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**'Women of the Nottinghamshire Elite
c. 1720-1820'**

by Sandra Dunster, BA, MA

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 2003



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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the lives of women in a small group of families in the Nottinghamshire elite between 1720 and 1820. A close reading of family papers, gives access to the minutiae of female life and it is from these small details that the attitudes, activities and responsibilities of elite women are constructed.

Drawing on the distinct historiographies of women and gender, and of the elite, the evidence produced by this sharply-focused approach is used to explore women's formal and informal roles, and the specific ways in which they were fulfilled, in the domestic, social, economic and political life of the elite.

Consideration is first given to attitudes towards girls within the family and to how childhood experience contributed to the construction of elite womanhood .

An assessment of the level of convergence between family and individual interests in the matter of marital choices is followed by an exploration of the weight of domestic responsibility experienced by women within the family, as wives, mothers and housekeepers. Attention then turns to assessing the extent of female engagement with political, economic and social life, in the pursuit of personal and family interests.

The narratives of women and their families illuminate how the female elite balanced the particular mix of subordination and privilege conferred upon them by gender and status. The range of activities in which they engaged and the multifaceted nature of that engagement demonstrate that throughout the eighteenth century women at all levels of the Nottinghamshire elite worked to support the ethos of elite pre-eminence in many small but cumulatively significant ways.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in footnote references to primary source materials.

BRO	Berkshire Record Office, Reading.
CH	Chatsworth House, Derbyshire
HP	Hooton Pagnell Hall, South Yorkshire
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
NAO	Nottinghamshire Archives Office, Nottingham
NUMD	University of Nottingham, Hallward Library, Manuscripts Department
SH	Sandbeck Hall, South Yorkshire

Note on the text

Original spelling, punctuation and capitalisation have been retained throughout. Where original abbreviations make the text hard to follow, these contractions have been rendered in full in square brackets.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the eighteenth-century English elite has been, until very recently, a predominantly masculine affair. Whether concerned with defining membership, exploring activities or asking what promoted the longevity of this ruling class, historians have focused attention on the ways in which men achieved and exercised power in the political, economic and social worlds of the day. This thesis aims to contribute to the business of redressing the balance by exploring the content, range and purpose of women's lives in the elite of eighteenth-century England. Rather than focus in depth upon a particular sector of this heterogeneous social group, this study will cut a swathe through the Nottinghamshire elite, reconstructing the lives and accessing the attitudes and opinions of a cross-section of women from families of differing social status, from the peerage, through the greater and lesser gentry. Women's roles in family life, and in the political, economic and social environment in which elite families were rooted will be examined to ask what was expected of women, what they delivered, and what contribution, if any, they made to the maintenance of the elite.

This introduction establishes the themes which will run throughout this work, arising from the current state of research in the histories of the elite, of women and of gender. A definition of the social category 'elite' is followed by a brief consideration of how historians of the elite have dealt with women and, conversely how women's history has dealt with the elite, and the implications of developments in the history of gender for these approaches. Finally, the contours

of this study are defined, setting out, chapter by chapter, the topics to be explored and the questions to be asked.

There is a broad consensus amongst historians of the elite as to how this privileged ruling class was constituted. In general terms the elite of eighteenth-century England were the landowning families who, based on the wealth and power that landownership endowed, took the lead in national and local politics, dominated much of the economy and played a prominent role in society.¹ The wide-ranging privileges of membership were balanced by a responsibility to the communities in which they operated. Although it was possible to enter this exclusive social group from outside, through marriage or ennoblement, or by purchasing an estate, these routes offered only limited access to outsiders, due to the prevalence of endogamous marriage and the increasing scarcity of land available for purchase during the eighteenth century.²

Within this powerful and affluent social group there were wide variations in status, in wealth and in spheres of influence. The smallest but most prestigious group of about 400 families were the peerage or great landlords with an annual income from their extensive estates, often located in several counties, of anywhere between £5000 and £50,000. This economic pre-eminence was combined with

¹ J. V. Beckett, *The aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (Oxford, 1989 edn.), pp. 21-2; J. Cannon, *Aristocratic century: the peerage of eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 175; G. E. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (1963), p. 3

² On marriage see D. Thomas, 'The social origins of marriage partners of the British peerage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Population studies*, 26 (1972), pp. 99-111; Cannon, *Aristocratic century*, pp. 82-92; H. J. Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt and the estates system: English landownership 1650-1950* (Oxford 1994), pp. 227-31. On ennoblement; Cannon, *Aristocratic century* p. 30, points out that of the 229 new peerages created between 1700 and 1800, only 23 were awarded to men who did not already have connections with the peerage. On the availability

wide-ranging political and social leadership often on a national or regional basis, at the very least at county level. Next were the greater gentry with an income of £3-5000 per annum, from their somewhat smaller landholding, and fewer opportunities for political office, often representing the county at national level or holding other public office at regional or local level. The lesser gentry operated at local level, concentrating their efforts on the administration of villages and towns near which their estates were located, and overseeing the running of the small estates which brought them commensurately smaller incomes of between £300 and £3,000 per annum.³ What bound this 'amorphous' group together was 'the knowledge of their common role as the governing class'.⁴

Historians, while acknowledging the social diversity of the elite have, until very recently, presented the history of the elite at all levels as a history of men. The 'wealth, status and power', upon which elite pre-eminence rested have been classified as essentially 'masculine assets and attributes' and the focus has been on how men operated in the social, political and economic domain.⁵ Little separate attention has been paid to women. The female of the species, glimpsed fleetingly receiving visitors in the drawing room, playing cards, or dancing in the assembly room was characterised as, at best a passive, at worst, a frivolous creature, whose interests rarely extended beyond marriage, children and shopping.⁶ At the same

of landed property for purchase see J. V. Beckett, 'The pattern of landownership in England and Wales, 1660-1880, *Economic History Review*, 37, 1984.

³ Mingay, *Landed society*, pp. 20-29.

⁴ Beckett, *Aristocracy* p. 22.

⁵ D. Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (New Haven, 1990), p. 7. The quote refers specifically to the aristocracy, but the belief that underlies it has informed many other academic studies of the elite. This point is also made by K. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 2.

⁶ Mingay, *Landed society*, pp. 226-7; L. Stone and J. C. F. Stone, *An open elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1983), p. 219; Beckett, *Aristocracy*, p. 366; F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The gentry in*

time, women were accorded an important, if passive, role in forging marital links with other landed families and in boosting (or depleting) family fortunes by bringing a portion into (or extracting a portion or jointure out of) family coffers on marriage.⁷ Mingay, who paid more attention than most to elite women, concluded that; 'Except for members of fashionable London society most eighteenth century ladies stayed in the background'; they did not make 'any discernible impression on the character of the times. Indispensable but insignificant they played out their vital role in the life of the ruling class.'⁸

A reluctance to address the roles of the female elite was also evident in the history of women, at least until the final decade of the twentieth century, when developments in gender history began to impact upon the parameters set for the study of women.⁹ Early feminist concern to identify gender as *the* defining characteristic of women's lives tended to relegate the elite woman, perceived as interesting but exceptional, to the margins.¹⁰ The development of the 'separate spheres' model, developed in the 1970s, initially from a reading of prescriptive literature, did little to bring the elite female back into the spotlight. The

England, 1500-1700 (Stanford, Ca., 1994), pp. 313-4; D. W. Howell, *Patriarchs and parasites: the gentry of south west Wales in the eighteenth century* (Cardiff, 1986), p. 176.

⁷ See, for example, Mingay, *Landed society*, p. 28; Beckett, *Aristocracy*, p. 297. P. Roebuck, *Yorkshire baronets 1640-1760, families, estates and fortunes* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 328-330;

⁸ Mingay, *Landed society*, p. 226-7.

⁹ The following assessment of developments in women's history and gender history highlights those aspects which impact specifically on the history of elite women. For more detailed analyses set in a broader context see, A. Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of women's history' *Historical Journal*, 36, (1993); H. Barker, and E. Chalus, (eds.), *Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (1997), pp. ; R. Shoemaker, *Gender in English society, 1650-1850* (1998); M. Weisner, *Women and gender in early modern Europe* (2nd Edition, Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-12; J. Alberti, *Gender and the historian* (2002).

¹⁰ See for example B.S. Anderson & J.P Zinsser, *A history of their own: women in Europe from pre-history to the present*, Vol. 1 (1988), p. xv, who assert that; 'While differences of historical era, class, and nationality have significance for women, they are outweighed by the similarities decreed by gender.'

association of the ideology of 'separate spheres' with the emergence of a distinctive middle-class identity in the late eighteenth century, focused attention on unravelling the issues of 'public' and 'private' distinctions in the lives of men and women of that particular sector of society.¹¹

During the 1980s the usefulness of the concept was brought into question on two fronts. Empirical research suggested that male/female, public/private divisions were not new to the late eighteenth century, but were evident in the division of labour between men and women in earlier historical periods. Second, the influence of postmodernism in the development of gender history led to a questioning of the excessive rigidity of the male/female public/private divisions it imposed.¹² The adoption of the techniques of linguistic analysis, with the aim of understanding what people in past times understood by such terms as 'public' and 'private' led to a clearer understanding of the fluidity of definitions of gender and of gender divisions in the past. This post-structuralist approach, though seen by some as a threat to the very foundations of women's history, raised important issues, emphasising the danger of back-projecting modern definitions of the concepts of 'public' and 'private' onto the past and highlighting the overly-simplistic nature of such models of binary opposition.¹³ By the late 1990s a survey

¹¹ The most influential study of the development of 'separate spheres' in English middle class society is L Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family fortunes men and women of the English middle-class, 1780-1850* (1987).

¹² For debate on usefulness of the 'separate spheres' model, see, L. Kerber, 'Separate spheres, female worlds, women's place: the rhetoric of women's history' *Journal of American history*, 75 (1988-9); Vickery, 'Golden age' *passim*.

¹³ For early proponents of the post-structural approach see J. Scott, *Gender and the politics of history* (New York, 1988); D. Riley, *Am I that name? Feminism and the category of 'women' in history* (Basingstoke, 1988). For a robust rebuttal of its usefulness., J. Hoff, 'Gender: a postmodern category of paralysis' *Women's history review*, 3 (1994). A consideration of the many definitions of the terms, 'public' and 'private' in the eighteenth century is found in L. Klein, 'Gender and the public/private distinction in the eighteenth century: some questions about evidence and analytical

of the history of gender in the long eighteenth century acknowledged openly that the term 'separate spheres' was of limited use and described no more than; 'a loose division of responsibilities between men and women within both public and private life'.¹⁴ This rather woolly concept, applicable to any historical era, is now seen as having little 'analytical purchase', incapable of capturing 'the specificities of gender relations in a particular social group, country or century.'¹⁵

These re-evaluations have opened the way for the emergence of a history of women which, whilst recognising that the experiences of women in the past were unquestionably shaped by gender distinctions within the enduring framework of patriarchy, also acknowledges the defining influence of other factors, which were not essentially female, such as social status, wealth and health, in determining women's actions and beliefs. As a consequence, general surveys of female life in specific periods of the past published during the 1990s embrace both similarity and diversity in the experiences of women; elite women are identified as a specific group within the broad category 'woman'.¹⁶ The recognition of the possibility of diversity has also led to a reassessment of the roles and responsibilities of elite women in every aspect of their lives, both within in the family, already accorded a

procedure', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29, 1 (1995). For widely influential reconsideration of the 'public sphere' see J. Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an enquiry into a category of bourgeois society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1989).

¹⁴ Shoemaker, *Gender* p. 318.

¹⁵ A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter; women's lives in Georgian England* (1998), p. 7.

¹⁶ N. Zemon Davies and A Farge (eds.), *A history of women in the west: III Renaissance and Enlightenment paradoxes* (1993); A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760* (1994); O. Hufton, *The prospect before her: a history of women in western Europe* (1995); S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in early modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998); Weisner, *Women and gender*.

particular relevance in the history of women, and in the social, political, and economic realms established as so important to the history of the elite.¹⁷

There are, as yet, only a handful of studies which actively seek to draw on both the separate disciplines of elite history and of women's history, taking on the challenges of, to paraphrase one of the pathfinders, putting women into the history of the elite and the elite into the history of women.¹⁸ This body of new work demonstrates differences of approach, historical period, and diversity in the specific status of women selected for study, but common themes are evident. The usefulness of the concept of 'separate spheres' is rejected on the basis that women's concerns are revealed to have encompassed a far broader world view than has previously been acknowledged. There is no agreement on a single term to describe the conjunction between male and female roles within this privileged social group. Women and men, whatever their specific place in the pecking order of the are variously described as having 'complimented'¹⁹ one another, or 'converged'²⁰ in their activities; they enjoyed an 'active partnership'²¹, or were united by 'the powerful experiences and convictions which they held in common.'²² Moreover, there is evidence of a long-standing continuity in the roles of elite women, from the medieval period to the nineteenth century, in matters

¹⁷ Separate assessment of the literature in the respective fields of education, marriage, domesticity, politics, social leadership and property is to be found below at the beginning of chapters 3-7

¹⁸ See J. Ward, *English noblewomen in the later middle ages* (1992); J. Gerard *Country house life: family and servants* (1994); Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*; K. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998). The specific reference is to Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Ward, *English noblewomen*, p. ix.

²⁰ Gerrard, *Country house*, p. 274.

²¹ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, p. 25. Reynolds also draws upon the social anthropological model of 'incorporation'; *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

²² Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 11.

domestic, political, social and economic.²³ Both the range and persistence over time of female activities and concerns revealed by these studies, suggest that the contribution made by women to the maintenance of elite pre-eminence has been previously underplayed.

This thesis draws on the work of historians of the elite, historians of women and historians of elite women in the construction of a conceptual and methodological framework for the consideration of the lives of women of the Nottinghamshire elite.²⁴ In selecting women from the peerage, and the greater and lesser gentry, the study acknowledges the validity of the broad definition of this privileged and multi-stranded social group. By seeking to assess women's activities, roles and responsibilities in every area of the life of the elite, the study incorporates the current view of the fluidity of the 'separate spheres' and the limited usefulness of binary opposition as a starting point for the analysis of gender roles. By grounding the empirical research in women's testimony, set against a backdrop of family papers, and placing both in the context of contemporary prescriptive literature, the work offers a view of not only what women did and said, but also of how they were perceived by contemporaries.

²³ For discussion of the tensions between continuity and change in women's history; J. M. Bennett, "'History that stands still': women's work in the European past' *Feminist studies* 14 (1988); idem, 'Women's history: a study in continuity and change', *Women's History Review*, 2 (1993); idem, 'Confronting continuity', *Journal of women's history*, 9, 3 (1997); B. Hill, 'Women's history: a study in change, continuity or standing still?' *Women's history review*, 2, (1993); Vickery, 'Golden age', particularly, pp. 401-412.

²⁴ The choice of this geographical location is discussed below in Chapter 1.

This holistic approach ran the risk of finding little to say on too many topics.²⁵

Instead, as the following chapters will illustrate, the result was the emergence of a wealth of information which demonstrates the many-stranded nature of the lives of elite women and the ways in which women and men of the elite worked side by side together to maintain the pre-eminence which they regarded as their birthright. Although the nature of the sources, and the diverting detail that emerged from them, invited the construction of case studies, the findings are presented thematically, to facilitate effective comparison between the experiences of individuals.

Chapter 1 sets the scene, briefly describing Nottinghamshire in the eighteenth century with particular reference to the profile of the aristocracy and gentry within the county. Key women in the study are identified and brief biographical details are provided both for these individuals and their families. The specific sources that have been used here to investigate women's lives will be assessed and the methodology adopted to extract the necessary material from these sources will be defined.

Chapters 2-4 focus on the domestic aspects of elite women's lives. Chapter 2, 'Childhood and Education', assesses elite attitudes to daughters and tracks the activities and location of elite girlhood, establishing where, by whom and what young women were taught. This investigation explores both formal and informal education, asking how elite female education was fashioned to prepare girls for

²⁵ Previous experience of the benefits of this approach, albeit on a reduced scale, reinforced the view that this was the way forward. See S. Dunster, 'An independent life? Nottingham widows, 1594- 1650', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 95 (1991).

elite womanhood. Chapter 3, 'Marital Choices' follows young women from the schoolroom into adult life, looking at the factors which determined marital decisions. Exposure to the elite social world, emotion, the interplay between individual and family interest and the financial arrangements for marriage are all explored. Chapter 4, 'Domestic Life' addresses female adult roles, assessing the extent of the domestic demands made upon elite women as housekeepers, and for married women, as wives and mothers. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which these domestic responsibilities absorbed both the physical and emotional resources of elite women.

The focus of the thesis then shifts from the domestic to the political, social and economic aspects of elite life. In Chapter 5, 'Politics', the spotlight is on the informal activities through which women contributed to the political life of their respective families, assessing women's interest in the political life of the county and nation, their methods of supporting family political activities and the extent to which female political action was determined by men. Chapter 6, 'Social Leadership' highlights three particular aspects of elite life, visiting, the dispensing of bounty, and the art of social display, and asks what motivated women to take part in these activities. Finally, Chapter 7, 'Property', explores women's stake in elite property, what they actually received and what they did with it. The extent and range of women's management of their own property and their activities in support of the economic interests of the family are also explored.

By focusing on the activities, attitudes and experiences of a small group of women, this thesis sets out to demonstrate that there was a part for women to play

in every aspect of the elite life of the eighteenth century and that the evidence for this is to be found in the manuscripts that they created. The retrieval of such evidence can only enrich our understanding of how the English elite retained its position of pre-eminence.

Chapter One

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ELITE WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILY**BACKGROUNDS**

Eighteenth-century Nottinghamshire was not held in particularly high esteem by contemporaries. Sir George Savile, a substantial landowner in the county, remarked in 1763 that it had ‘four Dukes, two Lords and three rabbit warrens, which, I believe, takes in half the county in point of space.’¹ Daniel Defoe, was a little more complimentary, noting that the county was ‘small but...full of wonders’. He also observed that it was a county of two halves; ‘the south part is the richest and most fruitful; and on the north part the most wild and waste, and next to barren’, an observation born out by modern scholarship.² At the beginning of the eighteenth century the north of the county was mainly undeveloped wasteland, dominated by Sherwood Forest. By the end of the century the forest had been substantially cleared and what remained of the original woodland was found within the enclosed parks of the nobility in an area which, due to the dominance of the aristocracy, later became known as ‘the Dukeries’.³ This part of Nottinghamshire did not see major agricultural improvement until the early nineteenth century. The area on the northern borders of the forest around the market towns of Worksop and Retford, both on major north-south routes through

¹ J. D. Chambers, *Nottinghamshire in the eighteenth century: a study of life and labour under the squirearchy* (2nd ed., 1966), p. 82.

² D. Defoe *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain* (Penguin ed. 1979, first published 1724-6), p. 451.

³ The description of the county that follows relies heavily on S. Aley ‘The Nottinghamshire landowners and their estates c.1660-c.1840 (unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Nottingham, 1985), pp. 36-52.

the county, although administratively part of the county of Nottinghamshire, had much in common with the neighbouring area of the West Riding of Yorkshire, with communication links facilitating access to Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield and northwards to York. The main route south from Worksop to Nottingham via Mansfield was not turnpiked until 1787.⁴

The centre and south of the county were given over to arable farming and pasture lands respectively. The south also had the economic advantage of the burgeoning framework knitting industry, centred around the county town of Nottingham.

Situated at the southernmost end of the navigable part of the River Trent,

Nottingham dominated the south of the county, and was an important centre for trade, industry, county administration and, increasingly during the eighteenth

century, a centre for entertainment and social life. During the period under

consideration here the town underwent considerable transformation. The market centre of 1720, with around 8000 inhabitants, was just entering a period of rapid

population growth; by the 1820s there were around 40,000 people in the town.⁵

Despite this rapid expansion, what was essentially a market town, remained an

attractive urban centre throughout the period, attracting positive comments from

many genteel visitors.⁶ The urban gentry remained resident in the centre of the

town for much of the period, although from the 1790s, increasing overcrowding in

⁴ A. Cossons, *The turnpike roads of Nottinghamshire*, Historical Association Leaflet no. 97 (1934), pp. 8-14.

⁵ A. Henstock, S. Dunster and S. Wallwork, 'Decline and regeneration: social and economic life' in J. V. Beckett, (ed.), *A centenary history of Nottingham* (Manchester, 1997) pp.134-8; J. V. Beckett 'An industrial town in the making, 1750-1830', in Beckett, *Centenary history*, pp. 191-2.

⁶ Beckett, 'Industrial town' pp. 189-90.

the town prompted a steady drift away from the centre to the suburbs by wealthier inhabitants.⁷

Nottingham offered public promenades, race meetings, theatres, concerts and assemblies to the leisured. The town's role as a centre for entertainment dovetailed neatly with its function as a centre for the administration of justice for the county and the two combined to draw in the gentry and peerage of the county for both duty and pleasure throughout the eighteenth century.⁸

It should also be emphasised that the elite of Nottinghamshire was not constrained by geography or poor roads to remain within the county. On a regional basis, all families made use of the good communication links available to them. Some travelled north to pursue business and political interests and entertainment in Yorkshire, visiting Doncaster, York and Scarborough. Others travelled west into Derbyshire to visit Buxton or Derby. Many families ventured further afield, visiting London for business, politics or to enjoy the delights of the season, and going to southern coastal and spa towns, such as Bath, Bristol, Weymouth, Tunbridge Wells and Cheltenham in search of good health and entertainment. In other words, although this thesis considers women of the Nottinghamshire elite, their field of action was far broader than a single county.

This, in outline, was the physical environment in which the women in this study operated. The chapter will now turn to placing these women and their families in

⁷ Ibid., pp. 204-6.

⁸ J. V. Beckett, 'Leisure, recreation and entertainment' in Beckett, *centenary history*, pp. 386-9.

this context, placing them within the social hierarchy, and identifying the primary source materials which have allowed access to these particular women's lives. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the problems and potential offered by the range of sources available.

Having identified the parameters of this study as defined in chapter one, the next step was to identify women from appropriate families for whom a suitable range of source materials was available. The selection of suitable families was facilitated by Aley's study of one hundred Nottinghamshire landowners and their estates between 1660 and 1840, in which she defined the landed interest in the county as;

those families who owned an estate; ... held social esteem; were possibly arms bearers; had county interests and influence; performed court or county service; had marriage and business connections with other land-owning families; and whose financial resources could sustain the lifestyle of a landed gentry family.

Within this general definition, three social categories were identified, defined according to the family's 'sphere of activity, influence and prestige'; the peerage, the county gentry and the village gentry. Aley's survey, which included each of the families represented here, found that 'there was a stable element of conservatism and continuity at its core, which was strong enough to sustain its traditional character and ethos'.⁹

Three aims were set for the selection of individual women for study. First those women chosen should come from, or marry into a family which maintained its principle country residence in Nottinghamshire. Second, the selected women

⁹ Aley, 'Thesis', pp. 68-9.

should between them offer a wide range of elite social backgrounds, ranging from the peerage, through the county gentry to the urban elite and village gentry. Third, the women selected for study should have their own voice, in that they should have generated their own records in the form of correspondence, accounts or diaries, and these should be available in conjunction with other family correspondence and legal documents.

An initial survey was carried out to assess the materials available in two main repositories, the University of Nottingham Manuscripts Department (NUMD) and the Nottinghamshire Archive Office (NAO). What emerged was an embarrassment of riches. Despite the generally gloomy view of the paucity of documentary sources for women in the past, these two repositories yielded far more material than could be included in a single study and it was necessary to be selective. The solution, given the abundance of wide-ranging documentary sources, was to select a tightly-knit group of greater and lesser gentry families from the north of the county – the Saviles, Thornhagh/Hewetts and Foljambes - combined with one aristocratic family - the Portlands - also based in the north of Nottinghamshire, and one family from the Nottingham urban elite, - the Frosts and Gawtherns - who also owned land in the southern half of the county.

The Portland landed interest in Nottinghamshire, principally their estate at Welbeck, began with the of the marriage of William Bentinck 2nd Duke of Portland to Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, daughter of Richard Harley, Earl of

Oxford and Henrietta Countess of Oxford in 1734 (see Fig. 1 and Map 1).¹⁰

Margaret was the only surviving child and sole heir of her parents, and took possession of the Welbeck estate on inheriting it from her mother in 1756. The Countess of Oxford had spent her widowhood based at Welbeck and had devoted considerable amounts of time and money on the house and estate, but Margaret, Duchess of Portland rarely visited Nottinghamshire during her ownership of the property.¹¹ After the death of her husband in 1762 she reached an agreement with her son, William, 3rd Duke of Portland, that he should have Welbeck as his country seat, while she retained the Portland seat of Bulstrode in Buckinghamshire. When William married Lady Dorothy Cavendish, sister of the 5th Duke of Devonshire in 1766, the couple continued to maintain Welbeck as their country home, visiting regularly until the death of the Dowager Duchess in 1782, when they adopted Bulstrode as their main residence. The family also owned estates in Northumberland, Cumberland, Cheshire, Hampshire and Soho.

William 2nd Duke of Portland, characterised by Turberville as ‘kindly but unambitious’, had little interest in politics, but his son William, 3rd Duke of Portland enjoyed a long and successful political career.¹² He entered parliament as

¹⁰ The Portland family has been the subject of several studies; A.S. Turberville, *A history of Welbeck Abbey and its owners*, Two Volumes, (1939); P.E.Schazman, *The Bentincks. The history of a European family* (1976); D. Wilkinson, ‘The political career of William Henry Cavendish Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland, 1738-1809’ (University of ,PhD thesis, 1997); R. Trumbach, *The rise of the egalitarian family: aristocratic kinship and domestic relations in eighteenth-century England* (1978), drew heavily on the Portland archives in support of his theory of change in aristocratic family life. The wide-ranging interests of Margaret , Duchess of Portland are explored in S.H. Myers, *The bluestocking circle: women, friendship, and the life of the mind in eighteenth century England* (1990). See also K. H. Porter ‘Margaret Duchess of Portland (Cornell University, Ph.D. thesis, 1930).

¹¹ For details of the activities of Henrietta Harley, Countess of Oxford, at Welbeck see, Turberville, *Welbeck*, vol. 1; C. Weir, *Women’s history in the Nottinghamshire Archives Office 1550-1950*, pp. 13-15. For information on her earlier life, R. W. Goulding, ‘Henrietta, Countess of Oxford’, *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, Vol. 27 (1923).

¹² Turberville, *Welbeck*, Vol. 2, p. 17.

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MP for Weobly in Herefordshire in 1761, then a year later, after the death of his father, took his seat in the House of Lords. Portland's marriage to Lady Dorothy Cavendish in 1766, whilst undoubtedly bringing personal happiness, also provided the additional benefits of a portion of £30,000 and a secure position amongst the Cavendish Whigs.¹³ Appointed as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1782, Portland then served as Prime Minister in 1783 and 1807-9. At a local level, from the 1760s the Dukes of Portland and Newcastle shared control of the eight Parliamentary seats in the county of Nottinghamshire, and the Duke was Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire in 1792.¹⁴ His younger brother, Lord Edward Bentinck also represented the county as MP for Nottingham. Portland's prominent position in national politics, and widespread landed interests in other counties meant that the family's physical presence in the county was intermittent, but their influence and interests within the county were maintained.¹⁵

The main focus of attention within the substantial Portland archive held at the University of Nottingham Manuscripts Department was the correspondence of two generations of women spanning the years c.1740-80, contained within the Portland (Welbeck) collection. Corroborative material from family wills and settlements was also extracted from the Portland (London) collection. The first generation is represented by Margaret Duchess of Portland (1715-1785), wife of William 2nd Duke of Portland. The archive contains 197 letters written by Margaret to her son between 1748 and 1781 and 81 letters received by her

¹³ See Wilkinson, thesis, pp. 15 & 55.

¹⁴ J.V. Beckett, 'Aristocracy and electoral control in the East Midlands 1660-1914', *Midlands history*, 18, (1993), pp.69-72.

¹⁵ Aley, thesis, pp. 79-80, notes this as a general feature of all peerage families in the county.

between 1740 and 1784, the latter mostly from writers, botanists and painters who shared her interests, with a few from family and friends.¹⁶ Additional material was also extracted from letters written by and referring to the Duchess in the six-volume *Autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, and from letters received by William 3rd Duke of Portland from his stewards.¹⁷

The next generation is illuminated by the correspondence of Margaret's daughters Elizabeth and Henrietta, and her daughter-in-law Dorothy, Duchess of Portland.

Lady Elizabeth (1735-1825) was married to Thomas Thynne, 3rd Viscount Weymouth, later Marquess of Bath, in 1759. Thirty eight letters to her brother, William, 3rd Duke of Portland, survive for the period 1760-1781.¹⁸ Lady Henrietta (1737-1827), married Lord George Grey of Grooby, later Earl of Stamford in 1763. Her more prolific correspondence with her brother, comprising some 140 letters, also spans the period 1760-81.¹⁹

The correspondence of Dorothy, Duchess of Portland comprises 214 letters covering the period 1765-94. These letters which begin in the year of her courtship by Portland and continue to the year of her death are mostly from her Cavendish family and her friends, the local gentry of Nottinghamshire and the

¹⁶ NUMD PwE, 1-81, Correspondence to and other papers of Margaret, 2nd Duchess of Portland; NUMD PwF 717-914 Correspondence between Margaret 2nd Duchess of Portland and William 3rd Duke of Portland.

¹⁷ *Autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delaney*, Series 1, vols. 1-3 (1861), Series 2, vols. 1-3 (1862). NUMD PwF 1575-1613, Joseph Briggs to William, 3rd Duke of Portland (1762-9); PwF 1837-1959, Richard Brown to same (1766-1775). Thanks are due to Elizabeth Archer of the University of Nottingham, Manuscripts Department, Hallward Library, who alerted me to the potential of this source.

¹⁸ NUMD PwF 8711-8749, Correspondence from Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland.

¹⁹ NUMD PwF 4498-4638, Correspondence from Lady Henrietta Cavendish Bentinck, later Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland.

medical profession, and also includes 35 letters exchanged with her husband.²⁰ In addition to this, within the 3rd Duke's correspondence there are a further 241 letters exchanged between husband and wife spanning the period 1766-81.²¹ A few letters between Dorothy and her sister-in-law Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire have also survived in the Cavendish correspondence at Chatsworth.²²

Perhaps the most prestigious of the Nottinghamshire gentry families under consideration here was the Savile family of Rufford (See Fig. 2 and Map 1).

The Rufford estate had been in the possession of the Savile family since the late sixteenth century.²³ The succession of George Savile, son of John Savile rector of Thornhill, to the baronetcy and the family estates at Rufford in Nottinghamshire and Thornhill in Yorkshire in 1701, was the result of the failure of the male line from the fifth and sixth baronets Savile. Sir George, 7th baronet Savile, aged 22, moved from Yorkshire to make Rufford his main country residence and brought with him his widowed mother, Barbara Savile, and his sister Gertrude, aged four.

Sir George Savile did not marry until 1723, taking as his bride the sixteen year old Mary Pratt, daughter of John Pratt of Dublin, whom he met at Bath. The records are silent on the portion this young woman brought to the Savile family on marriage, although the gossip at the time suggested anything between £10,000 and

²⁰ NUMD PwG 1-214, Correspondence of Dorothy, 3rd Duchess of Portland.

