting behaviour was also influenced by two other factors, namely, the

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<sup>687</sup> Each of the following was said to have played a part in the Conservative victory: religion; bribery; undue influence; Milne Home's local connections; the ill-feeling generated by the Liberal committee's choice of candidate; and the conscientious electioneering of the Conservatives. See the *Berwick Warder*, 9 July 1880, p. 3; 20 July 1880, p. 3; and the *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, pp. 3 and 4.

<sup>688</sup> At the general election the Liberals returned two candidates, who between them obtained 56.3 per cent of the votes. At the by-election the Conservative candidate won by two votes, although, after a scrutiny, this was changed to three votes.

<sup>689</sup> In fact, there were only thirty-five fewer voters at the 1880 by-election than at the general election.

<sup>690</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 July 1880, p. 3.

<sup>691</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 4.

Conservatives' espousal of denominational education<sup>692</sup> and Gladstone's championship of Bradlaugh.

Second, there is the letter which appeared in the *Warder* and was addressed to the "ELECTORS OF THE TOWN OF BERWICK!" from a "LIBERAL CONSERVATIVE", confessing his change of heart and expressing his hope that others might do the same:

I was once a great admirer of Mr. Gladstone, but since his favouring the public recognition of an atheist in the House of Commons, I have changed my mind. The British Nation as a whole believes in God, and its representatives should do so also. I hope you all think the same, and that for once both Liberals and Conservatives in Berwick will put their shoulders to the wheel and do their utmost to return a member of sound religious principles. Mr. McLaren may be [a] very good man but he cannot vote against his party, while, you are well assured of Capt. Home. Electors, since the ballot has been introduced your fellow townsmen cannot know how you vote; but let every believer in God remember when he approaches the ballot box, that there is an Eye that sees him, and a God who will reward him, if he advances His cause.<sup>693</sup>

Doubtless, there were other voters who shared these sentiments. Indeed, if the experience of other constituencies is anything to go by, then the Bradlaugh case unquestionably had a detrimental effect upon the Liberals at this time.<sup>694</sup> For instance, at Scarborough in July 1880 the Conservatives flooded the constituency

<sup>692</sup> Education was a recurring issue at Berwick, although it was never a particularly prominent one. While both parties were sympathetic towards the advancement of education, they disagreed on the means of achieving it. Liberal candidates such as Stapleton, Marjoribanks and Bury advocated non-sectarian education, whereas Conservatives like Hodgson and Milne Home were vehemently opposed to the separation of religion and education. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 1 May 1852, p. 4; 14 May 1853, p. 4; 7 August 1868, p. 1; the *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 13 May 1853, p. 5; and the *Berwick Warder*, 3 February 1874, p. 2.

<sup>693</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 13 July 1880, p. 3.

<sup>694</sup> Arnstein has shown that the Liberals suffered a net loss of five seats in by-elections in 1880 and five more in 1881; and although they did not, on balance, lose any additional seats in 1882, their share of the vote declined in seven out of that year's eight contests. Even though it was normal for the winning party at a general election to experience some decline in strength in subsequent years, and even though the Bradlaugh case was not the only issue at stake at these by-elections, it would seem that wherever Bradlaugh became an issue the Liberals lost votes. See Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case*, p. 142.

with blue cards carrying the inscription, "Fathers of Scarborough. Do you want your children to be defiled by Bradlaugh's filth? If not, vote for DUNSCOMBE." Although the Liberals retained the seat, their majority of 595 in April was reduced to 222. At North Berwick and at Wigton, where McLaren had sought re-election before trying his luck at Berwick, Bradlaugh's name was also widely used, and in both towns the Liberals lost the seats they had won at the general election three months earlier.<sup>695</sup> Perhaps the most prominent casualty was Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, who was defeated at the Oxford by-election in 1880 by a Conservative who tarred him with the Bradlaugh brush.<sup>696</sup>

Similarly, in the North Riding of Yorkshire in January 1882, the Conservative candidate, Guy Dawnay, reported that no issue generated so much interest among the electors as the Bradlaugh case; and even a last minute repudiation of his pro-Bradlaugh stand by the Liberal candidate failed to prevent his defeat. Two months later, Sir Thomas Dyke Acland complained to Gladstone that the issue was being used effectively against his son who was contesting East Cornwall. Even though the Liberals eventually retained the seat, their share of the vote had dropped from 60 per cent in 1880 to 51 per cent in 1882.<sup>697</sup>

However, there was a limit to the benefits that could be gained from the Bradlaugh case. At the 1881 Berwick by-election the Liberal candidate Jerningham, when asked if it was true that he had pledged himself to support any measure to admit a professed atheist into the House of Commons, responded by saying that the question was wrongly put. He did not pledge himself to admit an atheist into the House. He had said that Mr. Bradlaugh, of whose opinions he did not wish to know anything, had a right in the House of Commons, but he was glad

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<sup>695</sup> Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case*, p. 143.

<sup>696</sup> Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans*, p. 269.

<sup>697</sup> Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case*, p. 144.

of the opportunity to say that he abhorred Mr. Bradlaugh's doctrines.<sup>698</sup>

Notwithstanding his denouncement of atheism, Jerningham still found himself under attack for upholding Bradlaugh's right to enter Parliament. The *Warder* led the way by expressing its surprise that a Roman Catholic, of all classes of Christians, should be prepared to assist in such an unholy work, pointing out that Jerningham did not have the sanction of the leaders of his Church. The newspaper concluded that if Jerningham persisted in maintaining that it was possible to overlook a total and absolute negation of all religion, it could only warn the electors that he would be a most dangerous and unfit parliamentary representative.<sup>699</sup>

However, it was not only Jerningham's *political* opponents who rebuked him for supporting an atheist. The *Advertiser* reported that the Roman Catholic priest at Wooler and a certain Mr. Gorham from Tonbridge had also become involved in the Bradlaugh controversy. While disclaiming any connection with the Conservative candidate Trotter, they had done their utmost to influence the electors against Jerningham by the use of "strong placards" and by circulating extracts from Bradlaugh's writings.<sup>700</sup>

Yet despite these attempts to discredit Jerningham by invoking the Bradlaugh issue, the Conservatives were unable to repeat their success of the previous year. Indeed, the Liberal's majority at the by-election of 1881 was the largest in the borough's history,<sup>701</sup> suggesting that, in Berwick at least, the name of Bradlaugh was no longer capable of arousing religious passions to the extent that

<sup>698</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>699</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>700</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, pp. 2 and 3. Religious opinion was obviously divided over Jerningham's declaration that he would vote for Bradlaugh's admission to the House of Commons. While the Catholic priest at Wooler campaigned against Jerningham, the Rev. John Smith of Wallace Green, Berwick, and another dissenting minister were criticised for supporting him. See the *Berwick Warder*, 7 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>701</sup> The result of the poll in 1881 was: Jerningham (L) - 1,046; Trotter (C) - 529.

it could significantly affect voting behaviour. When confronted by other factors, most notably the personal popularity of a local candidate, the Bradlaugh case lost its impact as an election issue.<sup>702</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Parliamentary reform, free trade and religion were all major election issues at Berwick during our period. Although such issues did not always decide the outcome of an election, they did at least play a significant part in that outcome. Of course, it is impossible to prove this. Who can say with any certainty why electors voted the way they did? However, it is difficult to believe that, despite continual interruptions from boisterous crowds, the contents of a candidate's speech fell entirely on deaf ears.<sup>703</sup> Candidates were generally aware of the issues that were of concern to their audience, and ensured that they concentrated on those issues. Even if the candidate was a stranger to the constituency, and in Berwick most of them initially were, they would have been informed by their sponsors, the local party leaders, about the topics that were of interest to the community. Candidates who avoided issues which the electors regarded as important usually paid the penalty at the polls, as Thomas Weeding discovered in 1841, when he resolutely refused to discuss the Corn Laws.<sup>704</sup>

Likewise, it is hard to conceive that the editors of local newspapers would be prepared to waste their time printing speeches, letters and articles which drew their

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<sup>702</sup> The *Berwick Advertiser* even maintained that one of the reasons for Jerningham's success was the persistent attacks made upon him because of his Catholicism and his promise to vote for the admission of Charles Bradlaugh to the House of Commons. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>703</sup> Although newspaper reporters often complained that election speeches were inaudible owing to heckling and cheering from the crowd, there were, of course, other means by which the candidates could disseminate their political sentiments. Printed addresses, which appeared in newspapers and on handbills and posters, and ticket-only meetings were just two of the methods employed to circumvent the problem of noisy crowds.

<sup>704</sup> See Chapter 5.

readers' attention to the political questions of the day. Editors were themselves members of the community and must therefore have been in touch with local public opinion. For evidence of this one need look no further than the readers' letters columns in local newspapers, a close examination of which "reveals not only the extent of public interest in political affairs, and the inordinate lengths at which certain issues were allowed to be discussed by indulgent editors . . . , but also the great variety of the social and occupational backgrounds of the correspondents."<sup>705</sup> Of course, an editor's job was not just to give expression to public opinion, but to shape it as well. As we have seen, the proliferation of newspapers in the second half of the century testifies to the growing number of people who could read and who wished to be informed - not just about gruesome murders and the latest panacea for bodily ailments, but also about politics. Indeed, as Maurice Milne has noted, politics was the lifeblood of the Victorian newspaper:

Each day's issue contained detailed accounts of Parliamentary proceedings, verbatim reports of the speeches of leading politicians in the House or at important constituency meetings, and lengthy leading articles interpreting the latest moves in the party game from the political standpoint of each particular newspaper.<sup>706</sup>

This obsession with the world of party politics was not restricted to the metropolitan press. Provincial newspapers were almost equally involved.<sup>707</sup> In 1855 Berwick, with a population of 15,000, boasted three weekly newspapers, all of which contained detailed accounts of parliamentary proceedings and world affairs. During elections even more space was devoted to politics, so that readers could be supplied with the latest election news not only from Berwick itself, but from constituencies all over the country. Such information would never have been printed if the readership had not been politically educated. Political opinion must

<sup>705</sup> A. Jones, "Local Journalism in Victorian Political Culture", in L. Brake, A. Jones and L. Madden (eds.), *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (Basingstoke, 1990), p. 67.

<sup>706</sup> M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p. 14.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*

therefore have been important to a significant proportion of the electorate. Issues such as parliamentary reform, free trade and religion had a direct bearing on the lives of the inhabitants of Berwick. The Whig/Liberal victories of 1832 and 1853 were significant enough to suggest that factors other than influence and bribery were at work. These two elections happened to coincide with issues that were of huge significance to many of Berwick's 700 or so electors. The way they voted must surely have reflected the way they felt about the issues at stake. This is not to deny that, at other times, other factors played a crucial role in determining the outcome of an election. However, it is our contention that, whenever issues were important to the community, and most issues were important to some people some of the time, then those who were fortunate enough to be enfranchised could, and often did, place those issues above all other considerations when they entered the polling booths. This was also the view of many contemporaries, including candidates, election agents and newspaper editors, and it is also the considered opinion of recent research into the voting habits of nineteenth-century electors.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> See, for instance, Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs*; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons, and Parties*; ch. 5; Brenchley, *A Place By Itself*, pp. 130 - 3; R. W. Davis, *Political Change and Continuity 1760 - 1885: A Buckinghamshire Study* (Newton Abbot, 1972); R. J. Olney, *Lincolnshire Politics 1832 - 1885* (Oxford, 1973); Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", ch. 8; and Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", ch. 4 and ch. 5.

## CHAPTER 7: ELECTORAL INFLUENCE: BRIBERY, TREATING AND INTIMIDATION

### INTRODUCTION

Bribery and treating had been prominent features of the unreformed electoral system and they were to continue unabated in the years following the Reform Act of 1832. Indeed, they may even have become more widespread, for not only did the ancient right voters who retained the franchise persist with their venal practices, but also these practices were readily adopted by the newly enfranchised electors. As Charles Seymour observes, in one of the earliest studies of the reformed electoral system, there is no shortage of evidence to support the view that corruption was a serious problem:

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance or the extent of corrupt practices in England during the generation which succeeded the passing of the Reform Act of 1832. The simple fact of the existence of such practices is indisputable. The number of elections voided for such reasons and the numerous and detailed reports of committees furnish evidence which is borne out by the extraordinary testimony given before those committees by the election agents, as well as by the opinions of the members themselves.<sup>709</sup>

This assessment of the system is endorsed by Norman Gash, who writes,

Those candidates and agents who hoped that the Reform Act would put an end to electoral corruption were soon disillusioned. The electors in general still attached a financial value to their vote and exerted an irresistible influence on the candidates to continue the old methods."<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>709</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 193.

<sup>710</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 124.



Similarly, H. J. Hanham alludes to the widespread treating and bribery which occurred after 1832:

Many electors, accustomed to electoral corruption before 1832, expected it to continue, and would not vote unless they were given drink or money or both. Others quite openly offered themselves to the highest bidder.<sup>711</sup>

Although most boroughs were corrupt in the sense that voters were regularly bribed, few were corrupt in the sense that the collective decision of the electorate was determined by a simple cash transaction.<sup>712</sup> Nevertheless, it was widely believed that such boroughs did exist, and they inevitably earned an unenviable reputation for their venality.<sup>713</sup> Some paid the ultimate penalty because of their fondness for gold: Sudbury, St. Albans, Great Yarmouth, Lancaster, Reigate, Totnes, Beverley, Bridgwater, Cashel, Sligo, Macclesfield and Sandwich were all disfranchised during our period. Others were more fortunate, sometimes only narrowly avoiding a similar fate. Dublin, Norwich, Canterbury, Kingston-upon-Hull, Cambridge, Maldon, Barnstaple, Tynemouth, Galway Town, Gloucester, Wakefield, Berwick, Oxford, Chester, Macclesfield and Knaresborough were all examined by a Royal Commission after a prior investigation claimed to have discovered evidence of extensive bribery. As Berwick was one of those constituencies which came perilously close to losing its representation, it is the aim of this chapter to evaluate the extent to which corrupt practices may have affected voting behaviour in the borough.

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<sup>711</sup> H. J. Hanham, *The Reformed Electoral System in Great Britain, 1832 - 1914* (London, 1968; reprinted 1979), p. 17. See also W. L. Burn, "Electoral Corruption in the Nineteenth Century", in *Parliamentary Affairs*, IV (1950 - 51), pp. 437 - 42.

<sup>712</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 154.

<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.* More recent scholars, however, play down the significance of bribery. See below pp. 265 - 70.

## BERWICK'S REPUTATION FOR CORRUPTION

In 1817 the Reverend Thomas Johnstone, minister of the Low Meeting House, Berwick, wrote:

It is not uncommon for the Burgesses of Berwick to promise their vote to a favourite Member of Parliament, several years before an election takes place; and, much to their honour, they have seldom been known to break this promise. Hence the Borough is often canvassed, and secured, long before a dissolution of Parliament, and the Representative who is fortunate enough to obtain the promise of a vote, has no doubt of its being literally fulfilled.<sup>714</sup>

Unfortunately, this glowing assessment of the political integrity of the Berwick electorate was not one that was widely shared during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>715</sup> The electors' ingratitude towards John Delaval, who had spent thousands of pounds on them during the 1760s, prompted Captain Nethercott to refer to them as "a herd of swine that the Devil possesses".<sup>716</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by J. Lambert, Esq. when he informed Earl Grey in 1832 that:

. . . the Berwick electors are such a venal pack that I fear there can be little hope entertained of their supporting even so straightforward and uncompromising a reformer as Sir F [Francis Blake] upon the principle of political feeling only . . . corruption has become so much a habit at Berwick that I think no candidate could rely on success, if opposed, unless he was prepared to spend something.<sup>717</sup>

<sup>714</sup> Rev. T. Johnstone, *The History of Berwick-upon-Tweed, and Its Vicinity* (Berwick, 1817), pp. 149 - 50.

<sup>715</sup> The view that Berwick's burgesses were renowned for their honesty first appeared in John Fuller's history of the town and has been repeated by subsequent historians. See J. Fuller, *The History of Berwick Upon Tweed* (Newcastle, 1973; first published 1799), pp. 244 - 5 and F. Sheldon, *History of Berwick-Upon-Tweed* (Edinburgh, London and Berwick, 1849), p. 304.

<sup>716</sup> Quoted in F. Askham, *The Gay Delavals* (London, 1955), p. 124.

<sup>717</sup> J. Lambert to 3rd Earl Grey, 13 May 1832, 3rd Earl Grey MSS., Box 113, file 2.

Indeed, it was a well-known fact that electioneering at Berwick was a costly business. Even the *Berwick Advertiser* acknowledged this when in 1831 it declared, "The expensiveness of the election for this borough are sufficiently known, to terrify any prudent person from engaging in a contest for it."<sup>718</sup> Similarly, another local newspaper, the *Kelso Mail*, observed on the eve of the 1832 general election, "Unless a pretty considerable REFORM has actually taken place, the purses of the honourable candidates may undergo a fearful change."<sup>719</sup> However, Berwick's notoriety had spread far beyond the locality. In January 1833 the *Weekly Despatch* referred to the town as "This once most corrupt and close tory borough".<sup>720</sup>

Not surprisingly, such attacks were deeply resented by the people of Berwick, who believed that the case against them had been somewhat overstated. Thus in January 1833 the *Advertiser*, referring to the conduct of the town's electors on former occasions, warily observed:

We are far from believing that they were all guiltless, - yet the borough has been more sinned against than sinning, and why should six or seven hundred good men bear the odium attached to the sins of fifty or perhaps sixty who desecrate the privileges which they enjoy.<sup>721</sup>

The newspaper was highly conscious of the borough's reputation for venality and was determined that such notoriety should be laid to rest with the old electoral system.<sup>722</sup> With this object in mind, it constantly urged the electorate to pursue a more honest course. For instance, on 15 September 1832 it beseeched

<sup>718</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 7 May 1831, p. 4.

<sup>719</sup> Quoted in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 September 1832, p. 4.

<sup>720</sup> *Weekly Despatch*, 5 January 1833, quoted in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 12 January 1833, p. 4.

<sup>721</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 12 January 1833, p. 4.