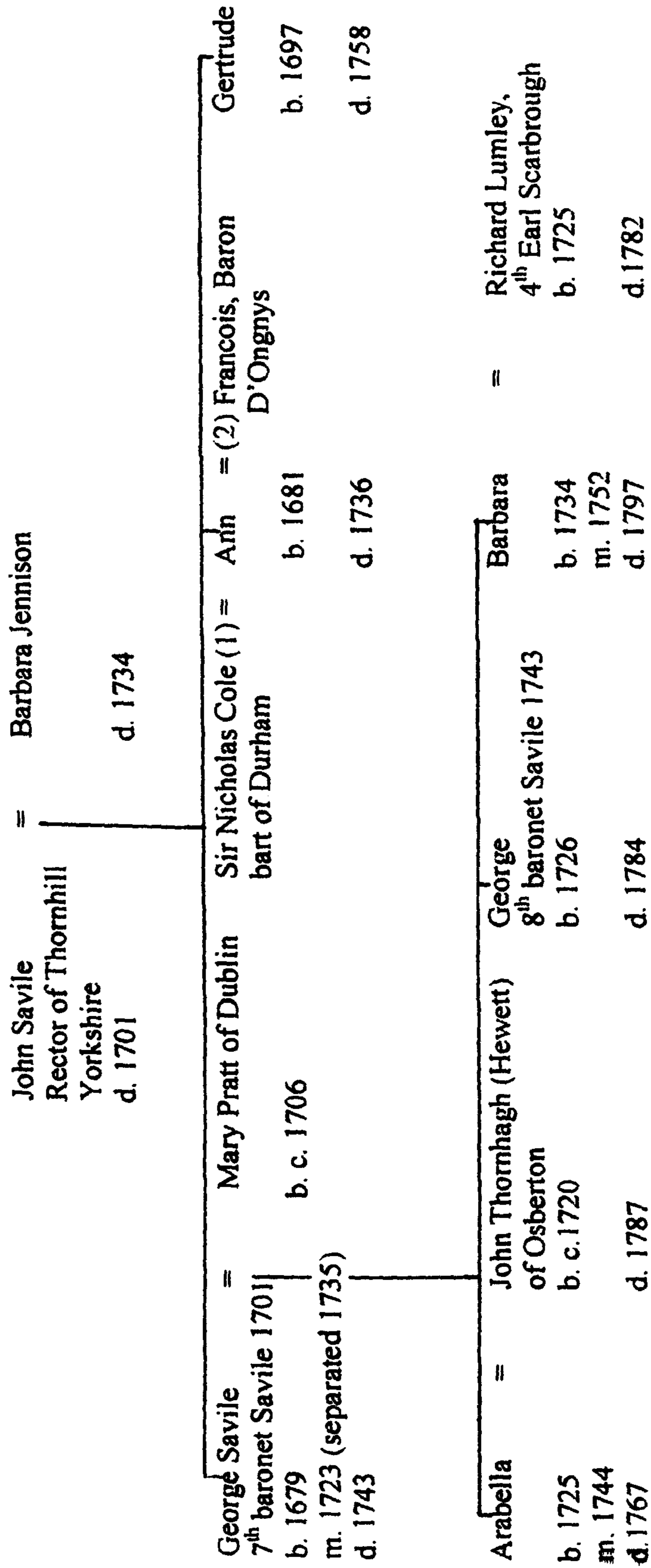
²¹ NUMD PwF 10525-10766, Correspondence between William, 3rd Duke of Portland and Dorothy, Duchess of Portland.

²² Chatsworth MSS, Correspondence of 5th Duke of Devonshire, CH 169.1, 528.1, 610.4, 611, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 1776-84; CH 1078.2, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire to Dorothy Duchess of Portland, [undated, c. March 1791].

²³ The Savile family history for the early part of the eighteenth century is summarised in A. Savile (ed). 'The diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-57', *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, Vol. 41 (Nottingham, 1997), pp. x-xvi. Also see E. Milner & E. Benham, *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley Castle* (1904), pp. 195-224, *passim*.

Figure 2

THE SAVILE FAMILY OF OF RUFFORD



£60,000.²⁴ The couple had three children, a son George and two daughters, Arabella and Barbara, before their separation in 1734, following Lady Savile's alleged adultery. The family divided their time between London and Rufford, but also owned estates in Ireland and Yorkshire.

Savile's daughters, Arabella and Barbara, both married into local families. In 1744 Arabella's marriage to John Thornhagh, heir to estates at Osberton and Shireoaks in Nottinghamshire, forged a link with a well established gentry family.

Barbara's marriage in 1752 to Richard Lumley, 4th Earl of Scarbrough, raised the family profile still further by creating links with the peerage. The Lumley Saunderson family owned estates in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and, following the 4th Earl's marriage, based their family life at Sandbeck Hall, between Rotherham and Worksop, within a short ride of Barbara's childhood home at Rufford.²⁵

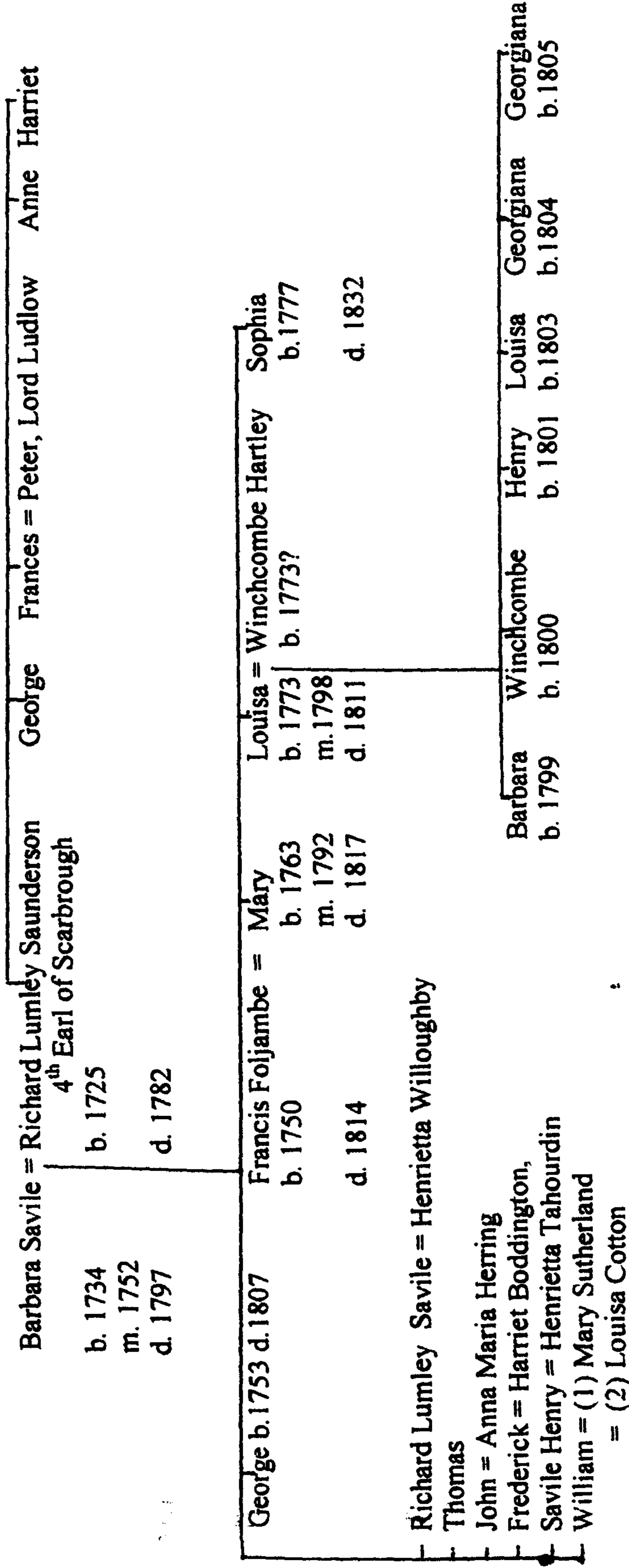
The Savile son and heir, George, succeeded to the title in 1743. He did not marry and after his death in 1784 the Rufford estate passed, according to Savile's wishes, to the Lumley family in the person of his nephew, Richard Lumley, second son of Barbara, Countess and Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough, who took the name Savile as a condition of succession (See Fig. 3 and Map 1). When Richard Lumley Savile succeeded to the Scarbrough title and estates in 1805,

²⁴ Milner & Benham, *Records*, p. 201; see also p. 206 where it is suggested that Sir George was 'deceived' as to the amount he was to receive. No documentary evidence has been found to substantiate the gossip or the allegation of deception.

²⁵ The Lumley papers have also been the source for two studies of the family; Milner & Benham, *Records*; T.W. Beastall, *A north country estate; the Lumleys and Saundersons as landowners, 1600-1900* (Chichester, 1975).

Figure 3

THE LUMLEY-SAUNDERSONS OF SANDBECK



following the death of his brother George, 5th Earl of Scarbrough, the Savile lands passed to the next son, John Lumley Savile.

Links between the Nottinghamshire gentry and the Lumleys were further reinforced when, in 1792, Lady Mary Lumley, daughter of Richard 4th Earl of Scarbrough became the second wife of Francis Foljambe of Aldwarke and Osberton. Lady Mary Foljambe maintained close links with her siblings, particularly her sisters, Lady Louisa and Lady Sophia. In 1798, Lady Louisa Lumley married Winchcombe Henry Hartley a young lawyer, who was distantly related to David Hartley MP, close friend of Louisa's uncle Sir George Savile. Hartley continued to practice law, but sought, despite owning no landed property whatsoever, to maintain the lifestyle of the landed elite. The Lumleys and Foljambes, out of consideration for their sister, gave the Hartleys much financial assistance and used their influence to gain Hartley a post at the Cape in 1806. Louisa and their five children sailed with Hartley to South Africa but Louisa's health forced their return the following year. Lady Sophia Lumley did not marry and after the death of her mother in 1797, although nominally based at Sandbeck, divided her time between the households of her brothers and sisters, being of particular help to Louisa and her growing family. After Louisa's death, her concern for her nephews and nieces led her to take responsibility for running and making a financial contribution to the Hartley household.²⁶

Savile authority in the countryside throughout the eighteenth century was based

²⁶ See below Ch. 4, Domestic Life.

not only upon their position as landowners but also upon political and military office. Sir George, 7th Baronet Savile became MP for Yorkshire in 1728 and his son George, 8th Baronet later followed suit and served in the same position 1759-84, gaining much respect for his integrity as ‘a staunch Whig of unimpeachable character’. He was also a Colonel in the West Riding Militia and was granted the freedom of Nottingham in 1776.²⁷ His successor at Rufford, Richard Lumley Savile, was Sheriff of Nottingham in 1793.

Women’s papers in the Savile archive can be divided into two main sections. The first covers the period c. 1720-1760, and centres on Gertrude Savile (1697-1758), sister of Sir George, 7th baronet Savile (see Fig. 2). The second, spanning c. 1790-1820, focuses on the daughters of Barbara Savile and Richard, 4th Earl of Scarborough, Lady Mary Foljambe (1763-1817), Lady Louisa Hartley (1773-1811) and Lady Sophia Lumley (1777-1832), (see Fig. 3).

Gertrude Savile was raised at Rufford Abbey in Nottinghamshire, under the supervision of her mother and brother. After her brother’s marriage, which took place when Gertrude was in her mid-twenties, she and her mother spent most of their time in London at a house in Golden Square. As she entered her thirties, Gertrude sought greater independence from her family, first taking lodgings near Hampton Court and then, following the respective deaths of her Cousin Newton, mother and sister, she inherited sufficient personal income to maintain her own household. She returned to Nottinghamshire in 1737 and leased a house in the village of Farnsfield, a few miles south of Rufford Park. Six years later she left the

²⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography*, (henceforth DNB), Vol. 17, pp. 853-55.

countryside, never to return, preferring to live in Great Russell Street in London, where she remained until her death.

Gertrude's journals and account books are an important source for the earlier part of the eighteenth century. Her surviving diaries cover the periods 1721-22, 1727-31 and 1737-57 and combine with her personal accounts for the period 1736-58, to offer a detailed insight into the daily activities, interests, expenses and emotions of a woman between the age of 24 and 58.²⁸ In addition to these very personal sources there is a considerable body of family correspondence from which was selected 38 letters exchanged by Gertrude and her brother between 1720 and 1738 and 22 letters between Gertrude, her mother and her second cousin between 1721 and 1734.²⁹ Information about the management of Gertrude's landed interest was found in her correspondence with Mr Ogle and with her land agent Gabriel Hall.³⁰ Financial matters that underpinned the lives of Gertrude and other women in the Savile family are further exposed in the wills of Gertrude's mother, Barbara Savile and of her brother George, and in deeds from the latter to Gertrude between

²⁸ The first volume, 1721-2 is at NAO DDSR 221/11, the twelve volumes that cover the period 1727-31 are at DDSR 221/10/1-12. The diaries that covered the final years 1737-57 were not deposited in the Nottinghamshire Archive Office and cannot now be found. Fortunately, a copy of the original was made in the early 1960s and later transcribed. An abridged version of all the diaries was published jointly by the Kingsbridge History Society and the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire and it is this version that has been consulted for this thesis; A. Saville (ed.), 'Secret Comment: the diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757.', *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, Vol. 41 (1997). The account books, to be found in two volumes at NAO DDSR A4/45 & 46 had received earlier attention, with substantial segments being published, again by the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire, and again it is the printed version which has been subjected to analysis for this thesis; M. Penn (ed.), 'The account books of Gertrude Savile 1736-58', *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire, Record Series*, Vol. 24 (Nottingham, 1967).

²⁹ NAO DDSR 212/13, Letters between Sir George Savile and Gertrude Savile, 1721-35; NAO DDSR 221/89, letters between Gertrude Savile, Barbara Savile and Mrs Bird, 1721-34; also NAO DDSR 221/81 Letters between Gertrude Savile and her sister Anne, 1728-30.

³⁰ NAO DDSR 221/88, letters from Mr Ogle to Gertrude Savile, 1739-57; NAO DDSR 212/14, letters between Gertrude Savile and Gabriel Hall, 1749-51.

1712 and 1723.³¹ This earlier section of the archive also contains information about Gertrude's nieces between 1743 and 1757, comprising 21 letters to Gertrude from Arabella Thornhagh (1725-67) and her husband, and three from Barbara, later Countess of Scarbrough (1734-97).³² Most of the material generated during the lifetime of the Scarbrough marriage is found in the Lumley archive (see below) but copies of the wills of both Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough and Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough were located in the Savile archive.³³

Coverage of the later period in the Savile archive, c. 1790-1820, is obtained largely from the papers of the eldest of Barbara's daughters, Lady Mary, from around the time of her marriage to Francis Foljambe of Aldwark and Osberton in 1792, until her death as a widow in 1817 (see Fig. 4 and Map 1).³⁴ This source consists of about 1500 letters received by Lady Mary between c.1789 and 1817, arranged in forty unsorted bundles. Not all the material was examined. An initial survey established that both the division of the correspondence into bundles, and the filing within the bundles were entirely random, and indicated that the letters were generated, for the most part, by Lady Mary's family; by her husband and his children from his first marriage, by her sisters and brothers and their respective families, and by other relatives and friends. Twenty two bundles were selected for

³¹ NAO DDSR 225/23/10, will of Barbara Savile, 30 July 1733, cod. 20 Aug. 1733; NAO DDFJ 3rd Series, Box no. 1503, will of Sir George Savile, 9 June 1743, cod. 10 June 1743; NAO DDSR 225/26 Abstract of deeds from Sir George Savile to Gertrude Savile, 1712-23.

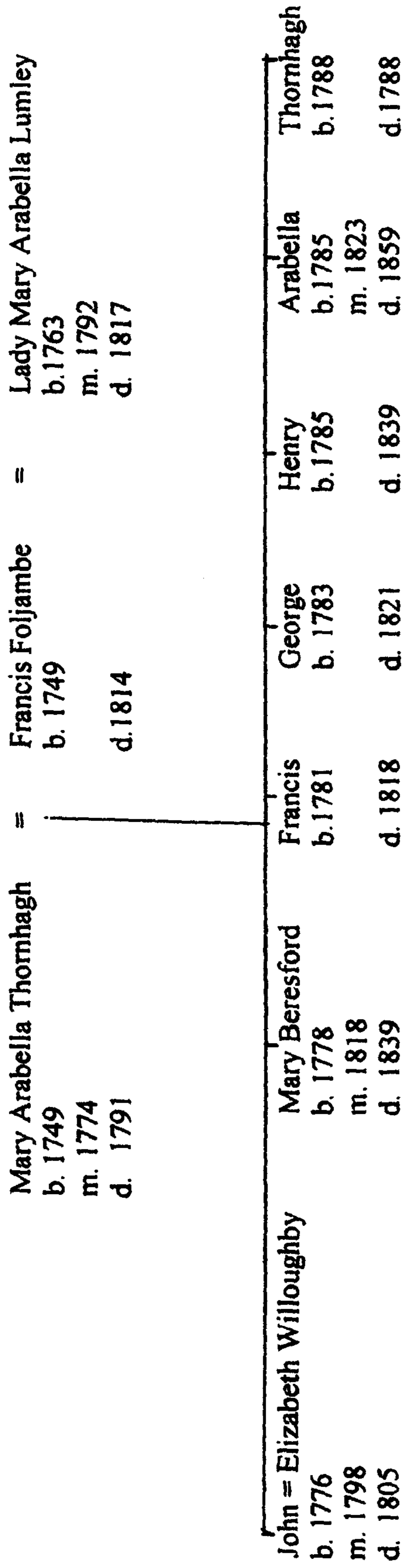
³² NAO DDSR 212/16, letters from John and Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 1744-47; NAO DDSR 221/90, letters from Barbara Savile to Gertrude Savile, 1746-57.

³³ NAO DDSR 207/39/15, will of Richard, Earl of Scarbrough, 1772; DDSR 212/41/1-7, will of Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough, May 1793, cod. 23 Feb., 8 April, 20 Jul. 1797. Also DDSR 221/15 contains a single letter from Barbara Countess of Scarbrough to Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough, undated [context suggests 1756]. A further twelve letters from Barbara, for the period 1779-83, and three from Lord Scarbrough located in the Hewett correspondence within the Foljambe archive, see DDFJ 11/1/3-5.

³⁴ NAO DDSR 221/8-48, correspondence to Lady Mary Foljambe c.1800-1820.

Figure 4

THE FOLJAMBE FAMILY OF ALDWARK AND OSBERTON



study, every letter in each of these bundles was examined and material was extracted from those letters which shed light on female activities and attitudes, with particular reference to Mary and her sisters Louisa and Sophia.³⁵

This method of selection produced 146 letters written to Lady Mary by her husband, Francis Foljambe from the time of their courtship in the spring of 1792 to his death in 1814. Also found were 24 letters written by Foljambe's children to their step-mother Lady Mary in the period 1801 –1817.³⁶ The most prolific correspondents amongst Lady Mary Foljambe's siblings were her sisters, Lady Louisa Hartley and Lady Sophia Lumley. 71 letters from Louisa were examined for the period between 1798 and her death in 1811 and a further 40 letters from other members of Lady Louisa's family, her husband, Winchcombe Henry Hartley, her daughters Barbara and Louisa and sisters-in-law Anne and Charlotte Hartley.³⁷ Of Sophia's letters, 108 were selected; about one third of these were undated notes, but most of the correspondence related to the period 1800-1815. Additional Lumley material was also taken from 48 letters from Mary's five surviving brothers, her four sisters- in-law, her paternal aunt, Anne Lumley Saunderson and her cousin Anne Ludlow.³⁸ Another useful source of information

³⁵ The bundles selected for study in this way were DDSR 221/8-25, 30, 32, 37, 46. In the summary that follows of the correspondence selected for study, for the sake of brevity, no attempt has been made to indicate in which of the 22 bundles letters from each correspondent can be found. When in later chapters, reference is made to specific letters, the number of the bundle in which that letter may be found is provided.

³⁶ NAO DDSR 221/8-46 (see fn. 35), Francis Foljambe jun. to Lady Mary Foljambe (11 letters, 1801-1817), Arabella Foljambe to same (2 letters, 1812) Mary Beresford Foljambe to same (1 letter, 1812); Elizabeth Foljambe to same (10 letters, 1804-7).

³⁷ NAO DDSR 221/8-46 (see fn.33), Winchcombe Henry Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe (15 letters, 1804-16); from Barbara Hartley to same (19 letters, 1805-1817); From Georgiana Hartley to same (4 letters, 1816); from Anne Hartley to same (1 letter, 1807), Charlotte Hartley to same (1 letter, 1816).

³⁸ NAO DDSR 221/8-46 (see fn.33), George, 5th Earl of Scarbrough to Lady Mary Foljambe (6 letters, 1801-7); William Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe (19 letters, 1800-17); John Lumley to same (1 letter, 1816); Savile Henry Lumley to same, (7 letters, 1798-1815); Richard Lumley to

was 42 letters from Lady Mary's friends and acquaintances in Nottinghamshire and London, and correspondence from her housekeeper.³⁹

Amongst all this correspondence from her family, Lady Mary remains a somewhat elusive figure, although the bundles selected did contain six undated draft letters in what appears to be Lady Mary's hand, two brief undated notes to her husband, and three other family letters 1792-1817. This comparative lack of evidence is compensated for somewhat by Lady Mary's personal accounts for the period 1792-1801, her kitchen account books, and the administration accounts for Lady Mary's estate after her death.⁴⁰

The private archive held by the present Earl of Scarborough at Sandbeck Hall provided material which complemented that found in the Savile papers in the Nottinghamshire Archive Office, relating to the finances of the Lumleys in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Correspondence from Barbara Countess of Scarborough to her son's agent, Richard Basset, 1782-92 illuminates the financial problems of her widowhood.⁴¹ Further information regarding the financial affairs of Lady Scarborough, Anne Lumley Saunderson and Lady Louisa Hartley was obtained from a further 33 items of family correspondence and from

same (2 letters, 1805-11); From her sisters-in-law, Anna Maria Lumley to same (1 letter 1807); Mary Lumley to same (1 letter, 1806); M A Lumley (2 letters, 1807). Anne Lumley Saunderson to same (6 letters, 1793-8); Anne Ludlow to same (4 letters, 1805-7).

³⁹ NAO DDSR 221/8-46 (see fn.33), Rose Haggitt to Lady Mary Foljambe (11 letter, 1800-1810); Sophie Ottey to same (11 letters, 1799-1817); Mrs C. Cooke to same (3 letters, 1800-1817); Mrs E. Vynner to same (3 letters, undated); Lady C. Leeds to same (4 letters, 1800-1810); Fanny Ramsden to same (8 letters 1800-1817); Mrs G. Porter to same (2 letters, 1800-1810).

⁴⁰ NAO DDSR 212/43, Lady Mary Foljambe's personal accounts, 1789-1801; DDSR 215/ 42-3, Kitchen account books of Lady Mary Foljambe; DDSR 225/33, Administration accounts of Lady Mary Foljambe, 1825.

⁴¹ SH 2 EMC/2 (39 letters).

the account books of Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough and of Richard Lumley Savile, later 6th Earl of Scarbrough.⁴²

The third major archival source used for this study was the, again, extensive collection of family and legal material contained in the Foljambe papers at Nottinghamshire Archives Office which give insight in to women's lives in three closely linked gentry families: the Thornhagh/Hewett family of Osberton and Shireoaks (see Fig. 5 and Map 1), the Foljambes of Aldwark, S. Yorkshire and Osberton (see Fig. 4 and Map 1) and the Warde family of Hooton Pagnell, S. Yorkshire (see Fig. 6 and Map 1).

The Thornhagh family had been resident at Osberton since the 1680s and had an established pattern of marrying within the local elite. As a consequence of this marital strategy the family owned several properties in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.⁴³ John Thornhagh's father and grandfather had married into the Lincolnshire elite; John and his sisters Mary and Frances found partners in other nearby locations. As noted above, John married Arabella Savile, daughter of Sir George Savile 7th Baronet, of Rufford in Nottinghamshire in 1744, and Mary and Frances also married into South Yorkshire families. The marriage, of Frances to Patientius Warde of Hooton Pagnell 'a very good match and a pretty gentleman'⁴⁴,

⁴² S EMC/3/1-9 (1783-1806); EMC/7/1-8 (1791-1807); EMC/2/4 -7 (1795-1802); EMC/13/1-12 (1807-1819); EMA/105 Account book of Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough (1754-1770); EMA/111/3 Account of private expenses of Richard Lumley Savile (1795-1799); particular thanks are due to Lord Scarbrough for drawing my attention to this revealing source; EMA/263(a) Richard Lumley Savile's Account with Messrs. Child and Co (1805-16 & 1825-8).

⁴³ Hawkesbury, 'Notes', p. 15.

⁴⁴ Milner & Benham, *Records*, p. 210, quoting Gertrude Savile.

Figure 5

THE THORNHAGH/HEWETT FAMILY OF OSBERTON AND SHIREOAKS,

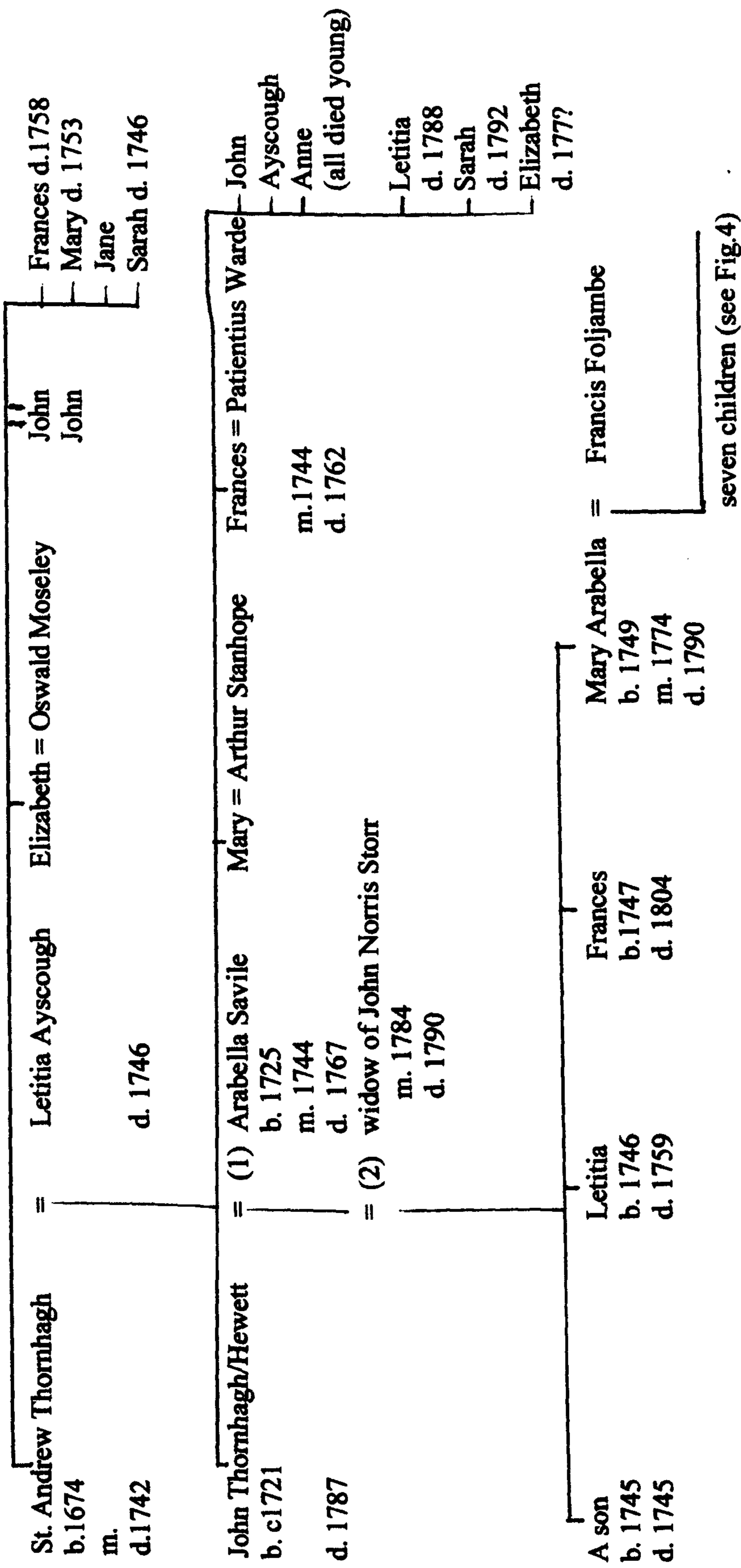
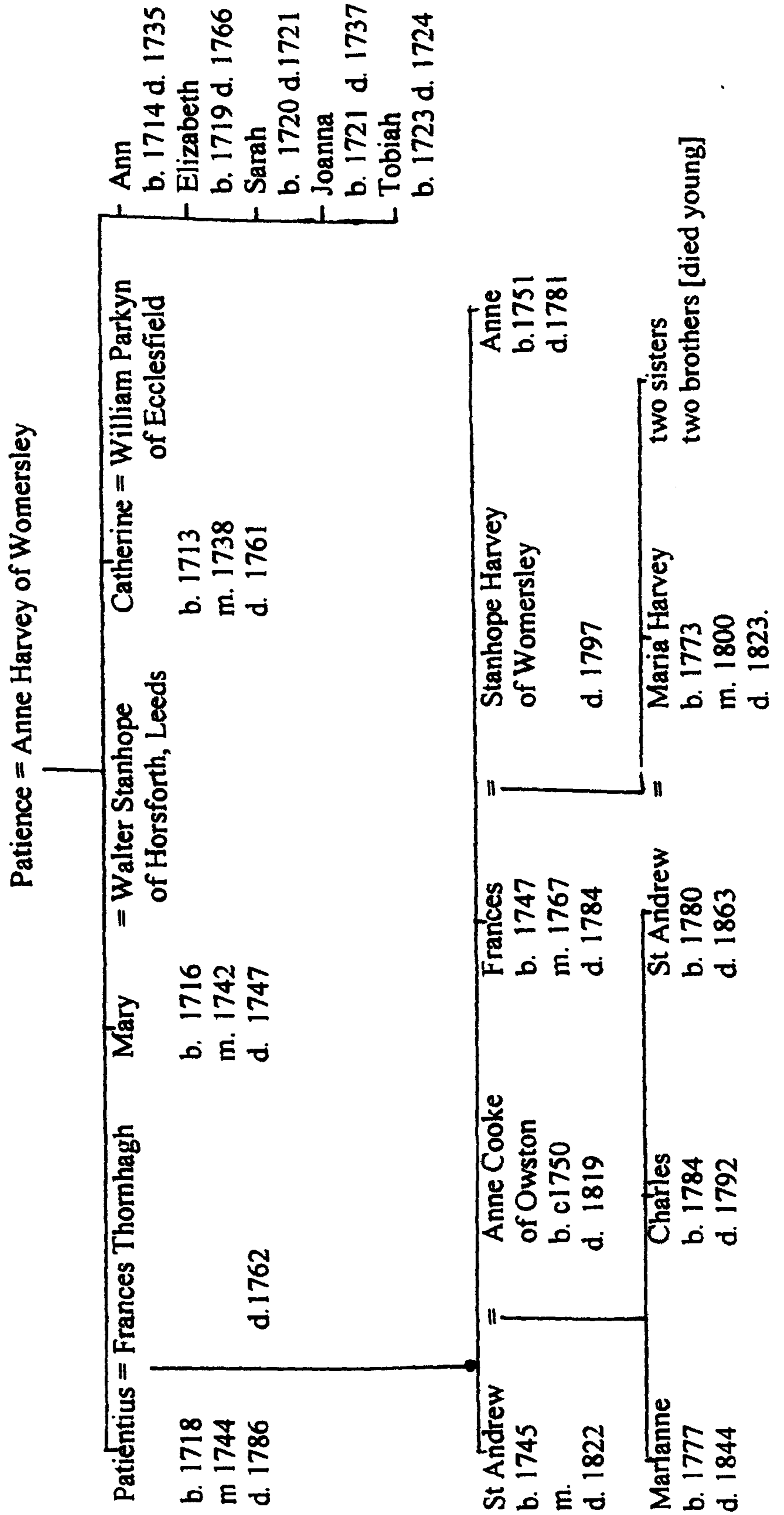


Figure 6

THE WARDES OF HOOTON PAGNELL



also in 1744, led to a close and enduring relationship between Hewett and his Warde nieces and nephews (see below). There were also three Thornhagh daughters who did not marry, Letitia, Sarah and Elizabeth. Their youth was spent in the family home at Osberton, and it has been suggested that after their brother's marriage they shared the smaller family residence at Fenton, also near Worksop. By the late 1770s they were resident in St. Saviourgate in York, where they maintained a joint household.⁴⁵

John and Arabella Thornhagh based their family life at Shireoaks, rather than at the Thornhagh seat of Osberton. A life interest in the Shireoaks estate was given to Thornhagh by his godfather, Sir Thomas Hewett, on condition that he should change his surname to Hewett, a condition which was accepted.⁴⁶ The marriage of Arabella and John Hewett produced four children, of whom two daughters survived to adulthood, to become joint heiresses to their father's estates. Their elder surviving daughter Frances Thornhagh (1747-1804) was declared a lunatic in 1784, and lived until 1804 in a house maintained for her by the family at Hoddesden in Hertfordshire, under the guardianship of her father, and then her brother-in-law, Francis Foljambe. The younger daughter, Mary Arabella (1749-1790) had forged further links with the South Yorkshire gentry by her marriage in 1774 to Foljambe, heir to the Aldwark estate near Rotherham.