<sup>722</sup> Since the turn of the century four candidates had had their election declared void. They were Thomas Hall and John Fordyce in 1802, Sir David Milne in 1820 and Sir John Gladstone in 1826. The town's corporation was also renowned for its venality. For an interesting analysis of the corporation's dissolute behaviour before 1835, see L. Gordon, *Berwick-Upon-Tweed and the East March* (Chichester, Sussex, 1985), chapter 8.

the electors:

Will you permit the name of your native place to be obnoxious to the very nostrils of honest men? - Will you have it written in corruption, and hackneyed round the land as a standing and evil jest with Gatton and Grampound?<sup>723</sup>

However, such exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and the electors of Berwick continued with their venal practices. Hence it was reported that in 1832 both Whig and Tory candidates gave money to the electors, especially towards the close of the poll on the second day, when "large sums were asked and given for votes."<sup>724</sup> Likewise in 1835 Donkin spent "Immense sums", Bradshaw "pulled out" a small amount, while Blake, who later had the audacity to blame his defeat on bribery, was "cleaned out".<sup>725</sup> As a result of this high expenditure, no candidate could be found to represent the Conservative interest at the by-election four months later, although it was reported that William Holmes was prepared to stand provided he could be assured of "one hundred volunteer votes" before the commencement of his canvass.<sup>726</sup> His failure to contest the seat suggests that such an assurance was not forthcoming.

Rather than erase its tarnished image under the new electoral system, Berwick's notoriety seems to have increased in the years after 1832. Following the election petition of 1852, which resulted in the election of that year being declared void, Thomas Phinn, the Liberal member for Bath, said in the Commons that it was

<sup>723</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 September 1832, p. 4. See also, for example, the *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 July 1832, p. 4. Gatton, with a population of 145, had only seven electors and was owned by Lord Monson, who sold it for £1,200 on condition that the member voted Tory. It was disfranchised under Schedule A of the 1832 Reform Act. Grampound, whose electors boasted that they received 300 guineas each for their votes, was disfranchised in 1821 and its two seats were transferred to Yorkshire. See Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, pp. 59, 62 and 166.

<sup>724</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 59, *Cowen Papers*, C763 and C764.

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>726</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 25 April 1835, p. 2.

the opinion of people acquainted with elections in Berwick that "It is of no use going down to Berwick unless you are prepared to pay the freemen all round."<sup>727</sup> He also said he believed that the corruption of Berwick was quite as notorious as that of Sudbury and St. Albans, two towns which had been disfranchised after a Royal Commission had found evidence of gross bribery and corruption.<sup>728</sup> Indeed, seven years after Phinn's damning pronouncement Berwick itself became the subject of a similar investigation.

Later in the chapter we shall consider whether or not Berwick deserved its reputation for corruption, but first we shall examine the ways in which that corruption was manifested.

## **BRIBERY**

Essentially there were three types of bribery in nineteenth-century English elections: the direct purchase of votes, indirect forms of payment and colourable employment - all of which played a prominent part in the political life of Berwick.

The cash value of a vote, like any other commodity, depended on the inexorable laws of supply and demand: the closer the contest, the more valuable the vote. According to O'Leary, the "normal" price of a vote during the elections immediately after Reform ranged from £1 to £10 in most boroughs.<sup>729</sup> By and large, Berwick conformed to this pattern. In 1852, for instance, votes were being sold for between £1 and £6;<sup>730</sup> while at the 1859 by-election they fetched between

<sup>727</sup> Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, Vol. CXXVI, 1853, 1129.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, 1126. Sudbury was disfranchised in 1844 and St. Albans in 1852.

<sup>729</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 15.

<sup>730</sup> Power, Rodwell and Dew, *Reports of the Decisions of Committees of the House of Commons in the Trial of Controverted Elections During the Sixteenth Parliament of the United Kingdom*, Vol. 2: *Case 8: Borough and Town of Berwick-upon-Tweed* (London, 1857), p. 216.

£2 and £5.<sup>731</sup> However, the price could be significantly higher. In 1832 the *Newcastle Journal* alleged that one man had received £15 for his vote.<sup>732</sup> At the same election another voter demanded £50 to poll for Beresford, but when he was offered only £35 by the Tory agent, William McGall, he refused it. The same voter later agreed to accept £35, but by then Beresford had effectively lost the contest and the vote was of no use.<sup>733</sup>

Holding out for the highest price was not always the best course of action, but some voters evidently thought it was a risk worth taking. In the 1863 by-election, when the price of a vote varied between £3 and £10, it was reported that about 200 voters were holding out for a higher figure.<sup>734</sup> Since the price of a vote could rise dramatically in just a few days, it is understandable that so many voters should wish to delay their decision until the final hour. In 1865 as election day approached the price of a Liberal vote "rose very rapidly from £2 to £5, £10, £15, £20," and on polling day reached £30 and even £35 and £40.<sup>735</sup>

Of course, Berwick was not the only borough where votes could fetch such high prices. At Ipswich in 1841 as much as £15 and £20 were given for a single vote, and it was rumoured that up to £30 had been offered.<sup>736</sup> Even worse, at Sudbury in 1835 it was estimated that the total amount spent on bribery averaged over £30 per voter;<sup>737</sup> while at Totnes the Conservatives were in the habit of bribing the Whig Duke of Somerset's tenants with sums varying from £60 to £150 per

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<sup>731</sup> Wolferstan and Bristowe, *Reports of the Decisions of Election Committees During the Eighteenth Parliament of the United Kingdom: Case XXIV: Borough of Berwick-On-Tweed* (London, 1865), p. 185.

<sup>732</sup> Reported in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 5 January 1833, p. 4.

<sup>733</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 59.

<sup>734</sup> "Elfin" in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, quoted in *The Berwick Advertiser*, 4 July 1863, p. 7.

<sup>735</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>736</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 157.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

head.<sup>738</sup>

When the price of a single vote could reach such high figures, it is not surprising that contesting an election sometimes required a huge capital outlay. Despite the *Advertiser's* claim that the 1832 election cost Donkin and Blake no more than £200 each,<sup>739</sup> it is probable that both candidates spent considerably more than this. In fact, the *Newcastle Journal* insisted that Donkin's election had cost him £1,500.<sup>740</sup> As for the third candidate, Beresford, one source alleged that the Tories had boasted before the canvass that £1,000 "would go a good way" towards securing their candidate's election, and that with a further £500 on the evening of the first day of polling they could have clinched it.<sup>741</sup>

If candidates were reluctant to disclose the exact amount of their election expenditure in 1832, they were even more reticent about the subject after 1854. In that year, in an attempt to eliminate bribery, Parliament passed the Corrupt Practices Prevention Act. One requirement of the new legislation was that every candidate should publish itemised accounts of his election expenses, which could be inspected by an auditor.<sup>742</sup> Not surprisingly, there was often a huge discrepancy between a candidate's legitimate expenditure and his actual expenditure. Even so, records do exist which relate to illegal election expenses after this date. In 1861, for instance, the Royal Commission at Berwick discovered that between 15 September 1857 and 12 March 1859 Charles Gordon had given £540 to William McGall for the purpose of maintaining his influence among the

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<sup>738</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 30.

<sup>739</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 December 1832, p. 4.

<sup>740</sup> Reported in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 5 January 1833, p. 4.

<sup>741</sup> "ANGLICANUS" in the *Berwick Advertiser*, 19 January 1833, p. 1.

<sup>742</sup> The system of election auditors proved ineffective and in 1863 it was abolished. Thereafter the task of inspecting election accounts was undertaken by returning officers, who were no more effective at preventing bribery than the auditors had been. See O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 24.

Berwick electors prior to his election in April 1859.<sup>743</sup> This, of course, was only part of Gordon's illegal expenditure. It seems likely that a further £100 was spent by McGall on Gordon's behalf just a few hours before the polling.<sup>744</sup>

The Commission also discovered the amounts expended at some of Berwick's earlier elections. In 1841, for instance, Matthew Forster spent £2,500, "owing, he said, to the means resorted to by his opponent".<sup>745</sup> In 1837 Richard Hodgson spent almost as much and admitted that his election in 1841 was also an expensive one. Finally, at the notorious 1852 Berwick election Forster spent £2,000, while John Stapleton, his fellow Liberal, spent £2,900.<sup>746</sup>

It is also illuminating to consider the amounts spent in other constituencies during our period. At the Bridgwater by-election of 1866 the supporters of the Conservative George Patton spent £2,000 in direct bribes in just a few hours; while his opponent, the Liberal Walter Bagehot, was informed after the election that £800 had been spent on his behalf, in addition to the £200 legitimate expenses.<sup>747</sup> At Gloucester in 1859 the actual expenditure of the Conservative Camden was £2,600 against a declared figure of £1,200; that of the Liberal candidates, Price and Monk, was £1,200 each, of which only £464 had been declared.<sup>748</sup> And at Lancaster in 1865 the Liberals spent £7,459, mainly in open bribes, and the Conservatives spent £7,070, although the declared expenditure of the two parties was £1,404 and £1,129 respectively.<sup>749</sup>

<sup>743</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. ix.

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii. Presumably Forster is referring to Richard Hodgson, who came second in the poll.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.* Both Forster and Stapleton were unseated on petition.

<sup>747</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 54.

<sup>748</sup> Jackson, "The British General Elections of 1857 and 1859", p. 330.

<sup>749</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 29.



Of course, such heavy expenditure was no guarantee that a candidate would be successful. Despite the £2,600 spent on Camden's campaign in 1859, he lost the election. Similarly, Donkin was defeated at Berwick in 1837, even though he had given "large sums as much as £25 for votes."<sup>750</sup> On the other hand, a candidate's failure to extend his largesse to an expectant electorate was likely to prove disastrous, as Miller discovered at Berwick in 1847 when he refused to "pull out".<sup>751</sup> For many electors there was no substitute for hard cash: according to one observer, the Conservatives had insufficient funds to match the Liberals' expenditure at Berwick in 1852, so "they dealt largely in promises but that was not substantial enough."<sup>752</sup>

The direct purchase of votes was supplemented by more indirect forms of payment, such as gifts to electors. The obvious attraction of this form of bribery was that it was much more difficult to prove, since there was no transaction between the donor and the recipient. Furthermore, such payments often took place prior to an election. In Nottingham, for instance, "basket-money" was distributed for weeks before an election, each voter receiving from ten to thirty shillings a week; while in Kingston-upon-Hull candidates presented gifts, known as "head-money", of one or two guineas to each elector.<sup>753</sup> The practice of paying head-money also prevailed at Berwick at least until 1852. According to the Conservative agent at Berwick, R. B. Weatherhead, head-money was considered by the freemen as a sort of right and was known as "gooseberries". At the 1852 election such payments amounted to £2

<sup>750</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 59.

<sup>751</sup> In other words, pay the voters. See Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 52. Miller came bottom the poll with only 13.7 per cent of the vote.

<sup>752</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 59. Not only were the Conservatives well beaten in 1852, but it was also the first time since 1835 that they did not have a share in the representation of the borough.

<sup>753</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, pp. 180 - 1.

or £3 per head.<sup>754</sup>

Sometimes loans were offered to electors. At the Berwick by-election of 1859 James Douglas tried to induce an elector to abstain from coming to Berwick and voting for Hodgson by promising him a loan of £50.<sup>755</sup> Similarly, at Coventry and Maldon large sums of money were lent to electors with no suggestion of repayment until the approach of an election; while at Stafford and Ipswich it was customary for election agents to pay the rates and taxes of the voters.<sup>756</sup> Often it was the electors themselves who approached the candidates. During the late eighteenth century Sir John Delaval, a local landowner, received numerous requests from Berwick voters in exchange for their votes. These requests included loans and leases at favourable rates, the settling of rent arrears, the paying of debts and the awarding of contracts.<sup>757</sup>

In freeman boroughs candidates would pay for the freemen's admission to the freedom of the borough in return for their support at election time. At Gloucester, where many of the 450 freemen were too poor to pay the 13s. 6d. fee necessary to acquire their freedom, it was a well-established custom by the 1850s for the candidates, or, later, the political associations, to pay such fees.<sup>758</sup> And at

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<sup>754</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vi. Similarly, at Peterborough Earl Fitzwilliam annually paid crowns to every scot-and-lot voter who chose to demand it. However, after the anti-Milton Liberals started distributing "Blue Crowns" to those who had supported them in 1837, the Fitzwilliam interest paid two crowns (10s.) to those who gave both their votes in the Milton interest and one crown (5s.) to those who split, or abstained from voting. The Select Committee appointed to inquire into the allegations contained in the petitions of certain electors and inhabitants of Peterborough, complaining of the interference of Fitzwilliam, concluded that although the Fitzwilliam crowns were originally charitable payments, they had taken on a political complexion: "Those payments . . . appear to Your Committee irreconcilable with purity of election, being calculated in various ways to influence the votes of the poorer voters." See P. P. 1852 - 53 (898), xvii, *Report from the Select Committee on Peterborough Election Petitions; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix*, p. 392. See also T. Bromund, "A Complete Fool's Paradise: The Attack on the Fitzwilliam Interest in Peterborough, 1852", pp. 47 - 67.

<sup>755</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. xv.

<sup>756</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 179.

<sup>757</sup> Stoker, *Elections and Voting Behaviour*, p. 319.

<sup>758</sup> Jackson, "The British General Elections of 1857 and 1859", p. 315.

Maldon the Liberal agent reported "it to be the constant practice for the candidate, or his agent, to pay the expense of the admission of the freemen."<sup>759</sup> The same procedure can be found at Berwick, Bristol, Coventry and Kingston-upon-Hull,<sup>760</sup> while at Durham Lord Londonderry's influence was heavily dependent upon the support of those freemen whose freedom he had funded.<sup>761</sup>

A sudden increase in the number of admissions in an election year is often an indication that the freemen had received some assistance towards the cost of securing their privilege. Table 5.1 shows the number of freemen admitted to the freedom of Lancaster between 1847 and 1865:

Table 7.1: Numbers of Freemen Admitted in the Borough of Lancaster,  
1847 - 1865<sup>762</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Admitted</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Admitted</u>
<b>1847</b>	145	<b>1857</b>	39
<b>1848</b>	17	1858	25
1849	24	<b>1859</b>	63
1850	17	1860	52
1851	40	1861	42
<b>1852</b>	82	1862	48
1853	31	1863	29
1854	16	<b>1864</b>	134
1855	19	<b>1865</b>	103
1856	28		

Note: election years are in bold.

A similar motif can be discerned at Berwick during the eighteenth century. In the year leading up to the 1734 general election, thirty-five freemen were admitted,

<sup>759</sup> Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 238.

<sup>760</sup> Brenchley, *A Place By Itself*, p. 127; Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 182; Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 238.

<sup>761</sup> Salmon, "Electoral Reform at Work", p. 239.

<sup>762</sup> W. O. Roper, *Materials for the History of Lancaster* (Manchester, 1907), p. 272, cited in Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 62.

whereas in the next four years the numbers were fourteen, nineteen, twenty-two and eighteen - a pattern which continued throughout the century.<sup>763</sup>

However, contrary to expectations, an examination of the number of freeman admissions at Berwick during the period 1832 to 1865 does not provide evidence that this trend continued beyond 1832 (see Table 7.2). If the freemen of Berwick were receiving financial assistance in acquiring their freedom under the reformed electoral system, it certainly did not have any effect on the number of annual admissions. The only occasions when the number of freeman admissions rose above thirty were in 1841, 1855 and 1862 - and only the first of these was an election year. At Lancaster the average number of freeman admissions during election years was 2.7 times greater than the average number of admissions during non-election years (i.e., 83.3 as opposed to 31.0). In contrast, at Berwick the average number of freeman admissions during election years was marginally lower than the average number of admissions during non-election years (22.5 as opposed to 23).

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<sup>763</sup> Brenchley, *A Place By Itself*, p. 127.

Table 7.2: Numbers of Freemen Admitted in the Borough of Berwick.  
1832 - 1865<sup>764</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Admitted</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Admitted</u>
<b>1832</b>	24	1849	27
1833	29	1850	22
1834	24	1851	25
<b>1835</b>	21	<b>1852</b>	20
1836	23	<b>1853</b>	21
<b>1837</b>	22	1854	13
1838	19	1855	32
1839	19	1856	27
1840	19	<b>1857</b>	25
<b>1841</b>	36	1858	27
1842	19	<b>1859</b>	15
1843	21	1860	21
1844	17	1861	15
1845	27	1862	33
1846	30	<b>1863</b>	22
<b>1847</b>	17	1864	23
1848	24	<b>1865</b>	25

Note: election years are in bold.

Of course, not all gifts came in the form of money. At Bristol the Conservatives distributed beef, known as blue-beef, among the electors after the election. Seven pounds were given to each Tory voter in 1832 and fourteen pounds in 1835.<sup>765</sup> We have already seen how Macdonald tried to win votes by dispensing coals to the Berwick electors in 1880, a practice which also occurred at Hertford and Boston.<sup>766</sup>

The importance of contributing to local charities and institutions was discussed in an earlier chapter.<sup>767</sup> However, it was a tradition which went back many years. In 1765 Berwick's sitting members, Thomas Watson and Sir John

<sup>764</sup> Berwick-upon-Tweed Guild Books.

<sup>765</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 173.

<sup>766</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>767</sup> See Chapter 3.

Delaval, each subscribed five guineas to a relief fund for the families of twenty-four fishermen who had lost their lives that year; and in 1773 Jacob Wilkinson and John Vaughan, prior to their election the following year, both contributed £25 towards the cost of installing a new organ in the parish church.<sup>768</sup> The parish church was also the recipient of a "rare and exquisitely stained window" donated by D. C. Marjoribanks in the 1850s.<sup>769</sup> Yet even this paled into insignificance compared to the £2,500 given by Charles Gordon for the building of St. Mary's Anglican Church in 1857 - 8. Marjoribanks and Gordon appear to have been among the most generous patrons of the town's charities and religious institutions.<sup>770</sup>

The third form of administering bribes, colourable employment, was also widely used. Such employment generally comprised a variety of election jobs, which were well paid for the little time and effort they involved. Thus at Derby members of nominal committees received five shillings per day for a week or more; while at Southampton a messenger received five shillings and a chairman from one sovereign to £2 per day.<sup>771</sup> In Dublin the Conservative candidate Sir Arthur Guinness engaged a number of officials whose titles - "street agents", "gutter agents" and "clergymen to the ward" - and the vagueness of their duties clearly suggests colourable employment.<sup>772</sup>

Sometimes bribes were administered in the form of compensatory payments for loss of wages, or in the form of travelling expenses. At Reigate in 1865 labourers were paid from three to six times their daily wages for loss of time on nomination and polling days.<sup>773</sup> And in 1861 David Alexander Lamb admitted to

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<sup>768</sup> Brenchley, *A Place By Itself*, pp. 129 - 30.

<sup>769</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 4 April 1857, Supplement.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.* and the *Berwick Warder*, 19 June 1863, p. 2

<sup>771</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 181.

<sup>772</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 55.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

the Royal Commission at Berwick, that at the by-election in 1859 he had given one elector forty shillings for coming from Sunderland and another fifty shillings for coming from Alnwick, "under colour of paying their travelling expenses, but in truth to secure their votes" for D. C. Marjoribanks.<sup>774</sup>

Occasionally, the jobs offered to electors in return for their votes were of a more permanent nature than the nominal tasks undertaken at election time. In 1837 R. S. Donkin, who as Surveyor General of the Ordnance had a good deal of Government patronage at his disposal, promised posts in the Customs, Excise and Navy in return for electoral support.<sup>775</sup> One elector even had the audacity to insist that his son's appointment to the Customs should be "signed, sealed, and delivered" before he gave his vote.<sup>776</sup> Yet it was not only Government ministers who rewarded their supporters. At the Berwick by-election of 1859 one elector was bribed by the promise of a situation on the North British Railway for his son, to vote for Richard Hodgson, the company's chairman.<sup>777</sup>

## TREATING

Treating, which was the most difficult form of corruption to prove, involved entertaining the electors with food and drink at the candidates' expense. The

<sup>774</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. xv. Sunderland is seventy-six miles from Berwick, and Alnwick is only thirty miles away.

<sup>775</sup> Although an open borough, the Government had always had considerable influence at Berwick through the Customs, Excise, Taxes and Post Office, as well as through the garrison, Navy and Ordnance. See L. B. Namier and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754 - 1790* (3 vols., London, 1964), p. 348; Stoker, "Elections and Voting Behaviour", p. 8; and Brenchley, *A Place By Itself*, p. 114.

<sup>776</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 18 March 1837, p. 2. "Government" boroughs could be particularly generous to voters. At Chatham in 1852 one elector was rewarded for his support by the appointment of his son as a letter-carrier in the Post Office through the influence of the successful Government candidate, Sir Frederic Smith; and at Harwich no fewer than seventeen places of profit were bestowed upon the electors during Peel's short administration of 1834 - 5. See Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 446 and 454.

<sup>777</sup> Wolferstan and Bristowe, *Reports of the Decisions of Election Committees*, p. 185.

process generally began once it was known that a contest would take place,<sup>778</sup> and it often continued until after the declaration.<sup>779</sup> When John Campbell Renton arrived in Berwick in July 1847, confirming the advent of a contest, the prospect of the treats that lay in store was the signal for much excitement:

Numbers of the electors were seen in a state of inebriety, and young and old in the community seemed to be caught up with the frenzy of the occasion. When the night set in the streets became thronged, while squibs and blazing tar-barrels were rolled along the streets by a tumultuous and elated crowd.<sup>780</sup>

Throughout the election public houses would be kept open, so that voters could obtain any refreshment they desired. For the sake of convenience, much of this entertainment took place at the inns where the candidates had their committee rooms. In 1837 the *Berwick Advertiser* observed, "A single sight of the staggering burgesses who issue from the quarters of Messrs. Holmes and Hodgson, will show where the treating goes on".<sup>781</sup> The quarters in this case were two coaching inns, the King's Arms and the Hen and Chickens. However, a variety of different establishments would be used, especially if the treating was to occur on a large scale. At Bradford in 1868 the Conservative candidate Henry Ripley and his agents spent £7,000 in treating in about 100 public houses;<sup>782</sup> while at Leicester each party opened a string of public houses at the start of the canvass and distributed tickets, believed to be worth from 3s. 6d. to 5s. per day, among the voters, which gave "free access to all the public-houses for eating and drinking the

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<sup>778</sup> The 1865 Royal Commission at Reigate found that it had been the practice since 1858 for hotels and public houses to be kept open for weeks on end before the election - at the expense of the parties. See O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 29.

<sup>779</sup> Until 1842 treating was not illegal provided it did not occur before the test of the writ.

<sup>780</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1847, p. 2.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 April 1837, p. 4.

<sup>782</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, pp. 55 - 6. The amount spent on treating in a county election could be even higher. At the Northumberland election of 1826 the Whig candidate Beaumont reputedly spent £11,000 in public houses in Alnwick Ward alone, and more than £5,000 on similar entertainment in Newcastle, where many county electors lived. See McCord and Carrick, "Northumberland in the General Election of 1852", p. 93.



whole time".<sup>783</sup> Ticket distribution was obviously a well-established practice. At Berwick in 1780 Delaval handed out 1,600 tickets valued at 5s. each, which could be redeemed at any of the forty public houses he favoured with his custom.<sup>784</sup>

Although the pages of the Berwick newspapers abound with allegations of treating, it is often difficult to find irrefutable evidence of such corrupt practices. One possible indication, however, of the existence of treating is the sudden increase in the incidence of drunkenness which usually accompanied a contested election. Certainly contemporaries viewed this phenomenon as evidence of treating. In 1837, for instance, the *Berwick Advertiser*, referring to rumours of Conservative treating, announced:

How far these rumours of Tory treating are correct we cannot pretend to say, yet we are inclined to believe they are not altogether without foundation: the old freemen who are seen rolling about the streets throughout the day and by whose well-known and melodious voices the slumbers of the peaceful and sober inhabitants of the borough are not infrequently disturbed - must be kept moist at some one's expence [sic] . . .<sup>785</sup>

Two weeks later the same newspaper reported that several drunken voters, having voted, "had to be rather ceremoniously handed to the door by the officers, bellowing 'Holmes and Hodgson for ever!'"<sup>786</sup> Later, at the declaration, "several of the low electors" had to be evicted from the Town Hall because of their drunken and noisy behaviour.<sup>787</sup>

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<sup>783</sup> Cited in Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", Vol. 1, p. 225.

<sup>784</sup> D. Stoker, "Berwick Elections 1754 - 1790" (Unpublished B.A. Dissertation, Manchester, 1973), pp. 32 - 3.

<sup>785</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 July 1837, p. 4.

<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 July 1837, p. 3.

<sup>787</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Similarly, in 1852 the *Berwick and Kelso Warder* reported that Stapleton's friends were trying to persuade electors to break their pledges to other candidates. The report referred to one individual in particular:

who proves his attachment to tee-totalism by filling every elector he can clutch beastly drunk, and has then the blasphemous audacity to attempt the administration of an oath to his inebriated victims that they will vote for Stapleton, no matter how sacred may be their pledges to either of the other three candidates . . . 788

The *Warder* also revealed that both of the Liberal candidates, supposing their return possible, had forfeited their seats by treating their committee-men and supporters to dinner.<sup>789</sup> In the event, the *Warder's* statement proved to be correct: Forster and Stapleton were elected, but were unseated on petition, the former for bribery and the latter for treating. Stapleton later begrudgingly admitted to having made mistakes during the 1852 election, excusing his actions on the ground that he and his friends had been "novices in electioneering matters".<sup>790</sup>

The outcome of the 1852 election petition seems to have had a salutary effect on the borough's electoral morality. The 1853 by-election was reckoned to be a pure election,<sup>791</sup> while the 1857 election was characterised by an absence of treating.<sup>792</sup> However, things soon returned to normal. In 1859 there were further allegations of treating by both parties;<sup>793</sup> while in 1863 the Liberal candidate, Alexander Mitchell, declared that he had for the first time in his life seen a great number of drunken electors come to the poll.<sup>794</sup> Undeterred by this experience,

<sup>788</sup> *Berwick and Kelso Warder*, 21 May 1852, p. 4.

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 April 1852, p. 2.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 March 1857, p. 3.

<sup>791</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vii.

<sup>792</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 21 March 1857, p. 3.

<sup>793</sup> See, for instance, the *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1859, p. 2; 7 May 1859, pp. 2 and 3; 14 May 1859, p. 2; and the *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

<sup>794</sup> *Berwick Journal*, 3 July 1863, p. 4.

Mitchell returned to the borough in 1865 by which time, if the *Warder's* charge of treating is to be believed, he appears to have overcome his squeamishness towards the electors' lack of sobriety.<sup>795</sup>

## INTIMIDATION

Intimidation, or undue influence, was the use of force or restraint upon a voter to influence his vote.<sup>796</sup> It could take a number of forms, the most common of which were physical threats, exclusive dealing, dismissal from employment and eviction from tenancies. All of these devices were resorted to at Berwick during our period.

Physical threats were generally administered by gangs of hired bullies, or crowds of partisan non-electors, whose object was to deter voters from voting for a particular candidate. This happened at the notoriously corrupt Berwick election of 1859, when ironworkers from Tweedmouth and Spittal gathered round one of the polling booths, hissing the Conservative voters and cheering the Liberals. After a while the ironworkers began to hustle and manhandle the Conservatives, so as to prevent them from reaching the booth. In one instance, voters were only permitted to escape from their ordeal by promising to plump for the Radical John Stapleton. Whether the mob's actions were authorised by the Liberal party, or whether they were simply a spontaneous outburst of popular feeling is not clear. However, Liberal leaders made no attempt to suppress this blatant intimidation and, indeed, appear to have found the whole episode highly amusing.<sup>797</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4

<sup>796</sup> Until the Corrupt Practices Prevention Act of 1854 there had been no definition of intimidation or undue influence. In 1883 the definition of undue influence was extended to incorporate threats of spiritual as well as secular injury. See Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, pp. 229 and 444.

<sup>797</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p.4.

There was further intimidation at subsequent Berwick elections. In 1863 "a number of roughs, strangers to the place" were brought into town to intimidate Conservatives on the hustings.<sup>798</sup> In 1865 a large group of Scotsmen "kept up a perpetual howling" at those who recorded their votes for the Conservatives;<sup>799</sup> while intimidation among neighbours "prevented many respectable people from voting as they desired."<sup>800</sup> Such was the situation in Tweedmouth and Spittal that the *Warder* maintained "a man can hardly venture to vote for a Conservative without exposing his life, and certainly his property, to danger of attack and destruction."<sup>801</sup> In 1868 there were numerous complaints of Liberal intimidation. Three of these, which included a smashed shop window, a wounded pig and a broken wall, proved to be unfounded.<sup>802</sup> However, other claims are harder to dismiss. A mob's efforts to disrupt polling were serious enough for one of the Conservative candidates, Richard Hodgson, to ask the sheriff, as returning officer, to adjourn voting - a request which was denied.<sup>803</sup> The *Warder* also asserted that 168 pledges to the other Conservative candidate, George Carpenter, were broken because of intimidation in Tweedmouth and Spittal:

To what are we to attribute the breaking of 168 of these promises? The truth is, that in Tweedmouth and Spittal the atmosphere is charged with intimidation. Timid people dare not vote for Conservatives. Some apprehend night attacks upon their persons or property; some fear the loss of business. All dread to place themselves in opposition to the public opinion of the two places, which is unmistakably that of violent opposition to constituted authority, and hatred of every established right. The result is that many people vote in these two towns for the Liberals against their own opinions. They simulate Liberalism to prevent their mills or their dwellings being destroyed, or themselves attacked and wounded.

<sup>798</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 26 June 1863, p. 7.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 July 1865, p. 5.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 November 1868, p. 2.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Others for the same reasons refrain from voting who would gladly swell the Conservative numbers if they dared.<sup>804</sup>

Similar attempts to interfere with the electoral process occurred in other parts of the country. In 1832 the Tories of Leicester complained that the reform sentiments of the crowds dissuaded some of their most respectable supporters from voting;<sup>805</sup> and at Durham in 1835 the mayor decided to adjourn the proceedings after the commotion in the market place had caused the polling clerk's table to be overturned.<sup>806</sup> At Bradford in 1837 the nomination ceremony was disorderly, Conservatives were roughly handled and hired gangs roamed the streets, "persuading" the voters.<sup>807</sup> And in 1837 the Birmingham Conservatives ascribed their defeat, after a successful start at the polls, to the violent actions of a large mob which attacked the Conservative voters.<sup>808</sup>

Sometimes electoral violence extended beyond the intimidation of electors and involved vicious fights between rival gangs of supporters, and even rioting. At Hertford in 1832 the Tory candidate, Ingestre, hired a gang of gypsies, while the reform candidate, Duncombe, employed a band of bargemen from Ware. On nomination day there was a fracas involving the two gangs, and Ingestre's gypsies were defeated. The following day the gangs clashed again, and this time the bargemen were beaten and driven from the borough.<sup>809</sup> At Bradford in 1837 a savage brawl ensued when a Conservative gang of miners and ironworkers encountered a gang of Radical handloom weavers and combers in Great Horton.<sup>810</sup> And at Warwick in 1832 serious rioting broke out, and a great deal of destruction was committed, when Radicals from Birmingham and Coventry

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<sup>804</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 20 November 1868, p. 4.

<sup>805</sup> Radice, "Identification, Interests and Influence", Vol. 2, p. 125.

<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>807</sup> Wright, "A Radical Borough", p. 143.

<sup>808</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 145.

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>810</sup> Wright, "A Radical Borough", p. 143.

attacked gangs drawn largely from the Earl of Warwick's estates. Eventually the Scots Greys were called in to suppress the disturbance.<sup>811</sup>

One of the most serious cases of rioting occurred at Wolverhampton during a county by-election in 1835. Large crowds assembled in the streets on the morning of the poll and began yelling, hooting, jostling and spitting as voters made their way to the polling booth. Those who voted for Anson, the Whig candidate, were cheered, while those who voted for Goodricke, the Conservative candidate, were hissed, buffeted and insulted. Many voters were knocked down, had their clothes torn and were smeared with mud and spittle. Various missiles were thrown into the polling booth, and the deputy-sheriff threatened to stop the poll because of the disturbance. However, worse was to come. The next day a crowd gathered outside the Swan Inn, where Goodricke had his committee-rooms, and assailed anyone who tried to enter or leave the building. By the close of the poll at four o'clock the crowd had grown to over 3,000 and was groaning and yelling and throwing stones. When the Reverend John Clare, a magistrate, came to the balcony of the Swan and implored the mob to disband, he was greeted with a hail of stones which struck him and broke the windows behind him. Twenty minutes later Clare read the Riot Act and ordered a party of dragoons to clear the streets. The rioters then retreated to a churchyard, locked the gates behind them and started pelting the troops with stones. The latter responded by opening fire, and by nine o'clock the mob had been cleared out.<sup>812</sup>

The worst case of electoral violence at Berwick occurred during the general election 1859. Although the nomination and polling had been marked by rowdy behaviour, the serious trouble did not start until the close of the poll at four o'clock on Saturday afternoon, when the Conservatives assembled in the Town Hall raised

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<sup>811</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 146.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149 - 51.

a hearty cheer at the success of their candidates. This aroused the hostility of their Liberal opponents, who began yelling, hooting, hustling and fighting. A fierce attack was then made on a number of Conservatives, some of whom attempted to escape and some of who tried to defend themselves. At about 4.30 p.m. the crowd - mainly non-electors - directed their attention towards the section of the hustings occupied by the Conservative candidates and their friends. They then rushed the outer barrier, which was broken down and clambered over a table, treading upon several boys who were seated there. Some of the mob made a rush at the poll books, but these were carried off by the deputy-sheriff, who, along with the sheriff, managed to escape from the hall. Wine bottles, glasses and plates in which refreshments had been brought to the poll clerks were broken and seized as weapons. Several people were knocked off the table, sustaining severe bruising, while the table itself, the railings of the hustings and a chandelier were all damaged. Once the mob discovered that all the official documents had been carried to safety and that the leading Conservatives had escaped, the disturbance gradually subsided.<sup>813</sup>

The mob then gathered outside the Town Hall and "seriously ill-treated" any Conservative electors who had the misfortune to be passing. Several Conservatives had their hats battered and their clothes torn. Even the wives of Conservative voters did not escape personal abuse. The mob also turned their fury on non-electors, one of their victims being a fish woman in the market who had her stall broken to pieces. After this, the mob marched on the houses of William McGall, R. B. Weatherhead and Dr. David Cahill, three of the town's leading Conservatives, smashing their windows and shouting "the most terrible threats and imprecations".<sup>814</sup> Their next stop was the residence of the vicar of Berwick, the Reverend George Hans Hamilton, on the Quay Walls. Against the advice of the

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<sup>813</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*

superintendent of police, the vicar came out to reason with the mob on the folly of their conduct. He informed them that any damage they might do would have to be paid out of the rates. This seemed to have a pacifying effect on the rioters. A few of the men asked for something to drink, but the vicar explained that he could not find ale for the whole crowd, and, instead, he threw a few shillings among the mob, telling them to go home. The mob promptly left the Quay Walls and passed over to Tweedmouth and Spittal, where they continued to smash the windows of Conservative electors. Straggling parties of rioters paraded the town for the remainder of the evening, but there were no further outbreaks of violence that day.<sup>815</sup>

However, rioting broke out again on Monday morning, when a crowd of 400 or 500 non-electors gathered in the Town Hall for the declaration of the poll. As the defeated Liberal candidates, Marjoribanks and Stapleton, entered the hall, they were received with cheers. In contrast, the two successful Conservatives, Gordon and Earle, were greeted by "groans, yells, hisses, and cats' noises". At about 10.30 a.m. labourers from Spittal and Tweedmouth ironworks rushed excitedly into the hall, to the obvious delight of the those already assembled there. As on Saturday, the mob attempted to storm the barriers in front of the hustings, but were prevented from doing so by Alexander Robertson, the ironworkers' employer, who ordered them to stand back. When the sheriff declared the result of the poll there was more hooting and hissing, which continued as the successful candidates each made a brief address.<sup>816</sup>

After the declaration the mob again paraded the town, threatening all the leading Conservatives. As they passed the Salmon Inn a large stone was thrown through the window of the room in which Charles Gordon was sitting. Once more

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<sup>815</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

<sup>816</sup> *Ibid.*



the rioters crossed over to Tweedmouth, where they broke the windows of several Conservatives, including those of Robert Towerson, whose wife was struck on the head by a stone, although she was not seriously hurt.<sup>817</sup>

Although the Berwick disturbance of 1859 had many features in common with the Wolverhampton riot of 1835, there were obvious differences. First, it lacked the intensity of the earlier disturbance. The Berwick police may have proved ineffective in quelling the outbreak,<sup>818</sup> but at least there was no need for military intervention as there had been at Wolverhampton.<sup>819</sup> Once the Berwick rioters had vented their anger at the Conservative victory and the manner in which it had been achieved,<sup>820</sup> they dispersed of their own accord. Second, the demonstration at Berwick was, in the main, both controlled and discriminating. As the *Advertiser* observed, "while the outbreak displayed in one sense the power of a giant, that strength was not made use of to a bad purpose - no personal injury was inflicted and even in the destruction of property there was moderation as well as discrimination in the selection of objects."<sup>821</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

<sup>818</sup> According to the *Berwick Warder*, the superintendent of police, Mr. Anderson, did his utmost to persuade the crowd not to rush the barriers at the close of the poll on Saturday afternoon. However, when the first barrier was breached, he turned his back on the mob and went to see the mayor. Other police officers who were present simply looked on as the mob surged forward. No effort was made to single out those who were the most active during the riot, such as Andrew Robson, a printer, who was described as "a kind of ruling spirit among the mob". (See the *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4). If the police were guilty of political partiality, they did at least refrain from becoming actively involved, unlike the constables at Bradford in 1835, who, according to the Conservatives, were used by the Liberals to intimidate voters. See Wright, "A Radical Borough", p. 164.