⁴⁵ Hawkesbury, 'Notes, p.15.

⁴⁶ Milner & Benham, *Records*, p. 209. According to this source Hewett 'disinherited his only daughter, tradition says, in consequence of her marriage with a gypsy or fortune teller.'

The marriage between Francis Foljambe and Mary Thornhagh produced seven children and brought considerable wealth and landed property to the Foljambe family. Mary had a marriage portion of £20,000 and after the death of Sir George Savile in 1784 she also inherited his estates in Ireland and at Brierley in Yorkshire. In addition to this, Mary and her sister Frances were joint heiresses to the Thornhagh estates and on the death of John Hewett in 1787, the Foljambes inherited the Thornhagh estates in Nottinghamshire at Osberton and Fenton. When Mary's sister Frances died in 1804, her share of the Thornhagh fortune, held in trust since her father's death, also went to Francis Foljambe.

Mary Foljambe died in 1790 and as noted above, Francis and his second wife, Lady Mary Foljambe, moved their main residence from Foljambe's original estate of Aldwark in Yorkshire, to the Osberton estate in Nottinghamshire which he had inherited from John Thornhagh/Hewett. This second marriage produced no children. Foljambe's eldest son, John, took over Aldwark on his marriage to Elizabeth Willoughby in 1798. John Foljambe died in 1805 and the Foljambe estates were inherited from Francis Foljambe in 1814 by his grandson George.

Both John Hewett and his son-in-law Francis Foljambe held political office. Hewett was Sheriff of Nottingham in 1746 and had a long and respected career in Parliament serving as MP for Nottinghamshire from 1747 to 1784, a close political ally of his brother-in-law Sir George Savile. Frances Foljambe was active in both national and local politics in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. He was elected as MP for Yorkshire in the by-election of 1784, with the backing of Sir George Savile and Earl Fitzwilliam. At the general election, later in the year he

withdrew from the poll when it became clear that he would not be re-elected. He confined his activities to the local area until, in 1801, he was elected as member for Higham Ferrers, in Essex, and served until his retirement in 1807, resisting a suggestion that he should stand in Nottinghamshire in 1812.⁴⁷ Foljambe also sat as a Justice of the Peace on the East Retford bench from 1779 and was High Sheriff of Yorkshire 1787-8.⁴⁸

Within the four bound volumes of personal correspondence, received by John Hewett between 1778 and 1784, there are a significant number of letters from and concerning his sisters, daughters and nieces.⁴⁹ This material, combined with a range of legal and financial papers, illuminates the lives of two generations of women. Information relating to the older generation is somewhat sparse, compared to that for the younger. Hewett's wife, Arabella, a correspondent of Gertrude Savile, is represented in the Foljambe papers only by the settlement made on her marriage to Hewett in 1744.⁵⁰ Berkshire Record Office also holds five letters written by Arabella.⁵¹ Hewett's sisters fare slightly better as there are 25 letters from Letitia Thornhagh (c.1725 – 1788) and 3 from Sarah Thornhagh (c. 1725- 1792).⁵² Their respective wills are also available within the archive.⁵³

⁴⁷ *History of Parliament; The Commons 1790-1820*, Vol. III (1986), pp. 782-3

⁴⁸ G. Welby, 'Rulers of the countryside: the justice of the peace in Nottinghamshire, 1775-1800', *Transactions of the Thorton Society*, 77 (1973), pp. 83 & 79.

⁴⁹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1 & 3-5, Correspondence of John Hewett. The letters are bound in volumes in date order in each volume.

⁵⁰ NAO DDFJ 15/5/8, Marriage settlement Thornhagh Savile, 1744. For the Savile correspondence see above fn. 28.

⁵¹ BRO D/E HY F112, letters from Arabella Hewett to Mary Hartley (5 letters 1759-69); Also at BRO D/EX 183/13, a 1748 edition of Lord Halifax' *Advice to a daughter*, inscribed on the flyleaf M.A. Thornhagh, probably belonging to Arabella's daughter Mary.

⁵² NAO DDFJ 11/1/4 Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 1779 (16 letters); DDFJ 11/1/3, same to same, 1780-84 (9 letters); DDFJ 11/1/4, Sarah Thornhagh to same, 1779 (1 letter); DDFJ 11/1/3, same to same, 1778 (2 letters).

⁵³ NAO DDFJ 15/3/33, Will of Letitia Thornhagh, 1781-92; DDFJ 15/3/34, Will of Sarah Thornhagh, 1788-92.

In the second generation, the marriage of Thornhagh's younger daughter Mary Arabella (1749-1790) to Francis Foljambe, is brought into sharp relief by the young couple's letters to Hewett, 28 from Mary and 51 from Francis, providing chatty details about the couple's interests, their life together and their children.⁵⁴

The financial arrangements that supported this marriage are detailed in the settlement of 1774.⁵⁵ There is only one letter from Hewett's other daughter Frances, and a handful of family letters which refer to her in passing, but a wealth of information survives defining the framework of her life between 1770 and 1804, from the legal documents relating to her declared insanity and records of the subsequent family management of her life and finances.⁵⁶

Another family who feature prominently in the Hewett correspondence in the Foljambe archive are the Wardes of Hooton Pagnell in South Yorkshire. The Wardes were relative newcomers to the landed gentry, the money for the purchase of the estate in 1704 originating from the activities of a London wool merchant.⁵⁷ The marriage of Frances Thornhagh and Patientius Warde in 1744 produced three children. St. Andrew, the heir, took over the estate from his father around the time of his marriage to Anne Cooke of Owston in 1775, at which point Patientius

⁵⁴ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Mary Arabella Foljambe to John Hewett, 1778-84 (7 letters); DDFJ 11/1/4, same to same, 1779 (13 letters); DDFJ, 11/1/1, same to same, 1779-83 (2 letters); DDFJ 11/1/5, same to same, 1780 (6 letters).

⁵⁵ NAO DDFJ 15/7/12, Abstract of the marriage settlement between Francis Ferrand Foljambe and Mary Arabella Thornhagh, 28 June 1774.

⁵⁶ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, Frances Thornhagh to John Hewett, 27 Jan. 1780; DDFJ 11/1/3, David Hartley to John Hewett, 1770-1771; Sir George Savile to John Hewett, 1778 (2 letters); DDFJ, 11/1/1, part 2, Sir George Savile to John Hewett, 1780 (2 letters); DDFJ 15/8/37, petitions to the Lord High Chancellor in the matter of Frances Thornhagh, 1784-6; DDFJ 15/8/43 (a), records of household bills and wages for Frances Thornhagh; DDFJ 15/8/43 (b), correspondence relating to Frances Thornhagh, 1778-1783; DDFJ 15/8/38, accounts for the administration of the estate of Frances Thornhagh.

⁵⁷ For the history of Hooton Pagnell, see J. Hunter, *South Yorkshire: the history and topography of the Deanery of Doncaster*, Vol. 2 (1831), pp. 140-53. Also, A. G. Ruston and D. Witney, *Hooton Pagnell: the agricultural evolution of a Yorkshire village* (1934).

Warde retired to live in Nottingham, setting up a household which he shared with his unmarried daughter Anne Warde. After Anne's untimely death at the age of thirty in 1781, Patientius Warde was persuaded to move to York, it being suggested that he should join his spinster sisters-in-law Letitia and Sarah Thornhagh.

Warde participation in county administration and politics was limited. There is no evidence to suggest that Patientius held any public office. St. Andrew Warde did serve on the Grand Jury at the York Assizes in 1781 and was active in the county militia.⁵⁸ However, he refused the opportunity offered by the Duke of Portland in 1799 to act as Sheriff of Yorkshire on the grounds that he had insufficient funds to support the office.⁵⁹

The children of Hewett's sister Frances' marriage to Patientius Warde continued a close relationship with their uncle, seeking his friendship and advice in their correspondence between 1778 and 1784. His niece Anne Warde wrote at her uncle's request to keep him abreast of family news, and of social and political gossip from Nottingham; 18 letters survive. Hewett's correspondence from his nephew, St. Andrew Warde and his wife Anne, comprising some 56 and 22 letters respectively, illuminate their daily lives, interests and concerns.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ NAO DD FJ 11/1/5, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 15 March 1781; HP/33/1 Deed of appointment by the Marquess of Rockingham of St. Andrew Warde as a deputy lieutenant under the Militia Act of 1762, 3 Aug. 1775.

⁵⁹ HP/27/19, St. Andrew Warde to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 18 Nov. 1798; William, 3rd Duke of Portland to St. Andrew Warde, 28 Nov. 1798. Warde estimated the annual cost of holding this office as £1000, and his own income as £1600. Portland replied that he could not 'but admit the force of the reasons you assign for asking to be excused serving that office'.

⁶⁰ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 1778-80 (3 letters); DDFJ 11/1/4, same to same, 1779 (8 letters); DDFJ 11/1/5, same to same, 1780-81 (7 letters). NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, St. Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 1778-84 (11 letters); DDFJ 11/1/4, same to same, 1779 (28

The enduring links between the Thornhagh/Hewetts and the Wardes are reflected in the contents of the private archive maintained by the Warde–Norbury family at Hooton Pagnell Hall today. The collection contains many legal and financial papers, including the settlement agreed on the marriage of Frances Thornhagh's marriage and Patientius Warde in 1744, and the settlements for the marriages of their children, Frances, in 1767 and St. Andrew in 1774, and the arrangements for their third child, Anne to receive her portion.⁶¹ Also available is a cluster of testamentary material for single women between 1740 and 1792 consisting of the wills of Sarah, Frances and Mary Thornhagh, spinster aunts of John Hewett and Frances Warde, papers relating to the execution of the will of their sister Sarah Thornhagh and the will of Frances' daughter Miss Anne Warde.⁶² For the later period, within St. Andrew Warde's general correspondence for 1788-90 there is one letter from his wife Anne, ten letters from Sarah Thornhagh and two from Francis Foljambe.⁶³

The final set of papers under consideration here are those relating to Abigail Gawthern (1757-1822) of Nottingham (see Fig. 7 and Map 1). Abigail's father,

letters); DDFJ 11/1/5, same to same, 1780-84 (17 letters). NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 1778-84 (4 letters); DDFJ 11/1/4, same to same, 1779 (8 letters); DDFJ 11/1/5, same to same, 1780-83 (9 letters).

⁶¹ HP/2/11-12, Marriage settlement for Patientius Warde and Francis Thornhagh and receipt for payment of portion by John Thornhagh, 8/9 May 1744; HP/2/22, Marriage settlement of Frances Warde and Stanhope Harvey, 28 April 1767; HP/2/16, receipt for portion of Frances Warde, 28 April 1767; HP/2/31-5, Marriage settlement of Anne Cooke and St. Andrew Warde, 13 June 1775; HP/2/16 & 29, receipts for payment of portion to Anne Warde, 28 April 1767 and 24 Oct 1774;

⁶² HP/9/33-4, will of Letitia Thornhagh, written 10 July 1744, cod. 25 Feb. 1745; HP/9/31, will of Sarah Thornhagh, written 23 June 1740, prob. 19 July 1740; HP/9/35, will of Mary Thornhagh, written 29 Apr. 1749, prob. 6 July 1750; HP/9/36, will of Frances Thornhagh, written 26 Apr. 1753, prob. 6 July 1758. HP/9/8-9, Will of Miss Anne Warde, written 1773, cod. 22 April 1780, prob. 8 Nov. 1781 and receipts for payment of legacies, 9 Nov. 1781; HP/9/40 & 43, Valuation of the goods of and executors accounts for Sarah Thornhagh, 1792.

⁶³ HP/27/1-5, Correspondence of St. Andrew Warde, 1788-1790.

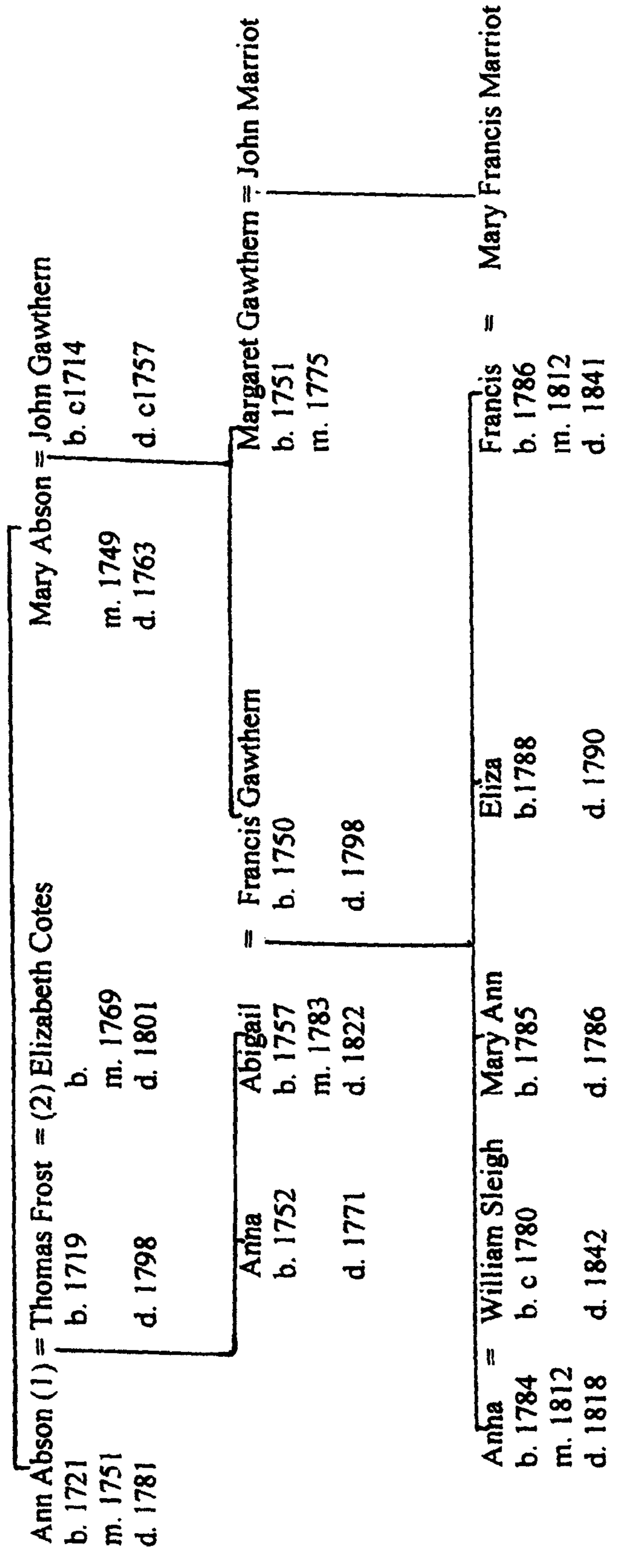
Thomas Frost, was the son of yeoman farmer, and was apprenticed as a grocer in Nottingham.⁶⁴ Having served his apprenticeship he in turn set up in business as a grocer and tallow chandler and in 1751 married Ann Abson, the daughter of the rector of St Nicholas church in Nottingham. By the time of his death in 1798, Thomas Frost had amassed considerable inherited wealth, with landed property in Nottingham, an estate at Granby and a smaller estate at Holme. The Holme estate was bequeathed by his uncle Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas was quick to enhance this by building a new country residence, Holme Hall.

Thomas and Ann, although thought to have had eight children, were survived by only one, Abigail. Born in 1757, she married her cousin Francis Gawthern, the owner of a Nottingham leadworks, in 1783, and the couple took up residence in a significant house on the fashionable Low Pavement in Nottingham. The couple had four children, two of whom, Frank and Anna, survived to adulthood. Abigail was widowed in 1791 and continued the family business in the town during her

⁶⁴ Except where another reference has been provided, the biographical information about the Frost and Gawthern families, provided in this and the following two paragraphs, has been taken from the wealth of detail provided in the introduction to A. Henstock (ed.), 'The diary of Abigail Gawthern of Nottingham, 1751-1810', *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, Vol. 33 (1980), pp. 1-23.

Figure 7

THE GAWTHERN FAMILY OF NOTTINGHAM



son's minority. After the death of her father and step-mother, she rationalised the family properties in the countryside by selling the Granby estate, but maintained Holme as a country residence.

Although the Frosts and Gawtherns were not of the same social standing as the other, more elevated landowning families described above, they were unquestionably part of the urban elite. Thomas Frost was active in town politics throughout his life, and in 1766 was elected as a junior councillor for the Tory interest in the Nottingham Corporation. Abigail's diary indicates that she held her head high in fashionable Nottingham society, as a young woman, wife and widow. Her social horizons extended to a recording of the presence of the Portlands, the Wardes, the Saviles and the Lumleys at the assemblies, plays, races and political processions in which she herself participated. She visited their country homes as a tourist and took the trouble to note the deaths of several of their family members.⁶⁵ At the same time, the Frost family landholdings of around 270 acres, albeit dispersed in several locations in the county is thought to have placed Thomas Frost amongst the lesser gentry.⁶⁶ Certainly a late eighteenth century directory granted him pre-eminence in the village of Holme, referring to him as 'the only inhabitant of note'⁶⁷ His daughter Abigail Gawthern noted her pleasure at the ringing of bells in the village to acknowledge her family as significant persons in the parish.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Henstock, 'Diary', *passim*.

⁶⁶ This point is made in Henstock 'Diary', p.10, and is further confirmed in Aley, thesis, p. 73; she defines the Frosts of Holme as part of the 'village gentry' of eighteenth century Nottingham.

⁶⁷ *Universal British Directory* (Newark, c. 1793), p. 61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 83 & 103.

There is no discrete Gawthern archive. Much of the available material is found in the general manuscripts collection of Nottinghamshire Archive Office.⁶⁹ The most substantial of these source documents is the diary of Abigail Gawthern, covering the years 1751-1810.⁷⁰ Abigail's diary is essentially a record of activity rather than emotion. She recorded what she perceived of as significant events, in her own life, in the lives of her family, friends and acquaintances, and in the world at large. The papers of Abigail's great-uncle, Archbishop Thomas Secker at Lambeth Palace Library yielded a few pieces of correspondence to Abigail from her sister Ann and from the trustees of Secker's estate, as well as other papers relating to Abigail's finances covering the period 1763-83.⁷¹

In addition to the primary manuscript and printed source material detailed above, genealogical information has been extracted from standard reference works, from local and family histories, from pedigrees published in *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire* and from printed parish registers.⁷²

Information relating to the political and administrative careers of men was

⁶⁹ NAO M 23,904-12.

⁷⁰ The original document is held at NAO M 23,904. A full transcription of the diary is available at Henstock 'Diary', pp. 24 –149. It is this published version which has been consulted for this thesis.

⁷¹ LPL MS 1715 fo. 1, Ann Frost to Abigail Frost, (1 letter undated); fo. 2-3, same to Thomas Frost (1 letter, 1764); LPL MS 2165 fo. 6-9, B Porteus to Abigail Frost (3 letters, 1772-9); fo. 18, George Stinton to Abigail Frost (1 letter, 1779); LPL Ms 2165 fo.26, The will of John Secker, written 11 Jan. 1763, prob. 2 Mar. 1763; LPL Ms 1715 fo.30-31, Investment of £5000 from Archbishop Secker's will by B. Porteus and G. Stinton, 25 Aug. 1768; LPL MS 2165 fo. 39-41, Abstract of marriage settlement of Francis Gawthern and Abigail Frost, undated.

⁷² G. E. Cokayne, *The complete peerage*, 13 vols. (1910-59); Burke's Commoners (1833); Burke's Landed Gentry (1837); J. Throsby (ed.), *The antiquities of Nottinghamshire* II, (1790, reprinted 1972); Lord Hawkesbury, 'Notes on Osberton, Scofton, Rayton, Bilby, Hodsock, Fleecethorp &c.', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, Vol. 5 (1924); *Idem*, 'Sturton-le-Steeple, Notts.', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, Vol. 7 (1908), supplement; 'The parish registers of Hooton Pagnell 1538-1812' *Yorkshire parish registers society*, Vol. 87 (1929).

available from the *History of Parliament*, and *Dictionary of National Biography*.⁷³

To summarise, the family papers selected for study here contained an impressive range of sources for the study of women's lives in the eighteenth century. The most plentiful source was correspondence and the study has incorporated letters generated by women and also letters generated by men which were addressed to women, or letters between men which referred to women or family matters. The collections also yielded women's own records of their daily activities and interests and expenditure in the form of diaries and personal and household account books. Also available for study were a range of legal documents which defined women's stake in family property, such as deeds, bonds and marriage settlements and wills. Each of the collections offered a somewhat different time period for study within the eighteenth century. Two generations of women are visible in the Portland family between c.1730 and c.1790. Women from the Savile, Thornhagh/ Hewett and Foljambe families are accessible over four generations between c.1720 and 1820. Abigail Gawthern and her daughter are documented from c.1760-1810.

The source materials used here raised both specific methodological issues, generated by the size and range of the family collections used, and by more general issues arising out of the type of documents selected for study. The surprising wealth of materials generated by and relating to women in the family collections, imposed a need to be selective in the interests of the manageability of

⁷³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, 21 Vols. (1921-2); Sir L. Namier, & J. Brookes, *The history of Parliament; the Commons 1754-90* (1964); idem., *The history of Parliament; the Commons 1790-1820* (1986).

the project and of balance. This was particularly necessary in the use of family correspondence, by far the most prolific source contained in the family collections. Where collections of letters were extensive, such as those generated by Gertrude Savile and her family, or those received by Lady Mary Foljambe or John Hewett, not all correspondence was selected for study. In these circumstances the main focus was on letters exchanged between women, whether family members, friends or acquaintances, and on letters between women and their fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. Manageability was also the main motivation for the decision to work from the published transcripts of the diaries of Gertrude Savile and Abigail Gawthorn.

While it was necessary to be selective in the matter of correspondence, the broad range of other materials available within the family collections offered several advantages. First they allowed the consideration of women within an appropriate context. Every woman in this study lived a life that was centred upon family; this cannot be ignored if an accurate picture of female roles and responsibilities was to be obtained. Second, the family collections also offered access to a range of legal and financial documentation, such as settlements, wills, account books, deeds and bonds, which illuminate the economic position and activities of women both as individuals and as family members.

Each of the sources used here has advantages and disadvantages. Personal correspondence offers a unique perspective on the thoughts and activities of an individual, but letters are not necessarily all-revealing. The writer decides what should be included and excluded, thus making the letter as much a cultural

construction as any other narrative. The correspondents in this study have themselves highlighted the reasons for withholding information. A letter containing delicate or scandalous or political information could easily fall into the wrong hands. When Lady Sophia Lumley and her sister Lady Mary Foljambe exchanged information by letter about a pregnant maid, the former assured the latter that letters would be ‘safely locked up’, to prevent the children from seeing them.⁷⁴ Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, having been advised that her letters to her husband in Carlisle were likely to be opened and read by their political opponents, took steps to ensure a personal delivery and also noted that ‘what I write will do...neither good nor harm’.⁷⁵ When such matters were raised obliquely, the writer might suggest that the exchange of specific information should be delayed until a verbal communication was possible. Lady Henrietta Grey was careful to employ discretion in communications with her brother. She told him that; ‘I can’t tell you in a letter the state of politicks here, otherwise you would see that the compromise you mention was utterly impossible’⁷⁶. On another occasion she told her brother that details of her husband’s election activities would have to wait, ‘for it impossible to say anything in a letter.’⁷⁷ Similarly, she withheld specific information about her mother-in-law’s will, but promised that he would be told the details ‘when we meet’.⁷⁸

If possibly indiscreet information was included in a letter, the recipient could be

⁷⁴ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 13 Dec. 1812.

⁷⁵ NUMD PwF 10551, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 11 March 1768.

⁷⁶ NUMD PwF 4520 Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 19 Nov. 1763.

⁷⁷ NUMD PwF 4557, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 Dec. 1767.

⁷⁸ NUMD PwF 4600, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 16 Dec. 1772;

asked by the writer to destroy the letter once its contents had been read and absorbed, an injunction which, happily for the historian, was sometimes ignored. Young women were very much aware that their correspondence was subject to the scrutiny of their parents. Miss Walpole, speculating on the fate of her aunt on her wedding night, requested that Lady Dorothy should burn the letter and refrain from referring to the matter in her next letter 'for fear of accidents'.⁷⁹ At the end of a letter to her brother, in which she had commented none too favourably on their parents, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth added, 'I beg you will burn this scrawl.'⁸⁰ When Lady Louisa Hartley told her sister of her current financial crisis and her feelings about gossip relating to her husband, she ended by saying 'I wish you would burn my letters'.⁸¹ A letter from Anne Lumley Saunderson to her niece, Lady Mary Foljambe, which set out the extent of her financial difficulties and justified her decision to overlook her Lumley nieces and nephews in her will contained the following instruction;

When you have read and communicated the content of that part of this letter concerning your *two Sisters and Brothers*, I beg and pray it may be committed to the flames.⁸²

Similarly, the diary as a source, whilst of value in offering a unique perspective on the thoughts and attitudes of an individual, must be approached with some caution. Diary writers themselves can reveal the limitations of the source they have provided. For example Gertrude Savile's journals vary considerably in their style and content according to her self-imposed rules, her mood and her

⁷⁹ NUMD PwF 196, Miss C. Walpole to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland [undated].

⁸⁰ NUMD PwF 8711, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth, to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Dec. 1760.

⁸¹ NAO DDSR 221/50, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 31 Dec. 1805.

⁸² NAO DDSR221/10, Lady Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated [1787-1810].

inclination. The purpose of her early diaries, according to an entry made by Gertrude in 1729, was therapeutic; ‘an imployment for many tedious hours that hung upon my hands, which spent [idly], would have made me mad.’ The format she devised, ‘many Years agoe’ was all-inclusive, combining the recording of details such as the time of rising and going to bed, and how the hours in between were spent, with a record of her thoughts and feelings. At this time Gertrude chose to free herself from continuing the ‘now tyresome task’ of the consistent recording of thoughts and deeds on the grounds that; ‘I am grown as unfitt to converse with myself and with anybody elce’. Instead she chose to continue in a different vein;

Yet I do not design to renounce it, but to take off all restraint of a Task and business hitherto imposed upon my dear self ...
Henceforth I will go on in this broken manner or what manner I please; leave what blanks I please; intermitt as long as I please;....⁸³

A month later she recorded some guilt about her lapses, recording that ; ‘These Five days I have utterly forgott, nor have I anything to say to fill up this page’, but explaining that her difficulty in finding anything to say was highlighted by her habit of marking up the pages some two or three months in advance;

That makes a difficulty to find just matter enough and not too much for the space I have left each Day. I let you into this secrett my dear, least you should be surprised by so many Forgetts and Blanks, and also to excuse any sillyness put in to fill up.⁸⁴

It should also not be assumed that a diary is always a strictly contemporary record. Gertrude Savile provided evidence that she went back over her entries, editing and changing earlier entries. At the beginning of 1731 she recorded that

⁸³ Savile ‘Secret comment’ p. 187

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 193-4.

having spent most of 1 and 2 January reading over her diary, on 4 January she read 'some of my journal' to her mother and a friend. She then devoted the afternoon of the following day to the 'business of reading and correcting journall which has its use I hope, as well as some pleasure.'⁸⁵ Much of Abigail Gawthern's diary was completed many years after the events she describes. The editor of the printed version describes it as a 'retrospective chronicle of personal, family and local events', and indicates that the diary, which covers the years 1751-1810, was compiled between 1808 and 1813 from entries in Abigail's pocket books.⁸⁶

On the other hand, the isolated use of legal documents such as wills and marriage settlements raises a different set of issues. Legal documents are 'factual and formal' and offer details of business arrangements, rarely providing an indication of the broader social and emotional impact of the document.⁸⁷ While a will or settlement may tell us that a woman owned a particular property, it is only from other sources, perhaps a diary or correspondence that we can learn how she managed that property and what it meant to her.⁸⁸ Also, whatever the provisions made for the transmission of any kind of property from one person to another in a legal document, this does not guarantee that the specified transfer took place. Some of this uncertainty may be overcome by the painstaking tracking of legal and economic activities through its accompanying documentation. For example, the payment of a bequest specified in a will may be verified by the survival of a

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁸⁶ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 3, where it is also noted that the diary begins six years before the birth of the author, and that entries before the mid-1760s were not drawn from Abigail's personal experience.

⁸⁷ See J. Warde (ed.), *Women of the English nobility and gentry 1066-1500* (Manchester, 1995), p. 12.

⁸⁸ A. L. Erickson, *Women and property in early modern England* (1995), pp.12-13.

receipt for that payment in the executors' accounts, but there are no guarantees that such documentation existed or that it has survived. Financial documents, such as account books, in addition to providing a record of what money was spent, and on which dates, can also be useful in providing supplementary details. For example, the household can be reconstructed from a record of payment of wages to servants. In some cases the account keeper may record where the money was spent, allowing the tracking of their movements.⁸⁹ Faced with these uncertainties, the historian must proceed with care, using both the 'soft' data provided by letters and diaries and the 'hard' data contained in legal documents and financial accounts. Combining and comparing the two allows for the broadest possible view of women's lives, helping to verify whether intentions became reality, whether thoughts and deeds coincided and whether promises were fulfilled.⁹⁰

Although the available range of primary source material may be wide, as was the case in this study, the evidence that it yields can still be no more than fragmentary. Even those women for whom the most abundant documentary sources survive are not 'visible' to the historian at all times in their lives. Perhaps the most difficult period of life to gain direct access to is childhood. The direct testimony of children rarely survives, and it is necessary to rely on the materials produced by parents, guardians and tutors to gain a view of how and where and under whose

⁸⁹ Both of these additional benefits were available within the female account books considered here. See M. Penn, (ed.), 'The account books of Gertrude Savile, 1736-58' *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire, Record Series*, Vol. 24 (Nottingham, 1967). NAO DDSR 212/43, Lady Mary Foljambe's personal account books, 1789-1801.

⁹⁰ A. Vickery, 'Women of the local elite in Lancashire, 1750-c.1825' (unpublished PhD. thesis, London University (1991), pp. 41-2 makes this point, arguing that the use of legal, financial and civil records to construct a framework for the qualitative data, serves to 'anchor' the evidence of correspondence of diaries and letters in material circumstances. There is further discussion of the problems presented by legal documents and the gap between intention and reality, below in Chapter three, *Marital Decisions* and in Chapter eight, *Property*.

care a girl spent her time and the rationale that directed childhood activity. Even where women's voices are heard in adolescence, sending letters home from school or corresponding with relatives, it is often evident that the hand of the girl is guided by that of an adult, either a parent or governess ensuring that the right impression is made. The source materials for women as wives and mothers are more abundant, but present different problems. For example, a husband and wife will usually only communicate by letter when they are separated, so how can we gain access to their life together? If we rely on their communication with other family members and friends, how open will a woman be in discussing her relationship with her husband? Equally, although women may comment upon their role as mother, the only direct communication between mother and child that we are able to witness is that reported by others or provided by letters, which again will only be sent when mother and child were separated. A woman's accounts might inform us about a woman's household expenses, but may not be clear on who did the shopping or cooked the meals.

These are just some examples of the difficulties encountered in the necessary task of constructing case studies of individuals. This detailed focus on individuals enables the assessment of their actions, relationships and roles, but it must be accepted that some aspects of life will never be entirely accessible. Once the task of reconstruction of individual activities and attitudes has been completed, considerable care must be exercised in extrapolating generalities from the experiences of a few. While it cannot be denied that 'historical narrative is ultimately the concretion of individual life stories', it is dangerous to compress the

experiences and actions of a few individuals to form a kind of collective biography.⁹¹

The intention here is to not to construct a composite life of the elite woman, but rather to comment upon both particularity and similarity in the thoughts and deeds of specific women, within the broad social group that constituted the eighteenth century Nottinghamshire elite. The consideration of the differences and similarities between women at various levels in the elite will assist in addressing the question of whether it is legitimate to refer to a single female elite, or whether the attitudes and activities of, for example, the aristocratic woman and the gentleman's daughter were so different as to require separate consideration.

⁹¹ S. H. Mendelson, *The mental world of Stuart women* (Amherst, 1987), p. 11.

Chapter Two

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION.

*Youth, the time wherein the foundation of life is laid!*¹

For a girl to become a fully integrated adult member of elite society, she needed to understand both the restrictions imposed by gender and the privilege that elevated social status conferred. Successfully combining the ideals of submission and superiority was the challenge faced by elite parents presented with a daughter. This chapter will address the subject of how eighteenth-century childhood experience was fashioned to ensure that girls learnt both how to be women and how to be elite. Girls' lives are tracked within the primary source material, establishing how and where time was spent and with whom; day-to-day life, education and recreation are examined and the social relationships that underpinned these activities are defined. This reconstruction must be considered in the context of the current debates in the history of childhood, of the family, of women, of education and of the elite.

It is forty years since Aries argued that the eighteenth century was the period in which attitudes to childhood and children began to undergo radical change. He suggested that children in the early modern period had suffered under a regime of severe discipline, administered by cold and distant parents who made little emotional investment in their children. The supposed transition from this desolate

¹ A. Saville (ed.), 'Secret comment: the diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757' *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire, Record Series, Vol. 41* (1997), p. 16.

childhood landscape of the past to the loving and nurturing family environment of the present, was prompted by a new perspective on the child, which emerged in the eighteenth century. Children, it is argued, were increasingly viewed as innocent individuals who required nurture, rather than discipline; they became the object of parental affection and enjoyed more permissive childcare.² Stone's analysis of family relationships also identified the eighteenth century as a period of change in childhood experience. From the late seventeenth century the early modern emphasis on the patriarchal nuclear family was supplanted by the closed domesticated nuclear family and the accompanying emotional climate of 'affective individualism' heralded a more liberal and affectionate attitude to children. This change of attitude was said to have its roots in families of the middling sort and to have gained strength during the course of the eighteenth century, working its way up the social ladder through the gentry and aristocracy.³

These theories of sweeping change have been dismantled by succeeding generations of historians of childhood and the family. The methodology used to construct the theoretical framework has been criticised on several fronts. Pollock found that a reworking of the evidence uncovered an over-emphasis on contemporary advice literature combined with insufficient and overly-selective

² P. Aries, *Centuries of childhood* (Harmondsworth, 1962). Similar arguments are found in L. de Mause, *The history of childhood* (New York, 1974); J.H. Plumb, 'The new world of the child in eighteenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 67 (1975); E. Shorter, *The making of the modern family* (1976).

³ L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977). All subsequent page references are to the revised, abridged edition (1979). See also R. Trumbach, *The rise of the egalitarian family: aristocratic kinship and domestic relations in eighteenth century England* (1978).

use of primary source material.⁴ Wilson identified the inappropriate use of modern childcare precepts in judging past childcare practice, arguing that the differences between past and present childcare practice reflected the differing social context, and should not be interpreted as evidence of inherent neglect.⁵ Furthermore, the notion of seventeenth-century childhood misery has been demolished by the weight of evidence since extracted from primary sources, which demonstrates that early modern children enjoyed care and attention from their parents that was remarkably similar to that received by subsequent generations.⁶ The current state of research suggests that the history of childhood experience has been one of continuity, rather than sweeping change. This is not to deny that there were alterations in child-care practice during the eighteenth century, but these were minor modifications in response to changes in the social context, rather than the radical transformation in parent-child relations that had been trumpeted by an earlier generation of historians.⁷

The history of elite girlhood has undergone a corresponding revision in recent years. Early scholarship in the fields of education, women and the family pinpointed the eighteenth century as a period in which the upbringing and education of girls was subject to change. Standards of literacy rose, the number of boarding schools increased, although the emphasis on the acquisition of feminine ‘accomplishments’ continued, and girls received less training in household

⁴ L. Pollock, *Forgotten children: parent child relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁵ S. Wilson, ‘The myth of motherhood a myth: the historical view of European childrearing’, *Social History*, 9 (1984).

⁶ K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (1982); Pollock, *Forgotten children*; R.A. Houlbrooke, *The English family 1450-1700* (1984).

management.⁸ O'Day, while acknowledging that these changes took place, suggested that their impact on the lives of girls was negligible, because 'Broadly speaking, the role for which middle-class and upper-class girls were being finished had not changed at all.'⁹ For three centuries a woman was required to be obedient and subordinate to men and her vocation was wife and mother.¹⁰ Subsequent research into the lives of the female elite in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has confirmed this underlying continuity of purpose and demonstrated the minimal effect of changes in practice in the upbringing of elite girls.¹¹ The salient features of the framework for transforming an elite girl into an elite woman were remarkably constant from the early modern period to the nineteenth century. A girl learned obedience and submission to parents and brothers, in preparation for wifely submission. Formal education was provided at a level that allowed her to be sufficiently well educated to partner her husband, but not so learned as to render her superior. Her status was reinforced not only by the extent of her learning but also by the acquisition of feminine

⁷ For example, Plumb, in 'The new world of the child' argued that childhood gained broader horizons during the eighteenth century. Pollock, *Forgotten children*, p.18, points out that this 'new world' of childhood was merely a reflection of changes in adult life.

⁸ M Reynolds, *The learned lady in England 1650-1760* (1920); D. Gardiner, *English girlhood at school* (1929); J. Kamm, *Hope deferred: girls' education in English history* (1965). Stone, *The family*, pp.228-32.

⁹ R. O'Day, *Education and society: social foundations of education in early modern Britain* (1982), p. 194.

¹⁰ O'Day, *Education and society*, pp. 179-195. G. Fletcher, *Gender, sex and subordination in England 1500-1800* (1995), pp. 364-375 reaches a similar conclusion in his brief overview of three centuries of female education.

¹¹ For the seventeenth century see L. Pollock, ' "Teach her to live under obedience"; the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England', *Continuity and change*, 4 (2), (1989); S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in early modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998) pp.75-92. For the eighteenth century, some illustrative material is found in A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter, women's lives in Georgian England* (1998), pp.156, 343-4, n.86, and in S. Tillyard, *Aristocrats* (1995); S. Skedd, 'Women teachers and the expansion of girls' schooling in England, c. 1760-1820', in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds.) *Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (1997), pp. 101-125. For the nineteenth century, C. Dyhouse, *Girls growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (1981); P. Jalland, *Women, marriage and politics*, (Oxford, 1986), pp. 7-17; P. Horn, *Ladies of the manor* (1991), pp. 24-50; P. Horn,

'accomplishments', such as music, drawing and dancing which set her apart from her social inferiors and emphasised an appropriately leisured life-style. This education was, for the most part, delivered within the household, allowing constant parental supervision, and preventing casual contact with those outside a parentally-defined acceptable social circle. This predominantly domestic focus also allowed her to observe at first hand the day-to-day management of the household and the extent of her mother's participation in this essentially female activity. This did not mean that an elite girl was confined within a prison of domesticity. Throughout childhood and adolescence she was slowly and systematically exposed to the wider world of the elite beyond the family, in readiness for a successful transition from girlhood to womanhood.

Whilst the general framework remained the same over the *longue duree*, there were some changes in practice during the eighteenth century. What is questionable is the extent of the impact of these changes. For example, while Skedd's study of girls' schooling clearly demonstrates the expansion in the number of girls' boarding schools, Vickery's study of eighteenth-century gentlewomen in Lancashire found little evidence of an overall improvement in educational standards or of the increased use of boarding schools by the elite.¹² Vickery's findings also raise questions about the supposed decline in the transmission of household skills. Lancashire gentlewomen continued to draw self-esteem and prestige from a well-run home throughout the eighteenth century and ensured that

High society, the English social elite, 1880-1914 (1992), pp. 63-4; J. Gerard, *Country house life; family and servants 1815-1914* (1994), pp. 38-65.

¹² Skedd, 'Women teachers', pp. 104-6; see also Plumb, 'New world of the child', pp. 71-80; Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 343-4, n. 86.

their daughters had the knowledge to follow suit.¹³ Only further similarly detailed studies of elite girls and women will determine first the extent to which the experiences of this particular sub-strata of the elite were typical and second the extent to which the impact of change was modified by such variables as social status and geographical location.

Historians of the elite, whilst consistently stressing the important contribution made by education to the maintenance of the elite, have paid little attention to the upbringing of girls.¹⁴ In the 1960s Mingay argued that although elite girls were not entirely excluded from the rigorous training that their brothers received, their education was, by comparison, 'shallow and haphazard'.¹⁵ The implicit assumption that difference equalled relative neglect in the field of childhood experience stood unchallenged until Pollock questioned the validity of this equation in the late 1980s. In her survey of the upbringing of elite girls in the seventeenth century, whilst agreeing that the elite, ever concerned to maintain a distance between themselves and their social inferiors, 'was a class drilled in the exercise and retention of power', she also contended that *all* children of the elite 'required a select training regime in order to be prepared for their future roles in life, roles which varied by gender and birth order... daughters, heirs and younger sons were equally assiduously and differently instructed.'¹⁶ Moreover, childhood education and socialisation was a matter of urgency. Childhood was regarded as

¹³ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 127-160.

¹⁴ J. Cannon, *Aristocratic century; the peerage of eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 40-48; J.V. Beckett, *The aristocracy in England 1660-1914* (1986), pp. 99-103.

¹⁵ G.E. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (1963), p.131.

¹⁶ Pollock, 'Teach her', pp. 234-5. M.R. Hunt, *The middling sort, commerce gender and the family 1680-1780* (1997), p. 83, makes a similar point about a different social group. She challenges the view that 'love translates into practical egalitarianism', arguing that in the middle classes 'girls

an important period that offered a unique opportunity for laying the foundations for adult life: time spent in idleness and play was wasted. To this end, elite parents were prepared to devote at least as much time, effort and money to the upbringing of their daughters as they expended on their sons, with the purpose of ensuring that girls became 'the kind of women men of the upper ranks wished to marry'.¹⁷

Following Pollock, Fletcher has argued that the 'highest priority' in the upbringing and training of women was 'their future effectiveness and obedience as wives'.¹⁸ However, late twentieth-century scholarship, in addressing the demands of patriarchy, has focused more attention on the importance of womanly obedience, than on the definition of what constituted effectiveness for an elite female. Further consideration needs to be given to Pollock's suggestion that an elite woman needed to 'perform a dual role of subordination and competence'.¹⁹

Clearly there are many issues which remain open to discussion in relation to elite girlhood experience, yet illustrative case studies are rare, particularly for the eighteenth century. The spotlight here will focus on girlhood but some comparison with the upbringing of boys has to be made if the idea that girls and boys were 'equally assiduously but differently trained' is to be addressed. Also, what, if any, were the points of divergence between the childhood and education of the daughter of a peer and the daughter of a member of the local elite? The lives of girls will be considered from birth until the age of about fourteen or fifteen. The evidence will be analysed thematically, focusing in turn on attitudes towards girls,

were a lower priority when it came to distributing family resources' but that this did not mean that they were loved any less than boys.

¹⁷ Pollock, 'Teach her', p. 244.

¹⁸ Fletcher, *Gender*, p. 375.

¹⁹ Pollock, 'Teach her', p. 247. See also J. Ward (ed.), *Women of the English nobility and gentry 1066-1500* (Manchester 1995), p. 9.

the location of girlhood, the content and delivery of informal and formal education and, finally, recreation and leisure.

Historians and eighteenth-century novelists alike have provided considerable evidence which suggests that the birth of a daughter could be a source of disappointment to eighteenth-century parents.²⁰ Historical studies have argued that in elite families, from the early modern period to the nineteenth century, bearing a son was a 'service a wife owed a husband and his family'.²¹ Elite women knew 'they were expected to bear sons to inherit name, title, and estates'; daughters were, at best, 'a sign that the couple was fertile'.²² At worst, daughters were 'particularly undesirable'.²³ Eighteenth-century fiction spelled out the consequences of a preference for sons; daughters could be 'Neglected in every respect' for having committed no offence other than being 'not a boy'.²⁴

In the Portland family, first-time expectant mothers displayed a range of levels of anxiety about the gender of their child. Lady Henrietta Grey, in the early stages of pregnancy, was relaxed enough to be able to laugh with her brother about their mother's recommendations following family disappointment at the birth of a fourth daughter to their sister Lady Weymouth;

²⁰ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, pp. 80-81; O. Hufton, *The prospect before her; vol. one 1500-1800* (1997), p. 192; L. Pollock, 'Embarking on a rough passage; the experience of pregnancy in early modern England' in V. Fildes (ed.), *Women as mothers in pre-industrial England* (1990), pp. 39-40.

²¹ J.S. Lewis, *In the family way: childbearing in the British aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1986), p. 61.

²² P. Crawford, 'The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England' in Fildes, *Women*, pp. 19-20.

²³ Stone, *Family*, p. 286.

²⁴ Mary Wollstoncraft, *Mary* (Penguin Classics edn. 1991; first published 1788), p. 7; Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda* (Everyman edn. 1994; first published 1801), p. 37.

I dont know when I have laugh'd so much as at reading what she said in regard to L[ad]y W[eymouth] but I wish the next time she mentions this to you, you would advise her to make a short extract of the method she pursued when she was with child of you; since it succeeded so well, as it might be of great use in the Propagation of Males, and I dare say her memory is so good that she could recollect it;²⁵

Dorothy, Duchess of Portland was more apprehensive than her sister-in-law about the gender of her first child. Not long after the pregnancy was confirmed, her comments on hearing of the death of Lady Henrietta's infant daughter, expose her understanding of the importance of having a son; 'I am sorry Lady Harriet has lost her child as I daresay she will be very much so, tho' I think as it was so young & a *girl* it signifies but little to her...'.²⁶ A few months into her pregnancy, she began to speculate openly about whether she would have a boy herself. The birth of a son to Lady Buccleugh caused concern; '...now I am afraid I shall have a lady which I shall not like half so well...'.²⁷ She was not consoled by other news of the birth of daughters;

Lady Strathmore instead of two boys has produced one girl, as also has Lady Betty Craven, there are nothing but girls come now, so I shall despair of having anything else if Lady Thanet & Lady Barrymore (who are expected every day) should have the same.²⁸

Once Dorothy had herself produced a son, she was able to express sympathy for those less fortunate than herself; 'the Duchess of Buccleugh has got a daughter which I am sorry for.'²⁹ The expression of such sentiments did not persist. Once

²⁵ NUMD PwF 4523, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 31 Dec. 1763. Unfortunately the letter that prompted this response has not survived.

²⁶ NUMD, PwF 10548, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 29 Nov. 1767.

²⁷ NUMD, PwF 10561, same to same, 29 March 1768.

²⁸ NUMD, PwF 10571, same to same, 30 April 1768.

²⁹ NUMD, PwF 10582, same to same, 23 May 1769.

all of the Portland women in this generation had borne a son and heir, the topic of the gender of children disappeared from the family correspondence.

No other family in this study left any record of the desire for sons, or of disappointment at the birth of a daughter, even when a couple was without a male heir.³⁰ There is also no evidence to suggest that girls were neglected in any way. Parental accounts of children's health, welfare and activities demonstrate that successive generations of eighteenth-century children of both sexes were the object of concern and affection. In the early part of the century Sir George Savile reported that his son George had been successfully weaned and his daughter Arabella 'improves in talking, good humour and a pretty air as well as in growth'³¹ Five months later he judged that his children were; 'very great together. She is very much taken up in her care of him as being sensible he is but a child.'³² Their grandmother also gave them equal consideration; she took great delight in recounting the success that her 'two jewells [sic]' had had at Court, when invited to play with the Princess Louise and the Duke of Cumberland.³³ In the mid-eighteenth century Savile's younger daughter Barbara, recorded her delight in both her young children, excusing the greater attention paid by others to her son on the grounds of age rather than gender;

I really grow fonder of my little bantlings ev'ry day; George grows so comical that that I'm diverted (as well as delighted) with his droll little fancy's, to the greatest degree; & Fanny has little ways that are peculiar only to infants of her age, & w[hi]ch as they are

³⁰ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 105 & n. 66, p. 315, suggests that the absence of these stated desires may be interpreted as an indication that 'the desire for sons was so widely felt as to need no mention' and were likely to be less prevalent in families with an heir.

³¹ E. Milner and E. Benham, *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley castle* (1904), p. 202. Sir George Savile, 7th Baronet to Barbara Savile, 22 Oct. 1726.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 203, Sir George Savile, 7th Baronet to Gertrude Savile, 29 March 1727.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 204, Barbara Savile to Lady Anne D'Ognyes, 5 March 1730.

not really so distinguishable to strangers & people with less interested affections, I can the more easily pardon their being overlook'd by such who therefore (at present) bestow all the attention on the little brother;³⁴

The Hewett correspondence of the 1770s and 80s is peppered with references to the progress of children from birth in the Foljambe and Warde families. Both Marianne Warde and Mary Beresford Foljambe, like their brothers, were observed carefully by their parents. As infants their growth and development was monitored, both sets of parents noting changes in appearance and ability and recording mileposts such as weaning and walking.³⁵ Health was a constant concern; Marianne's illness following her smallpox inoculation was the cause of 'such a state of distress and anxiety' for the parents of the 'precious Babe', that her parents were unable to put pen to paper for some days, and they spared no efforts in arranging her convalescence.³⁶

Following a shared infancy, based within the family home, daughters and sons inhabited a different space for the rest of their childhood. Boys were routinely sent away from the family to school; from the age of about seven or eight, they exchanged routine domesticity and the company of their parents, sisters and neighbours for close contact with their social peers in a predominantly male environment. Both private schools and the great public schools provided an apt training ground for entry to the male adult elite, where boys 'could become acutely conscious of their membership of a caste and prepared for future absences

³⁴ NAO DDSR 221/90, Barbara, Countess of Scarborough to Gertrude Savile, 31 July 1756.

³⁵ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/3. St. Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 24 Jan 1778; DDFJ, 11/1/1, Francis Foljambe to same, 15 Jan., 10 April. 27 April 1780.

³⁶ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 19 March 1779; Mrs Anne Warde to same, 26, 27, 29 March, 17 April, 30 April, 8 Aug., 1779.

from home on military or colonial service.³⁷ In the families in this study, George, son of Sir George Savile 7th Baronet was the only boy to be educated at home, until he went up to Cambridge in 1745.³⁸ The Lumleys went to Eton; the sons of the Portland family to Westminster, although this tradition was broken by the 3rd Duke who preferred to have his son educated at a private school in Ealing.³⁹ St Andrew Warde sent his sons to Halifax grammar school in the 1790s; following the death of the younger, Charles, the heir St Andrew went to Harrow.⁴⁰ In the rather less prestigious Hartley family it became a matter of pride that the boys should attend Rugby. Lady Sophia Lumley confided in her sister;

I indeed fear they will find a Public School... above their Income & I shall always dread fresh distresses, but what can be done with so obstinate & proud a being as he.⁴¹

By contrast, the physical location of elite girlhood was predominantly domestic. Amongst the aristocracy the thought of sending a girl to boarding school was clearly abhorrent. Gilbert Mitchell, worrying about the upbringing of his ward, Barbara Savile, expressed the opinion that of all the options available 'a boarding school is the worst of all'.⁴² More than half a century later this view was shared by Barbara's daughters, Lady Louisa Hartley, Lady Mary Foljambe and Lady Sophia Lumley. Louisa, when on her death bed, was said to have extracted a promise from her husband that their three daughters should not be sent to boarding

³⁷ L. Colley, *Britons forging the nation 1707-1837* (1992), p. 183. See also Beckett, *Aristocracy*, pp. 99-100; 35% of peers born 1681-1710 attended one of the four major public schools. For those born after 1740 this proportion increased to 72%.

³⁸ Trumbach, *Egalitarian family*, p. 254 suggests that the practice of educating the sons of the elite at home had largely died out by the 1720s.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-5.

⁴⁰ HP/27/6, correspondence received by St Andrew Warde concerning the death of his son Charles 1793-4.

⁴¹ NAO DDSR, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 6 Apr. 1811.

⁴² Milner and Benham, *Records*, p. 217, Gilbert Mitchell to Gertrude Savile, 3 Jan. 1746.

school.⁴³ Hartley, finding it difficult to maintain his daughters in a fitting style, sought additional financial support from his brother-in-law Lord Scarbrough.

When Scarbrough refused, Hartley claimed he saw no alternative but to place the girls;

either at a School where they may have a *permanent* home, or... in a boarding house under the superintendence of my sister, who would provide.... the best mode of instruction for them which their so very moderate means will allow.⁴⁴

Although Lord Scarbrough was not moved by this threat, his sisters Lady Mary and Lady Sophia were. According to Sophia;

the idea of a *Boarding house or School* for them wou'd make Mr H & me as miserable as it wou'd you, but after my Bro[ther]:s answer there seemed no *alternative*....what a *disgrace* it wou'd have been to *our* family such a thing'⁴⁵

The disgrace was averted by Sophia, with encouragement from Lady Mary and her husband, setting up a household for the girls, at her own expense, risking, as Hartley pointed out to the rest of the family, 'serious hazard' to her own financial position.⁴⁶

The families do not spell out why a girl attending a boarding school was considered so inappropriate. Skedd, in documenting the proliferation of girls' schools in the eighteenth century, noted that it was middle class, rather than elite families who led the demand for such establishments.⁴⁷ In her view, the problem

⁴³ NAO DDSR 221/23, Winchcombe Henry Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe 11 Oct. 1815.

⁴⁴ NAO DDSR, 221/49 same to same, 2 Mar. 1812.

⁴⁵ NAO DDSR 221/11, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 21 Mar. 1812.

⁴⁶ NAO DDSR 221/49, Winchcombe Henry Hartley to Francis Foljambe, 2 Mar. 1812.

⁴⁷ Skedd, 'Women teachers', p.103-5; See also Kamm, *Hope deferred*, pp.136-151; Gardiner, *English girlhood*, pp. 332-358; Jalland, *Women*, pp.10, 13, argues that in the nineteenth century the elite viewed boarding schools as the domain of the middle classes, only to be used by the socially elevated in 'exceptional domestic circumstances'.

for the elite was that the commercial nature of such schools encouraged social inclusiveness and thus threatened the elite ethos; 'the social circle of both pupils and teachers within a school was not determined by considerations of family, locality or rank, but of business and income'⁴⁸ In this study it was only those of the lesser gentry who, on occasion, made use of girls' boarding schools. The Frost and Gawthern families, wealthy Nottingham merchants and minor landowners sent their daughters to boarding schools in London, Canterbury and York respectively for a year or two in the 1770s.⁴⁹ Colonel Harvey, active in the Yorkshire militia and owning a small estate at Womersley in Yorkshire, found boarding school the best option for the upbringing of his daughters after the death of their mother.⁵⁰

Although it was the preferred option for the upbringing of elite girls, a suitable domestic environment was not always easy to maintain. As the examples of the Hartleys and Harveys demonstrate, the death of a mother could threaten the stability of the parental household. If fathers did not remarry, they often sought assistance from other female relatives in raising their motherless daughters. After Sir George Savile, 7th Baronet, separated from his adulterous wife he invited his sister Gertrude to join him and his children. This arrangement was not a success. By her own admission, Gertrude was fearful and unwilling from the outset 'from the knowledge of my own inability [sic] for so great a Task; (a Task fitt for none

⁴⁸ Skedd, 'Women teachers', p. 125.

⁴⁹ A. Henstock, (ed.), 'The diary of Abigail Gawthern' *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, 33 (1980), pp. 12-14.

⁵⁰ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, John Harvey to John Hewett, 17 June 1784; DDFJ 11/1/3, same to same, 15 July 1784.

but those of more than double my Capacity and Courage)'.⁵¹ Within a year she moved out and Savile sought help elsewhere, co-opting his widowed cousin to provide a responsible female presence as they moved from Rufford to London and Bath, a role which she played intermittently until Arabella Savile married in 1744.⁵²

Implicit in the desire for a suitable adult female presence in the life of an elite girl was the belief that mothers (or mother substitutes) would be responsible for the supervision of day-to-day life, ever alert to the dangers of inappropriate social contact. The eighteenth-century elite household included servants, who, although necessary, also presented a problem in that they were of an inferior social status. Gilbert Mitchell was concerned that the newly-wed Arabella Thornhagh, sister to Gilbert's ward Barbara Savile, was too distracted by her new husband to provide appropriate supervision for Barbara. He confided his fears to Barbara's aunt Gertrude Savile;

I fear Miss S has not had all the care and attention paid her at Shireoaks which we could wish; I wish you would ask her how she used to spend her time there, whether she was much with her brother and sister, or in her chamber with her maid, or in the kitchen and among the lower servants.⁵³

When Barbara was with her aunt, Mitchell requested that Gertrude 'afford her as much of your company and allow her as little of your servants, as may be.'⁵⁴

⁵¹ NAO DDSR 212/13/37-8, Gertrude Savile to Sir George Savile, 7th Baronet, 29 March 1738. This letter is witness to the emotional turmoil suffered by Gertrude following her attempt to join her brother's household, although written a year after her decision to leave.

⁵² Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 236-54, passim.

⁵³ Milner and Benham, *Records*, p. 218, Gilbert Mitchell to Gertrude Savile, 3 Jan. 1746.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 214, Gilbert Mitchell to Gertrude Savile, 19 Oct 1745.

The social credentials of those recruited to work with young girls had to be impeccable. Gertrude was outraged that Barbara had been given ‘Nany Gascoin, late Scullion Wench to Squire Thornhagh!’ as her personal maid.⁵⁵ Even when great care was taken to select the right person for the job, problems could occur. Sophia Lumley was horrified to discover that Susan, the maid she had hired for her three Hartley nieces, had been secretly married and was pregnant. Sophia bustled the maid out of the house, before her pregnancy became too obvious and ensured that the letter received from Lady Mary Foljambe on the subject was to be ‘safely *locked up*’ until it could be returned to its author. The character references for Susan’s replacement were scrutinised very carefully.⁵⁶

When selecting a governess, the social connections and character of any applicant were of equal if not greater concern than her academic qualifications. The Hartleys took great pains to emphasise the suitability of successive governesses to Lady Mary Foljambe. Barbara Hartley wrote to her aunt Mary of a new recruit;

You will be glad to hear that Mama & we are much pleased with Miss Piesse; she was highly recommended to Mama through Aunt Sophia, by the Lady (who was formerly governess to Lady Auckland) & in whose school Miss Piesse has been as teacher for the last two years.... She is very good-humoured & Mama says appears very steady & her manners are good.⁵⁷

Hartley’s words of regret on Miss Piesse’s departure also emphasise the relative importance of the range of characteristics sought in a governess, describing her as ‘of adequate capacity, & of amiable gentleness of temper, & of assured

⁵⁵ Saville, ‘Secret comment’, p. 269.

⁵⁶ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 13 Nov. 1812. See also, 221/9, same to same, 12 November 1812, and 221/10, same to same, undated, [post mark 1812].

⁵⁷ NAO DDSR 221/18, Barbara Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 2 April 1811.

conduct'.⁵⁸ Five years later Hartley justified his continuing to employ the 'not very experienced' Miss Balaam;

on the ground of her being more approved by your family as the person chosen by Lady Sophia, & *on this ground solely*. You will be enabled to estimate her competency... both as to her attainments & her manners & you will find her very humble & good-natured.⁵⁹

The earliest lessons that girls received in the home were related to obedience and submission. Gertrude Savile's reflected on her childhood in the early decades of the eighteenth century, resenting the harshness of her upbringing; '... what unbreakable impudent gay spirit was I born with that needed all those checks, those documents, those precepts against levity, against Coquetry? (and the least cheerfulness in me was recon'd so)'⁶⁰ She returned to the subject again a few months later; 'The qualifications I was born with, of mind and body, would have rendered me passable enough... had they not every way been suppress'd and strangled instead of encouraged and improved...'⁶¹ A glimpse of life in another nursery confirms that female obedience and submission continued to be taught from an early age. Francis Foljambe told his father-in-law of a 'comical' incident in the lives of his young children, in which Mary, aged eighteen months, received an early instruction from her four year old brother Jack;

The other day, he [Jack] wanted a book that Mary had in her hand & attempted to take it but she would not let him & squalled upon which he told her she was naughty and put her in the cupboard. He then asked her if she was good, she replied yes & he let her out again.⁶²

⁵⁸ NAO DDSR 221/17, Winchcombe Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 23 Nov. 1811.

⁵⁹ NAO DDSR 221/18, same to same, 21 Nov. 1815.

⁶⁰ Savile 'Secret comment', p. 2.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 16

⁶² NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 15 April 1780.

Contemporary childcare manuals made it clear that these lessons were a vital part of a girl's upbringing. Nelson's *Essays on the governance of children* insisted that; 'all children, however high their rank, should be taught to obey... without obedience they cannot regulate their passions.'⁶³ However, mere obedience was not sufficient for a girl. Hannah More emphasised that;

young females should be accustomed very early in life to a certain degree of restraint....That bold, enterprising spirit, which is so much admired in boys, should not, when it happens to discover itself in the other sex, be encouraged, but suppressed.it is of the greatest importance to their future happiness that they should acquire a submissive temper, and a forbearing spirit.'⁶⁴

Despite Gertrude's resentment and Mary's squalling, for the most part, girls seem to have absorbed these early lessons with few problems. Louisa Hartley recorded with pleasure that little Georgiana, just two years old, was 'a very good little Girl & says & does everything she is bid.'⁶⁵ Lady Sophia Lumley who took responsibility for supervising Georgiana and her sisters' upbringing for considerable periods of time after their mother's death, reported with evident satisfaction on their progress under her care;

the dear girls are quite well & improve every day in *looks, growth, shape and goodness*, & L[ouisa] and G[eorgiana] are much improved in their *studies*, I am happy to say & L[ouisa's] *temper & disposition* much improved - dear B[arbara] I need not add continues the same sweet engaging description as ever, & is a dear companion to me.⁶⁶

Whilst obedience and submission were important within the family, a girl also had to learn how to behave with confidence in the wider social world

⁶³ J. Nelson, *Essays on the governance of children* (1763) p. 316.

⁶⁴ H. More, *Essays on various subjects principally designed for young ladies* (1777), pp. 145-6.