<sup>819</sup> The sheriff and vicar of Berwick, apprehending a breach of the peace, had applied to the county authorities for 12 county police. They had also applied to Edinburgh for the militia, but their application was refused. In contrast, the mayor argued that there was no need for extra police, for in the fifty years he had lived in Berwick there had not been a breach of the peace at an election. (See the *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4). There is no reason to disbelieve this statement. During his research on Berwick elections in the eighteenth century, Stoker could find no mention of a disturbance at any of the borough's elections. See Stoker, "Berwick Elections 1754 - 1790", p. 33.

<sup>820</sup> During the two years leading up to the election the Conservatives had been systematically bribing the electors. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 May 1859, p. 2.

<sup>821</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 14 May 1859, p. 2. The "objects" selected by the mob were, of course, Conservative houses.

Even though the bullying tactics of the Berwick mob dissuaded some Conservatives from voting as they would have wished, the Conservative victory suggests that such methods had a limited impact. However, this was not always the case. The use of threatening behaviour at Blackburn and Drogheda in 1868 was serious enough to invalidate both elections on the ground of general intimidation.<sup>822</sup>

Another common form of intimidation was "exclusive dealing"; that is to say, threatening to deal exclusively with tradesmen and shopkeepers who supported a particular party, or to withdraw custom from those who voted for the opposition. As the livelihood of shopkeepers depended upon the goodwill of their customers, it was an effective means of exerting political pressure. Such pressure could come from a variety of sources. At Westminster, for instance, shopkeepers were considerably influenced by their wealthy customers; while at Birmingham neighbours of a butcher threatened not to buy meat from him unless he voted Radical.<sup>823</sup> Any tradesman or shopkeeper foolish enough to ignore such threats soon suffered the consequences. At Chester in 1835 a printer who voted for the reform candidate discovered that all his official contracts had suddenly been cancelled and transferred to a Conservative rival; and in Birmingham shopkeepers who voted Conservative found the next day that a cross had been chalked on their doors and that no customers entered their shops.<sup>824</sup>

At Berwick both parties seem to have been adept at harassing shopkeepers. In 1859, for example, the *Advertiser* reported that a number of Conservative landed proprietors of the district had arrived in the town to solicit several tradesmen for their votes. This in itself did not anger the Liberal newspaper; it was the fact that

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<sup>822</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 56.

<sup>823</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 137 and 145.

<sup>824</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 186.

the men in question did not have any legitimate influence in the town.<sup>825</sup> As the *Advertiser* pointed out, "The very little these people do for the tradesmen of the town does not entitle them to interfere in any business which does not concern them."<sup>826</sup>

At the same election the bellman was sent around Tweedmouth and Spittal "to caution the public against patronising such shopkeepers and publicans as had voted for the Conservatives", and warning that "any who did so would be marked men and treated accordingly!"<sup>827</sup> Similar treatment was meted out to Radical shopkeepers. In September 1859 Robert Mathison, the Berwick agent of the Northern Reform Union, complained that the Whigs had done him much harm, driving off his customers and forcing him to take a mean shop "not one-fourth large enough" for his needs.<sup>828</sup> There are further recorded incidents of exclusive dealing in 1832, 1852, 1863 and 1868,<sup>829</sup> although it is highly likely that most elections witnessed the phenomenon to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>830</sup>

Shopkeepers were not the only voters whose livelihood could be threatened by undue influence. Employees were likewise vulnerable, especially when business was bad and jobs were scarce. In 1859 one of the chief officials of the

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<sup>825</sup> Exclusive dealing was openly advocated as a legitimate means of electioneering in a number of journals, most notably in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*. See Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 187.

<sup>826</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 16 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>827</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 6 May 1859, p. 4.

<sup>828</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859. Cowen Papers, C763. Cited in Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", p. 161. Presumably, this anti-Radical feeling can be explained by the 1857 election, when a Radical-Conservative alliance not only placed the Radical Stapleton at the head of the poll, but also enabled the Conservative Gordon to come within three votes of defeating the Liberal Marjoribanks. It is possible that Mathison upset the Whigs by splitting his votes between Stapleton and Gordon. Unfortunately, it is not possible to verify this, as there is no poll book for the 1857 election. Interestingly, Mathison did not poll again until 1868, when he voted for Stapleton and Bury.

<sup>829</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 September 1832, p. 5; 15 May 1852, p. 4; the *Berwick Warder*, 26 June 1863, p. 7; and 13 November 1868, p. 4.

<sup>830</sup> It is worth noting that shopkeepers were not averse to exerting their own influence by demanding instant payment of outstanding bills. See Wright, "A Radical Borough", p. 164.

North Eastern Railway visited Tweedmouth station and, calling the voters employed there, ordered them to vote for Marjoribanks. However, the voters responded to this coercion by declaring that they would rather lose their situations than vote for the Liberal candidate. The same official even attempted to browbeat voters employed by the North British Railway at Berwick station, but his threats were treated with contempt.<sup>831</sup> There were also allegations that high-ranking municipal officials "forced servants of the Corporation to withdraw, on pain of losing their favour, promises pledged to the Conservative candidates, and transfer them to Mr. Marjoribanks."<sup>832</sup> Similarly, in 1865 there were claims that intimidation by employers and fellow-workmen was "largely practised on the Liberal side";<sup>833</sup> and at the 1880 by-election Liberal workmen were reportedly sent out of town by their employers to prevent them voting.<sup>834</sup>

The use of such tactics to influence voting behaviour seems to have been fairly common. At Leicester, for instance, the textile manufacturers were reputed to exercise political pressure on their workers by threatening to seize their frames; while at Nottingham the practice of employers compelling their workers to vote as they directed was known as "thumbing".<sup>835</sup> In some cathedral cities it was the clergy who held sway. Thus at Canterbury a Conservative archdeacon discharged his butcher because he was a Liberal, and a canon went through his lists of

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<sup>831</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 22 April 1859, p. 3.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 July 1865, p. 4

<sup>834</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 23 July 1880, p. 4.

<sup>835</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 137.

tradesmen, deleting the names of those who had voted for the Liberal candidate.<sup>836</sup> In the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge college servants and lodging-house keepers were obliged to vote as the college authorities decreed.<sup>837</sup> Although there were numerous instances where workmen were dismissed for voting against their employers' wishes,<sup>838</sup> it is likely that in most cases the mere threat of dismissal was enough to guarantee a worker's compliance.

Another susceptible group of electors were tenants and leaseholders. This was especially so in the counties, where the vote of a tenant was regarded as the personal property of the landlord, which was to be disposed of as he saw fit. Thus in South Devon it was said that the tenants and leaseholders were totally under the control of their landlord; while in South Cheshire the landlords brought their tenants to the poll "just like well-drilled soldiers."<sup>839</sup> If there was any doubt in the tenant's mind about how he should vote, the threat of being evicted for disobeying his landlord's directive was likely to bring him into line. Such was the case in 1835, when a number of Whig landlords, including Lord Fitzwilliam and the Duke of Devonshire, forced their tenants to vote in their interest.<sup>840</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 186. The influence of the clergy is highlighted by Nossiter, who shows how the political preferences of successive bishops of Durham affected the voting habits of the electors of Bishop Auckland. In 1832 the 800 voters of the town gave 16.5 percentage points more support for the Tory candidate favoured by their bishop than South Durham as a whole. Even as late as 1868 there was a difference of 10.9 per cent among 2,000 voters in Auckland in favour of the Conservative candidate compared with the constituency overall. Whig bishops in 1841 and 1857, however, were able to swing the district in line with the south division in general. See Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, pp. 54 - 7. Similarly, a study by Patrick Joyce reveals that political allegiance in Blackburn and Bury was shaped by the powerful influence of the factory community. Joyce cites the example of St. Paul's ward, where Liberal power was centred upon the George Street West mills of R. R. Jackson. In 1868 George Street West voted 28 to 5 in favour of the Liberals, and the ward, known as the Liberal "Rock of Gibraltar" [sic], was retained by the party for most of the remainder of the century. See Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, p. 206.

<sup>837</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 186.

<sup>838</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>839</sup> Cited in Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 182.

<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182 - 3.

In the boroughs too landlords used their influence over their tenants to ensure that they voted as they were bid. When Lord Salisbury's influence at Hertford was being challenged by T. S. Duncombe during the early 1830s, he ruthlessly evicted his tenants in order to obtain their political obedience.<sup>841</sup> And at Ripon in 1832 Elizabeth Sophia Lawrence of Studley Park evicted nine of her tenants for failing to vote for her nominees, who had been defeated by two Whig candidates. The effectiveness of such a lesson was demonstrated at the 1835 election when all her tenants voted according to her wishes.<sup>842</sup> The same tactics were employed at Berwick in 1852, when Richard Hodgson and his friends resorted to threatening tenants. In one case, a lady who had "made herself very prominent in Mr. Hodgson's cause", called upon one of her husband's tenants to solicit his vote. When the tenant showed himself to be immune to her charms, she reminded him that when the house was next let, it would be let along with the vote.<sup>843</sup> Landlord influence was also prominent at Tynemouth, where the Conservative Duke of Northumberland was Lord of the Manor and owned much of the property in the town. At the 1852 election fifty-eight of his tenants had votes in the borough, and forty-two of these voted Conservative. One of them later testified before a Select Committee that if there had been a secret ballot he would have voted Liberal, but that in the current circumstances he had been unwilling to risk reprisals from his landlord.<sup>844</sup>

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<sup>841</sup> Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, p. 137.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>843</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 15 May 1852, p. 4.

<sup>844</sup> McCord and Carrick, "Northumberland in the General Election of 1852", p. 104. One of the most notorious cases of landlord intimidation occurred at Newark in 1829, when the Duke of Newcastle allegedly evicted tenants for refusing to vote as they were instructed. When challenged over his interference, he declared "is it presumed that I am not to do what I will with my own?" Cited in A. J. Heesom, " 'Legitimate' versus 'Illegitimate' Influences: Aristocratic Electioneering in Mid-Victorian Britain", in *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1988), p. 283.

## ATTEMPTS TO ERADICATE CORRUPTION

During the period there were several attempts to eliminate electoral corruption. The first of these was the abolition in 1839 of the partisan Grenville Committees, which tried election petitions, and their replacement by a General Committee of Elections, which was appointed by the Speaker of the House of Commons at the start of each session. The consequences of the new Election Committees were immediate. Following the 1841 election several petitions were suddenly withdrawn, which prompted J. A. Roebuck, the Liberal member for Bath, to introduce his famous 1842 motion for a Select Committee to inquire into the sudden withdrawals of petitions from six boroughs.<sup>845</sup> Roebuck's Select Committee proved that all of these petitions had been withdrawn through corrupt motives, and that both parties were involved.<sup>846</sup>

As a result of the Select Committee's findings, an Act was introduced by Peel in 1842, which provided that if a petition was withdrawn under suspicious circumstances, the House Election Committee could inquire further.<sup>847</sup> The Act also stipulated that treating before the test of the writ, during the campaign, or after the return would rank as a corrupt practice.<sup>848</sup>

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<sup>845</sup> The six boroughs were Reading, Penryn and Falmouth, Bridport, Nottingham, Lewes and Harwich.

<sup>846</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 21. Such compromises between rival candidates were not uncommon. They tended to conform to the following pattern: one of the sitting members would agree to vacate his seat if the petition against him and his colleague was abandoned. The remaining member would then promise that neither he nor his party would oppose the return of the petitioning candidate at the ensuing by-election. As a guarantee that the contract would be honoured, the remaining member would deposit a sum of money with a third party. See Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 259 - 63.

<sup>847</sup> Ironically, Sunderland had a compromise with Brighton even while the Roebuck inquiry was under way, whereby M. W. Attwood would withdraw his petition against Viscount Howick in return for the withdrawal of Summers Harford's petition against Lord Alfred Hervey. See A. J. Heesom, "A Corrupt Election Compromise in 1842", *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, Vol. IV, pp. 55 - 61.

<sup>848</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 21.

Despite the 1842 Act, and despite a measure introduced by Russell in 1841, which enabled evidence of bribery to be given before proof of agency at the trial of petitions,<sup>849</sup> the elections of 1847 and 1852 demonstrated that bribery and treating were still rife and that attempts to eliminate corrupt compromises had failed.<sup>850</sup> In 1852, for instance, there were forty-nine petitions - the highest number yet and the third highest of the period.<sup>851</sup> One of the 1852 petitions was from Berwick and it resulted in both of the members being unseated - one for bribery and the other for treating. However, had the numerous attempts by Richard Hodgson, the petitioner, to procure a corrupt compromise not been spurned by the sitting member, Matthew Forster, the outcome of the parliamentary inquiry would have been quite different: the case against Forster would have been abandoned, Stapleton would have been unseated, and Hodgson would have been elected unopposed at the subsequent

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<sup>849</sup> Prior to this it was necessary to establish a connection between the candidate and those who had committed bribery before proceeding with the evidence. Since the candidate could not be unseated without proof of agency, elaborate precautions were taken to conceal the connection between the candidate and the corruption practised on his behalf. After 1841 such precautions became pointless, for it was possible to start an inquiry with evidence of bribery and cast doubt on a challenged candidate before trying to prove agency. It even became possible, as the Sudbury case showed, to unseat a candidate for bribery *without* proof of agency. See Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. 135 - 6.

<sup>850</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 22.

<sup>851</sup> Although only twenty-five of these petitions were successful, this was a marked improvement on previous years. In 1837, for example, only four of the forty-seven petitions presented were successful. However, the increase in the proportion of successful petitions was not maintained. In 1857, for example, only five of the nineteen petitions were successful and in 1859 only twelve out of thirty petitions were successful. See Table 7.4.



by-election in 1853.<sup>852</sup>

Despite the exposure of Berwick's transgressions, it was the venality of two other boroughs that caught the public eye at this time and led to the introduction of another measure in the war against electoral corruption. After a thorough and damning investigation into the electoral affairs of Sudbury by a Special Commission in 1842, the Government introduced a Bill to disfranchise the borough, which was finally passed in 1844. Eight years later another corrupt borough, St. Albans, was investigated by a Royal Commission and suffered the same fate. The success of these two inquiries resulted in an Act in 1852, which provided for a joint address to the Crown requesting a Royal Commission to examine any constituency in which the House Election Committee believed that corrupt practices extensively prevailed.<sup>853</sup> Unlike the House Committees, a Royal Commission would have the power to force witnesses to testify. Within ten years Berwick would become the subject of such an examination.

The 1852 Act was followed by the Corrupt Practices Prevention Act of 1854. This contained comprehensive definitions of bribery, treating and intimidation. It

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<sup>852</sup> The details of the compromise are as follows: in November 1852 Richard Hodgson informed Matthew Forster, via the latter's son, John, that he would abandon his petition against him and proceed only against John Stapleton, if Forster promised not to oppose Hodgson's return at the ensuing election. A guarantee, in the form of a bond or bet for £1,000, was to be given by Forster. Both proposals were rejected by Forster. In April 1853 Forster was approached by Hugh Taylor (who, in the same month, was himself unseated at Tynemouth for bribery and treating), on Hodgson's behalf, and told that if he gave Taylor a cheque for £2,000 as security for any costs that might be incurred in the prosecution of the petition, no evidence would be offered against his return, provided he promised not to use his influence against a Conservative candidate at the next election. This offer was declined by Forster. A week later Forster's agent, James Coppock, proposed that no further evidence should be presented against Forster if the latter agreed not to oppose Hodgson at the coming election. This proposal was refused, but the following day, Stapleton having decided not to defend his return any further, it was finally agreed between Taylor and Coppock that no more evidence should be presented to the Committee, that costs not exceeding £800 were to be paid by Forster, and that Forster should not oppose any candidate proposed by Hodgson. However, this arrangement was made without Forster's consent and he was not informed of it until a fortnight later. See P. P. 1852 - 3, viii (604), 253, *Report from the Select Committee on the Berwick-upon-Tweed Election Petition Together with the Proceedings of the Committee*. For an account of a compromise at Sunderland, see Heesom, "A Corrupt Compromise in 1842".

<sup>853</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, pp. 22 - 3.

also introduced stiffer penalties for those found guilty of corrupt practices;<sup>854</sup> and made it obligatory for every candidate to publish itemised accounts of his election expenses, which could be inspected by an election auditor.