⁶⁵ NAO DDSR 221/19, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 7 Oct. 1807.

⁶⁶ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to same, 31 Oct. 1814.

of the elite. Much of this was learned in an unconscious fashion; from infancy girls accompanied their parents to social events. In 1779 the Foljambes planned to take the infant Mary Beresford to the Christmas parties at Rufford as soon as 'she will be old enough to take some pleasure in it'.⁶⁷ The following year at the age of fifteen months her father noted that 'little Mary seems to enjoy herself in the crowd as well as most'.⁶⁸ Gertrude Savile was painfully aware of her own social failings and clear in her belief that the fault lay in the lack of appropriate social intercourse in her childhood;

Youth, the time wherein the foundation of life is laid! O I could weep! The wretched education I have had [is] plainly seen in my unfitness for the most common occurrence of life; in my trembling faltering silences; in my choosing to sit alone rather than endure the agony of going into company.⁶⁹

More specifically she complained that her mother had been 'an Old woman (or very near what may be cal'd so) before I grew up, and past the inclination to introduce or put me forward into the world.' As for her brother;

there is no coming out of my Brother's family redy cutt and dry'd a fine Woman... 'Twas not possible to be made acquainted with the World in my Brother's house and be made fitt to converse with the Beau-Mond for me who was used to a continual silence and awe like a Baby'⁷⁰

Gertrude contemptuously contrasted her own awkwardness with her cousin's social ease;

She is only compleetly fitt for the World; (diametrically my opposite). She can do everything to please and make herself agreeable to all and gain the ends of oblidging, and be by everybody thought most affable and good-natured, and in their absence exerts her ridicule and mirth upon them.

⁶⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Mary Arabella Foljambe to John Hewett, 9 Jan. 1779.

⁶⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 15 Jan. 1780.

⁶⁹ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 16.

⁷⁰ Ibid p.2

Moreover she observed with some envy that these skills were being passed on from mother to daughter. Young Nanny ‘... treds in her steps wonderfully indeed for so Young a Girl, but she is both born with the same temper and carefully instructed to do so, and has an uncommon capacity for such instructions.’⁷¹

A second strand to the informal education received by girls in the home was learning how a household was run, in preparation for the adult female role of housekeeper. Contemporary advice manuals were divided on the extent to which young girls of the elite needed to learn about household management. Nelson makes no mention of housekeeping as a necessary skill for the daughters of the aristocracy and gentry, although he deemed it essential for the daughters of trade and commerce.⁷² Lady Sarah Pennington trod carefully; acknowledging that her views were ‘unfashionably rustic’, she nevertheless asserted that it was not ‘below the dignity of any lady of rank to know how to ... manage her whole family with prudence, regularity and method’⁷³ Fordyce blustered that ‘no height of rank or affluence’ could justify the neglect of domestic accomplishments in the education of a young woman.⁷⁴ However he also conceded that this responsibility was, more often than not, honoured in the breach; ‘Would to heaven that of this science many mothers would teach their daughters but the common rudiments; that they were unfashionable enough to educate them to be fit for anything but mere show!’⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷² Nelson, *Essays*, p. 368.

⁷³ Lady Sarah Pennington, *An unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughters; in a letter to Miss Pennington* (1761), p. 27.

⁷⁴ J. Fordyce, *Sermons to young women* (1766), p. 210.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 226.

The primary source materials in this study offer no direct evidence of instruction in the art of household management. Advice manuals suggested that girls' learning in this area was a matter for maternal instruction and self-disciplined 'attentive observation'.⁷⁶ As Chapter 4, 'Domestic Life', will reveal, the attention paid to such matters by grown women varied considerably, as did the skill with which households were managed.

More evidence remains of the formal education received by girls from governesses, masters and their parents. There were some notable gaps in the curriculum enjoyed by women educated at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Lady Savile, wife of Sir George, 7th Baronet, was said to write 'wonderfull well considering her not writeing before she was marryd.'⁷⁷ A letter from Sir George Savile indicated that he regarded his sister Gertrude's literacy skills as unusually high for a woman;

As to your Sex's Priviledge for False Spelling, False English, and Nonsense; when there is a Parliament of Women you shall have my vote to be a Member, for you are so Honourable not to take Advantage of any part of it.⁷⁸

Although complimented by her brother, Gertrude considered herself to be poorly

⁷⁶ Pennington, *Unfortunate mother*, p. 29. Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 133 & 156 points to the importance of the pocket memorandum book in creating a reference manual for young girls, and details the household skills taught to the daughter of a Liverpool merchant, between the ages of ten and thirteen.

⁷⁷ NAO DDSR 212/13/8, Sir George Savile and Barbara Savile to Gertrude Savile, 14 June 1723.

⁷⁸ NAO DDSR 212/13/13, Sir George Savile to Gertrude Savile, 24 Apr. 1727.

educated, being largely self taught and not having learned any foreign language.⁷⁹

A century later, writing and foreign languages were an unquestioned part of the education of Lady Savile's great-granddaughters, Barbara, Louisa and Georgiana Hartley. They began their formal education at the age of five, under the supervision of a governess and immediate consideration was given to providing additional tuition in writing.⁸⁰ By the time Barbara, the eldest, was eleven, she and her sisters had the benefit of a governess who 'understands & speaks French very well, & also teaches us Grammar, geography, Writing & Arithmatick.'⁸¹ A year later, in response to an enquiry from her Aunt Mary Barbara confirmed that she continued to study French and that ancient and modern history had been added to the curriculum.⁸² When Sophia set up the house for the girls after their mother's death, her concern for their education was evident in the careful attention that was paid to the environment in which the girls were to learn; 'we have Blinds & Ventilators to our School Room, which makes it very cool now...'⁸³

Despite the evident concern to ensure that the Hartley girls received a decent education, it is also clear that this was difficult to sustain.⁸⁴ The Hartleys employed at least four different governesses in ten years. The first of these, Miss Woodward was engaged in 1805 when their eldest child, Barbara, was five.⁸⁵ She

⁷⁹ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. xiv.

⁸⁰ NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 18 Oct. 1805.

⁸¹ NAO DDSR 221/18, Barbara Hartley to same, 2 April 1811.

⁸² NAO DDSR 221/9, Barbara Hartley to same, 29 Nov. 1812.

⁸³ NAO DDSR 221/8, Barbara Hartley to same, 20 Aug. 1813.

⁸⁴ A. Laurence, *Women in England 1500-1760; a social history* (1995), p. 171 suggests that this problem was widespread, even in families where a high value was placed on the education of girls.

⁸⁵ NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 18 Oct. 1805.

stayed with the family for four years, although it is questionable how much she was able to teach the children, as she frequently took on the duties of ladies maid and nursemaid as well.⁸⁶ Miss Woodward's replacement, Miss Kirkham, stayed for only eighteen months, followed by a Miss Piesse who left the household shortly after the death of Lady Louisa.⁸⁷ Despite the reports of a school room and a wide curriculum, no mention is made of a governess while the girls were under Lady Sophia Lumley's care in Bishopsgate; a letter from Barbara stated that her current studies were 'all ... by Papa's direction.'⁸⁸ When the household in Bishopsgate was disbanded and the girls sent to their paternal aunt in Bath the 'not very experienced' Miss Balaam was engaged with Sophia's blessing.⁸⁹

Elite families who were able to offer more stable working conditions could attract well-qualified individuals and retain them, ensuring better quality and continuity in female education. In 1739 the Portland family employed the distinguished scholar, Elizabeth Elstob, to instruct their children 'in the principles of religion and virtue, teach them to read, speak and understand English well, keep them company in the house, and take the air with them when her strength allowed'. Objections by the children's grandfather, Lord Oxford, that Mrs Elstob could not speak French were dismissed by the Duchess who argued that this could be

⁸⁶ See for example, NAO DDSR 221/19, same to same, 30 May 1807; Lady Louisa told her sister 'I must not omit to tell you the comfort I find in Good Miss Woodward, especially in any illness.'

⁸⁷ NAO DDSR, same to same, 12 July 1809; DDSR 221/18, Barbara Hartley to same, 2 April 1811; Winchcombe Hartley to same, 21 Nov. 1811.

⁸⁸ NAO DDSR 221/9, Barbara Hartley to same, 29 Nov. 1812.

⁸⁹ NAO DDSR 221/18, Winchcombe Hartley to same, 21 Nov 1815.

delivered by a master 'or a maid to talk'.⁹⁰ Mrs Elstob remained in post until her death in 1756.

Providing the best academic instruction was not always the highest priority in female education. In planning the education of Barbara Savile, Gilbert Mitchell attached greater value to her moral education;

I wish we might find a place for her, where her mind might be improved with knowledge, honour and generous sentiments with the whole train of virtues; these are the things that should first and last be instilled into her with tenderness and address by precept and by example; these will be of the most extensive and lasting advantage to her, they will form the true happiness and beauty of her whole being⁹¹

Another important element in eighteenth century female education was the acquisition of a range of feminine 'accomplishments'; dancing, music and drawing were regarded as essential by many parents while moralists complained that time spent on such frivolous pursuits was wasted. Nevertheless, implicit in the criticism was an understanding that 'accomplishments' were an accepted part of elite education; it was their adoption by the middle classes that caused such outrage.⁹² Hannah More complained that the 'phrenzy of accomplishments, unhappily, is no longer restricted within the usual limits of rank and fortune... it rages downwards with increasing violence'⁹³

⁹⁰ Lady Llanover (ed.), *The autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany* Series 1, Vol. 2 (1861), p. 14. See also A.S. Turberville, *A history of Welbeck Abbey and its owners*, Vol. 1 (1938), pp.25-6; For more about Mrs Elstob and her achievements as a scholar of Anglo Saxon, see Gardiner, *English girlhood*, pp. 387-92; S.H. Myers *The bluestocking circle; women, friendship and the life of the mind in eighteenth century England* (1990), pp. 129-33.

⁹¹ Milner & Benham, *Records*, pp. 217-8, Gilbert Mitchell to Gertrude Savile, 3 Jan. 1746.

⁹² R. Leppert, *Music and image: domesticity, ideology and socio-cultural formation in eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 29 argues that a musical education was necessary for the female elite as 'an appropriate mark of both femininity itself and female class status'.

⁹³ H. More, *Strictures on the modern system of female education; with a view of the principles and conduct prevalent among women of rank and fortune* (1799), p. 69.

Dancing lessons often started at an early age and continued into adolescence.

Barbara Hartley, was five when her mother first began to consider the necessity of providing a dancing master and was still receiving tuition at the age of sixteen.

Her younger sister Georgiana reported with excitement that Barbara, in Paris with her father, was 'learning to dance of a French Master who taught the Duchess of Bedford' but added casually that she and her sister Louisa had ceased their own dancing lessons for the time being.⁹⁴ Abigail Gawthorn's daughter was eight when it was noted that 'Anna went for the first [time] to learn to dance with Mr Ray'⁹⁵

Anna and her brother Frank attended the dancing master's children's balls throughout their early teens, an opportunity for them to practice their skills on the public dance floor.⁹⁶

Gilbert Mitchell was of the opinion that it was a waste of time and money for his ward Barbara Savile to study dancing and music;

Music and dancing seem to me not to deserve much time or expence [sic], they are little better then amusements at best and upon matrimony they are generally superseded by and neglected for the more valuable cares of a family.⁹⁷

This view was in part supported by advice manuals. Nelson stipulated that music and drawing could be omitted from the education of all but girls of the 'First Quality' on the grounds that they were too time consuming and too expensive and Lady Sarah Pennington felt that they only merited study if a girl had a natural

⁹⁴ NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 18 Oct. 1805. DDSR 221/23, Georgiana Hartley to same, 7 Oct. 1816.

⁹⁵ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 55.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 61, 68, 75, 77.

⁹⁷ Milner and Benham, *Records*, pp. 217-8, Gilbert Mitchell to Gertrude Savile, 3 Jan. 1746.

talent.⁹⁸ However, most girls studied at least one of these arts. Barbara Hartley was encouraged to draw; her aunt sent her drawing case as a present when she was seven and Barbara responded by sending a painting of flowers and occasionally included a 'little drawing' in her letters to her aunt.⁹⁹ When in Paris, Barbara acknowledged the accepted importance of both music and drawing in a young lady's education; she justified restricting her studies to French and dancing on the grounds that 'Italian, Drawing and Musick will be much better acquired in Italy'.¹⁰⁰ It was not unusual for girls to begin their musical studies in their teens. Anna Gawthern was thirteen when she had her first music lesson with Mr Neilson and Lady Dorothy Cavendish, aged sixteen, took lessons from Giardini in the year before her marriage.¹⁰¹

Childhood was not all serious application to studies and the polishing of refinement. Lady Sarah Pennington suggested diversion was necessary and that that the period between dinner and supper could be devoted to such pleasures as 'Company, Books of the Humerous Kind, and entertaining Productions of the needle, as well as Plays, Balls, Cards &c.'¹⁰² Moreover, Buchan warned that the health of young girls was 'greatly injured from the want of exercise and free air'

⁹⁸ Nelson, *Essays*, pp. 323-4, 351-5; Pennington, *Unfortunate mother*, p. 25.

⁹⁹ NAO DDSR 221/17, Barbara Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 6 Oct 1807; 221/23, same to same, 26 April 1810.

¹⁰⁰ NAO DDSR 221/10, Barbara Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 16 Nov. 1816. It seems likely that Barbara's father had a hand in writing this letter. Both the restriction of Barbara's studies and the dismissal of her maid, are presented in a way that makes a virtue out of necessity, but leaves the reader in no doubt that the true motive was economy.

¹⁰¹ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 69; NUMD PwG 102, Lord John Cavendish to Lady Dorothy Cavendish, 3 Feb. 1765; PwG 138, a note of Giardini's terms for providing lessons, 11 Dec. 1766.

¹⁰² Pennington, *Unfortunate mother*, p. 23.

and advised that during adolescence girls should be encouraged to take exercise, eat wholesome food, keep cheerful and avoid over-tight clothing.¹⁰³

Girls had many opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of life in the countryside and in the town. When in the country, children enjoyed fresh air, exercise and the company of their social peers. Arabella Thornhagh took her daughter Letitia out and about from the age of two months. The baby Letitia, it was said, ‘grows a thumping lap and takes notice very much: when Mr Thornhagh and brother went to the Assizes she & I convoyed them as far as Rufford, which I think a great performance.’¹⁰⁴ Barbara Savile evidently enjoyed an active outdoor life in the country. When she was eleven her sister mentioned that she had not been well; ‘occasion’d as we imagine by a surfeit of fruit & catching cold going into the water.’¹⁰⁵ The Foljambe correspondence for the 1770s and 80s reveals that the children in the Foljambe and Lumley families socialised with each other and their relatives and neighbours alongside their parents. As mentioned above, Jack and Mary Foljambe enjoyed the Christmas parties at Rufford from the earliest age and they regularly travelled the short distance to visit their grandfather, Hewett, at Shireoaks.¹⁰⁶ They also socialised with their Lumley cousins. On one occasion Foljambe reported that his children and Lady Louisa and Lady Sophia Lumley were ‘at this moment at high romps in the room’, as he wrote to his father-in-law.¹⁰⁷ Later the same year, Lady Scarbrough took her children to Rufford and was joined there by the Foljambes, who anticipated ‘a merry meeting of little

¹⁰³ W. Buchan, *Domestic medicine* (1772), p. 647.

¹⁰⁴ NAO DDSR 212/16/19, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 29 Sept. 1746.

¹⁰⁵ NAO DDSR 212/16/10, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 10 July 1745.

¹⁰⁶ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Frances Foljambe to John Hewett, 14 Jan. 1779.

¹⁰⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 17 Jan. 1779.

ones'.¹⁰⁸ Foljambe also took the young Lady Mary Lumley and her brothers to view the splendours of Wentworth House. They saw 'the great hall, the Library & a few of the principal rooms... the conservatory, menagerie & the riding house... They seemed very much pleased with their expedition.'¹⁰⁹

In the towns, children were also taken out for an 'airing' on a regular basis, Abigail Gawthern mentioned that her son and daughter, aged one and three respectively, were taken out in the carriage for this purpose by servants.¹¹⁰ The same year, after a serious illness Anna's return to health and normality were marked by the statement that she was 'in the garden for the first time, Nov. 24th'.¹¹¹ Gertrude Savile was advised that while her niece Barbara was staying with her in London, 'that I fancy the best exercise, and what she will like, will be to walk and run about (Mrs Wyche with her) in the fields behind your own house.'¹¹² The towns also offered numerous diversions that were thought suitable for young girls. Abigail Gawthern's diary carefully recorded her daughter's first enjoyment of a wide range of activities in Nottingham, from beginning to attend services at two of the town's parish churches at the age of five, going to the races aged six, attending her first concert aged nine, and dancing at her first assembly at twelve.¹¹³ The letters sent by the Hartley girls to their aunt Mary demonstrate the variety of day-to-day entertainments that Bath had to offer to children. They told of a visit to Sydney gardens, where they had enjoyed the labyrinth and the swing,

¹⁰⁸ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, Mary Arabella Foljambe to John Hewett, 13 Nov. 1779.

¹⁰⁹ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/5, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 4 March 1781.

¹¹⁰ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 44.

¹¹¹ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 46.

¹¹² NAO DDSR 212/16/17, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 19 Oct. 1745.

¹¹³ Henstock, 'Diary', pp. 48, 49, 52, 59.

and drunk tea.¹¹⁴ A few weeks later, in addition to dinner and tea-drinking at their paternal grandfather's home, followed by games of consequences and fortune telling, the girls had also wondered at the splendour of Bonaparte's carriage, exhibited in the town, and enjoyed a trip to the shops to buy cakes in celebration of their governess' birthday.¹¹⁵

While eighteenth-century literature can provide evidence of patriarchal contempt for daughters, and it cannot be denied that amongst the aristocracy, the need for a male heir could cast a shadow over the birth of a daughter, it appears that most elite parents overcame any initial disappointment and put just as much effort into raising a daughter as a son. From birth both girls and boys were the object of parental concern, affection and admiration. As infants struggled with illness, weaning and walking, their parents recorded successes and failures for both sons and daughters. Once children reached the age of about seven or eight, boys and girls trod a different path; boys left the parental home for extended stays at public schools and girls were kept at home. Indeed it could be argued that girls often received more attention than their brothers, simply by virtue of spending most of their childhood and adolescence in the family home. The object here, however, is not to catalogue the differences between the upbringing of boys and girls, but rather to assess the extent to which the upbringing of elite girls was shaped to prepare them for adulthood in the most privileged sector of eighteenth century society. The not unsurprising conclusion is that, on the whole, elite parents did a pretty good job.

¹¹⁴ NAO DDSR 221/16, Georgiana Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 19 Sept. 1816.

¹¹⁵ NAO DDSR 221/23, Georgiana Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 7 Oct. 1817.

Girls' childhood activities mirrored in miniature the lives they might expect to lead as women, combining an appropriately domestic location and circumscribed social contacts with a fitting range of obligations and enjoyment. Viewed from this perspective, basing girls' upbringing within the domestic environment was neither neglect nor cosseting, but a responsible way of preparing them for their future roles as wives and mothers, accustoming them to the daily routines and physical boundaries of adult female life. Watching over daughters carefully in the domestic environment and restricting their social contacts taught them to be comfortable within a particular social range and circumspect about their choice of companions. This protected and privileged existence was not without obligations. Girls were taught to be obedient and to submit to the will of their parents and brothers, in preparation for their future subordinate roles as wives. They were also required to absorb sufficient in the way of academic learning to enable them to demonstrate their elite status to the rest of the world. In return for accepting the restraints and meeting the obligations placed upon them, girls enjoyed the delights of eighteenth-century society in town and country; they learned to read and write, to dance and enjoy musical entertainment and to play cards, to shop and to dress well.

Not all elite girlhood was constructed in the same way. Rank impacted on the choice of childhood environment in that the more prestigious the family, the more important it was to them that the exclusivity of their daughters' social contacts be maintained. For the Lumleys and the Saviles, to even consider sending a girl away to school was a 'disgrace', 'the worst of all'. For those in less elevated circles the

choice could be either a pragmatic solution to a particular set of circumstances or perceived as the best way for a girl to set the seal on her elite status. Thus Hartley suggested a school for his daughters on the grounds of economy, Harvey sent his daughters to school when his wife died. The Frosts and the Gawthorns may have sent their daughters to school in the belief that boarding school offered social benefits to those with aspirations to enhanced elite status.

Within the broad framework of continuity in female education, the anecdotal evidence of this study suggests that there were some minor adjustments in what girls were expected to learn. Literacy skills received greater emphasis in the second half of the eighteenth century and by the end of the century girls were more likely to learn a foreign language. As for the matter of learning to run a household, the Nottinghamshire material offers no clues as to how this was achieved during girlhood. The relative success or failure of this aspect of girls' upbringing can only be assessed by reference to their adult activities as housekeepers.

The intended outcome of the upbringing of a girl was that she should enter adult society with ease, and take her place in the adult world in a way that was considered appropriate both to her gender and to her status. The evidence from these Nottinghamshire families suggests that this objective was, for the most part, achieved without difficulty. There is little evidence that young girls resisted the limits set for them and, with the notable exception of Gertrude Savile, it appears that most girls enjoyed a suitably privileged childhood which was constructed to accustom them to the physical and mental parameters of the life of an elite

woman, to equip them with the flexibility to be both obedient and confident, as appropriate, and to set them apart from their social inferiors.

Chapter Three

MARITAL DECISIONS

As an elite young woman emerged from the schoolroom two respectable life-options lay before her. Either she would marry or she would remain single. This chapter tracks the lives of young women, from the time that they entered society until either the decisive moment of marriage, or the beginnings of the slow slide into respectable spinsterhood. How did young women behave during this crucial period in their lives? Where did they find, or fail to find, a husband? What factors influenced marital choices and who was involved in the decision-making?

Most elite women expected to marry and demographic studies show that the hopes of many were fulfilled, although the same studies also reveal that an increasingly significant minority remained single. In the mid seventeenth century about 15% of elite women never married; by the early eighteenth century this had risen to around 25% and the proportion remained above 20% until 1800.¹ Until recently scholarship has focused on the experience of the majority and debate has clustered around two main questions; who was more important in determining marital choice, parents or children, and what factors influenced the decisions that were made?²

¹ T.H. Hollingsworth, 'The demography of the British peerage', supplement to *Population Studies* 18, 2 (1964), pp. 19-21; P.C. Otto, 'Daughters of the British aristocracy: their marriage in the eighteenth and nineteenth century with particular reference to the Scottish peerage' (Stanford University, unpublished Ph.D. thesis 1974), p. 283.

² Discussion of the position of spinsters is to be found in, O. Hufton, 'Women without men: widows and spinsters in Britain and France in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Family History*, 9 (Winter, 1984); S. Staves, 'Resentment or resignation? Dividing the spoils among daughters and younger sons' in J. Brewer, and S. Staves, *Early modern conceptions of property* (1995); S. Dunster, 'Useless and insignificant creatures? Spinsters in the Nottinghamshire upper-classes

In matters of marital choice, the starting point for discussion must be Stone's model of change in family life. He argued that the shift from the 'patriarchal' to the 'closed domesticated' nuclear family brought a concomitant change in the process of selecting a mate. According to this argument, for the seventeenth-century elite, considerations of wealth and rank, 'family interest', were more important than the feelings of the individuals concerned in the making of a marriage. Parental authority was paramount and children had no more than a power of veto in the matter of selecting a spouse. During the eighteenth century, the balance shifted. Parental authority and the consideration of family interest gave way to individual choice in the making of a match and romantic love was sought as a prerequisite for marriage in a climate of affective individualism.³

Stone's work has been challenged, both in respect of his methodology, and in respect of the chronology of change that he proposed. When the 'lived-experience' of families has been the focus of historical investigation, rather than the strictures of moralists, what has emerged is the diversity of practice in the formation of marriages⁴ Considerations of romantic love, wealth and rank, have all been found to have a place in the making of elite marriages from the fifteenth

1720-1820', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 102, (1998); P. Sharpe, 'Dealing with love: the ambiguous independence of the single woman in Early Modern Europe', *Gender and History*, 11, 2, (1999); J.M. Bennet and A.M. Froide, (eds.) *Singlewomen in the European past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999); B. Hill, *Women alone; spinsters in England 1660-1850* (2001).

³ L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977); all page references are to the revised, abridged edition (1979), pp. 181-191. A similar model of change was also proposed in R. Trumbach, *The rise of the egalitarian family aristocratic kinship and domestic relations in eighteenth century England* (New York, 1978), pp. 69-113.

⁴ R. O'Day, *The family and family relationships, 1500-1900: England, France and the United states of America* (1994), pp. 266-74.

to the nineteenth centuries, whether decisions were made by parents or children.⁵ The division between loveless arranged marriage and romantic freedom of choice is now considered to be an 'artificial dichotomy'⁶ and factors influencing marital decisions are understood to have been 'all mixed up together'⁷ well into the nineteenth century.

This is not to suggest that the social context in which marriages were formed was immutable. The eighteenth century undoubtedly saw a wave of sentiment in literature, which extolled the virtues of romantic love to an avid female readership. What is open to question is the extent to which this change in sensibility impacted upon elite marital decisions. As Vickery points out 'new idioms do not necessarily connote new behaviour'.⁸ Women of the eighteenth-century Lancashire elite sought a balance between 'emotional warmth' and 'pragmatic choice' which 'maintained or improved one's position in the world and secured the long-term support of family and friends'.⁹ Habakkuk's work also suggests that this kind of 'prudential marriage' was the norm amongst landed families, but he speculates that within families, 'the intrusion of changes in sensibility'¹⁰ were less likely 'wherever a marriage had an effect on the fortunes

⁵ K. Wrightson, *English society, 1580-1680* (1982), p. 104; R. Houlbrooke, *The English family 1450-1700* (1984); A. McFarlane, *Marriage and love in England. Modes of reproduction 1300-1840*, (Oxford, 1986); V. Lamarnie, 'Marriage and the family: the example of the seventeenth-century Newdigates', *Midland History*, 9 (1984); J.S. Lewis, *In the family way; childbearing in the British Aristocracy, 1760-1860* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1986); P. Horn, *Ladies of the manor*, (1991); H. J. Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt and the estates system: English landownership 1650-1950*, (Oxford, 1994); A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter* (1998).

⁶ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 40.

⁷ J. V. Beckett, 'Family matters' *Historical Journal*, 39, 1 (1996), p. 251. See also H. Medick and D.W. Sabean, 'Interest and emotion in family and kinship studies: a critique of social history and social anthropology' in H. Medick and D.W. Sabean (eds.), *Interest and emotion: essays on the study of family and kinship* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 11.

⁸ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86; see also Lewis, *Family way*, p. 19.

¹⁰ Habakkuk, *Marriage*, p. 218.

of the estate and the family'¹¹ Another change was the expansion of elite sociability in the eighteenth century which brought young women into contact with a far wider range of potential marriage partners than ever before. There is general agreement amongst historians that the effect of this was limited. Whilst geographical boundaries may have opened up, the social exclusivity of the so-called 'marriage market' that developed in fashionable urban centres, continued to provide parents with some guarantees that marital choices would be made within appropriate social circles.¹² Demographic studies bear witness to the continuing endogamy of elite marriage in the eighteenth century.¹³

The late seventeenth and eighteenth century also brought changes in arrangements for the transfer of property from one generation to the next, which impacted on portions, the share of family wealth made available for marriage or to fund spinsterhood. The precise effect of this change is still open to question. Habakkuk has argued consistently that daughters, and younger sons, gained from strict settlement; their portions were secured and likely to represent a larger proportion of family wealth than in the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Stone, sharing Habakkuk's optimism, has suggested that strict settlement, in guaranteeing portions, both

¹¹ Ibid., p. 239.

¹² Stone, *Family*, pp. 213-4; Habakkuk, *Marriage*, pp. 227-231.

¹³ Hollingsworth, 'British peerage', p. 9; D.M. Thomas, 'The social origins of marriage partners of the British peerage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Population Studies* 26, (1982), pp. 99-111; Otto 'Daughters', p. 389; see also J. Cannon, *Aristocratic century the peerage of eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1984) pp. 79-93.

¹⁴ This argument was first aired in H.J. Habakkuk, 'English land ownership, 1680-1740', *Economic History Review*, X (1939-40); and in idem, 'Marriage settlements in the eighteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 32, (1950). The most recent expression is in, idem, *Marriage*, pp. 126-36. Although he acknowledges in the latter work that the case is by no means proven he continues to argue that the 'predominant effect' of strict settlement on the portions of younger children was to increase the proportion of the paternal estate that they received. He is ever careful to point out that this amelioration was not the purpose of strict settlement, but was rather a by-product of the desire to protect the patrimony.

allowed women greater personal autonomy in the choice of marriage partner, and enabled more women to remain single, secure in the knowledge that they had funds to support an elective spinsterhood.¹⁵ By contrast, Spring has argued with equal consistency that strict settlement, by establishing 'a family constitution, the character of which can be summed up in three words; patrilineal, patriarchal and primogenitive', reduced the proportion of wealth enjoyed by daughters.¹⁶

Moreover, as Staves has demonstrated, there were wide variations in arrangements for the distribution of wealth under strict settlement and, even more significant, there were no guarantees that legal contracts would be honoured, or that portions would be paid.¹⁷ The consequences for daughters' marriage prospects were not favourable; some women would have had insufficient portions to attract a suitable husband and 'portions unpaid or delayed for a decade could mean lesser marriages than they wanted or no marriages at all'¹⁸

The history of marriage, as written by late twentieth-century historians has been predominantly a story of the struggle for power between individuals and their families. Is this focus entirely appropriate? Some years ago Pollock suggested that concentration on the issue of parental authority in marriage 'has obscured the

¹⁵ L. Stone and J.C.F. Stone, *An open elite? England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, 1983), p. 142.

¹⁶ E. Spring, *Law, land and family: aristocratic inheritance in England, 1300-1800* (1993), p. 144. For earlier discussion see idem, 'The family, strict settlement and historians', *Canadian Journal of Family History*, XVII (1983); idem, 'Law and the theory of the affective family', *Albion*, XVI (1984); idem, 'The strict settlement: its role in family history', *Economic History Review*, XLI (1988).

¹⁷ S. Staves, 'Resentment or resignation? Dividing the spoils among daughters and younger sons' in J. Brewer and S. Staves, *Early modern conceptions of property* (1995), pp. 199-206. For further discussion of the importance of the gap between legal provision and reality see also S. Staves, *Married women's separate property in England, 1660-1833* (1990), pp. 203-8; Beckett, 'Family matters', p. 255.

¹⁸ Staves, *Married women's property*, p. 217; Hufton, 'Women without men', p. 359; Staves, 'Resentment', p. 203; Habakkuk, pp. 166-7.

main issue. It is not parental control that mattered per se, but the financial interdependence of family members.’¹⁹ More recently, Staves has noted that economic historians have made

quite sharp distinctions between the interest of the “family” understood as economic interests, and the interests of women, who seem to be individuals competing against the “family” interest rather than integral and necessary parts of the “family” – perhaps even sharper distinctions than those made by eighteenth century patriarchs themselves.²⁰

In charting young women’s progress into adult life, this chapter will ask what marital choices, and the financial arrangements which underpinned them, can reveal about the interplay between ‘family interest’ and the interests of young women. Points of convergence and opposition will be identified between young women and their families, as daughters entered society and then married or resigned themselves to spinsterhood. Attention will be paid both to the actions, motivations and feelings revealed by personal correspondence and to the financial arrangements that were made for marriage or spinsterhood in legal documents.

Contemporary moralists advised that as young women left the sheltered world of the schoolroom and entered society, they should be prepared to bear their share of the burden of family reputation. Nelson warned that a ‘Young lady of the First Quality’ should be taught that ‘the World has its Eyes upon her.’²¹ Fordyce made it clear that the weight of responsibility for maintaining the good name of the family rested more heavily on the shoulders of daughters than of sons;

¹⁹ L. Pollock, ‘“An action like strategem” courtship and marriage from the middle ages to the twentieth century.’ *Historical Journal*, 30, 2 (1987), p. 498.

²⁰ Staves, *Married women’s property*, p. 203.

The world, I know not how, overlooks in our sex a thousand irregularities, which it never forgives in yours; so that the honour and peace of a family are, in this view, much more dependant on the conduct of daughters than of sons...²²

The solution to this problem was considered to be education and parental supervision, but throughout the eighteenth century advice literature implied that the transition from the shelter of childhood to the exposure of womanhood was often badly managed. Marriot suggested as young girls left their studies they were 'immediately initiated in public assemblies, where the mothers, fixed in deep attention to cards, turn their daughters adrift.'²³ At the end of the century, Gisborne offered an even more dramatic analysis of the emergence into society; 'Pains are taken.... to contrive, that when the dazzled stranger shall step from the nursery and lecture room, she shall plunge at once into a flood of vanity and dissipation.'²⁴

However, amongst the elite families considered here, the transfer from the schoolroom to the assembly room was managed with care. The transition was a gentle one, as girls usually began to enjoy the delights of eighteenth-century social life long before they left the schoolroom. The fifteen-year-old Dorothy Cavendish enjoyed dancing at the assembly in Aylsham, balls at Blickling Hall and attending

²¹ J. Nelson, *Essays on the governance of children* (1763), p. 324.

²² J. Fordyce, *Sermons to young women* (1765), p. 17.

²³ T. Marriot, *Female conduct, being an essay on the art of pleasing to be practised by the fair sex before and after marriage* (1759), p. xxii.

²⁴ T. Gisborne, *An enquiry into the duties of the female sex* (1797), p. 93.

the opera in London, but continued to study French, history and music.²⁵ Anna Gawthern's entry to Nottingham society also predated the end of her full-time education. She attended her first concert in the town at the age of nine, left school at ten, went to her first assembly aged twelve and a full year later began to study music.²⁶

A girl's early incursions into polite society were closely supervised. Abigail Gawthern was present at all the concerts and dances that her daughter Anna attended between the age of nine and seventeen.²⁷ Moreover her supervision was sufficiently attentive to enable Abigail to keep a note of Anna's dance partners, a habit that continued until Anna was in her twenties.²⁸ When Lady Henrietta Bentinck experienced her first Season in London, her sister complained that their mother's supervision was so close that '... all last Winter I never saw Taz [Henrietta] three times comfortably as she never cou'd come alone to me, and I never cou'd stay with her at any time as she was never left at Home'.²⁹ Henrietta's mother, Margaret, Duchess of Portland extended this close guarding of her younger daughter to written as well as personal contact. In the knowledge that her mother would read all her letters, Henrietta begged her brother to send any intimate news or advice to their sister, to be passed on verbally.³⁰ Later the same

²⁵ NUMD PwG 100, Lord John Cavendish to Lady Dorothy Cavendish, 6 Dec. 1765, PwG 97, Lord George Cavendish to same, 19 Sept 1765; PwG 90, Lord Frederick Cavendish to same, 27 Nov. 1764; PwG 102, Lord John Cavendish to same, 3 Feb. 1765.

²⁶ A. Henstock, 'The diary of Abigail Gawthern, 1751-1810', *The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, Vol. 33 (1980), pp. 59, 61, 66, 69. Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p.267, notes that there was no general agreement as to when young girls should begin their exposure to society.

²⁷ Henstock, 'Diary', pp. 58-88, *passim*.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 58-149, *passim*.

²⁹ NUMD PwF 8711, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7 Dec. 1760.

³⁰ NUMD PwF 4502, same to same, 24 Feb. 1761.

year she remonstrated with him; 'I must beg you my Dearest that you will not venture to send me any more of those dear little inclosed bits, for you know in London the Letters come in at Dinner, & I fear they would be discovered...' ³¹ It was not until four months after her marriage that Henrietta reported with some pride that, on her husband's advice, she had finally broken free from her 'old custom of showing her my letters' and demanded praise for 'so courageous an action'. ³²

The absence of maternal supervision as a young woman entered society was dealt with, where possible, by the substitution of a suitable female relative. Sir George Savile 7th Baronet drafted in his mother's sister to assist him in this matter after separation from his wife. ³³ Lady Dorothy Cavendish's guardians, her paternal uncles, were pleased by her ready agreement to their plan to send her to live with her aunt, Lady Walpole. 'Our only wish was to see you happy now & hereafter, you have left us no room to doubt, & you have shewn a good heart & a good understanding in the Chearfulness with which you have complied in the only plan that would answer' ³⁴. Also there was evident relief that a satisfactory arrangement had been achieved so easily; 'I am sure you could have been

³¹ NUMD PwF 4510, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 29 Sept. 1762.

³² NUMD PwF 4517, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Sept. 1763.

³³ A. Saville (ed.), 'Secret comment: the diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757' *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, Vol.41 (1997), pp. 238-252. Gertrude's diary entries show that between 1739 and Savile's death in 1744 her brother and his children were accompanied in their comings and goings from Rufford to London by Aunt Newton, who also took her niece Arabella to Bath in 1741.

³⁴ NUMD PwG 89, Lord Frederick Cavendish to Lady Dorothy Cavendish, 16 Nov. 1764.

in no situation that would have been so proper & so comfortable at the same time'.³⁵

Once young women had become accustomed to appearing in society, it was not unusual for daughters occasionally to be entrusted to other female family members or close friends. The timing of this loosening of parental reins varied considerably. Abigail Gawthern allowed her daughter to attend a Nottingham assembly with a Mrs Elliot at the age of seventeen.³⁶ At the other extreme, Lady Henrietta Bentinck was kept under strict maternal supervision until her marriage at the age of twenty six.³⁷ In other families the use of married female relatives to keep an eye on young women seems to have become routine once young women reached their early twenties. Mary and Bell Foljambe, who might otherwise have been restricted in their opportunities to enter local society by the infirmity of their step-mother Lady Mary, were often escorted to local social events by other family members. Lady Sophia Lumley told Lady Mary that '... my sister [in-law] H[arriet]: L[umley] is so good to say she will chaperone me to the Ball Mon[da]y she desires me to say with her love, she shall be very glad if you & Mr F[oljambe] like M[ary]: B[eresford] to go also & begs she will be here in good time on Mon[da]y...' ³⁸ A similar offer was made by Elizabeth Foljambe, the widow of the girls' eldest brother John, who was spending the summer in Scarborough with

³⁵ NUMD PwG 90, Lord Frederick Cavendish to Lady Dorothy Cavendish, 27 Nov. 1764.

³⁶ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 88.

³⁷ S. Mendleson and P. Crawford *Women in early modern England 1550-1720* (1998), p. 112, note that continuous supervision of young women was the norm amongst the aristocracy in the seventeenth century. By contrast, Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 269-70 found that young women of the eighteenth-century local gentry 'did not labour under constant chaperonage'.

³⁸ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 12 Dec. [no year].

her young children; ‘..if Mary and Bell would like to come, & you think *me* a sufficient chaperon *here* as in G[rosvenor] Place...’³⁹

The chaperonage of other respectable females could be less restrictive than that of a mother, as Gertrude Savile discovered to her delight at the age of twenty-four during a visit to Bath with her Aunt Newton. She recorded with pleasure that she found herself capable of living ‘from under my Mother’s Wing’.⁴⁰ She declared that she was ‘positively happy in being intirely my own mistress and knowing my Will was my only Law,’ although significantly she added that ‘I did nothing, nor was inclined to anything, that the strictest Governors in the World might not have approv’d on’.⁴¹ Such was her family’s confidence in her self-restraint that they even went as far as to give her permission to remain in Bath after her Aunt Newton’s departure. Gertrude noted with regret that she had received a letter from her brother on her return to London saying that ‘since I expressed an unwillingness to leave [Bath], he would have supplied me with more money....and trusted me to have continu’d alone there as long as I had a mind.’⁴²

The key-note here was trust. The purpose of a chaperone was to safeguard a young woman’s reputation and monitor her social contacts. Gertrude had evidently demonstrated to her family’s satisfaction that she was sufficiently mature and aware of her responsibilities and could be trusted to do nothing that would cast her or her family in a bad light. Most young women demonstrated the

³⁹ NAO DDSR 221/23, Elizabeth Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 1 Aug. 1807.

⁴⁰ Savile, ‘Secret comment’, p.5

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴² Ibid, p. 6.

desire to behave correctly and win the approval of society. Lady Dorothy Cavendish wanted to buy a season ticket to the Opera, but felt it necessary to ask her uncle how she should proceed. He advised her that it 'will be just the same in fact whose name the ticket is in, as you are to have the whole use of it, but I think it would have a better appearance if taken out in one of ours.' He warned in more general terms, anticipating Fordyce; 'There is an absurd, ill-natured, ridiculous thing called the world that loves to find fault & chiefly with the ladies.' In the same letter he praised Lady Dorothy for her good behaviour in the matter of her residence with her Aunt Walpole; 'I have never had any doubts but that yr. Ladyship would always do what was perfectly right my only anxiety about you has been that in doing right you might be at yr. ease & am very glad that it seems to have turned out so.'⁴³ Margaret, Duchess of Portland, although ever vigilant, was reported to have faith in her daughter's discretion in choosing a husband. In discussing the current crop of unlikely candidates she told Henrietta that 'she had a better opinion of me than to imagine that I could ever like any of them'.⁴⁴

Rebellion was rare. Even though the restrictions placed upon Lady Henrietta had chafed a little at the time, in retrospect she acknowledged her debt to her mother, stating that she wished to do 'everything in my power to please her....her Conduct to me has always been such that she had the greatest right to expect it'.⁴⁵ Gertrude Savile often struggled to meet the expectations of her family and prior to the new freedom gained in Bath had considered;

what woud have been a remediless ruin to myself and an affliction to my Relations. What that woud have been, I did not then know,

⁴³ NUMD PwG 90, Lord Frederick Cavendish to Lady Dorothy Cavendish, 27 Nov. 1764.

⁴⁴ NUMD PwF4499, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 20 Jan. 1760.

⁴⁵ NUMD PwF 4513, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 9 July 1763.

but I own, had any sort of opportunity (for which I was waiting) offer'd, that woud but be a change to my misery, I shoud have embrac'd it...'.⁴⁶

Her happy experiences at Bath were sufficient to bring her back from the brink; although subsequently she was rarely happy, she never again contemplated breaking free of the constraints of her status and gender.

The bad behaviour of other young women in the region provided fodder for the male gossips in the Hewett correspondence network. Foljambe described the 'pranks' at Harewood House in Yorkshire with evident enjoyment;

Lady Worsley & two Miss Cramers threw most of the gentlemans cloathes out of the window particularly their *breeches* thinking them I suppose unnecessary. One night these three heroines ... tried to borrow a coach to go to Leeds and when refused they rode the carthorses instead ...

He went on to describe in great detail how the women had stopped at an inn, broken into a room and set fire to the colours of the local militia; '..how do you think they quench'd the flames their own fair selves had caused? They did not call water, water it was more at hand they fairly ----- it out' According to Foljambe the rampage continued through the surrounding countryside for three days and included more escapades than he had room for in his letter.⁴⁷ St Andrew Warde was shocked; '..the whole expedition was too bad.... The excuse I have for them is that they were drunk if I may say that of the fair sex that they did not know what they did.'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 1.

⁴⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 28 Jan. 1779.

⁴⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 6 Feb. 1779.

By contrast there was nothing of this kind to cause gossip amongst the sample families. While Gertrude Savile recorded her internal struggles, that had taken her to the brink of 'remediless ruin', she overcame the desire to break the rules. The compliance that was demonstrated by all was testimony to the success of parents and guardians in raising daughters that were completely at home in their social milieu and who shared parental values. Conflict between young women and their families on matters of propriety was notable by its absence. As a girl entered society, she and her family shared a common purpose. By maintaining close supervision through the medium of a chaperone and providing careful schooling in the correct way to behave, the reputation of the individual and her family was protected. As Hunt pointed out in her study of the eighteenth-century middle class, both daughters and their families were aware that 'Loss of reputation drastically lowered a woman's worth in the marriage market and meant a net loss in terms of her relative's ability to marry her off in such a way as to accrue them social influence'⁴⁹

The principal aim of introducing young women to society was to assist them in achieving 'the great object of female hope'; marriage⁵⁰. The image of eighteenth-century social events as so many stalls in the marriage market has received much attention from modern historians.⁵¹ Gertrude Savile's account of her brother's selection of a wife at Bath illustrates how efficiently this system could work in the

⁴⁹ M.R. Hunt, *The middling sort, commerce, gender and the family 1680-1780* (1997), p. 97; see also Mendleson and Crawford, , pp. 80-81.

⁵⁰ William Hayley, *A philosophical, historical and moral essay on old maids by a friend to the sisterhood* (1785), vol. 1, p. 8.

⁵¹ Stone, *Family*, pp. 213-4; Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 267-9, 285-6.

enclosed world of the elite where personal connections were soon established. Sir George Savile joined his sister on her second visit to Bath in the autumn of 1722;

His time came when he should see ... a wife. He had not been there a Week when he saw and liked Mr. Pratt's Daughter[Mary]; her Father a Gentleman of Ireland who is recon'd to have £3000 a Year there; Deputy Treasurer of Ireland and Cunstable of Dublin Castle. Her Mother, Sister to Sir James Brooks, Mrs Proctor of Newcastle, Mrs Pickett and Mrs Fitzmorrays, nearly related to Lord Cadaggen, Lord Shelbourn etc. Herself an only Daughter, very young, not 16. He inquired after her, expressed his likeing which was well excepted and follow'd by Mrs Pratt, as he was immediately in an Amour. In short, in less than a month's time the match was as good as made.⁵²

Lady Henrietta Bentinck took rather longer than Mary Pratt to find a husband.

Family letters began to discuss the possible candidates as Henrietta entered Court circles and enjoyed the London season in 1760. Both Henrietta's sister and mother were of the opinion that the current batch of eligible bachelors were all 'animals', and entirely unsuitable.⁵³ There is also a suggestion that the Duchess of Portland was reluctant to part with her younger daughter; Henrietta reported;

She is really vastly good to me, & I dare say sometimes thinks it would be very happy if I was as well provided for as my Sister; but then she does not chuse to part with me & comforts herself again that all the *Animals* are so strange and good for nothing ... that she thinks she is pretty secure of keeping me⁵⁴

By the summer of 1762 Henrietta, referring to herself in the third person, expressed exasperation at her failure to find a husband;

her father says if she don't make her Fortune in two years time he must take her from Court for she is a great expence [sic] to him; I am sure all those who have seen her, must do her the justice to say that nobody ever took more true pains to get a Husband than she

⁵² Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 33.

⁵³ NUMD PwF 8711, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7 Dec. 1760.

⁵⁴ NUMD PwF 4499, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 20 Jan. 1761.

has done; & its hard she should be a sufferer for the Men's stupidity...⁵⁵

Her experiences led her to counsel her brother William, Duke of Portland, who was also seeking to marry. She made it clear that, in her opinion, he had to decide what was important to him and make a choice;

My opinion of you is such that I cannot bring myself to think you will ever sacrifice domestic happiness to Ambition; if you are so fortunate as to have both Passions gratified in one object (which I wish to God you may) I have nothing to say; but I am afraid you will not be able to name one instance of it; you must now give me leave to plead a little for the Ladies...can neither personal Merit, Family, or a reasonable Fortune induce you to look upon any of them....⁵⁶

Brother and sister both made suitable matches, which met with the full approval of the family and satisfied their requirements for domestic happiness. In 1763 Henrietta married Lord Grey, later Earl of Stamford and by 1766 William had convinced himself that Lady Dorothy Cavendish had sufficient personal merit, her portion of £30,000 was quite reasonable enough, and she came from one of the wealthiest and most prestigious families, who also shared his political views.

When Anna Gawthern was eighteen her mother began what has been interpreted as a serious assault on the marriage market.⁵⁷ An extended visit to London in 1802 was followed in 1805 by a family excursion to Bath, Bristol, Clifton and Weymouth.⁵⁸ The purpose of this energetic socialising is clear from her mother's diary; Abigail continued to record her daughter's dance partners, companions on

⁵⁵ NUMD PwF 4505, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 21 July 1762.

⁵⁶ NUMD PwF 4509, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Sept. 1762.

⁵⁷ Vickery, *Gentlemen's daughter*, p. 271.

⁵⁸ Henstock, 'Diary', pp. 91-7, 113-18 for details of the trips to London and the South; pp. 98, 137 for proposals received and rejected.

various outings and proposals received and rejected. However, in the end a husband was selected, not as a consequence of Anna's more far-flung forays into the marriage market, but from among the junior officers of the 100th Regiment of Foot, first stationed in Nottingham in 1808.⁵⁹

There can be little doubt that the entertainments of London, Bath and other provincial towns provided young women with opportunities for flirtation and romance, but this experience did not necessarily lead directly to marriage. Whilst at Bath in 1721 Gertrude Savile was delighted to discover that despite her 'cold, sily[sic], unpromising temper', she enjoyed the attentions of three admirers;

Powlett... a pretty a gentleman as ever I saw.... Aston was much a gentleman, most agreeable company Stanhope, tho' last, not least belov'd....He was by his persiveering, honest, senceer goodnatured and above all, jealous looks, everything that was agreeable to my eyes.

She was, however, realistic about the likelihood of these relationships developing further 'I have recon'd up a pretty large quantity of trifling amusements and not one downright lover among them all'⁶⁰. Anna Gawthern's dalliance with a Captain Roope, begun during the visit to London in the spring and summer of 1802, lasted a little longer. Her mother noted that he 'was always of our party'⁶¹, paid polite calls on the Gawtherns, accompanied them on their visits to the tourist attractions of the day, and introduced his sister and the Rev. Roope. When the Gawtherns left London at the end of August, Anna and her mother continued a correspondence with the Captain until the January of 1803, when Abigail noted 'I

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 16, 105.

⁶⁰ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 3.

⁶¹ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 96.

wrote to C.R., the last letter.⁶² Lady Mary Lumley retained in the same bundle as letters from her future husband, two letters from a Peter Poultney, written before his departure for India, in which he enclosed romantic poetry and reminisced about musical parties they had enjoyed together in Cheltenham.⁶³

If marriage did not ensue from the flirtations enjoyed during elite sociability, it appears that the romantic frisson generated during such encounters could change a young woman's expectations of marriage. Based on her experiences at Bath, Gertrude Savile recorded her intention of rejecting the tentative arrangement made by her family to marry her to a cousin;

Give me (I do nott say Stanhope, 'tis vain to say so) but one who I like as well and likes me as well as I fancied he did. Let who will take estate or titles; and I ne'er woud envie them...I think I must get somebody to cry peccavy for me to my cousin Burnell for the hopefull Esq. her son.⁶⁴

Most young women in this study enjoyed the delights of the season, either provincial or national, but selected a husband from the men available within the local network of family and friends. There is no suggestion that these marriages were coolly planned by generations of parents for dynastic purposes, nor was there coercion of children by parents. These marriages took place with the full approval of family and friends and young women willingly took a husband from the pool of substantial landowners of fitting social rank. Yet again, by their

⁶² Ibid., p. 98.

⁶³ NAO DDSR 221/46, Peter Poultney to Lady Mary Lumley, 31 July and 30 Dec. 1789. E. Milner and E. Benham, *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley castle* (1904), p. 271 suggest that John Eyre, a younger son of a Nottinghamshire gentry family was also an admirer.

⁶⁴ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 3. The OED defines peccavi as an acknowledgement of guilt, from the Latin 'I have sinned'. This suggests that Gertrude, before her visit to Bath, was considering this marriage.

actions, young women demonstrated how well they were integrated into their family and into their social class. The contented approval that 'prudential' matches of this kind generated was evident in Gertrude Savile's diary entry describing the marriage of her niece Barbara Savile to the Earl of Scarborough in 1752;

Nothing that can seem to promise happyness wanting in the Match. His charicter extreordinary in all respects; long acquaintance, more than common (espeshily among the Nobillity), likeing and love on his side, with a proper Shair on hers, agreable to all his Familie, as well as to hers. His first proposal was just before his Father Dyed in last March, so approv'd by him. Since [then] the progress to Matrymony has been as quick as prosperity and the Lawyers woud allow...⁶⁵

The essential quality which was valued in marriage by all observers was parity or balance between the prospective partners. What the marriages within the core families provided was similarity; the prospective husband and wife were of similar rank and fortune, of a similar political persuasion. Moreover they already shared a common lifestyle and social circle.

A proposal of marriage which did not meet the requirements for parity was unlikely to be successful. David Hartley's proposal to Frances Thornhagh, during a stay at Sandbeck in the winter of 1769-70, was rejected without hesitation by both Frances and her father John Hewett. In no sense would this match have been an equal bargain. Hartley although a close friend and political ally of Sir George Savile, Frances' uncle, was of middle-class origin, the son of a Bath doctor, had no personal fortune or land to his name, was twice Frances' age, and according to contemporary accounts, had little in his personal manner or appearance to

⁶⁵ Savile, 'Secret comment', pp. 300-1.

recommend him.⁶⁶ By contrast, Frances was a member of a family whose well established position in the county was of long standing, she had a portion of £10,000 which had been transferred to her at the age of twenty one and with her sister was joint heiress to her father's estates. As Hartley himself conceded, whilst protesting his sincerity, his proposal was open to interpretation as;

taking advantage of an intimacy within a family, & a few years advantage over her head, to endeavour to overreach a modest young woman, *with a fortune above my pretensions.*⁶⁷

Hewett was deeply offended by Hartley's presumption. In the spring of 1771, having regained Hewett's confidence, Hartley renewed his suit but was again rebuffed by father and daughter. Hewett indicated that he had discussed the matter with Frances 'and we both think you had a sufficient and proper answer at Sandbeck and that you must not expect any other.'⁶⁸

Although proposals that deviated from the norm could cause unease among family and friends, not all were doomed to fail. A young woman who was over the age of twenty one, was in control of her portion, and did not need the permission of her parents or guardian to marry could, if she was prepared to suffer the subsequent family disappointment and society-wide gossip, marry more-or-less whomsoever she pleased. Lady Elizabeth Weymouth wrote to her brother with the latest news about Lady Harriet Wentworth who had married her footman. After reassuring him that the woman's fortune had been protected from her husband, by

⁶⁶ G. Gutteridge, , 'David Hartley, M.P.', *University of California Publications in History*, Vol. 14 (1926), pp. 235-6.

⁶⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, David Hartley to John Hewett, 26 April 1771.

⁶⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, John Hewett to David Hartley, undated draft, written on the back of David Hartley to John Hewett, 22 April 1771.

settling the greater part of it on any children of the marriage, she then went on to speculate about the reasons for this extraordinary marriage; 'she was all this summer at Bath for her Health & used to ride out constantly every evening till it was dark behind this Man & I suppose found his conversation so agreeable made her fix upon him for her spouse.' Pursuing this romantic attachment was condemned as both short-sighted and selfish; 'I fancy she repents by this time. I pity all her family vastly'.⁶⁹

Even when the social differences were less marked, and the families known to one another, a young woman who accepted a proposal of marriage from a man who was her social inferior could be the subject of considerable disapprobation. When Lady Louisa Lumley chose to wed Winchcombe Hartley in 1798, letters sent and received by the family expressed concern. Lady Anne Lumley Saunderson, Louisa's paternal aunt, was worried on several counts. Her first concern was that Louisa could have done much better; 'tho' she is my Neice I must say she is a very fine young Woman, & was entitled to any Match in the kingdom... I hope he is as sensible as he should be of the sacrifice she has made.' Hartley's social status was questionable; although she conceded that 'he looks genteel & is polite', she was unhappy about his family background; 'as to the circumstances in the connection... I cannot imagine what business the father was in, for I have been told he has failed twice'. The combined income of Hartley, a lawyer with no landed wealth, and Louisa who had only a small portion was also cause for concern, even though their respective families had done what they could to help; 'I fear their circumstances with all the kindness of their brothers will be very *very*

⁶⁹ NUMD PwF 8716, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to Duke of Portland, 19 Nov. 1762.

moderate'.⁷⁰ Two months after the wedding she continued to voice her concerns; 'When I think of poor dear Louisa, I dread what may be her fate: had her poor dear father been living, I think he would never have given his consent to such a match'.⁷¹ Although Louisa's brothers and sisters did their utmost to support Louisa in her marriage to Hartley, his humble origins, combined with his pretensions to gentility, continued to provoke gossip. Two years after the wedding, on hearing that the Hartleys might settle in Nottinghamshire, an elderly friend of the family, Mrs Eyre commented acidly;

I really think she will enjoy it, as all her friends I am sure will, having *her* so near them, I wish I could go a little farther, but I doubt there may be some little alloy to the pleasure of her company *alone* would give them. I *was* in hopes Mr H would have been a good deal engaged in town but I understand he has thoughts of giving up his business, & becoming a *Country gentleman*.⁷²

Reactions to this match also highlight a shift in aristocratic attitudes to marriage from a position where emotional involvement received little emphasis to one where it was considered essential.⁷³ Despite the disapproval of the Lumley spinster aunt and the elderly in local families, the younger generation, Louisa's siblings, seem to have done more to facilitate the marriage than prevent it. Her sister Lady Mary Foljambe had evidently tried hard to convince the doubtful aunt that Hartley and Louisa were so much in love as to be likely to be 'permanently

⁷⁰ NAO DDSR 221/18, Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated, but context suggests March 1798.

⁷¹ NAO DDSR 221/25, Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, 23 May 1798.

⁷² NAO DDSR 221/20, Mrs Eyre to Lady Mary Foljambe, 20 May 1800.

⁷³ Lewis, *'Family way'*, pp. 17-18, 55, found ~~that~~ amongst the aristocracy, in 1760 'a lukewarm respect and regard' was enough; by 1860 one needed to be 'perfectly in love'. This change was seen as causing family stress, as different generations experienced variable rates of change in attitude. Literary evidence of this intergenerational conflict is contained in the opening pages of Susan Ferrier *Marriage*, (1818), p.2. Lady Juliana declares herself to be seeking 'a mere competence with the man of my heart'. Her father, the Earl of Courtland responds angrily; 'There's no talking to a young woman now about marriage, but she is all in a blaze about hearts, and darts.... I'll suffer no daughter of mine to play the fool with her heart, indeed! She shall marry for the purpose for which matrimony was ordained amongst people of birth – that is for the

happy'. Her brothers were reported to have encouraged her by 'coming so readily into Louisa's match & showing so much kindness and generosity'.⁷⁴ The younger generation's pragmatic attitude to the match owed more to an ideal of personal happiness than to one of dynastic ambition.

Money was an important factor in assessing the suitability of any match. The amount of money that was to form the financial basis of a marriage and the arrangements for its subsequent management were vital elements in the preparation for any elite wedding. Lady Weymouth was rather more convincing in her satisfaction with the financial arrangements for her daughter's wedding than she was in describing her daughter's happiness in anticipation of the event;

I flatter myself we have all the reason to hope Louisa will be happy in this alliance he appears so well satisfied to be so attentive and so desirous to do anything that can shew his regard to her... I think he is agreeable to her – he settles £1500 pr. a. Jointure in present & £2000 at his Mother's death... £400 Pin Money & different sums on Younger children according to their number... & proposes that she should have a certain part of her own fortune at her own disposal...⁷⁵

Such discussions were not confined within the family. The Nottinghamshire elite gossip network buzzed with financial information at the prospect of a wedding. The prospect of making an advantageous marriage in financial terms could override other objections. Anne Warde told her uncle Hewett that;

This morning, Mr Wright the banker married his fifth daughter to a Mr Edwards an Irish gentleman, the lady is only eighteen but as it

aggrandisement of her family, the extending of their political influence - for becoming, in short, the depository of their mutual interest.'

⁷⁴ NAO DDSR 221/18 Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated, but context suggests March 1798.

⁷⁵ NUMD PwF 8747, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 Oct. 1781.

is an advantageous match in point of fortune the impediment of her youth which was at first an objection has been overcome.⁷⁶

In similar vein, Mary Foljambe informed her father of a match between a Captain Wrightson and Miss Bland;

She is extremely young, not at all handsome but has a fortune to outweigh everything, it is very large at present but is to be £5000 a year more at the death of her mother. Very convenient I daresay to Mr W.⁷⁷

Even when, as was often the case, the personal happiness of the bride was the main concern of the correspondent, the financial position of the groom was included as a contributory factor in assessing their chances of happiness. When Anne Warde wrote to her uncle of the marriage of their friend, Miss Ibbertson to a Mr. Fenton, she said she had received a 'favourable account' of the groom;

He has a considerable estate near Leeds & I am told his fortune is large & what is still more material his disposition and character unexceptional. I hope she will experience much felicity from her choice.⁷⁸

In theory, the sum of money that was available for a daughter's marriage portion was defined in the settlement documents that were drawn up at the marriage of her parents and it has been consideration of these legal arrangements that has fuelled the continuing debate on the effects of strict settlement on portions. In practice, as critics of Habakkuk and Spring have pointed out, life was rarely this simple.⁷⁹

Both the source of the portion, the sum of money and the availability of cash for

⁷⁶ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Anne Warde to John Hewett, 26 April 1779.

⁷⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 31 Jan 1781.

⁷⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Anne Warde to John Hewett, 25 Jan 1778.

⁷⁹ See above n. 18.

payment were subject to variation, as an examination of the experiences of three generations of Nottinghamshire women will demonstrate.⁸⁰

Arabella Savile married John Thornhagh, later Hewett, in 1744. The settlement document recorded that she brought a portion of £18,500, £16,000 to be found out of her father's estate and the additional £2,500 from her maternal grandfather. £10,000 was set aside for the portions of younger children of the marriage.⁸¹ In the event, there were no 'younger children'. Arabella and John's son died in infancy and their two surviving daughters, Mary and Frances succeeded as joint heiresses. When, in 1774 Mary married Francis Foljambe, also an heir, rather than the £5000 she would have received as a younger daughter, she brought a more substantial portion of £20,000, reflecting her enhanced status as heiress. The settlement document noted that this was made up four separate sums of money. £11,375 was the current value of her portion of £13,000 which had been transferred into her name at the age of 21 and invested in 3% annuities. To this were added 62 shares in the Calder and Hebble navigation canal, valued at £6329 6s 5d, which had been a gift from her maternal uncle, Sir George Savile. Also thrown into the pot were £210 14s 1d worth of East India Bonds. To make up the total to the full £20,000 her father added a further £2084 19s 6d.⁸²

Again, as in her parents' marriage settlement, £10,000 was secured to be divided equally amongst any younger children of the marriage. Mary and Frances had five

⁸⁰ For a discussion of the timing of payment, and augmentation of portions, see Habakkuk, *Marriage*, pp. 121-33.

⁸¹ NAO DDFJ 15/5/8 (1) Marriage settlement Thornhagh Savile 1744.

⁸² NAO DDFJ 15 7/12, Abstract of marriage settlement between Francis Ferrand Foljambe and Mary Arabella Thornhagh, 28 June 1774.

younger children, three sons and two daughters; each was thus only entitled to a portion of £2000 each from the parental fund. However, as Fig. 8 below shows, each of the younger children also received additional cash legacies, from their spinster great-aunts and from their father.