The Corrupt Practices Prevention Act had a limited impact on electoral corruption. On the positive side, there was a reduction in the number of petitions following the elections of 1857 and 1859 (See Table 7.4). Furthermore, a Select Committee appointed in 1860 to investigate the working of the Act discovered no evidence to suggest that corrupt practices had increased since 1854. However, the Committee also concluded that the system of election auditors was ineffective and recommended its repeal. This recommendation was implemented in 1863.<sup>855</sup>

The failure of the auditors to control illegal election expenses is borne out by the findings of the 1861 Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the existence of bribery at Berwick. At the 1857 election, for instance, Charles Gordon's legitimate expenses (i.e., those presented to the auditor) were £392 9s. 3d. However, these were later increased by £25 4s., a sum which had been unintentionally omitted from the auditor's account, and by a payment of £50 to Richard Hodgson to reimburse monies advanced by him to one Alexander Waite, a tailor, in remuneration of Waite's "personal services".<sup>856</sup> Although Waite told the Commissioners that he had borrowed £42 17s. 3d. from Hodgson for his own incidental expenses in looking after voters, he denied that any of it had been used for an unlawful purpose. However, Hodgson admitted that, without Gordon's authority, he had employed Waite "to further Captain Gordon's election by treating

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<sup>854</sup> Candidates found guilty of bribery faced expulsion from the House for the lifetime of the existing Parliament and a fine of £50; those guilty of treating and intimidation were liable to a fine of £50 and the risk of prosecution for a misdemeanour, but not the loss of their seat. Voters found guilty of bribery faced a fine of £10 and prosecution for a misdemeanour; while those guilty of treating and intimidation had their vote struck off.

<sup>855</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, pp. 24 - 5.

<sup>856</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. viii.

electors in public houses".<sup>857</sup>

There was further expenditure by Gordon which did not appear in his election accounts. Between September 1857 and April 1859 Gordon gave William McGall, his unofficial agent, £700, of which £160 was to be retained by McGall, while the residue of £540 was to be distributed by him among the voters for the purpose of "maintaining and increasing" Gordon's influence at a future election. With regard to these transactions between McGall and Gordon, the Commissioners concluded that "No account of the expenditure has ever been tended by the one or required by the other."<sup>858</sup> In addition, on 12 March 1859 Gordon gave McGall a further £100 as a present for himself. However, it was the Commission's belief that this money "was freely distributed by McGall among the voters within a few days if not within a few hours of the polling."<sup>859</sup>

Finally, the Commissioners found that before, during and after the 1859 by-election Hodgson withdrew £650 from his bank - a sum which he could not satisfactorily account for, beyond the denial that any of it was used directly or indirectly for his election. Notwithstanding Hodgson's denial, the Commissioners concluded that "this money had been used by McGall in bribery and was furnished by Hodgson with a corrupt intent."<sup>860</sup> Further investigations by Royal Commissions at Yarmouth, Lancaster, Reigate and Totnes after the election of 1865 proved conclusively that the law regarding election expenses was wholly ineffective.<sup>861</sup>

The continued existence of corruption during the 1860s only served to emphasise the inadequacy of the electoral reforms of the 1850s. Consequently, in

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<sup>857</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. viii.

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>861</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 31.

1868 Parliament passed the Election Petitions and Corrupt Practices Prevention Act (commonly known as the Parliamentary Elections Act), which transferred the jurisdiction over controverted elections from the House of Commons to the Court of the Queen's Bench. At the same time the penalties for bribery were made more severe: a candidate convicted for a second time would be disqualified for life from sitting in the House of Commons.<sup>862</sup> In dealing with a host of petitions arising from the 1868 election, the judges not only showed that they were more efficient than the House Committees, but their decisions also provided the foundations of a corpus of election law "far more scientific than the old."<sup>863</sup> Indeed, such was the impact of the Parliamentary Elections Act in comparison to the earlier electoral reforms of the period that one historian has described it as "the first effective attack on electoral bribery."<sup>864</sup>

The 1868 Act was soon followed by further electoral reforms. In 1872 the Ballot Act introduced voting by secret ballot, increased the number of polling places and abolished public nominations. However, those advocates of the ballot who hoped that it would have an immediate and far-reaching impact upon electoral corruption were soon disappointed. It certainly seems to have had little effect on bribery. As the 1874 election drew to a close the *Berwick Warder* announced:

We had hopes that the advent of the ballot would have put an end to the disgraceful demoralisation of the constituency which has characterised past elections under open voting. It is with disgust we learn that the scandalous system has been recommenced. Where Liberal gold is plentiful, it is still, it seems, to be freely scattered. The cause is a bad one, and the most nefarious means are still, it seems, to be used to support it. But we doubt if they will avail. They can but excite the indignation of all honest men, who will take care, by their votes, to give a final dismissal to all who believe that even under the

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<sup>862</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 35.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>864</sup> R. Blake, *Disraeli* (London, 1967; first published 1966), p. 495.

ballot the constituency is to be bought and sold.<sup>865</sup>

Although the same newspaper later asserted that "the contest was decided on purely political principles", and that a purer election had not occurred in the borough for a long time,<sup>866</sup> evidence from elsewhere supports the view that bribery persisted after 1872. The Commissioners who investigated the Sandwich by-election of May 1880 reported that:

It did not appear that the mode of taking votes by ballot had the slightest effect in checking bribery. On the contrary, while it enabled many voters to take bribes on both sides, it did not, as far as we could ascertain, render a single person unwilling to bribe for fear of bribery in vain.<sup>867</sup>

And the barrister Serjeant Ballantine, who as an advocate in the election courts had plenty of experience of election petitions, wrote in his memoirs: "I do not believe that the ballot will ever be effectual to prevent the practice [of bribery] . . ."<sup>868</sup>

If the Ballot Act failed to eradicate bribery, it did at least suppress undue influence. As we have seen, in previous Berwick elections Conservative candidates and Conservative voters had been subjected to a considerable amount of intimidation by the non-electors of the borough, and local Conservative leaders had made frequent requests for troops to be stationed in the town, so that order could be preserved. In marked contrast, the 1874 election was a peaceful affair. On 6 February the *Advertiser* was able to report:

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<sup>865</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 3 February 1874, p. 2.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 February 1874, p. 3.

<sup>867</sup> [C. 2796] p. xv. H.C. (1881). XLV, 15. Quoted in Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, p. 267. Sandwich was, in fact, disfranchised in 1885, along with Macclesfield.

<sup>868</sup> W. Ballantine, *Some Experiences of a Barrister's Life*, new edition, (London, 1898), p. 240. Quoted in Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, p. 267.

The General Election is not yet over, but by this time the great majority of the constituencies have chosen their representatives, and the all-absorbing affair is passing off with a brevity and a quietness that have hitherto been unusual, so that they seem striking in their very novelty. In some places there have been disturbances and rioting, but nothing to speak of in comparison with the noisy and turbulent times of past general elections.<sup>869</sup> In our own borough everything has been orderly and decorous. But while this has been the state of matters here and in most other quarters as far as could be judged by external appearances, there has been perhaps as much excitement, although of a quiet and undemonstrative kind, as formerly characterised general elections before the passing of the Ballot Act.<sup>870</sup>

Other constituencies reported similar improvements. The Mayor of Pontefract in a letter to the *Times* declared that the familiar scenes of the old days were entirely absent: there was no drunkenness, and no crowds at the polling places. At Preston the streets were almost as tranquil as on a normal day. And in large industrial towns, like Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, it was revealed that the ballot had made the proceedings more peaceful and orderly.<sup>871</sup>

By abolishing the public nomination and by providing a greater number of indoor polling booths which refused admission to the disfranchised, the Ballot Act reduced the risks of intimidation and disorder: no longer could crowds of non-electors attend the nomination and exert their influence; and no longer could they gather round the hustings on polling day to intimidate the voters, either by physical

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<sup>869</sup> In fact, there were ten cases of serious rioting in 1874: at Willenhall near Wolverhampton, Stourbridge in East Worcestershire, the Forest of Dean, Wolverhampton, Barnsley, Newcastle, Nottingham, North Durham, Sheffield, Thurles (Tipperary), Dudley and Holybridge. The trouble at Willenhall appears to have been as bad as any election disturbance since the riots at Coventry in 1832; at Stourbridge sixty police and 100 yeomanry restored order with difficulty; at the Forest of Dean the military were called out; and in Wolverhampton the Chief Constable and twelve of his men were forced to retreat and a magistrate was threatened with death if he read the Riot Act. However, as O'Leary points out: "It is not surprising that it [i.e. rioting] had not disappeared as soon as open voting was abolished, since the riots that occurred in 1874 took place (as before) during the campaign, not on polling day. The days of polling were remarkably free of incident." See O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, pp. 88 - 9.

<sup>870</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 6 February 1874, p. 3.

<sup>871</sup> Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, p. 432.

threats or by the threat of exclusive dealing.<sup>872</sup>

The final measure during our period in the war against electoral corruption was the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883. It was also the most effective.<sup>873</sup> The Act had two principal objects. First, it sought to curb election expenditure by introducing a list of maximum election expenses, which depended on the type of constituency and the size of its electorate;<sup>874</sup> and by regulating the number of agents, clerks, messengers and committee rooms that could be employed during an election. Second, it introduced stricter penalties for corrupt practices.<sup>875</sup> The Act's impact upon corruption can be seen in the reduction of election expenses,<sup>876</sup> and in the decline in the number of petitions at subsequent elections (see Tables 7.3 and 7.4). Nevertheless, bribery, treating and intimidation all persisted after 1885, even though they were effectively confined to a few old towns with venal

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<sup>872</sup> Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp. 157 - 8.

<sup>873</sup> According to O'Leary, the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act "was by far the most stringent ever passed in Britain against electoral malpractices; its effect was to transform the whole character of British electioneering within a generation." See O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 175.

<sup>874</sup> Excluding the candidate's personal expenses and the returning officer's charges, the cost of an election in English, Welsh and Scottish boroughs was not to exceed £350 if the electorate were below 2,000; and £380 if above 2,000, plus £30 for every additional 1,000 electors. In English and Scottish counties the cost was not to exceed £650 if the electorate were below 2,000; and £750 if above 2,000, plus £60 for every additional 1,000 electors. See O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 175.

<sup>875</sup> Anyone found guilty of corrupt practices faced one year's imprisonment (with the option of hard labour) and a fine of £200. Candidates found personally guilty of corrupt practices faced perpetual exclusion from the constituency concerned, loss of voting rights, and exclusion from the House of Commons and all public and judicial offices for seven years. Where candidates were found guilty through their agents, the punishment was merely exclusion from the constituency for seven years. Anyone found guilty of illegal practices was liable to a fine of £100, loss of voting rights, and exclusion from all public and judicial offices for five years. Candidates found personally guilty of illegal practices were liable to seven years' exclusion from their constituency, but where the agents were guilty and the candidates innocent the exclusion was only for the lifetime of the existing Parliament. Corrupt practices were: bribery, treating, undue influence, assaulting or abducting a voter, personation, perjury and a false statement in the return of expenses. Illegal practices were: exceeding the expense maxima, payment for conveyances, employment of voters, wearing party favours or marks of distinction, and any violation of the rules relating to personal expenses, election accounts and the employment of agents, clerks and messengers. See O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, pp. 174 - 5.

<sup>876</sup> Although candidates often continued to present inaccurate election accounts, there is no evidence that they significantly exceeded the limits set by the Act. See Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics*, p. 55.

habits.<sup>877</sup> One of these was Worcester, which in 1906 became the scene of the last Royal Commission to inquire into a British election.<sup>878</sup>

Table 7.3: Expenses Incurred by Candidates at General Elections, 1880 - 1900 <sup>879</sup>

1880	£1,786,781
1885	£1,026,645
1886	£624,086
1892	£958,532
1895	£773,333
1900	£777,429

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Table 7.4: Number of Petitions Succeeding on the Ground of Bribery, etc., 1832 - 1900 <sup>880</sup>

<u>Year of Election</u>	<u>Number of Petitions Presented</u>	<u>Number Successful</u>
1832	23	6
1835	16	2
1837	47	4
1841	26	10
1847	24	14
1852	49	25
1857	19	5
1859	30	12
1865	61	13
1868	51	22
1874	22	10
1880	28	16
1885	8	3
1886	3	0
1892	12	5
1895	7	1

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<sup>877</sup> Hanham, *The Reformed Electoral System in Great Britain, 1832 - 1914*, p. 18.

<sup>878</sup> For an account of the continuation of electoral corruption after 1885, see O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>879</sup> C. Cook and B. Keith, *British Historical Facts, 1830 - 1900*, (London and Basingstoke, 1975), p. 137.

<sup>880</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, Appendix 1.



Since the last election in which Berwick qualified as a separate borough occurred in 1881, it would be futile to even contemplate an evaluation of the Act's effectiveness in what was essentially a different constituency. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the conduct of the parties during the 1885 election was a vast improvement on their antics at some of the earlier elections. As the *Advertiser* remarked on the eve of the election:

Whatever decision the electors may arrive at, it must be admitted that on the whole the contest has been conducted in a fair spirit on both sides by the leaders of the respective parties. The candidates themselves have acted up to the motto *Noblesse oblige*,<sup>881</sup> and everything that each has done during the contest has been marked by gentlemanliness and honourable feeling towards one another. Amongst their followers and admirers also there has, until the last week or two, been little of that ill-feeling and bitterness which are often the outcome of the zeal of partizanship.<sup>882</sup>

The polling, so often the scene of over-zealous partisan behaviour, passed off "as quietly as the most orderly politician could desire." At Berwick, Tweedmouth, Alnwick, Wooler, Chatton and Belford there was little or no excitement, the only disruption occurring at Spittal, on account of the township having lost its polling station under the new arrangements.<sup>883</sup> Furthermore, there appears to have been none of the usual recrimination that occurred in the aftermath of a Berwick election, thanks to "a disposition on the part of all to forget past contention and strife."<sup>884</sup>

However, there is evidence to suggest that electoral corruption at Berwick was in decline even before the passage of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act.

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<sup>881</sup> The candidates were Earl Percy (Conservative) and Sir Edward Grey (Liberal).

<sup>882</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 27 November 1885, 3. From all accounts, the only actions which marred the election were the alleged attempts by Conservative farmers to prevent many of their workers, who were likely to vote for the Liberal candidate, from going to the poll; and the interruptions which took place during the candidates' speeches. See the *Berwick Advertiser*, 27 November 1885, p. 3 and 4 December 1885, p. 3.

<sup>883</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 4 December 1885, p. 4.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Although John McLaren petitioned against the return of David Milne Home after the 1880 by-election on the grounds of bribery, treating and undue influence, the judges upheld the Conservative member's election, concluding that corrupt practices had not prevailed on either side.<sup>885</sup> Similarly, at the 1881 by-election the *Berwick Advertiser* reported that "there was no insinuation of treating or corrupt practices, and it is believed that this was one of the purest elections ever fought in Berwick".<sup>886</sup> Not before time, and with a little parliamentary assistance, the town was beginning to shed its tarnished image.

## CONCLUSION

Having discussed the nature of electoral corruption in the post-reform period as well as the principal steps taken to eliminate corrupt practices, we are left with two important questions. First, did Berwick deserve its reputation for venality? And, second, what effect, if any, did corruption have on voting behaviour in the borough?

Any attempt to answer the first of these questions will inevitably rely heavily upon the report of the 1861 Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the existence of bribery at the Berwick elections of 1859. Although there were four successful election petitions during our period, none of these produced an investigation as thorough as that of the Commissioners. The first successful petition was in 1852 and it resulted in a void election after the Select Committee had determined that John Stapleton was, by his agents, guilty of treating and that Matthew Forster was, by his agents, guilty of bribery.<sup>887</sup> The second was in 1860

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<sup>885</sup> Edward Loughlin O'Malley and Henry Hardcastle, *Reports of the Decisions of the Judges for the Trial of Election Petitions in England and Ireland, Pursuant to the Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868*, Vol. III (London, 1881), pp. 178 - 83.

<sup>886</sup> *Berwick Advertiser*, 28 October 1881, p. 2.

<sup>887</sup> Power, Rodwell and Dew, *Reports of the Decisions of Committees of the House of Commons in the Trial of Controverted Elections During the Sixteenth Parliament of the United Kingdom*, Vol. 2, p. 217.

and it led to a recommendation for a Royal Commission to investigate the borough after the Committee discovered that bribery extensively prevailed at the by-election in August 1859.<sup>888</sup> The third was in 1863 and it culminated in the conclusions that no case of bribery was proved, and that it was not proved that corrupt practices extensively prevailed at the election.<sup>889</sup> The fourth successful petition was in 1880 and it produced the ruling that corrupt practices had not prevailed on either side.<sup>890</sup>

The 1861 Commission sat daily in Berwick (except for an adjournment for one week) from 30 July to 1 September, and afterwards six times in London. Since the Commissioners found no suspicion of corruption attached to the 1853 election, they did not enter into the details of that or of any previous election. However, they did receive "general information as to the previous political reputation of the borough."<sup>891</sup> Of particular significance is the fact that the freemen were generally presented as "the most accessible to the influence of bribery".<sup>892</sup> Thomas Bogue, the mayor, for instance, told the Commissioners that before 1853 "bribery was reported to have extensively prevailed, principally among the freemen"; while John Graham, a resident of Berwick for fourteen years, said that "since he came to Berwick the opinion has always prevailed that the freemen will not vote unless they are paid for their votes"; but he added to this his opinion "that the householders are as bad as the freemen." Another witness, Mr. Jeffrey, a solicitor of Jedburgh, who was sent to Berwick in 1859 to collect evidence in support of the prosecutions

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<sup>888</sup> Wolferstan and Bristowe, *Reports of the Decisions of Election Committees During the Eighteenth Parliament of the United Kingdom*, p. 185.

<sup>889</sup> Wolferstan and Bristowe, *Reports of the Decisions of Election Committees During the Eighteenth Parliament of the United Kingdom*, p. 233. The fact that bribery was not proved did not, of course, mean that bribery did not take place. The petitioner's case was not helped by the fact that two material witnesses absconded before they could be served with the Speaker's warrant. See Wolferstan and Bristowe, *Reports of the Decisions of Election Committees During the Eighteenth Parliament of the United Kingdom*, pp. 229 - 33.