Fig. 8

Monies received by younger children of Francis and Arabella Foljambe⁸³

Source	Name				
	Francis	Henry	George	Mary	Arabella
Parent's marriage settlement ⁸⁴	£2000	£2000	£2000	£2000	£2000
Letitia Thornhagh's will (aunt) ⁸⁵	£500 (godson)			£100	
Sarah Thornhagh's will (aunt) ⁸⁶	£300	£300	£500 (godson)	£300	£300
Father's will ⁸⁷	£1000 + annuity of £400 pa	£1000	£1000	£1000	£1000
Total	£3800 +annuity of £400 pa	£3300	£3500	£3800	£3300

Foljambe showed no desire to top up the portions of his younger children. In his will he stated that he felt that his younger children 'were amply provided for' in his marriage settlement, 'and under the wills of relations friends and otherwise'

⁸³ This is a summary of the monies known to have been received by Foljambe's younger children. There may well have been additional legacies which have not come to light.

⁸⁴ DDFJ (A) 15 7/12, Abstract of the marriage settlement between Francis Ferrand Foljambe and Mary Arabella Thornhagh, 28 June 1774.

⁸⁵ DDFJ 15/8/33, Probate copy of the will of Letitia Thornhagh, 6 Nov. 1781, proved at York, 20 March 1792. George, Henry and Arabella were not deliberately excluded from this will. They were unborn when the will was written.

⁸⁶ DDFJ 15/3/34, Probate copy of the will of Sarah Thornhagh, 29 March 1788, proved at York, 20 March 1792.

⁸⁷ DDFJ (A) 15 7/12, Abstract of the will of Francis Ferrand Foljambe (no date) and codicils dated 16 June, 7 August 1813 and 9 June 1814. The annuity for Francis junior is not explained. It may have been in recognition as of his responsibilities as trustee for the Foljambe estate. The eldest

and he thought it unnecessary to add to their respective fortunes, but as a token of his affection he gave each an additional gift of £1000.⁸⁸ Francis and George never married. Henry, Mary and Arabella married in their late thirties, some years after the death of their father. Both daughters married men who earned their living, although respectably in the church and the army. Although there were small variations in the total amount received by each child, none were advantaged sufficiently to make them financially attractive in the marriage markets.

Even when a more substantial sum of money was set aside for the younger children of a marriage, it could be something of a lottery how much was actually received by each. The financial health of the family could impact upon this. Anne Lumley Saunderson, sister of Richard, 4th Earl of Scarborough recorded the sorry tale of her own lack of funds as she neared death; ‘my fortune had I my due, originally was £18,000, but I fear I never shall (or my heirs) near realize that sum; from the unfortunate affairs of both your dear father and Lord Ludlow [her brother and brother-in-law]’. She calculated her entitlement as £6000 from her parent’s marriage settlement, made up to £10,000 by her father, and legacies from her aunt and her mother. Of the latter sum of £4000 she protested; ‘of which I have never seen one shilling either principal or interest for she had lent three of it to Lord Ludlow long before her death; the other £1000 I received, & lent my dear brother’⁸⁹

brother, John Savile had died and his widow and four children were to be supported from the estate.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ NAO DDSR 221/10, Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated. The letter was written as an apology to her Lumley nieces and nephews for their not being advantaged by her will. The opening words suggest it was not to be delivered until after her death.

The financial problems of Richard, 4th Earl Scarborough spilled over into the next generation, compounded by the high fertility of his marriage. In his will he requested that £40,000 be invested for the younger children of his marriage.⁹⁰

When the will was made in 1772, ten years before the Earl's death, he had seven younger children, six boys and a girl. By his death he had gained two more daughters, which reduced the theoretical portion of each child from about £5714 to £4444. We do not know exactly what each child received. Scarborough's will instructed that property be sold to finance the younger children's portions.⁹¹ This was done, but George, the 5th Earl did not curtail his expenditure, nor did he marry and bring liquid assets into the family in the form of a wife's portion.⁹² His mother's jointure and the interest due on his sibling's portions often went unpaid.⁹³ His brothers found employment in the armed forces and the church and of his sisters, Mary and Louisa married and Sophia remained a spinster. A financial statement relating to Sophia's affairs stated that her 'paternal fortune', paid to her in about 1813, amounted to only £2222 4s.⁹⁴

Mortality was also a factor in determining how much a daughter might receive.

Anne Lumley Saunderson justified leaving what little she had to her sister's children on the grounds that 'had it been the Almighty's will to have taken me hence under age' her own fortune would have gone to her sister. This is precisely what happened to Abigail Frost. Eventually sole heir to her father's property, she

⁹⁰ NAO DDSR 207/39/15, Will of Richard, 4th Earl of Scarborough, 1772.

⁹¹ Habakkuk, *Marriage*, p. 118 suggests that when provision for younger children was made in a father's will, it was not unusual for instructions to be given for the sale of assets.

⁹² For the importance of the heir's wife's portion as a means of funding the marriages of the heir's sisters, see Hufton, *Prospect*, pp. 105-6.

⁹³ Milner and Benham, *Records*, pp. 265-7.

⁹⁴ NAO DDSR 212/49/2, Lady Sophia's payments and expenditure at Bishopsgate.

brought a portion of £6,705 to her marriage to Frank Gawthorn; this sum was hers as a result of two bequests by relatives of her father. John Secker, a Coventry mercer had left £1000, and Archbishop Secker had left £5000 to the two daughters of Thomas Frost, to be divided between them at the age of twenty one. As the elder sister Ann had died aged of 17, Abigail inherited the full amount at the age of twenty one.⁹⁵

The size of a young elite woman's portion was a reasonable indicator of her marital expectations; if her portion was more than £10,000 she was unlikely to have any difficulty in finding a suitable husband and making a prestigious marriage.⁹⁶ £30,000 was sufficient, combined with youth and family connections, for Lady Dorothy Cavendish, the daughter of the Duke of Devonshire, to marry William, 3rd Duke of Portland.⁹⁷ A similar sum was mentioned in the marriage settlements of the Duke's sisters, Elizabeth and Henrietta upon their respective marriages to Viscount Weymouth and Lord Grey, who were both heirs.⁹⁸ Arabella Savile with a portion of £18,500 married John Thornhagh, also an heir.⁹⁹ As discussed above, the daughters of Arabella and John Thornhagh also had portions of £20,000 each. The younger, Mary married an heir, Francis Foljambe. The elder, Frances rejected the M.P. David Hartley, and remained single. Her fate was sealed not by her lack of portion, but by her mental instability which became apparent in her late twenties.

⁹⁵ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 14.

⁹⁶ Habakkuk, *Marriage*, p. 165, suggests that a portion of £10-20,000 was enough to marry a Duke in the first half of the eighteenth century.

⁹⁷ NUMD P1 F5/1/5, Settlement made previous to the marriage of the 3rd Duke of Portland with lady Dorothy Cavendish, 5-6 Nov. 1766.

⁹⁸ NUMD P1 F4/3/2, Copy settlement made previous to the marriage of Lady Elizabeth Cavendish with Viscount Weymouth, 19 May 1759.

However, the smaller the portion the more elusive marriage became and in each generation, there were women for whom spinsterhood was the most likely outcome. Habakkuk suggests that suggests that in the eighteenth century a portion of less than £2000 was unlikely to be enough for marriage within the landed gentry.¹⁰⁰ In 1785 Hayley identified the typical 'unmarried daughters of English gentlemen' as 'with difficulty living on the interest of two or three thousand pounds'.¹⁰¹ In the 1720s, Gertrude Savile's modest portion of £3000, combined with her self-confessed awkwardness and depression, and her disfiguring skin complaint did not auger well for her chances of finding a husband. In the middle of the century, John Thornhagh had six sisters and two brothers, who were to share the £10,000 set aside for the portions of younger children of their parents' marriage.¹⁰² Only two married ; Frances and Mary both made respectable marriages, the former to Patientus Warde of Hooton Pagnell, Yorkshire with a portion of £3000. The settlement documents give no clue as to how this sum was constituted, although it clearly represents more than one eighth of the family money set aside for portions. An accompanying receipt bears witness that this was not an idle promise; the full amount was paid by Thornhagh to Warde on the day

⁹⁹ NAO DDFJ 15/5/8 (1) Marriage settlement Thornhagh Savile 1744

¹⁰⁰ Habakkuk, *Marriage*, p. 167; A.L. Erickson, *Women and property in early modern England* (1995), pp. 86-7, estimates that in the seventeenth century, upper gentry portions needed to be in the region of £1-5000.

¹⁰¹ Hayley, *Old maids*, p. 7.

¹⁰² The marriage settlement for Thornhagh's parents has not survived. However, his own settlement states that the £10,000 he sets aside for the children of his marriage is the same £10,000 that was allocated for this purpose by his father. See NAO DDFJ 15/5/8 (1) Marriage settlement Thornhagh Savile 1744.

the settlement document was signed.¹⁰³

Love, family assistance or a willingness to accept a less prestigious marriage could overcome the disadvantages of a small portion. Lady Mary Lumley married Francis Foljambe; the tone of the letters she received from him both before and after marriage suggest that his passionate love for Mary, combined with his own substantial fortune, led him to overlook a meagre portion in his second wife.¹⁰⁴

Lady Louisa Lumley married Hartley, a lawyer of middle-class origin; their combined marital fund was so small that her brothers were persuaded to augment Louisa's portion in an attempt to secure her standard of living. Actions of this kind could, however, disadvantage other siblings, as Anne Lumley Saunderson was quick to point out to her youngest niece, Lady Sophia Lumley. Family resources were finite; although her brothers 'may have done it for one they could not for two of them, & yet it might appear hard and partial' She also gave Sophia 'in the kindest manner I could' the following advice;

in regard of any person she may on first acquaintance feel inclined to take a fancy for, & begged her not to encourage anything of the sort, till she knew *who he was*, his *character*, if there was a sufficiency on his part to live upon;¹⁰⁵

None of the single women mentioned above chose spinsterhood in preference to marriage. Most young women, whatever their circumstances, showed an

¹⁰³ HP/2/11 Marriage settlement of Patientius Warde of Hooton Pagnell and Frances Thornhagh of Osberton, 8/9 May 1744; HP/2/12 Duplicate of 2/11 with receipt for portion of £3000 paid over by John Thornhagh 8/9 May 1744.

¹⁰⁴ NAO DDFJ 221/46; the letters here are undated but labelled 'My D[ea]r[e]st M[r] F[oljambe]'s letters April and May 1792. For letters after marriage see DDFJ 221/1-50, *passim*.

¹⁰⁵ NAO DDSR 221/18, Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated, but context suggests March 1798.

inclination to marry. Gertrude Savile concluded, as she approached her twenty-fifth birthday;

I was never so convinced of the reasons for a young woman's making marriage a shelter from the insults, scorns and the thousand ills she is exposed to while single, An old maid is the very butt for ridicule and insults. Miserable are women at best, but without a protector She's a boat upon a very stormy sea without a pilot; a very Catt, who if seen aboard is hunted and worried by all the curs in town.¹⁰⁶

Also in her twenties, Lady Sophia Lumley continued to cast about for a prospective suitor. She thanked her sister Mary for 'your hint about Mr Kent, I will try what I can to captivate him when I see him next'.¹⁰⁷

A willingness to marry did not mean that young women were necessarily in a hurry to relinquish their single status. When teased by her uncle Hewett on the subject of marriage, Anne Warde's response suggested that she was content with her present situation. She pertly thanked her uncle for:

your *polite* congratulations which tho' premature were kind & flattering. Alas I have no right to accept them as I still retain the name of Anne Warde, and to own the truth, have at present no inclination to resign *that &* my liberty

At the age of twenty-eight she had not, however, dismissed marriage altogether.

She continued;

When I have I think I shall have the *civility* to inform you; and perhaps request the honour of your presence at the ceremony, at least I shall not forget to send you a piece of the bride cake.¹⁰⁸

What is most striking, if not altogether surprising, about the behaviour of this

¹⁰⁶ Saville, 'Secret Comment', p.21.

¹⁰⁷ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe 12 Nov. [no year]

¹⁰⁸ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, Anne Warde to John Hewett, 26 April 1779.

group of young women of marriageable age is the degree of conformity that they displayed in their behaviour and in their marital choices. Young women shared a common interest with their families in securing the best future for themselves and demonstrated the belief that this could best be achieved by obedience to and respect for the norms of eighteenth-century elite society. Transgression of society's rules for the good behaviour of young women attracted at the very least idle gossip; at worst a reputation could be ruined beyond remedy. Young women also knew that their behaviour reflected not only upon themselves as individuals, but also upon their whole family. To a great extent, the young women studied here regulated their own behaviour, demonstrating a clear understanding of the position they occupied as a representative of the family. Constraints placed upon them were interpreted as evidence of parental care and concern and the bars of the gilded cage were barely rattled. Frances Thornhagh's wild behaviour, driving herself around town and country without an escort, was attributed to her mental instability, rather than to wilful disobedience.

For the most part, the women who married did so within established boundaries of emotional, financial, political and social acceptability. They chose husbands for whom they had some romantic feeling and who they believed, cared for them. Their selected husbands were landed gentlemen of sufficient means to ensure the continuation of a comfortably leisured way of life, whose political views were in sympathy with their brothers and fathers. The reward for this 'prudential' choice was the approval of family and friends and an appropriate lifestyle. Those who stretched the boundaries, like Lady Louisa Lumley, risked social and economic

penalties; the disapproval of family and friends was expressed and the subsequent financial insecurity will become evident in later chapters.

The impact of the expansion of elite sociability on the choice of marriage partners was variable. The behaviour of the Portland family suggests that the London season was an important factor in finding a suitable husband or wife at the highest levels of the aristocracy, where the local area was unlikely to provide a satisfactory supply of social peers. However, at lesser levels and amongst the gentry, the elite marriage market was geographically more self-contained.

Although young women enjoyed the opportunities for entertainment and flirtation offered by London, Bath or the provincial towns, once flirtations had run their course and entertainments began to pall, most young women selected a husband from a local area which was limited to north Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire.

Not all daughters married. In each generation of every family there was at least one spinster daughter. The evidence suggests that an insufficient portion was a more important contributory factor here than individual choice. Young women were dependent upon their family to provide a portion and, where strict settlement combined with high fertility and low infant mortality, the division of the sum set aside for younger children into six or eight portions could result in each child being entitled to a sum of money that was barely enough to support an individual, let alone encourage a suitor. At the same time, close examination of the constitution of individual portions suggests that whilst the debate has focused on the sum of money set aside in the parental marriage settlement, the arrangements

laid out in this document should be regarded as no more than a guide to what any young woman might take into a marriage or use to support her spinsterhood.. At worst as the Lumley documents have indicated, although settlements and wills might be made with generous intentions, financial reality could restrict the ability of subsequent generations to deliver the promised cash. On a more optimistic note, the sum to be received from the parental purse could be, and frequently was, augmented by gifts and legacies from parents and/or other relatives.

All the marriage settlement documents examined demonstrate a strict impartiality in the division of money between the future younger sons and daughters of the marriage. Wills were sometimes more discriminating as personal feelings intruded; godchildren often benefited from their relationship with god parents, and sons or daughters who had particular responsibilities within the family could receive a financial reward, but there are no clear patterns of gender favouritism or discrimination. Gender differentiation is to be found not at family level in settlement papers but in the norms of eighteenth-century elite society which allowed its younger sons to augment their share of family wealth by finding employment in the church or the armed forces, but insisted its daughters should eschew paid employment of any kind. As a consequence, daughters were more financially dependent on their families than sons and felt the effects of financial interdependence all the more keenly.

Childhood socialisation had prepared young women to enter the social milieu that was their birthright. Those that were financially well-endowed found husbands that were equally fortunate. Those that were more modestly portioned did less

well; they either accepted husbands that were equally unfortunate and accepted the comparatively straightened circumstances which followed, or if no acceptable offer of marriage was received, slipped gently into spinsterhood. There is no suggestion that young women were coerced into loveless marriages or actively prevented from marrying, or that young women routinely ignored the expectations of family and friends in matters of marital choice. The interests of young women and their families were, for the most part, convergent; social, financial and emotional factors impacted on marital decisions and shaped the behaviour of both the individual and the family group.

Chapter Four

DOMESTIC LIFE

This chapter will focus on three specific aspects of domestic life, exploring the extent to which the roles of wife, mother and housekeeper absorbed the emotional and physical energies of elite women. First, how much time did a wife spend in the company of her husband and how was this time spent? Is there any indication that the marital relationship restricted a women's activities? Second, how did women manage motherhood? How much assistance did they have in the care and education of their children and what level of emotional investment was made in the role of mother? Third, how much involvement did elite women have in the organisation and management of a household? By plotting the key activities that formed the basis of domestic life, it will be possible to assess the extent of the domestic demands made upon women, and the ways in which they fulfilled these responsibilities.

When, in the second half of the twentieth century, historians turned the spotlight on domestic life, in every strand of the discipline early concerns were with the construction of models of change and the establishment of a chronology within which that change took place. Aries and Stone produced influential and complementary analyses of family life, reaching similar conclusions about changes that took place during the early modern period.¹ In short, according to

¹ P. Aries, *Centuries of childhood: a social history of family life* (Harmondsworth, 1962); L. Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977). See also L. de Mause, *The history of childhood* (New York, 1974); E. Shorter, *The making of the modern family* (1976); R. Trumbach, *the rise of the egalitarian family: aristocratic kinship and domestic relations in eighteenth century England* (New York, 1978).

these pioneering studies, relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children changed dramatically over the course of two centuries. The seventeenth-century family was characterised by cold formality and distant, rigid discipline within the 'patriarchal' family. By contrast, the eighteenth century heralded a greater focus on domesticity; families spent more time in each other's company and enjoyed close and affectionate relationships within what Stone refers to as the 'closed domesticated nuclear family'.

When historians of women and gender turned their attention to domestic life, the eighteenth century was once again identified as a period of change; the staging post between the positive and productive picture of seventeenth-century womanhood drawn by Alice Clarke's pioneering study, and the enclosed world of the Victorian woman, imprisoned by the notion of 'separate spheres'.² This pervasive paradigm proposed that in England towards the end of the eighteenth century there was a resurgence of patriarchal attitudes, which increasingly confined women to the 'private', domestic sphere, caring for husband and children within the household, at the expense of the wider interests and activities they had previously enjoyed in the 'public' sphere.

Subsequent substantive research has cast doubt upon the validity of these models of change, revealing both greater diversity and continuity in past domestic life. In respect of the family, Wrightson and Houlbrooke argued that the idea of a

² A. Clark, *Working life of women in the seventeenth century* (1919); L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family fortunes; men and women of the English middle-class, 1780-1850* (1987). A Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), pp. 383-401 provides a cogent summary of the rationale that supported this theory of change and the subsequent objections to it.

succession of family types with corresponding emotional climates was an oversimplification of reality and, according to the former, patriarchal and companionate marriages were 'poles in an enduring continuum in marital relations'.³ A recent critique by Pollock has picked up this theme again, but rejects the view that families were either patriarchal or companionate, demonstrating instead that the seventeenth-century family 'was not one thing or the other; rather it was many things, often all at the same time.'⁴ Wrightson and, more recently, O'Day have also drawn attention to the gap between the narrow range of behaviour proposed by moralists, which formed the basis of Stone's work, and the wide variety of practice that can be found from detailed examination of family source materials.⁵ Studies of childhood have also revealed a greater continuity in the parent-child relationship than Aries and Stone suggested. Parental practices have changed over the centuries, but emotional investment in children was a constant feature of concerned parenting from the early modern period to the nineteenth century.⁶

The concept of 'separate spheres' as an organising principle for the analysis of women's lives has also been criticised. Early in the debate Kerber suggested that a focus on gender as *the* determinant of women's roles imposed a 'restrictive

³ K. Wrightson, *English society 1580-1680* (1982); R Houlbrooke, *The English family 1450-1700* (1984); Wrightson, *English society*, p. 104.

⁴ L. Pollock, 'Rethinking patriarchy and the family in seventeenth-century England', *Journal of family history*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1998, p. 20.

⁵ Wrightson, *English society*, p. 92; R. O'Day, *The family and family relationships, 1500-1900: England, France and the United States of America* (1994), pp. 266-74.

⁶ See for example, L. A. Pollock, *Forgotten children: parent child relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983); idem. *A lasting relationship; parents and children over three centuries* (1987); S. Wilson, 'The myth of motherhood a myth: the historical view of European child-rearing, *Social History*, 9 (1984); P. Crawford, 'The social construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England', in V. Fildes (ed.), *Women as mothers in pre-industrial England: essays in memory of Dorothy McLaren* (1990).

dualism' on historical interpretations of women's lives.⁷ Subsequent research has highlighted the importance of rank and status in determining the shape of female roles. Studies by Lewis, Vickery, Reynolds and Foreman, demonstrate that in the upper echelons of eighteenth and nineteenth century society the boundaries between the spheres were by no means as distinct as the 'separate spheres' model, developed to define the experiences of the nineteenth-century middle-classes, might suggest.⁸

While theoretical models continue to undergo revision, case studies which explore the domestic life of elite women in the eighteenth-century elite remain thin on the ground and their findings are contradictory. Trumbach found that over the course of three generations, between 1690 and 1780, relationships between the eighteenth-century aristocratic woman and her husband became increasingly 'close and loving' and couples spent more and more time together.⁹ By contrast, Lewis' study of peerage families found that the ideology of domesticity and the companionate marriage did not become widespread until the 1820s and was experienced by different families at different times.¹⁰ In her study of the Lancashire local elite, Vickery found that although patriarchal values, in particular the rule of male authority, prevailed throughout the eighteenth century, it was character and personal circumstances which determined the way in women (and

⁷ L. Kerber, 'Separate spheres, female worlds, woman's place: the rhetoric of women's history', *Journal of American History*, 75 (1988), p. 18.

⁸ J. S. Lewis, *In the family way: childbearing in the British aristocracy, 1760-1800* (New Jersey, 1986); Vickery, 'Golden age'; idem., *The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (1998); K. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford, 1998); A Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (1998). See also R.B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English society, 1650-1850* (1998), pp. 87-144 for an overview of gender roles within the family and household.

⁹ Trumbach, *Egalitarian family*, p. 120.

¹⁰ Lewis, *Family way*, p. 55.

their husbands) played the marital cards with which they were dealt; 'Marriage carried the potential for both harmonious licence and miserable servitude'.¹¹

The same studies also demonstrate diversity in matters of maternity. Trumbach found that elite mothers spent increasing amounts of time with their infant children over the course of the eighteenth century and claimed that by the 1780 most aristocratic women had abandoned the use of wet-nurses and were breast-feeding their own children.¹² Again Lewis' findings counter Trumbach's conclusions. Although she conceded that more women were breast-feeding by the 1780s, the employment of wet-nurses by the aristocracy continued into the nineteenth century and women 'exercised a considerable degree of autonomy' in their decisions about breast-feeding.¹³ Moreover Lewis suggests that women in peerage families were not constrained by motherhood; their social profile remained high throughout pregnancy and motherhood.¹⁴ Mothers in the Lancashire local elite also made decisions about infant feeding according to personal preference and circumstance, but Vickery found that the consequences of motherhood were potentially far-reaching; 'Motherhood could absorb almost all reserves of physical and emotional energy for at least a decade.' Mothers of young children were less mobile, enjoyed fewer contacts with a social circle beyond kin, and wrote fewer letters. Nevertheless, 'women's efforts to surface were as vigorous in the 1820s as in the 1750s'¹⁵

¹¹ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 86.

¹² Trumbach, *Egalitarian family*, p. 223.

¹³ Lewis, *Family way*, p. 209.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵ Vickery, *Gentlemen's daughter*, p. 97; p. 117.

The responsibilities of women as housekeepers have received little attention from historians, although a handful of studies provide some details of the composition and organisation of eighteenth-century households.¹⁶ All elite households were serviced by servants, although the number could vary from four or five at the level of the lesser gentry, to around twenty in the upper gentry; aristocratic households often employed between thirty and forty staff.¹⁷ Stone's view was that elite women withdrew from active housekeeping during the course of the eighteenth century, delegating responsibility wherever possible; 'Wives of the middle and upper ranks of society increasingly became idle drones. They turned household management over to stewards...'.¹⁸ Yet, according to Trumbach, unless the household was at the centre of a great estate, the eighteenth-century aristocratic wife became more, rather than less, involved in housekeeping, as the fashion for domesticity encouraged women to spend more time at home, and a higher proportion of female servants were employed.¹⁹ Vickery found no evidence of a change in attitudes to household responsibilities among the local elite. Throughout the eighteenth century women were required to sustain an 'active and demanding' managerial role.²⁰ Within the household women were responsible for a wide range of difficult and time-consuming responsibilities including the hiring, supervision and firing of domestic servants and the care and maintenance of the interior of the

¹⁶ J. J. Hecht, *The domestic servant class in eighteenth century England*, (1956). D. Marshall, 'The domestic servants of the eighteenth century', *Economica*, 19 (1929), provides a few additional details. R. Bayne Powell, *Housekeeping in the eighteenth century* (1956) is more informative on the business of the household than on how it was organised and managed. B. Hill, *Servants: English domestics in the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1996), provides useful detail on the social and economic relationships between employers and servants.

¹⁷ Hecht, *Domestic servant*, pp. 5-7. Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 134-5, also concludes that seven domestic servants was considered an ideal number by the eighteenth century local elite of Lancashire.

¹⁸ Stone, *Family*, p. 247

¹⁹ Trumbach, *Egalitarian family*, p.

²⁰ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 157.

home. Men who lacked a wife often sought a female relative to take on this important role.²¹

By focusing in turn on the three key aspects of female domesticity, the roles of wife, mother and housekeeper, the aim here is not to explore the mechanics of each in detail, but rather to assess the extent to which these particular facets of female experience were central to the day-to-day activities of elite women.

Vickery concludes that although during the eighteenth century 'the language of domesticity became more powerful and pervasive ... genteel women became more adept at manipulating it to pursue a range of activities and assume a set of responsibilities outside the home'.²² This chapter will establish how women of the Nottinghamshire elite used the resources at their disposal to fulfil the demands of husband, children and household and assess how consuming these responsibilities were of time and energy.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Gisbourne decried the detached life-style that he observed was adopted by the urban elite. In his view it was

totally repugnant to the cultivation of affection and connubial happiness. The husband and wife are systematically kept asunder. Separate establishments, separate sets of acquaintance, separate amusements...²³

By contrast, the elite couples in this study provide much evidence to suggest that

²¹ Ibid., pp. 128-9. See also S. Dunster, 'Useless and insignificant creatures? Spinsters in the Nottinghamshire upper classes, 1720-1820' *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottingham*, Vol. 102 (1998), pp. 105-6. B. Hill, *Women alone: spinsters in England 1660-1850* (2001), pp. 68-78.

²² Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 293-4.

²³ T. Gisbourne, *An enquiry into the duties of the female sex* (1797), p. 328.

marital companionship, rather than being avoided, could be a positive source of pleasure for wives and husbands. Couples shared homes, amusements and friends and told friends and family of their enjoyment. The domestic contentment of two generations of Portlands was apparent. A few months after her marriage, Margaret wife of William, 2nd Duke of Portland told friends in her letters that her husband had '*every good quality you wished him to have*', and asserted; 'The sweet William's as agreeable as ever'.²⁴ Mrs Delany recorded many instances of the couples' domestic complacency and remarked some twenty years into the marriage that the Duke was 'the same good obliging person he ever was.'²⁵ The Portland heir, William 3rd Duke and his wife Dorothy were also content, their low-key domestic harmony observed by a contemporary 'All is moderation and innocence... six penny cribbage and dancing with the children the evening amusement'²⁶ Mary and Francis Foljambe's correspondence with her father is littered with passing references to happy moments enjoyed by the young couple and their growing family. They read together, sat in the spring sunshine together eating fresh radishes from the kitchen garden, hunted together, played with their children together, visited relatives and neighbours, went to Doncaster Races, attended the theatre in York, in short were almost constant companions.²⁷ Their cousins, the Wardes of Hooton Pagnell, showed a similar level of marital

²⁴ Lady Llanover (ed.), *Life and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, Vol. 1, Series 1 (1861), pp. 497, 511.

²⁵ Llanover *Mrs Delany*, Vol. 3, Series 1, p. 239.

²⁶ D. Wilkinson 'The Political career of William Henry Cavendish Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland, 1738-1809' (University of Aberystwith, unpublished PhD thesis 1997), pp. 62-3; quoting [in private possession] Blair Adam mss, William Adam to father, 1 Sept. 1785. This and other contemporary comment leads Wilkinson to summarise the Portland's domestic life as 'serenity verging on tedium'.

²⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 19 Sept. 1779; 11/1/5, same to same, 25 March 1782; 11/1/4, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 4 Nov. 1779; Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 17 Jan 1772; Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 9 Jan. 1779; same to same, 2 Oct. 1779; 11/1/1, same to same, 6 April 1780.

contentment and pleasure in companionship. They eloquently expressed their mutual devotion and respect. St. Andrew Warde assured his uncle that he would take the greatest care of his wife 'for I have the sincerest regard and esteem for her ...Her loss would be irretrievable to me'²⁸ His efforts in securing his wife's good health, accompanying her to spa after spa did not go unappreciated. Anne Warde commented 'It is vain for me to enter into the Eloquium of my good Husband: his virtues beggar description & make every affectionate return a double duty'.²⁹ She was happy to take her turn in nursing 'the kindest of husbands' and confessed that 'I cannot help being alarmed on every trifling occasion, for where we greatly love we greatly fear.'³⁰

Contemporary advice also made it clear that, once married, a woman's loyalty lay with her husband;

A wife owes to her husband's person the debt of undivided love; to his reputation all her assistance in defending it; to his fortune all her care in improving and securing it, and an unaltered affection in all the changes of it...³¹

The extent to which a wife was prepared to weather the disapproval of her family in support of her husband is demonstrated by Lady Louisa Hartley. The Hartleys, as predicted at the time of their marriage, suffered a series of financial crises, and were bailed out on several occasions by her family.³² Throughout all these

²⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 12 Jan. 1778; see also 11/1/5, same to same, 16 Jan 1781;

²⁹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 10 Dec. 1780.

³⁰ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 25 April 1780; 11/1/5, same to same, 27 May 1782.

³¹ W. Wilkes, *A letter of genteel and moral advice to a young lady* (1751), p. 128.

³² See for example, DDSR 221/32 Richard Lumley Savile to Lady Mary Foljambe, 24 Jan. 1805; in which he calculated that Hartley had extracted at least £330 from the family for expenses in Bath.

problems and despite her evident affection for her sisters, Louisa steadfastly refuted all suggestions that her husband had behaved badly. In 1805, she wrote an angry letter to Mary, asserting that Hartley had been misunderstood and made it clear that although she was grateful to her family for their financial help, her loyalties were with her 'dear husband';

No allowance has been made by some for his misfortunes his hopes his disappointments after every expectation of the contrary ... you could feel little comfort in the society of those *even your own* family when you felt they had *unjustly* (as I do) a bad opinion of *your* husband (whoever he might be)...³³

However much a couple enjoyed one another's company, the reality of eighteenth-century elite life imposed temporary separation of husband and wife with some regularity. The demands of public life - politics, the law, military service - or of pleasure - hunting and shooting - could lure the most happily married man away from his home. Women too found reasons to travel alone, for health or to visit friends and family. Both the volume and content of correspondence between husbands and wives suggest a high emotional investment in marriage. In the early years of marriage Dorothy, Duchess of Portland and her husband, wrote to one another almost daily when they were apart. In a typical period in 1767, when William was delayed in London by political business and Dorothy was at Welbeck, they exchanged seventeen letters between 7 and 24 July.³⁴ As the time passed slowly in the country side, Dorothy suggested that if her husband was to be delayed for more than a week she would return to London; 'for to stay here longer than that without you would make me miserable. I hope you will not be angry

³³ NAO DDSR 221/49 Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 12 Nov. 1805.