<sup>890</sup> Bean, *The parliamentary representation of the six northern counties of England . . . from 1603 to . . . 1886*, p. 63.

<sup>891</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. v.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi

initiated by the Northern Reform Union against some of the electors for bribery, told the Commissioners that he had heard in the town itself that "an election never took place without extensive bribery on both sides." And Matthew Forster, the Liberal member from 1841 to 1852, stated that although it was difficult to ascertain what number of electors were bribeable, his own impression was that while he sat for the borough "two thirds of the freemen and some portion of the householders were corrupt."<sup>893</sup>

Connecting this evidence of general reputation with the fact that large amounts were spent by the various candidates at the elections of 1837, 1841 and 1852,<sup>894</sup> and with the fact that the two successful candidates were unseated in 1852, the Commissioners concluded that "we could feel no doubt that the parliamentary elections at Berwick down to the year 1853 were attended with very considerable corruption."<sup>895</sup>

In contrast, the 1853 by-election was characterised by its purity, although, as the Commissioners observed, "As that election followed immediately on the avoidance for bribery of the return of the members elected in 1852, its purity has been reasonably attributed to the fear of ulterior consequences induced by the recent exposure."<sup>896</sup> In other words, the election was pure only because the electors were afraid that another inquiry might lead to their disfranchisement.

However, the main task of the 1861 Royal Commission was to investigate the elections of 1857 and 1859. In the event, it was an investigation fraught with difficulty. As the Commissioners observed in the introduction of their report:

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<sup>893</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vi. This would mean that in 1852, for example, about 235 freemen were bribeable.

<sup>894</sup> See above.

<sup>895</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vii.

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid.*

In the investigation which we were charged to conduct, the difficulty experienced by us in obtaining any reliable information upon which to shape our inquiries soon gave ground for believing that nothing would be disclosed which could be withheld. During the inquiry itself the majority of the witnesses displayed a mental reservation through which it was difficult to break; while not a few prevaricated and perjured themselves with the utmost hardened effrontery.<sup>897</sup>

The Commissioners attributed this pervasive dishonesty partly to an apprehension that a truthful disclosure would result in either personal or general disfranchisement, and partly to "a perverted notion of duty" which made some of the witnesses reluctant to betray those who had bribed them.<sup>898</sup>

Yet, despite this general reticence on the part of the witnesses, the Commissioners were able to paint a fairly comprehensive picture of the 1857 and 1859 elections. In 1857, for instance, there had been some suspicion that Charles Gordon's position on the poll had been achieved by illegitimate means. As a stranger who came to Berwick only ten days before the election, he was not expected to do very well. His canvass was not a favourable one, and he confessed to one of his opponents, D. C. Marjoribanks, that he had no more than 100 pledges. Indeed, his chances of success looked so slim that he retired to Edinburgh on the morning of the nomination. However, John Renton Dunlop, the chairman of his committee, and the Reverend George Hans Hamilton were more sanguine, and Gordon was persuaded to return to the borough, where he was defeated by only two votes. The Liberals were certainly surprised by the unexpected support he had received. Marjoribanks, for example, said he thought that Gordon's position was due to the promises he had made about what he would do for the town after the election.<sup>899</sup> On the other hand, Hamilton argued that the presence of three Liberal candidates, each trying to get as many single votes as possible, had given Gordon

<sup>897</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. v.

<sup>898</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>899</sup> Gordon had said that if he was elected he might give money for some public building for the benefit of the whole town. See P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vii.

a chance of success. After considering the testimony of all concerned, the Commissioners decided that "nothing was adduced in evidence to warrant us in concluding that Captain Gordon's election was not, so far as he was personally concerned, legitimately conducted."<sup>900</sup> However, as we have already seen, others, like the erstwhile Conservative member for Berwick, Richard Hodgson, were especially active in furthering the cause of the Conservative candidate. It is little wonder that Dunlop and Hamilton were more optimistic than Gordon about his election prospects.

If Gordon had been a political novice in 1857, he certainly learned how to curry favour with the Berwick electors in time for his next foray into electoral politics. Not only did he donate over £2,000 for the building of a church,<sup>901</sup> but he made regular trips to Berwick in 1858 - 9, visiting the sick and giving them money.<sup>902</sup> He also employed Hamilton to dispense his charities. These included the distribution of coals, the payment of occasional sums to the poor and subscriptions to charitable societies. In all, Gordon had resolved to spend about £200 a year at Berwick. However, this was not the limit of his largesse. He also retained William McGall as his agent by a fee of £50 and gave him money to distribute among the poor.<sup>903</sup> Gordon's motives were perfectly clear:

I gave McGall the money with a sort of mixed object; one was, no doubt, to keep up my influence in the place; it had also reference to the peculiar poverty of the place, which had struck me very much. I instructed McGall not to exclude voters; he was to give money in all

<sup>900</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. vii.

<sup>901</sup> He admitted to the Commissioners that when he discovered that Berwick already had sufficient places of worship, it did occur to him that he might have found other places where a church was more wanted. However, as a gentleman, he felt bound to honour his promise, and the church was accordingly built. Naturally, he denied his generosity was actuated by political motives. See P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. viii.

<sup>902</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. viii - ix.

<sup>903</sup> Since 1847 McGall had been responsible for distributing money among the freemen, for the purpose of cultivating the Conservative interest in the borough. See P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. ix.

cases where there was poverty; but then he was not to exclude voters, because a great many of the voters were more needy than many of the paupers. I gave him a general discretionary power. He saw that it had reference to the election, that I was charitably disposed, and that I wished to help the people. There were no details gone into.<sup>904</sup>

In all, McGall spent £540 in the advancement of Gordon's object. It was distributed by him "to some hundreds of individuals, of whom a large proportion were freemen."<sup>905</sup> A further £100 was spent by McGall within a few days of the poll. Indeed, according to Johnson How Pattison, who was himself bribed, McGall paid sixty or seventy voters from £1 to £3 in his house, popularly known as the "gull-hole", the night before the election.<sup>906</sup>

So confident of a Conservative victory was Gordon that he invited R. A. Earle, Disraeli's private secretary, to stand with him at Berwick in 1859. Gordon assured Earle that his election would be inexpensive, since he was certain to benefit from Gordon's popularity in the borough. And indeed he did, coming second in the poll behind Gordon. The Commissioners were in no doubt that Earle's election owed much to "the potent monetary influences which had been discreetly employed by McGall for the promotion of the Conservative interest in the town."<sup>907</sup> Gordon himself concurred with this view, although he was inclined to believe that other factors played a part:

It is only natural to suppose that the money distributed through McGall had a considerable influence in securing the election, although I believe that people voted according to their predilections, and on other grounds as well.<sup>908</sup>

<sup>904</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. ix.

<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>906</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>907</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii. In contrast to the widespread corruption on the part of the Conservatives, the Commissioners found that, apart from one elector who was rewarded after the election for having voted for Marjoribanks, there had been "no corrupt expenditure on the Liberal side with reference to the 1859 election." See P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. xii.

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid.*

This may well have been the case. However, the return of two Conservatives in 1859 was very much against expectations. Since their landslide victories in 1852 and 1853 the Liberals had dominated Berwick politics; and although there was always enough Conservative support in the borough to allow for the possibility of returning one Conservative candidate, the likelihood of achieving a double victory by legitimate means was fairly remote. It certainly did not happen again during our period, although Richard Hodgson only narrowly failed to become Berwick's second Conservative member at the 1859 by-election. However, this election too was far from pure.

The 1859 by-election was brought about by the resignation of R. A. Earle. Although there had been a compromise between Marjoribanks, Gordon and Earle,<sup>909</sup> this did not prevent the Berwick Conservatives from mounting a challenge at the August election. As in April, corruption played a prominent part in the contest. The Commissioners reported that bribery was committed on both sides by individual supporters of the two candidates, but that they were unable to determine the exact extent to which it was carried on. They entirely absolved Marjoribanks from the suspicion that he either directly or indirectly supplied money for the purpose of corruptly influencing the constituency. Although they failed to discover the existence of any organisation for the purpose of bribery on the Liberal side, they did find that on polling day three individuals were "actively engaged in endeavouring to promote Mr. Marjoribanks' election by corrupt payments and offers."<sup>910</sup> Yet this was nothing compared to the bribery practised by the Conservatives, which the Commissioners described as "more systematic, and

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<sup>909</sup> Earle was to retire following the withdrawal of Marjoribanks' petition against the two Conservative members. Marjoribanks was then to stand unopposed. However, the compromise was arranged by the London agents of the parties involved and did not have the approval of the Berwick Conservatives, who, resenting this outside interference in the borough's affairs, invited Hodgson to stand against Marjoribanks at the by-election.

<sup>910</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. xiv.



almost wholly performed by the agency of William McGall.”<sup>911</sup> McGall had been very active on polling day, visiting the “George” and the “Woolpack” public houses, where he had bribed a number of electors to vote for Hodgson with money which was believed to have been provided by Hodgson for that express purpose.<sup>912</sup>

In their report the Commissioners named four individuals, including Gordon and McGall, who were guilty of bribery in April 1859 by corruptly giving or promising money for votes; and fifteen who were guilty of bribery by receiving money for their votes. In addition, they named twelve individuals, including Hodgson and McGall, who were guilty of bribery in August 1859 by giving or promising money for votes; and twelve who were guilty of bribery by receiving money.<sup>913</sup>

The damning conclusions of the 1861 Royal Commission are supported by Robert Mathison's account of corruption in the borough. In a letter to Richard Reed, the secretary of the Northern Reform Union, Mathison describes the bribery and treating that occurred at Berwick between 1832 and 1859, drawing particular attention to the “Capital election” of 1852 and the “bribery election” of 1859.<sup>914</sup> According to Mathison, after the 1859 election he heard “a Gentleman who did ‘business’ for the Whigs at many elections” say that there “are two hundred voters who will not poll without money.” Mathison told Reed that he believed this to be true.<sup>915</sup>

If this evaluation of the corruptibility of the Berwick electorate is accurate, it would mean that of the 703 electors who were entitled to vote in 1859, just over 28

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<sup>911</sup> P. P. 1861 (2766), xvii, *Berwick Bribery, Royal Commission*, p. xv.

<sup>912</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv - xvii and xvii.

<sup>913</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

<sup>914</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 59.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*

per cent of them were bribed to do so. On the other hand, if Forster's estimate of the number of corrupt electors is taken into consideration, the figure rises to above 35 per cent.<sup>916</sup> Either way, this is bribery on a large scale. It would place Berwick on a par with boroughs like Yarmouth, where 33 per cent of the electors were proved to have given or received bribes,<sup>917</sup> and Beverley, where 37 per cent of the electorate were open to bribery;<sup>918</sup> but behind the most venal boroughs of the period, such as Reigate, where the proportion of the electorate affected by bribery was nearly 50 per cent,<sup>919</sup> St. Albans, where almost 64 per cent of the electors habitually took money,<sup>920</sup> Lancaster and Totnes, where corruption involved about 66 per cent of the electorate,<sup>921</sup> and the incorrigible Bridgwater, where 75 per cent of the constituency were "hopelessly addicted" to giving or receiving bribes.<sup>922</sup> Since all of these boroughs were disfranchised for corruption,<sup>923</sup> Berwick can count itself lucky to have escaped a similar fate.

With such a high proportion of the electorate susceptible to bribery, it would be easy to assume that the outcome of an election would be determined by the amount of money which found its way into the pockets of the voters. However, there is compelling evidence to suggest that this was not the case. In his study of electoral politics in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire,<sup>924</sup> M. A. Manai has shown that poll book evidence casts much doubt on the alleged importance of corruption on the outcome of elections. By tracing a number of voters over a period of time, he

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<sup>916</sup> This figure is based on the number of voters who polled in 1852 and on Forster's impression that about two-thirds of the freemen were bribeable. It does not take into consideration that "portion" of the householders who were also corrupt. It is, therefore, a conservative estimate. See above.

<sup>917</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 29.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>920</sup> Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain*, p. 65.

<sup>921</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, pp. 29 - 30.

<sup>922</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>923</sup> St. Albans was disfranchised in 1852; Yarmouth, Reigate, Lancaster and Totnes in 1868; and Beverley and Bridgwater in 1870.

<sup>924</sup> The three boroughs examined by Manai were Lancaster, Oldham and Rochdale.

discovered that they did not change their political allegiances and were not swayed by money. Other factors, such as occupation, age, location and religion, were much more significant determinants of voting behaviour than money. "Bribery", argues Manai, "may have confirmed rather than changed political views."<sup>925</sup>

Other historians have also questioned the importance of bribery in determining election results. For instance, in his analysis of 3,716 electors during four Colchester elections, Andrew Phillips found that their voting behaviour appeared consistent and partisan.<sup>926</sup> He concludes, "If Colchester voters were venal, they were consistently so: only 1% of four-time voters switched party twice."<sup>927</sup> Likewise, J. R. Vincent has shown that in constituencies throughout the country there was a strong correlation between occupation and political affiliation, suggesting that corruption had a limited impact upon voting behaviour. As he observes:

... though the relative will and power of each party to buy votes varied enormously from election to election and from candidate, the patterns of occupational preference remain relatively stable from year to year and from one place to another. Croesus fought many elections, but he never made shoemakers into good Tories, or butchers into good Liberals.<sup>928</sup>

This view is endorsed by T. J. Nossiter, who, in his study of voting behaviour in the North East of England, points out that even if the case is not conclusive, "there are good grounds for believing opinion to have had a continuous relationship to occupation from 1832 onwards, not only in the north-east, but in other large towns as well."<sup>929</sup> Notwithstanding all the evidence of extensive bribery

<sup>925</sup> Manai, "Electoral Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century Lancashire", p. 190.

<sup>926</sup> A. Phillips, "Four Colchester Elections: Voting Behaviour in a Victorian Market Town", p. 205.

<sup>927</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>928</sup> Vincent, *Pollbooks*, p. 11.

<sup>929</sup> Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*, p. 170.

and treating unearthed by Election Committees and Royal Commissions, Nossiter warns that, "it would be perhaps unwise to assume that a voter necessarily accepted money from a party he would not have supported anyway."<sup>930</sup>

Such a cautious approach to the relationship between money and voting behaviour would appear to be justified by evidence from this investigation. Using the reports of the 1852 Election Committee and the 1861 Royal Commission in conjunction with existing poll books, it is possible to trace the voting behaviour over a series of elections of the twenty-eight voters who took bribes at the general elections of 1852 and 1859 and at the by-election of 1859 (see Table 7.5).

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<sup>930</sup> Nossiter, "Aspects of Electoral Behavior in English Constituencies, 1832 - 1868", p. 161.

Table 7.5: Voting Record of Berwick Electors Who Were Bribed in 1852 and 1859

	<u>1847</u>	<u>1852</u>	<u>1853</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1868</u>
<u>Bribed in 1852</u>								
Aaron Dickeson	s	L	Cp	C	C			
Edward Keen	s	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
<u>Bribed in April 1852</u>								
Mark Sample				s	L	L	L	
Henry Allan				C	L	L	L	C
Joseph Marshall	C	C	s	C	L	L	L	C
William Collins	C	C	C	C	C	C	Cp	C
Mark R. Tomkins				C	C			
Robert Gladston	C			C				
George Todd				C	C			
Vaughan Curry	C	s	s	Cp	C		L	C
Charles Whillis		Cp	s	C	C			
Thomas Brown	C	C	Cp	C				
John Carrs	s	L	L	C				
Charles Forsythe	Cp	s	s	C	C			
Thomas Weatherhead		s		C				
James Lyall		s	Cp	C	C			
William S. Bouts				C	C			
<u>Bribed in August 1859</u>								
Matthew Middlemiss	s	s	s	C	C	C		
James Grey	s	s	Cp	C	C	C	C	C
Robert Buglass				C	C	C	s	C
George Keen	s	s	Cp	C	C	C	C	C
Robert Blaylock				s	C			
Robert McQueen	s	L	s	C	C	C	s	C
Alexander Melrose		L	L	s	C	C	s	
William Miller				C	C			L
James U. Brown				s	C	C	C	C
Johnson H. Pattison	Cp	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Thomas B. Buglass				C	C	C	L	C

Key: C = Conservative; L = Liberal; Cp = Conservative plumper; s = split vote.

Note: there is no poll book for 1857.

As all of these voters are known to have been corruptible, they are amongst those most likely to have allowed their voting behaviour to be influenced by money. Yet an analysis of their voting record, which in some cases spans as many as eight elections, produces an overall impression, not of a group of electors who were constantly changing their political allegiance, but rather of a group who were

consistently loyal to one particular party. Such a picture of partisan voting would appear to confirm Manai's assertion that money confirmed rather than determined the voting preferences of those who took bribes at elections.

Of course, there were always electors to whom this rule did not apply. At Beverley, for instance, it was reported that out of the 1,000 voters who were open to bribery in 1868,<sup>931</sup> a good third (over 12 per cent of the electorate) were known as "rolling stock". In other words, an adequate bribe would make them roll to the other side.<sup>932</sup> No doubt most constituencies had their share of these voters. It was alleged that Donkin lost at Berwick in 1837, "because the men who took his money - sold again to the tories and thus did him in two ways at once."<sup>933</sup> Similarly, in 1865 it was said that many of those electors who were charged in Mitchell's petition with having received bribes in 1863, had broken their pledges to Cargill and voted for Mitchell.<sup>934</sup> If such claims are true, the number of voters who sold out to the highest bidder must have been small. This is confirmed by the figures on voting consistency in Chapter 4,<sup>935</sup> as well as by the voting patterns displayed in Table 5.5. It is further supported by Manai's analysis of individual voting behaviour at Lancaster, which suggests that "the majority of voters remained loyal to specific parties rather than changing their political allegiances in line with whichever party offered them monetary incentives."<sup>936</sup>

Taking into consideration the poll book evidence of Berwick and of other constituencies, it is difficult not to concur with John Phillips' conclusion that:

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<sup>931</sup> There were around 2,700 voters at Beverley in 1868.

<sup>932</sup> O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices*, p. 52.

<sup>933</sup> Mathison to Reed, 29 September 1859, MSS. Account Berwick Elections, 1832 - 59.

<sup>934</sup> *Berwick Warder*, 14 July 1865, p. 4.

<sup>935</sup> See Tables 4.20 - 4.23.

<sup>936</sup> Manai, "Influence, Corruption and Electoral Behaviour in the Mid Nineteenth Century: a case study of Lancaster, 1847 - 1865", p. 161.

The survival of bribery and other undue influences notwithstanding, most electors after 1832 chose to give their support to one of the parliamentary parties. . . . Moreover, once an elector had chosen a party and cast his votes for it, he was likely to continue to support that party for the rest of his parliamentary voting career. If bribery was an active force at these elections, it seems to have been notably ineffectual.<sup>937</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> John A. Phillips, "Unintended Consequences: Parliamentary Blueprints in the Hands of Provincial Builders", in *Parliamentary History*, 17 (1998), Part I, p. 97.

## CONCLUSION

This examination of electoral politics in Berwick between the Reform Act of 1832 and the Redistribution Act of 1885 has revealed much about the nature of electoral politics during a period of substantial historical change.

Although rival factions occasionally caused problems by seeking to bring forward their own candidate, the selection procedure for parliamentary candidates generally worked well. Even when the more radical element within the Liberal party caused indignation among the party leadership by inviting their own candidate, John Stapleton, to stand in 1868, the Liberals were able to put their differences behind them and vote for Stapleton on polling day. One thing that would not be tolerated, however, was the notion that a candidate could be chosen without reference to the wishes of the electors. Any suggestion of a compromise between candidates and sitting members was bound to be greeted with hostility, as Miller, Hodgson and Marjoribanks all discovered. It is also apparent that, despite the development of a party-orientated electorate, locality and personality remained important factors throughout the period. The Liberal Government's attempt to foist the hapless McLaren onto the electors of Berwick met with sufficient resentment to allow a local Conservative, who had come bottom of the poll at the 1880 general election, to win the by-election four months later. Similarly, Jerningham's landslide victory in 1881 showed that a candidate with local connections could easily overcome religious prejudice in his bid to defeat an outsider.

An examination of Berwick's poll books yields some interesting information on the nature and voting behaviour of Berwick's electors between 1832 and 1872. The First Reform Act was followed by a decline in the size of the electorate, a pattern which, according to Taylor, was repeated in numerous other former



freeman boroughs. This was partly the result of the disfranchisement of the non-resident freemen, who in Berwick's case had formed almost 50 per cent of the pre-reform electorate; and partly because of the failure of many of the newly enfranchised to register their entitlement in the immediate aftermath of the Act. The size of the Berwick electorate remained below the pre-reform level until the Second Reform Act brought about a massive increase of almost 81 per cent. This was followed by a less dramatic increase of nearly 49 per cent in 1881, demonstrating the impact that a closer attention to the annual registration of voters could have on the size of the electorate. Despite the restricted size of the electorate (until 1868 only about 23 per cent of the adult male population over 20 were enfranchised), those townsmen who were entitled to vote generally did so. For most of the period turnout at Berwick was above the average for a two-member borough in the northern region, as revealed in Nossiter's study of the North East. A vital issue, or bribery, or efficient party organisation could each make a significant contribution to the number of voters who could be mobilised at election time.

Analysis of Berwick's poll books suggests that occupation was a significant indicator of political preference, endorsing the findings of Vincent and Nossiter, rather than echoing the doubts of Radice and John Phillips. Unfortunately, the absence of rate books at Berwick precludes the possibility of conducting a more meaningful analysis of occupational voting by investigating the economic background of individual voters. Looking at the poll books themselves, it is evident that the voting behaviour of occupational groups in Berwick generally conformed to the national pattern. As in most English boroughs, merchants, craftsmen and retailers mainly voted Liberal, whereas labourers and unskilled workers were usually the most Conservative of all the groups. However, two groups, the drink interest and the agriculturalists, bucked the national trend by voting Liberal, perhaps showing the effect that local factors could have on voting behaviour. A

candidate who refused to endorse the Temperance movement could count on the support of publicans and brewers regardless of his political colours. Likewise, politics could sometimes play a subservient role to religion at the polling booth. Analysis of a sample of Berwick voters in 1865 suggests a striking correlation between religious denomination and political preference. This relationship is even more pronounced among the town's religious establishment: Berwick's Anglican clergy voted for the Conservatives, whilst Nonconformist ministers gave their support to the Liberals, showing that Berwick followed a similar pattern to the constituencies studied by Radice and Andrew Phillips.

The poll books also indicate that voting consistency was relatively low between the elections of 1832 and 1835, whereas it was impressively high between the elections of 1859 and 1868. This change can be explained by the unimportance of party labels during the reform period and by the increasing significance of partisan voting during the later period. Increasingly, voters came to identify with a particular party as national politics began to supersede local concerns. Yet, compared to other boroughs, Berwick appears to have been late in developing party adherence, following more closely the model proposed by T. J. Nossiter rather than the one advocated by John Phillips.

Another interesting result of poll book analysis is the contrast in the voting preferences of the freemen and the ten-pound householders. While the former tended to vote Conservative, the latter voted Liberal. This seems to have been in line with other boroughs. The Whigs' attempts to disfranchise the freemen in 1832 and again in 1835, combined with their attack on freeman property rights in 1835, appears to have alienated the freemen and pushed them towards the Conservative camp, just as Salmon found in his study of Canterbury. This had significant long-term consequences, for it helps to explain why, in Berwick, where the freemen

formed about 50 per cent of the electorate, the Conservatives could often be assured of a share in the representation of the borough. It was only after the introduction of the household suffrage in 1867 that the freemen were finally in the minority, but even then it was still possible for the Conservatives to win one of the Berwick seats - provided they were prepared to field a local candidate. One corollary of the Second Reform Act was the increasing polarisation of the Berwick electorate between the Conservatives on the north side of the Tweed and the Liberals on the south side.

Newspaper accounts of Berwick elections show that they ceremonially followed a sequence of events, which included the registration of electors, the candidates' addresses, the public entries of the candidates, the canvass, the reading of the writ, the nomination, the show of hands, the poll, the declaration, the chairing of the successful candidates and the closing dinners. It was a procedure which, as O'Gorman and Vernon have shown, was repeated at elections throughout the country. In time some of these conventions were discarded in favour of a less ritualistic process. The introduction of private nominations and secret voting in 1872 was a crucial step in this direction. As the ceremonial aspect of elections went into decline, so too did the part played by the disfranchised. No longer able to participate in the nomination ceremony and barred from the polling booths, where they had once wielded some influence, the non-electors found themselves increasingly marginalised. However, extensions to the franchise in 1867 and 1884 ensured that many of those who had once attended elections in a supporting role, now had the opportunity to play a more substantial part in the electoral process.

Another trend was the growing importance of national issues and the corresponding decline in the significance of local issues. A series of important

national issues, such as parliamentary reform, free trade and religion arguably played a crucial part in determining the outcome of elections both at Berwick and in other boroughs. In particular, the Whigs' espousal of reform in 1832 and the Liberals' championship of free trade in 1852 appear to have proved decisive. Although there were various factors capable of influencing voting behaviour, it would be foolish to overlook the importance of opinion among them, as Davis, Fisher, Manai and John Phillips have all demonstrated. Many voters were consistently partisan and supported the principles of their adopted party, both in county and borough elections.

This interest in national issues was both reflected and encouraged by the provincial press. The growth of the newspaper industry during the Victorian era had important political consequences, for it became essential for each political party to possess an organ through which it could disseminate its views. Newspapers like the *Liberal Advertiser* and the *Conservative Warder* may not have transformed voting preferences, but they almost certainly confirmed them. Political propaganda had always been an essential part of electioneering, and newspapers ensured that each party's rallying cry was broadcast in the cheapest, most effective and most convenient manner possible.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that bribery, treating and intimidation were as much a part of the reformed electoral system as they were of the old system. All boroughs appear to have been corrupt in the sense that some of their electors were prepared, or even expected, to be paid for their votes. Some boroughs, however, had large sections of their electorate who were corrupt. Even in an age when corruption was the norm, these boroughs were severely castigated for their venality. Berwick was not amongst the worst of the boroughs renowned for their venality, but it certainly deserved its notoriety. A high proportion of Berwick's

electors were susceptible to bribery, and the borough may consider itself fortunate to have escaped disfranchisement after the investigation of the 1861 Royal Commission.

Although there were various attempts to purge the electoral system, bribery, treating and intimidation continued unabated, for the most part, until late in the period. It was not until the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883 that any real progress was made in the fight to eliminate corrupt practices, although the Ballot Act of 1872 had helped to reduce the amount of intimidation that had blemished the electoral process.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of corruption in Berwick, it is doubtful that corrupt practices actually affected voting behaviour. Poll book evidence from this and other boroughs strongly suggests that bribery and treating had a limited impact on the way in which electors cast their votes. Although money was readily taken from a candidate, it seems likely that the electors involved had already decided to vote for the candidate in question. Very few electors actually sold their vote to the candidate who offered them the most money. Indeed, the voting behaviour of individuals over a series of elections shows that the majority of electors, once they had decided to vote for a particular party, remained loyal to that party for the rest of their voting careers. As Manai observes in his reassessment of Lancaster's reputation for venality, whatever form corruption took and however widespread it might have been, it was no more than a small part of a whole process. It might have kept the wheels turning, but it never dominated the system. Therefore, its effects on electors' political preferences were arguably negligible. What applies to Lancaster also holds good for Berwick - and, no doubt for numerous other supposedly corrupt boroughs.

Despite Berwick's geographical location, it was not an isolated borough, immune to national trends. Most of the developments in electoral politics which were experienced by other English boroughs were also felt at Berwick. However, these developments were filtered through the unique nature of the constituency. Consequently, their impact needs to be judged in a local context as well as a national one. For much of our period electoral politics were very much a local affair, even though national issues and events were beginning to impinge upon this parochial world. The fact that local factors could still play a dominant role in Berwick's political affairs as late as 1881, when Hubert Jerningham's local connection was a decisive factor in his defeat of Henry Trotter, suggests that this transformation from provincial to national politics was a slow and uneven process. However, all this was about to end.

In 1885 Berwick, after 352 years, ceased to be a parliamentary borough sending two representatives to Westminster, and became a sub-division of the county of Northumberland with a single member of Parliament. The town, which had seen so many political changes since 1832, was to undergo the most dramatic change of all. Not only was the area of the new constituency much larger than that of its predecessor, covering nearly 800 square miles, but the size of its electorate rose substantially from 1,989 to 9,691 - an increase of 387 per cent. Nevertheless, there were some features which endured - most significantly, the rivalry between the Liberals and the Conservatives, who were now competing for only one seat. For thirty-seven years the Liberals continued to dominate electoral politics in the new constituency, but in 1922 the Conservatives won the seat and retained it for thirteen years. Thereafter Berwick has changed hands three times with both parties controlling the constituency for long periods, most notably under the twenty-two-year stewardship of the Conservative Anthony Lambton and that of the present member, the Liberal Alan Beith, who has represented Berwick since 1973. Despite

the rise of the Labour party during the twentieth century, no Labour candidate has ever succeeded in wresting control of Berwick from the Liberals and Conservatives.

## APPENDIX 1: ELECTION RESULTS

**General Election, 11 and 12 December, 1832** <sup>938</sup>

Sir Rufane Shaw DONKIN (Whig)	371
Sir Francis BLAKE, Bt. (Whig)	357
Lt. Col. Marcus Beresford (Tory)	345

**General Election, 6 and 7 January, 1835**

James BRADSHAW (Con)	410
Sir Rufane Shaw DONKIN (Whig)	350
Sir Francis BLAKE, Bt. (Whig)	337

Appointment of Donkin as Surveyor-General of the Ordnance

**By-election, 27 April 1835**

Sir Rufane Shaw DONKIN (Whig)

**General Election, 25 July, 1837**

Richard HODGSON (Con)	357
William HOLMES (Con)	354
Sir Rufane Shaw Donkin (Lib)	328

**General Election, 30 June, 1841**

Matthew FORSTER (Lib)	394
Richard HODGSON (Con)	344
Thomas Weeding (Con)	335

**General Election, 29 July, 1847**

Matthew FORSTER (Lib)	484
John Campbell RENTON (Con)	463
William Henry Miller (Con)	151

**General Election, 7 July, 1852**

Matthew FORSTER (Lib)	412
John STAPLETON (Lib)	335
John Campbell Renton (Con)	251
Richard Hodgson (Con)	210

Election declared void on petition

<sup>938</sup> All election dates are based on the polling day. Under the Reform Act of 1832 the time allowed for polling in each constituency was two days. After the general election of 1835 this was reduced to one day in the boroughs.



**By-election, 13 May 1853**

Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS (Lib)	473
John FORSTER (Lib)	385
John Campbell Renton (Con)	196
Richard Hodgson (Con)	157

**General Election, 28 March, 1857**

John STAPLETON (Lib)	339
Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS (Lib)	271
Captain Charles William Gordon (Con)	269
Matthew Forster (Lib)	250

**General Election, 30 April, 1859**

Captain Charles William GORDON (Con)	366
Ralph Anstruther EARLE (Con)	348
Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks (Lib)	330
John Stapleton (Lib)	257

Resignation of Earle

**By-election, 20 August 1859**

Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS (Lib)	305
Richard Hodgson (Con)	304

Death of Gordon

**By-election, 29 June 1863**

William Walter CARGILL (Con)	328
Alexander Mitchell (Lib)	310

**General Election, 12 July, 1865**

Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS (Lib)	396
Alexander MITCHELL (Lib)	367
William Walter Cargill (Con)	295
Joseph Hubback (Con)	268

**General Election, 17 November, 1868**

Viscount BURY (Lib)	669
John STAPLETON (Lib)	609
Major George Wallace Carpenter (Con)	508
Richard Hodgson (Con)	424

**General Election, 4 February, 1874**

Sir Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS (Lib)	617
Captain David Milne HOME (Con)	533
John Stapleton (Lib)	418
Viscount Bury (Lib-Con)	330

**General Election, 31 March, 1880**

Sir Dudley Coutts MARJORIBANKS, Bt. (Lib)	687
Hon. Henry STRUTT (Lib)	614
Colonel W. M. Macdonald (Con)	552
Captain David Milne Home (Con)	457

Succession of Strutt to the Peerage - Lord Belper

**By-election, 19 July 1880**

Captain David Milne HOME (Con)	584
Rt. Hon. John McLaren (Lib)	582

(After a scrutiny it was found that there were 581 votes for McLaren)

Elevation of Marjoribanks to the Peerage - Lord Tweedmouth

**By-election, 26 October 1881**

Hubert E. H. JERNINGHAM (Lib)	1046
Henry J. Trotter (Con)	529

By the Redistribution Act of 1885 the borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed ceased to have an independent representation, and became merged into the Berwick Division of North Northumberland.

**APPENDIX 2: PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES  
FOR BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, 1832 - 1885**

**BERESFORD, Marcus.** M.P. 1826 to 1832. Born 28 July 1800. Second son of the Hon. and Rev. George Beresford and grandson of the first Baron Decies. Entered the army; second lieutenant 21 Foot September 1817; captain 1824; lieutenant-colonel Nov. 1827; colonel Nov. 1841; lieutenant-colonel 3rd Foot December 1835 to May 1842 when placed on half-pay; major-general June 1854; commandant at Bangalore, with the rank of lieutenant-general, in the East Indies Sept. 1857; colonel of the 20th Foot Sept. 1858; general March 1866. M.P. for Northallerton 1824. Died Leamington 16 March 1876. A Tory.

**BLAKE, Sir Francis,** third baronet. M.P. 1827 to 1834 and candidate 1835. Born Heston, Middlesex 1774. Succeeded 22 May 1818. Lived at Tillmouth Park, about 10 miles S.E. of Berwick. Died 10 September 1860. A Liberal.

**BRADSHAW, James.** M.P. 1835 to 1837. Second son of Robert Haldane Bradshaw, M.P. for Brackley, 1802 to 1832. Captain in the navy. M.P. for Brackley 1825 to 1832 and Canterbury 1837 to his death in 1847. A Tory.

**BURY, LORD.** See **KEPPEL.**

**CARGILL, William Walter.** M.P. 1863 to 1865 and candidate 1865. Born 31 December 1813. First son of William Cargill, a founder of Otago settlement, New Zealand 1847. One of the Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms June 1854; adjutant April 1856 to June 1863. Educated at Edinburgh and called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn January 1859, but never practised. Captain-commandant 14 Perthshire Volunteers November 1860 to September 1866. Candidate Taunton 1880. Died 47 Avenue Henri Martin, Paris 23 May 1894. Buried Brompton Cemetery, London. A Conservative.

**CARPENTER, George William Wallace.** Candidate 1868. Only child of Colonel Carpenter who was killed at the Battle Inkerman; his grandfather, General Carpenter, was a relative of Hon. Charles Carpenter, M.P. for Berwick 1790 to 1796. Ensign in the 41st regiment June 1851; lieutenant in the 7th Fusiliers 1854; served in Turkey; and at the Battle of Alma, where he was wounded in the thigh. Captain Jan. 1855; major 1858; served at Gibraltar with the 7th Fusiliers and afterwards exchanged into the 32nd Light Infantry; retired from the service 1864. A Conservative.

**DONKIN, Sir Rufane Shaw.** M.P. 1832 to 1837 and candidate 1837. Only son of General Robert Donkin. Ensign in the 44th regiment March 1778; lieutenant Sept. 1779; captain May 1793; and major 1795. Served in the West Indies in 1774, at the taking of Martinique, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, Fort Bourbon and the recapture of Guadaloupe by the French, during part of which time he acted as brigade-major. In 1775 he was aide-de-camp to General Musgrave. In 1796 he went with Sir Ralph Abercromby to the West Indies and was at the capture of St. Lucia. In 1798 he served in the expedition to Ostend and was wounded and taken prisoner there. In

May 1798 he became a lieutenant-colonel in the 11th regiment of Foot and went to the West Indies in 1799, but returned 1800. He went again in 1801 and was there three years. In May 1805 he was made permanent assistant-quarter-master-general and went on the expedition to Copenhagen. In April 1808 he was made a colonel and in July went to Portugal as deputy-quarter-master-general, and remained so until April 1809; he commanded a brigade at the passage of the Douro, at the attack of the rear-guard at Salamonde, at Talavera (for which he received a medal), and in the retreat on Portugal in Dec. 1809. Soon after he was quarter-master-general in the Mediterranean for some time, when he went to Bengal and was second in command on the staff there. He was made a major-general June 1811; lieutenant-general 1821; and general June 1838. He was made colonel of the 80th regiment April 1825, but was removed to the colonelcy of the 11th Foot March 1837. He was made a K.C.B. April 1822. He was Governor of the Cape of Good Hope two years and commander of the forces there. He was Surveyor-General of the Ordnance from April 1835 to his death in May 1841. He was made a Grand Cross of the Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order and was made a G.C.B. in 1837. He was one of the original Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society and F.R.S. and also a Fellow of other learned Societies. He committed suicide at Southampton by hanging. He was candidate for Stockbridge 1826 and was M.P. for Sandwich 1839. A Liberal.

EARLE, Ralph Anstruther. M.P. 1859, but accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. Second son of Charles Earle of Everton, Lancashire. Born Edinburgh 1835. Educated at Harrow. Entered the diplomatic service in October 1854, when he was made an attache at Paris. There he remained until 1858, when he was appointed second-paid attache at Vienna, which he resigned on being elected for Berwick. He was private secretary to Disraeli in the Government of the Earl of Derby March 1858 to June 1859; and Parliamentary-Secretary to the Poor Law Board July 1866 to March 1867. He was M.P. for Maldon 1865 to 1868. Went into business, becoming an agent for Baron Hirsch in the Turkish Railway Negotiations. Died Soden, Nassau 10 June 1879. A Conservative.

FORSTER, Matthew. M.P. 1841 to 1853, when he was unseated for bribery, and candidate 1857. Son of Matthew Forster of Durham. Born Durham 1785. A partner in the London firm of Forster and Smith, African merchants. Was a major figure behind the opening up of the British Trade with the West African coastline. Gained public renown through his energetic support of the Ant-Slavery cause during the House of Commons Select Committee hearings on the Slave Trade in 1847. Died Belsize House, Belsize Lane, Hampstead 2 September 1869. A Liberal.

FORSTER, John. M.P. 1853 to 1857. Born 1817. Eldest son of the above. In November 1852 he acted as intermediary between his father and Richard Hodgson, when the latter offered to withdraw his petition against Forster in exchange for Forster's promise not to oppose his return at the 1853 by-election. When Hodgson's offer was rejected, John successfully contested Berwick in his father's stead. Inherited his father's business interests in London and in the South Hetton Colliery Company. Died 91 Victoria Street, London 7 January 1878. A

Liberal.

GORDON, Charles William. Candidate 1857, but, fearing his lack of success, he relinquished the contest. However, he was nominated in his absence and brought back almost by force to the town, and though the utmost exertions were used to seat him, he was defeated by two votes. M.P. 1859 to 1863. Although returned as a Conservative, he upset many of his supporters by voting too often with the Palmerston Government upon vital questions of Conservative policy. Born 1817. Was third son of Charles Gordon, of Fyvie Castle, Aberdeenshire, son of the Hon. Alexander Gordon, who was third son of the second Earl of Aberdeen. Captain of the Madras Light Infantry in the East India Company's service. He was the main donor of St. Mary's Anglican Church in Castlegate. Died 26 Pall Mall, London 15 June 1863. A Conservative.

HODGSON, Richard. M.P. 1837 to 1847 and candidate 1847, 1852, 1853, 1859 and 1868. Born 1812. Brother of John Hodgson Hinde, M.P. for Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1830, 1835, 1836 and 1847. Became a director of the North British Railway 1853 and was made chairman 1855, but resigned the office in 1866. Was a member of the River Tweed Commissioners, a magistrate and a deputy-lieutenant for the county of Northumberland. In 1877 served the office of High Sheriff of the county. Was a candidate for Newcastle 1847 and M.P. for Tynemouth 1861 to 1865. Died 22 December 1879. A Conservative.

HOLMES, William. M.P. 1837 to 1841. Born County Sligo 1799. Was fifth son of Thomas Holmes of County Sligo, brewer. Educated Trinity College, Dublin, B.A. 1795; D.C.L. of Oxford University 5 July 1810. He was at one time a captain in the army and served some years in the West Indies, where he was military-secretary to Sir Thomas Hislop, but retired from the army 1807. Whipper-in to the Tory party for 30 years; Treasurer of the Ordnance 1820 to 1830. At one period his services were in great request for the private management of the members of the House of Commons, and in their discharge he dispensed the greater portion of the patronage which passed through the hands of the Secretary to the Treasury. Was close to Spencer Perceval when he was assassinated in 1812 and near to William Huskisson when he was killed in 1830. Was M.P. for Grampound 1808 to 1812, Tregony 1812 to 1818, Totnes 1819 to 1820, Bishops Castle 1820 to 1830, Haslemere 1830 to 1832 and Queensborough 1830, but unseated; and candidate for Ipswich June 1835 and Stafford 1841. Died Grafton Street, Bond Street, London 26 January 1851. A Conservative.

HOME, David Milne. M.P. 1874 to April 1880 and July 1880 to 1885. Was son of Dr. D. M. Home, LL.D., Paxton House, and grandson of Admiral Sir David Milne, M.P. for Berwick 1820. Entered the Royal Horse Guards in May 1862 as a cornet and became lieutenant December 1865; captain December 1868; major April 1881; lieutenant-colonel July 1881 and colonel April 1885. He served in the Egyptian campaign in 1882 and received the fourth-class of the Osmanieh, and also the medal and bronze star. He was a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for Berwickshire. A Conservative.

HUBBACK, Joseph. Candidate 1865. A native of Berwick, but a Liverpool merchant and a magistrate for that city. He was at one time chairman of the Corn Association in Liverpool. A Conservative.

JERNINGHAM, Hubert Henry Edward. M.P. 1881. Son of Charles Edward Jerningham, who was son of Edward Jerningham, who was brother of Sir George W. Jerningham, Bt., who became Lord Stafford in 1825. He entered the diplomatic service in 1866 and was attache at Paris and Constantinople. In 1870 he was made a Third-Secretary and was afterwards employed on temporary duty at Athens, Carlsruhe and Darmstadt. After this he served as Acting-Charge d'Affaires and was made a Second-Secretary in 1873. In 1877 he was transferred to Vienna and in 1878 was Acting-Agent and Consul-General at Belgrade. He retired from the diplomatic service in August 1881. In 1874 he married Annie, daughter of Mr. Edward Liddell, of Benton Park, Northumberland, and widow of Mr. Charles T. N. Mather, of Longridge Towers, so becoming lord of the manors of Long Benton and Newton-by-the-Sea. A Liberal.

KEPPEL, William Coutts, seventh Earl of Albemarle and Viscount Bury. M.P. 1868 to 1874. Spoke in favour of the Volunteer Force and supported a Bill designed to prevent the destruction of sea birds. Born 1832. Only son of George Thomas Keppel, sixth Earl of Albemarle. Educated at Eton. Entered the army in 1849 and appointed ensign and lieutenant in the Scots Fusilier Guards; aide-de-camp to Lord Frederick Fitzclarence in India, 1852 to 1853; retired from army 1854; private secretary to Lord John Russell in 1850 and 1851; Civil Secretary and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Canada in 1854 and 1855; captain in the Middlesex Militia, but resigned in 1859; lieutenant-colonel of the Civil Service Volunteer Rifles in June 1860; a Privy Councillor 1859; Treasurer of the Queen's Household June 1859 to May 1866; Under Secretary for War 1878 to 1880 and June 1885 to February 1886; made a K.C.M.G. in August 1870; a magistrate for Norfolk and Hampshire. Appointed a Volunteer Aide-de-Camp to the Queen May 1881; K.C.M.G. 1870; lieutenant-colonel-commandant of the 5th Volunteer Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps (West Middlesex Corps); honorary-colonel of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Manchester regiment Sept. 1885; raised to the peerage as Baron Ashford 1876; succeeded to earldom 1891. M.P. for Norwich 1857 to 1859, for the Wick burghs 1860 to 1865, and a candidate for Dover 1865 and Stroud 1875. Died 1894. A Liberal in 1868; a Liberal-Conservative in 1874.

MACDONALD, W. M. Candidate 1880. Only son of Major-General James A. Farquharson, who married the daughter of Sir George Colquhoun, Bt. He succeeded his cousin, William Macdonald, Esq., in 1841, when he took the name and arms of Macdonald only. He was a salmon fishery commissioner and a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for the counties of Perth, Forfar and Sussex. He was also lieutenant-colonel-commandant of the 2nd Perthshire Highland Rifle Volunteers. A Conservative.

MCLAREN, John. Candidate July 1880. Eldest son of Mr. D. McLaren, M.P. for Edinburgh. He was called to the Scotch bar 1856 and admitted a member of the Faculty of Advocates. He was sheriff of Chancery in Scotland, 1869 to 1880, when

he was made a Queen's Counsel, and appointed Lord Advocate of Scotland. In July 1881 he was made a Lord of the Session, with the title of Lord McLaren. He was made an Honorary LL.D. of Edinburgh University 1882; was a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for the county and city of Edinburgh; was M.P. for the Wigton burghs April 1880 to May 1880, when he was defeated on taking office; was M.P. for Edinburgh January to July 1881. A Liberal.

MARJORIBANKS, Dudley Coutts. M.P. 1853 to April 1859, August 1859 to 1868 and 1874 to 1881. Born 29 December 1820; third son of Edward Marjoribanks of London, a partner in Coutts and Company's Bank from 1796 till his death in 1868. Educated at Harrow, 1833 to 1836, and Christ Church Oxford; matriculated 17 October 1838. Was called to the bar at the Middle Temple 28 January 1848; partner in brewery of Meux and Co.; and a director of the East India Company 1853; was made a Commissioner of Lieutenancy for London; was a magistrate for Westminster and a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for Middlesex, London and Invernesshire. He was created baronet 25 July 1866, as of Guisachan, Co. Inverness; created Baron Tweedmouth of Edington, Co. Berwick, 12 October 1881. Died 4 March 1894 at Bath. Buried Kensal Green Cemetery. A Liberal.

MILLER, William Henry. Born 1789. Candidate 1847. Was a deputy-lieutenant for Buckinghamshire; an F.S.A. He was a celebrated book-collector, and his books, valued at £60, 000, were left at his death in 1849 to the Advocates Library at Edinburgh; was M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme 1830 to 1841. Died 1848. A Conservative.

MITCHELL, Alexander. Candidate 1863 and M.P. 1865 to 1868. Supported the abolition of church rates and a new Reform Bill favourable to the preservation of the freemen's rights. Born Aberdeen 1831. Ensign Grenadier Guards October 1850; lieutenant October 1854; was in the Crimean campaign nearly one year; sold out March 1856. He became a captain in the 31st regiment in 1858; was a deputy-lieutenant for Berwickshire and a magistrate for Berwickshire, Selkirkshire and Midlothian. Died 6 Great Stanhope Street, London 16 May 1873. A Liberal.

RENTON, John Campbell. M.P. 1847 to 1852 and candidate 1852 and 1853. A protectionist. Second son of Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Campbell of the 42nd Highlanders, who married a Miss Renton. Born Edinburgh 1814. Died Malta 25 February 1856. A Conservative.

STAPLETON, John. M.P. 1852, but unseated on petition May 1853; M.P. again 1857 to 1859 and 1868 to 1874; candidate 1859. Born 11 April 1816. Fifth son of Thomas Stapleton, Esq., of Carlton Hall, Selby, and younger brother of Miles Thomas Stapleton, who was summoned by writ to the House of Lords in October 1840 as Lord Beaumont. He was called to the bar of Lincoln's Inn 19 November 1840 and went on the Northern Circuit. Admitted barrister at Middle Temple 16 August 1842. He was a director, 31 July 1855, and deputy-governor, 1856, of the Royal British Bank. The bank stopped payment 3 September 1856, the seven directors were prosecuted in the court of Queen's Bench and found guilty 27 February 1858; Stapleton was fined 1s 8d and discharged. Died Camden Grove,

Kensington 25 December 1891. A Liberal.

STRUTT, Hon. Henry. M.P. 1880. Eldest surviving son of the first Lord Belper, whom he succeeded as second lord June 1880. Was made an LL.B. at Cambridge in 1863 and later an LL.M; was a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and chairman of the Nottinghamshire Quarter Sessions; was made lieutenant-colonel of the Nottinghamshire Yeomanry Cavalry in 1879; was M.P. for Derbyshire (East Division) 1868 to 1874. A Liberal.

TROTTER, Henry John. Candidate 1881. Born 1836; second son of Lieutenant-Colonel William Trotter of Bishop Auckland, Durham. Educated Oriel College, Oxford, B.A. 1859, M.A. 1862. He was called to the bar at the Inner Temple on 6 June 1864 and became a member of the Northern Circuit, but afterwards retired from practice. Lieutenant in the 2nd West Yorkshire Yeomanry Cavalry June 1873 to April or May 1880; lieutenant-colonel-commandant of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry 8 January 1887 to death. He was a director of the Northern British and the Great Western Railways; was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries; and a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant for Durham County. In 1868 he was adopted as a candidate for Bedford in place of Mr. Stuart, but was compelled to retire through ill-health; was candidate for Tynemouth 1868 and 1880, and M.P. for Colchester 1885 to his death. Died 6 December 1888 at Langton Grange, Durham. A Conservative.

WEEDING, Thomas. Candidate 1841. Was a merchant of London and an East India proprietor. He was also a governor of Christ's Hospital, London. A Conservative.



**APPENDIX 3: CONTENTS OF OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES****CATEGORY 1: GENTLEMEN AND PROFESSIONALS**

Accountant	Land Agent
Agent	Law Writer
Architect	Lieutenant in Royal Navy
Articled Clerk	Major
Artillery	Major General
Artist	Master Mariner
Attorney at Law	Master of the Workhouse
Auctioneer	Medical Student
Banker	Merchant's Clerk
Banker's Clerk	Minister
Barrack Master	Organist
Barrister	Physician
Broker	Post Master
Captain in East India Company	Publisher
Captain in Militia	Railway Clerk
Captain in Royal Navy	Railway Superintendent
Civil Engineer	Registrar
Clergyman	Relieving Officer
Clerk	Revenue Officer
Coach Proprietor	Reverend
Collector	Road Surveyor
Collector of Customs	Roman Catholic Priest
Colliery Agent	Schoolmaster
Corporation Treasurer	Ship Agent
Curate	Superintendent of Police
Customs House Officer	Surgeon
Doctor of Medicine	Tax Collector
Editor	Teacher
Esquire	Town Adjutant
Excise Officer	Town Clerk
Gaoler	Town Mayor
Gentleman	Veterinary Surgeon
Harbour Master	Vicar
House Agent	Writing Clerk
Justice of the Peace	

**CATEGORY 2: MERCHANTS AND MANUFACTURERS**

Acid Manufacturer	Furniture Broker
Chemical Manufacturer	Hardware Merchant
China Merchant	Hat Manufacturer
Corn Factor	Iron Master
Corn Merchant	Leather Merchant
Fish Merchant	Marine Store Dealer

Meal Dealer  
Meal Seller  
Merchant  
Pipe Manufacturer  
Sack Manufacturer  
Shipping Company Manager

Ship Owner  
Tea Dealer  
Timber Merchant  
Wharfinger  
Whitening Manufacturer  
Wood Merchant

### CATEGORY 3: RETAILERS

Baker  
Barber  
Book Seller  
Butcher  
Chemist  
Confectioner  
Draper  
Druggist  
Fruiterer  
General Dealer  
Green Grocer

Grocer  
Hair Dresser  
Ironmonger  
Jeweller  
Linen Draper  
Meal Seller  
Pawnbroker  
Refreshment Rooms Proprietor  
Stationer  
Tailor  
Tallow Chandler

### CATEGORY 4: CRAFTSMEN

Blacksmith  
Block Maker  
Boat Builder  
Book Binder  
Boot Maker  
Builder  
Cabinet Maker  
Carpenter  
Cartwright  
Carver  
Clog Maker  
Clothier  
Coach Maker  
Coach Smith  
Cooper  
Currier  
Dyer  
Engineer  
Engineman  
Enginewright  
Engraver  
Felt Maker  
Fish Curer  
Furrier  
Gilder

Glazier  
Gun Maker  
Gunsmith  
Hemp Dresser  
Herring Curer  
Hosier  
House Carpenter  
Iron Founder  
Iron Moulder  
Joiner  
Mason  
Millwright  
Moulder  
Nail Maker  
Painter  
Photographer  
Plasterer  
Plumber  
Potter  
Printer  
Rope Maker  
Roper  
Saddler  
Sail Maker  
Sawyer

Ship Carpenter  
 Shipwright  
 Shoemaker  
 Slater  
 Soda Water Maker  
 Stocking Weaver  
 Tanner  
 Tile Maker

Tinsmith  
 Turner  
 Twine Spinner  
 Rope Spinner  
 Watch Maker  
 Weaver  
 Wire Worker

#### CATEGORY 5: DRINK INTEREST

Brewer  
 Hotel Keeper  
 Inn Keeper  
 Malster  
 Porter Merchant

Publican  
 Spirit Dealer  
 Spirit Merchant  
 Wine Merchant

#### CATEGORY 6: AGRICULTURE

Cattle Dealer  
 Cattle Salesman  
 Farmer  
 Field Grieve

Husbandman  
 Miller  
 Seedsman  
 Shepherd

#### CATEGORY 7: UNSKILLED AND LABOURERS

Assistant Overseer  
 Bailiff  
 Bellman  
 Bellringer  
 Bus Driver  
 Carrier  
 Carter  
 Chaise Driver  
 Coach Driver  
 Coachman  
 Coastguard  
 Commercial Traveller  
 Fisherman  
 Gardener  
 Groom

Guard  
 Labourer  
 Light House Keeper  
 Lime Burner  
 Mariner  
 Pavior  
 Pensioner  
 Pitman  
 Quarryman  
 Railway Porter  
 Seaman  
 Sergeant at Mace  
 Stoker  
 Traveller  
 Waiter

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