³⁴ NUMD PwF 10533, 10535, 10537, William 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy Duchess of Portland, 7, 16, 23 July 1767; PwG 35, 36, 40-1, 44 same to same, 9, 11, 14, 18, 21 July 1767;

with me for saying this but if you are I shall be very certain that you have not a notion of what I feel when we are separated.'³⁵ This newly-wed intensity was not maintained but correspondence continued to be a regular feature of time spent apart. Ten years later, when Dorothy spent August at Bonnington with the children, and William went to Welbeck, she still sent her husband at least two letters a week.³⁶

Intensity of feeling and frequency of correspondence was maintained within the second Foljambe marriage. When, in 1809 Lady Mary Foljambe went to London on her own, to consult a doctor about her health, her husband thanked her for her letters noting that 'after 17 years our recollections and feelings are the same....to feel tho' our bodies are separated our hearts are united'. He wrote eight times between 9 and 22 February, expressing his love and physical desire for her and describing the effects of separation;

Absence from those we sincerely love to the mind is like that of the sun to the sight & feeling;So dearest creature I feel daily and hourly the absence of your dear face ...³⁷

Mary's responses have not survived, however Foljambe's remonstrance about the length of her replies suggests that his feelings were reciprocated.

O fye! fye! notwithstanding my positive injunctions 20 pages & one fol[io] & a turn over!!!.... Seriously dear soul, you are sadly

PwG 37-9, 42, 43, 45, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 11,12, 13, 19,19, 24 July 1767; PwF 10534, 10536, 10538, same to same, 15, 18, 23 July 1767.

³⁵ NUMD PwG 43, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 19 July 1767.

³⁶ NUMD PwF 10688-94, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland. The Duke's replies have not survived, however the text of the Duchess letters makes it clear that this was not a one-sided correspondence.

³⁷ NAO DDSR 221/13, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 19 Feb. 1809. See also same to same, 9, 20,21 Feb. 1809; 221/15, 14, 15, 22 Feb. 1809; 221/16 16 Feb. 1809. A similar level of intensity is also evident in Foljambe's final letters to his wife during his absence for health reasons shortly before his death in 1814. See DDSR 221/21, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 21-23,26, 27, 29 Sept, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12 October, 1814.

wrong in writing so much when you have had such experience of its bad effects.³⁸

Another means of maintaining the connection between wife and husband was the sending of gifts. Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough, sent her husband, in Scarbrough for his health, hothouse fruit ' & a little box' the contents of which were not specified, but which she entreated should not cause him to laugh at her or call her 'silly'.³⁹ Some fifty years later, her eldest daughter, Lady Mary Foljambe, sent her husband, also at Scarborough for his health, a single fig, which he;

surveyed with peculiar delight & could hardly bring myself to devour it. However I kept it till I went to bed that I might feel the last thing that your dear soft fingers had touch'd in hopes I might dream of *all your soft touches* but alas no.⁴⁰

Wives also received gifts from their absent husbands. Foljambe sent his wife sweet herbs and fresh vegetables from the countryside and the Duke of Portland apologised to his young wife for his continued absence by sending her a new dress, buttons and earrings.⁴¹ The Duchess received them with good grace, but appeared to think them a poor substitute for her husband's presence at her side.⁴²

Further evidence of the emotional investment women made in their marriages was the extent to which a wife was prepared to take on a difficult or dangerous journey to be with her husband, even when friends and family urged her to remain

³⁸ NAO DDSR 221/13, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 9 Feb. 1809.

³⁹ NAO DDSR 221/15, Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough to Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough, undated [context suggests July/Aug. 1756].

⁴⁰ NAO DDSR 221/18, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 4 Sept. 1805.

⁴¹ NAO DDSR 221/15, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 14 Feb. 1809, 221/13 same to same 21 Feb 1809; 221/10, same to same, 18 June 1810. NUMD PwF 10635, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 16 July 1767; PwG 41, same to same, 18 July 1767.

⁴² NUMD PwG 42, 43, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 19, 20 July 1767.

at home. Mary, wife of General William Lumley, wished to follow her husband to South America in October 1806. When he left, her husband asked her to follow on the next possible boat. Although advised by other officers that the journey was ‘neither fit for me as a *Female*, or as Gen[era]l Lumley’s wife.’, and unable to seek help from her parents ‘knowing my Father would not have permitted me to leave my native country so totally unprotected’, she told Lady Mary that she was determined to follow William. Although the thought of travelling alone, at risk of capture by the Spanish or French, ‘does terrify meI will do my best & if I should die it is of no great importance if it is in attempting to do my duty to him who I vowed to love *and obey*’.⁴³ Similar sentiments prompted Lady Louisa Hartley’s decision to accompany her husband to his new employment in South Africa. Against the advice of her family, she packed up her belongings, five children and five servants, to brave the long sea journey and unfamiliar surroundings. Her sisters could only attribute this decision to ‘both duty and affection... we well know how much more miserable she would be had he gone without her’.⁴⁴ Louisa confirmed that her faith in her husband had prompted her departure; ‘... though my heart is a little heavy I have never repented in this great undertaking; in the firm hope & *constant reliance* I have on one who will

⁴³ NAO DDSR 221/23, Mary Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 10 Oct 1806. In the event, Mary did not travel. She became ill before the arrangements for her journey could be completed and died the following year, never seeing her husband again. NAO DDSR 221/16, M. Sutherland to Lady Mary Foljambe, 19 July 1807. A letter from a member of Mary’s family, informing Lady Mary of the death of her sister-in-law. DDSR 221/19, General William Lumley to Mary Lumley, 10 July 1807; copy sent to Lady Mary Foljambe.

⁴⁴ NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe [postmark] 1806.

always protect those who trust in him...'⁴⁵

When women did not accompany their husband on a long journey, the usual reason was health, either their own or that of their children. When Hartley took a second voyage to the Cape, his wife's continuing ill-health, which had forced the family's return to England, prevented her from accompanying him. She resigned herself to divine providence, to 'trust in *Him Alone* who will support me and protect my dearest Mr H.'⁴⁶ Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, pregnant for the first time, was advised by the medical profession to remain in London, rather than accompany her husband to Carlisle on a political campaign. She accepted her fate, knowing it was the sensible option; 'I know I would never forgive myself was I to risque [sic] the life of my child'⁴⁷ A mother's desire to remain with her children when they were ill could also cause husband and wife to take separate paths. Foljambe, having gone ahead to Rufford for the annual family party reported that Mary had been detained at home by the children being slightly unwell.⁴⁸

The ease and comfort of these happy marriages was brought into sharp relief by an awareness of the sufferings of those who did not enjoy marital security. Margaret, Duchess of Portland remarked that 'Poor Sir George Savile is quite mad', following the discovery of his wife's affair with William Levinz, MP for

⁴⁵ NAO DD SR 221/49 Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 11 Feb. 1807.

⁴⁶ NAO DDSR 221/18, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 12 July 1809.

⁴⁷ NUMD PwF 10564, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 6 April 1768.

⁴⁸ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/1, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 6 Jan 1780.

Nottinghamshire.⁴⁹ Lady Mary Foljambe writing to express sympathy for her brother's unhappiness, offered a glimpse of her own contentment:

I may say I speak from experience of the reverse in as much as the greatest happiness of my life consists in mine & my dear husbands mutual certitude in proportion should I be much grieved should it cease to exist between us ... this greatest of all comforts in the married state...⁵⁰

For the women in this study, emotional commitment was part and parcel of marriage. They loved and respected their husbands, were loyal and willing partners to them in all aspects of their lives and gave no indication that they viewed marriage as a constraint on their activities.

Equally demanding of emotion was the role of mother. Anxiety about children began during pregnancy, was heightened during infancy and continued throughout the rest of childhood and adolescence; at every stage mothers (and fathers) worried about the health, education and moral welfare of their sons and daughters. Maternal responsibility began in the earliest days of pregnancy, as pregnant women were advised to behave in a way that family, friends and the medical profession believed would benefit the health of mother and child. As soon as Dorothy, Duchess of Portland told her husband and a close friend that she thought she was pregnant she was subjected to advice from all directions. Both the Duke and Viscountess Torrington consulted doctors on her behalf; the conclusion of all was that 'her youth, her constitution, many many reasons make it necessary to be

⁴⁹ Llanover (ed.) *Mrs Delany*, Vol. I, p. 547. For further evidence of Savile's distress see NAO DDSR 212/13/34, Sir George Savile to Gertrude Savile, Sept, 4 Oct., 22 Nov., 1735. The record is silent on the matter of Lady Savile's feelings and subsequent separation from husband and children.

⁵⁰ NAO DDSR 221/58 Lady Mary Foljambe to 'Dear Brother' undated.

cautious to the last degree for her first child'⁵¹. Caution took the form of restricting her activities. Long journeys were to be avoided, particularly between weeks ten and fourteen of the pregnancy and short journeys to be restricted to good roads. Moderation was the key in daily life; 'no dancing, no jumping no running'. With regard to marital relations, the Duke was to be told '*not to hurry you about too much*' and Dorothy was advised to 'endeavour to keep your mind quite composed'. Lucy Torrington acknowledged that this would mean a change of lifestyle for a lively eighteen year-old, who was inclined to 'jumping in and out of a carriage' and 'generally running instead of walking', although she was offered the consolation that Dr Ford hoped that 'you will not understand that by keeping quiet that you are never to go out & to sit in your chair or lie on a couch all day.'⁵² Dorothy was compliant. She remained at Welbeck until the perceived danger of the first trimester passed, then transferred to London, where she remained until the birth. She assured her husband 'I will take all possible care of myself in my power, as I think it my duty both to you & *the little monster*'.⁵³ She continued to seek and heed the advice of the medical profession throughout her pregnancy even though the advice she received restricted her movements at every stage.⁵⁴

⁵¹ NUMD PwG 63, Lucy, Viscountess Torrington to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 Nov. 1767.

⁵² NUMD PwG 62, Lucy, Viscountess Torrington to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland 9 Nov. 1767. Viscountess Torrington, out of 'a hearty zeal for you' had taken it upon herself to consult Dr. Ford on the Duchess' behalf, describing the Duchess' age, health and situation, but preserving her anonymity. The Duke also consulted a Dr Partridge and conveyed similar, though less detailed advice to his wife; PwF 10547, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 23 Nov. 1767. The advice that was given was not unusual; see Lewis, *Family way*, pp 122-51.

⁵³ NUMD PwF 10550, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7 Mar. 1768.

⁵⁴ NUMD PwF 10563-5, 10568, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 4, 6, 9 & 22 April 1768.

Most healthy pregnant women continued life as normal, using their own common sense to restrict their activities when they felt it was prudent. Mary Foljambe was often reported to be feeling 'indifferent' during the first few months of her fourth and fifth pregnancies. Her indisposition delayed her letter writing and preventing her attending a ball at Sandbeck in the former, and threatened a visit to her father in the latter.⁵⁵ However, in the later stages of pregnancy, despite a cold, Mary went to Doncaster Races. Foljambe reported that his wife 'seems not to have suffered for her civility. She went to the Rooms but not the stand the second & third night & went to bed early.' Later the same month Foljambe suggested a visit to Shireoaks; 'I don't think such a jaunt will hurt Mary at all.' By the eighth month of pregnancy he observed that 'My dear Mary still keeps up & is on the whole pretty well but her spirits are not always so good as I could wish'.⁵⁶ Lady Louisa Hartley was less robust. Sent by her doctor to the countryside, she spent the final month of her sixth and final pregnancy; 'a poor creature...lying on the sofa'.⁵⁷

After giving birth, women were advised to observe a period of 'confinement'.⁵⁸

There is little to suggest that women rejected this opportunity to rest and recover.

Anne Warde gave birth to a son on 19 March 1780, by 1 April she was said to be 'recovering'; three days later she left her bedroom for the first time. Four weeks

⁵⁵ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/5, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 8 Dec. 1780, Francis Foljambe to same, 29 Dec. 1780; 11/1/3, same to same, 18, 23 June, 25 July 1784.

⁵⁶ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/3, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 2, 29 Oct., 27 Dec. 1784.

⁵⁷ NAO DDSR 221/50, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 25 July 1805.

⁵⁸ For contemporary advice on confinement see Anon., *The ladies dispensatory: or every woman her own physician* (1770), pp. 256-7. A. Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation' in V.A. Fildes (ed), *Women as mothers in pre-industrial England: essays in memory of Dorothy McClaren* (1990), pp. 75-6; Lewis, *Family way*, pp. 193-201.

after the birth she had still not ventured outside, but at six weeks she marked her emergence from confinement by taking up her pen again and writing to Hewett.⁵⁹

For those in the higher echelons of the aristocracy the ceremonies to be observed could be more formal. Ann Granville reported that four weeks to the day after the birth of her second daughter, Harriet, in February 1737, Margaret Duchess of Portland was 'happily released from the government of nurses, caudle, &c.; and has gone through her great ceremonies. She saw the Queen on Monday, the Princess on Tuesday, and *tout le monde* Wednesday and Thursday;' After this ritual return to the world, the Duchess was once again free to be seen 'abroad'.⁶⁰

While women submitted to the rituals, they did not necessarily enjoy them.

Arabella Thornhagh, expressed some impatience with tradition; 'I hope I have had your and all good peoples pitty [sic] during my confinement this hot weather, which tho' I have been long tired of is hardly over...'.⁶¹

Although the medical profession sent a clear message to mothers that breastfeeding was a 'duty incumbent on them' and moralists blustered that 'nothing but a strange perversion of human nature could first deprive children of their mother's milk', there is no evidence to suggest that any of the women in this study breast-fed their own children.⁶² The Saviles engaged a wet-nurse for their son George in

⁵⁹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 1, 4, 15 April 1780. Mrs Anne Warde to same, 25 April 1780.

⁶⁰ Llanover, *Delany* Vol. 1, Series 1, pp. 596-7. In *Idem.*, *Mrs Delany*, Vol. 2, Series 1, p. 299, Mrs Delany observed, referring to the Duchess' fifth lying-in in 1744, that 'she is so good and careful as never to go out until the fifth week.'

⁶¹ NAO DDSR 221/16, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, [undated but noted as received 10 July 1745]. The child was born 9 June 1745.

⁶² Anon., *Ladies dispensatory*, p. vii; Anon., *Letters to married women* (1767), p. 62. This is consistent with the findings of other studies, which have suggested that although there may have been a gradual increase in the incidence of maternal breast feeding, a diversity of practice prevailed throughout the eighteenth century. See Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 107-110; J. E. Mechling, 'Advice to historians on advice to mothers', *Journal of Social History*, 9 (1984); V. Fildes, *Breasts, bottles and babies: a history of infant feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986).

1726, structuring her pay and perks to encourage her to remain in their service 'so long as she is approved of'.⁶³ The Portland correspondence of the 1760s suggests an awareness of contemporary advice literature. Having discussed the matter with another pregnant woman, Dorothy informed her husband;

Mr Howard *is good* & will let her suckle her own child, however I am perfectly satisfied & do not desire you to let me do the same as I have another scheme which will content me as well & which you will not have any objection to....⁶⁴

The approved alternative was unlikely to have been anything other than a wet-nurse, as dry-nursing, the only other viable option, had been used to disastrous effect by the Duke's sister, Lady Harriet Grey, a few months earlier. The Duke told his wife that his sister had 'lost her child as is supposed (but not to be said) by wanting to bring it up by hand.'⁶⁵

The wet-nurse and nursery maid were a vital part of the team of support staff who could facilitate the return of an elite mother to activities outside the home. In most families the employment of nursery staff was so usual as to be beyond mention.⁶⁶

Mary Foljambe told her father that she had decided her two-month old daughter Mary was too young to be taken to Rufford for Savile's Christmas house-party, a two-week affair. She and her husband were encouraged by 'good accounts from

⁶³ DDSR 212/27/1, Memorandum regarding the appointment of a wet-nurse by Sir George and Lady Savile, 24 July 1726.

⁶⁴ NUMD PwF10567, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 18 April 1768.

⁶⁵ NUMD PwF 10547, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 23 Nov. 1767.

⁶⁶ For example, no mention was made in family correspondence of the arrangements for the care of the children of Sir George and Lady Savile. However, DDSR 212/27/2, Memorandum, 7 Feb. 1727 provides evidence of the employment of one Penelope Messenger 'to take care of ye children &c.' As with the earlier arrangement for a wet-nurse (see above), the Saviles structured her wages to encourage long service.

home of little Mary'.⁶⁷ Similarly, Mary's cousins, the Wardes of Hooton Pagnell, embarked on a tour of southern seaside towns and spas, in an attempt to restore Anne Warde to good health. Arrangements for childcare were not mentioned in the correspondence but they left their daughter and ten-week old son at home, and were absent for three months.⁶⁸

The freedom that a reliable nursery maid could offer the mother of young children was occasionally stated more clearly. Sophia Ottey assured Lady Mary Foljambe that although she was flattered by the latter's desire to see her daughters; 'I can leave them *all* under the care of the Nursery Maid very safely'.⁶⁹ Sophia's mother was even more explicit; 'notwithstanding your very kind wish to see the little girls ... we thought we should be more at liberty without them'.⁷⁰

Lack of assistance from servants made the burdens of motherhood heavy. Lady Louisa Hartley, with three children under five dreaded the departure of her sister Sophia;

I am seriously distressed without now you know even one *nursery* servant – after S[ophia] goes I shall feel it still more as my little H[enry] is rather too heavy for me to nurse & carry about much...⁷¹

When mothers had the support staff they needed to ensure adequate care of their children there is every indication that they were perfectly willing to observe Lord Halifax's injunction that; 'You may love your children without living in the

⁶⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Lady Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 9 Jan. 1779.

⁶⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Anne Warde to John Hewett, 10 Dec. 1780.

⁶⁹ NAO DDSR 221/15, Sophia Ottey to Lady Mary Foljambe, 1 Nov. 1811.

⁷⁰ NAO DDSR 221/49, S. Haggitt to Lady Mary Foljambe, 1 Sept. [no year].

⁷¹ NAO DDSR 221/58, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 4 August [context suggests 1803].

nursery...'.⁷² This arrangement allowed them the freedom to leave the home if they wished, unencumbered by infants, and also gave them the freedom to pursue other interests within the home. Mrs Delaney referred to the practice in the Portland household of the children appearing at set times to play with their parents and favoured guests;

I must drink coffee at five, and play with the little jewels – it is the ceremony of the house...half an hour after six we are in the dressing room ...then comes Lady Elizabeth., Lady Harriet, and the noble Marquis; after half an hour's jumping they are dismissed...⁷³

As children emerged from the nursery some mothers took an active part in their education.⁷⁴ Mary Foljambe prepared thoroughly for her role as educator by reading John Locke's *Thoughts on the education of children*, and taught her son the alphabet. Her husband reported:

Jack desires his mama to hear his lesson every morning & can now say all his letters. Mary has made him a little book with a letter on each page & drawn two or three figures whose names begin with the letter above them.....Mary & I are studying *Mr Locke* he is a sensible old gentlemen and I hope will assist us in making our little fellow a comfort to ourselves and a worthy member of society.⁷⁵

Margaret, Duchess of Portland took the initiative in the employment of the distinguished scholar Elizabeth Elstob to teach her young children. As they grew she continued to watch carefully over their education.⁷⁶ Mrs Elstob reported that the Duchess took up a 'great deal' of her teenage daughters' time, along with their masters and was observed by Mrs Delaney at Bulstrode, 'encircled by her

⁷² Halifax *Advice*, p. 290.

⁷³ Llanover, *Delany*, Vol. 2, Series 1 p. 21; see also Idem. *Delany*, Vol. 1, Series 1, p. 574.

⁷⁴ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 113-14.

⁷⁵ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 19 Sept. 1779.

⁷⁶ Llanover, *Mrs Delany*, Vol.2, Series 1, pp. 14-15, 18.

daughters, all at different works'.⁷⁷ The poet Edward Young congratulated the Duchess on her application to maternal duty when she took over the girl's education entirely during the illness of Mrs Elstob in 1740.⁷⁸ She did not limit her concern to the upbringing of her daughters. Margaret's correspondence with her son William, at Westminster school, underlined her keen interest in his moral development.⁷⁹ Newsy letters sent from Bulstrode were peppered with maternal advice; 'I need not tell you it is alone a virtuous conduct that will gain you the approbation of the World & that great parts & learning are of little account in comparison of sobriety & virtue.'⁸⁰ However, this maternal interest in education was a matter of choice rather than necessity and was in addition to the formal tuition that was provided by paid tutors and governesses.

Necessity offered less fortunate mothers little choice; educating a growing family could be a full-time occupation for the unassisted mother. Lady Louisa Hartley, without a governess or a helpful spinster sister to assist her, complained that she had, 'for above a week to attend so entirely to all my five dear children to hear their lessons &c. that I was fully engaged & rather knocked up with so doing...'.⁸¹ Sophia Ottey and her spinster sister Rose Haggitt took on this role between them in the winter of 1810, teaching Sophia's children and two nieces, '& as you know

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 215 & 237.

⁷⁸ HMC Calendar of the Manuscripts Of the Marqis of Bath preserved at Longleat, Wiltshire. Vol. I (1904), E Young to The Duchess of Portland, 20 Dec 1740.

⁷⁹ NUMD PwF 717-34, Letters of Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, Marquess of Titchfield, 1748-53. It appears that a letter was sent weekly when the rest of the family was resident at Bulstrode. It seems likely that when in London contact was maintained in person.

⁸⁰ NUMD PwF 738, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, Marquess of Titchfield, [undated, catalogue suggests 1751-2]; see also PwF 717, same to same, 12 June 1748; PwF 721, same to same, 31 July 1748; PwF 728, same to same, 1749; PwF 735, same to same, 26 July 1751.

⁸¹ NAO DDSR 221/13, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 9 Aug. 1809.

we perform the office of *Governess* ourselves, you will believe our time is pretty well filled up.’⁸²

The desire to delegate childcare to servants should not be attributed to lack of interest in or concern for children. Mothers who happily left healthy children at home to pursue their own enjoyment did not hesitate to cancel their plans at the first sign of childhood illness. Foljambe reported that

Many of our good friends are at Rufford & I went there on Tuesday, Mary intending to follow with the children the next day but some little cold they had got increasing she thought it most prudent to stay at home two or three days ...⁸³

When the complaint was more serious parents gave no thought to anything but ensuring the recovery of the child. As Anne Warde wrote in the aftermath of her daughter’s reaction to a smallpox inoculation; ‘We have been in such a state of distress and anxiety about our precious Babe that we were unfit for employment’.⁸⁴ It took Marianne a year to recover fully. Both parents took her to York to try bathing there, and then her mother alone took her to Scarborough.⁸⁵ When all the Portland children, in their teens, contracted scarlet fever, Mrs Delany, who was staying with the family at the time, described the distress of the family and the Duchess’ refusal to see anyone but her closest friends. When in 1756 her youngest daughter Margaret, aged fifteen, died of the fever, the Duchess received no visitors, did not leave the house for over a month and did not return to Court until the end of the year.⁸⁶

⁸² NAO DDSR 221/23 Rose Haggitt to Lady Mary Foljambe, 30 Jan. 1810.

⁸³ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 6 Jan. 1780.

⁸⁴ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Anne Warde to John Hewett, 29 March 1779.

⁸⁵ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, St. Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 17 & 30 April, 8 Aug. 1779.

⁸⁶ Llanover, *Mrs Delany*, Vol. 3, Series 1, pp. 420-426, 455.

Whilst it is clear that the combined physical, emotional and practical demand of maternity ensured that 'once embarked upon a maternal course, married women had only limited time and creative energy to invest in anything beyond household and kin', the extent of a woman's total immersion in motherhood was variable.⁸⁷

Those who enjoyed good health and adequate wealth could choose to pursue interests beyond maternity without being accused of neglecting their children.

Those with poor health or few servants found it more difficult to free themselves from the obligations of care imposed by motherhood and their choice was more limited.

Elite women made little mention in their correspondence of their personal contribution to household management. When a comment was passed it was more often than not of a negative nature; the lack of a servant, a shortage of a particular foodstuff or a failure to finish a decorating job, rather than a description of a job well done. The view of contemporaries and of modern historians was, and is, that as far as household management was concerned 'its most skilful exponents self-consciously expunged any impression of laborious attention.'⁸⁸ Eighteenth-century complaints about the lack of attention paid to housekeeping by the wealthy elite were many; 'neither wealth nor greatness'⁸⁹ nor 'any extent of fortune'⁹⁰ could excuse neglect of 'the province allocated to your sex'.⁹¹ At the same time a manual on the education of children, which identified a separate kind

⁸⁷ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 115.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 131.

⁸⁹ W. Wilkes, *A letter of genteel and moral advice to a young lady* (8th edition, 1766), p. 132.

⁹⁰ J. Gregory, *A father's legacy to his daughters* (1774), p. 52

⁹¹ Marquess of Halifax, *The ladies new year gift: or advice to a daughter* (1688) in J.P. Kenyon (ed.), *Halifax: complete works* (1969), p. 278. See also Lady Sarah Pennington, *An unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughters; in a letter to Miss Pennington* (1761), pp. 28-42.

of education for children of every social rank, made no mention of the need for the daughters of the aristocracy and gentry to acquire household skills.⁹² Fragments of information that can be gleaned from correspondence, suggest that elite women did not altogether eschew household responsibilities; the management of servants, concern with the maintenance and appearance of the domestic interior and food, all claimed female attention.

The extent to which women became involved in the recruitment and management of servants varied according to the size of household. Where, as in the case of the Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, a staff of forty or more were employed, much of the business of recruitment and management of staff was delegated to the steward or housekeeper.⁹³ Most of the Duchess' interest was focused on those who served her personally. Those who were satisfactory caused little comment; those who did not please were dismissed. Her man-servant Mr Dalton, 'much too dull of comprehension for my patience', was to be passed to her husband as soon as a more pleasing and useful replacement could be found.⁹⁴ She showed no compunction in dismissing her groom when she was prevented from riding by pregnancy 'I shall have no further occasion for him & as I do not think him a *treasure* he may be parted with.'⁹⁵ She did show some interest in the welfare of other household servants, particularly housemaids, intervening to prevent what she perceived as the ill-treatment of a young girl by another member of staff and

⁹² J. Nelson, *Essays on the governance of children* (1753); for the education of girls of the 'First Quality' and 'Second Rank', see pp.315-366; the 'management of a House' is not mentioned until the education of daughters of 'trade and commerce' is discussed, pp.367-8.

⁹³ NUMD PwF 9816, wages paid by the Duke of Portland Feb. 1767. This retinue was modest by mid-eighteenth century aristocratic standards. See Hecht, *Domestic servant*, pp. 5-6.

⁹⁴ NUMD PwF 10584, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 27 May 1769.

⁹⁵ NUMD PwF 10650, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 28 March 1774.

ensuring good nursing and care for another that was ill.⁹⁶ Even in somewhat smaller households, with between ten and fifteen staff, a reliable housekeeper could shoulder much of the responsibility for the recruitment and management of staff. Lady Leeds and Lady Mary Foljambe distanced themselves from a routine enquiry about a housemaid's reference, leaving the matter to their respective housekeepers, and when Lady Sophia Lumley sought help in finding a housemaid she approached Lady Mary's housekeeper, Mrs Porter directly, rather than consulting her sister.⁹⁷

In the smallest elite households, with four or five servants, the business of recruiting and maintaining staff, was the responsibility of the mistress. As one of Lady Mary Foljambe's correspondents commented; 'procuring servants ... I find it a most difficult thing.'⁹⁸ Women sought references for those they employed but, as Gertrude Savile complained, it was often the case that; 'Charicters signify nothing at all'⁹⁹. Lady Louisa Hartley, recently arrived in South Africa was horrified to discover that her cook-housekeeper, hired in England, had a 'terrible propensity' for drink, forcing dismissal.¹⁰⁰ Lady Sophia Lumley dismissed her niece's maid on discovering her secret marriage and pregnancy.¹⁰¹ The most detailed record of a mistress's problems with servants is found in Gertrude Savile's diaries. She attempted to retain a household of four, a man-servant, a cook, a housemaid and a personal maid. Between 1741 and 1745, to fill these four

⁹⁶ NUMD PwF 10644, 10688-94 Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 27 July 1773, 5-29 Aug. 1777.

⁹⁷ NAO DDSR 221/13, Lady Leeds to Lady Mary Foljambe, 13 Sept. 1815; 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Mrs Porter, 12 Nov. 1812.

⁹⁸ NAO DDSR 221/13, Sophie Ottey to Lady Mary Foljambe 15 Oct. 1806.

⁹⁹ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 313

¹⁰⁰ NAO DDSR 221/19, Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe., 7 Oct. 1807.

¹⁰¹ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Mrs Porter, 12 Nov. 1812.

positions she employed twenty-two individuals, three men and nineteen women.¹⁰² The personal failings of those that were dismissed as unsatisfactory were detailed in full in her diary 'worthless, insignificant, lazy, lying, rude and saucy' or 'the vilest hussey; impudent Whore, Drunkard, Lyer Slutt and I believe, Thief'. Those that chose to leave were ungrateful wretches 'spoil'd with too much Incouragement and Liberty' or 'good for nothing'.¹⁰³ Gertrude devoted considerable time, emotion and energy to servant management and was constantly disappointed by the poor returns she received from 'careless, idle, hard-hearted Servants'.¹⁰⁴

An area of broad responsibility shared by all women who headed households was food. There is no suggestion in any of the correspondence that any of the women studied here was involved in the preparation of food, but it seems most women did take an active part in overseeing the provisioning of the household. For some this was a responsibility managed at arm's length, the mistress demonstrating an awareness of what was required by the household, but leaving the procurement to servants. Dorothy, Duchess of Portland was solicitous about ensuring that her husband's dietary needs should be catered for. She assured him that in preparation for his joining the family she had ordered a supply of coffee and seltzer water.¹⁰⁵

A couple of weeks later she was alarmed to hear that there was 'neither fish nor

¹⁰² Saville, 'Secret Comment', pp. 243-65. Although Gertrude found this high turnover insufferable, it was not unusual. For example see Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 136-7, where an analysis of Elizabeth Shackleton's diary reveals similar problems; fourteen women filled five full-time positions in the Alkincoats household in 1772.

¹⁰³ Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 244, 250.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.325. Again comparison with Elizabeth Shackleton underlines the typicality of Gertrude's sense of betrayal: see Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 145-6. Between 1727 and 1730 Gertrude felt angry enough about the behaviour of her servants to devote a section of her annual summing up of each year's events to the subject of 'various plagues in servants'. See Saville 'Secret comment', pp. 88-9, 154-5, 195-6, 229-30.

vegetables to be got here now' and advised her husband not to join them as lack of these commodities would mean that 'upon the regimen you now are, you literally will be starved.'¹⁰⁶ Lady Louisa Hartley demonstrated a similar sense of responsibility in ensuring that her family was fed, although her methods of obtaining food were different. She made frequent requests for rabbit and chicken to be sent by her family from their country estates, usually citing her own or her children's illness in justification.¹⁰⁷ Her concerns about food were heightened as she prepared to take her family on a long sea voyage to settle in the Cape. Anticipating the family's needs in the coming year, she wrote to her sister; 'I shall thank you very much the next summer to get made for us.... About a d[o]z[e]n pots of red currant jelly & 3 or 4 of black & of raspberry jamthere are no currants at the Cape.'¹⁰⁸ Lady Mary attempted to improve her sister's voyage by sending a generous supply of fruit pies, potted meats and pickles from the pantry at Osberton.¹⁰⁹ Once established in Stellenbosch, Louisa wrote home in wonder at the comparative price of food and other essentials;

The price of some things here are *enormous*, a chaldron of coals £34, a Turkey *a Guinea*. Others & some indeed of the necessary articles are as cheap. Beef & Mutton 2d and 4d a lb...

Attached to this letter was a list of goods that she needed to be sent from England including 44 dozen bottles of Harrogate mineral water and two pounds of sugar plums, 'these must be very carefully packed so as not to rub against each other.'¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ NUMD PwF 10699, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 28 Sept. 1778.

¹⁰⁶ NUMD PwF 10702-3, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 13 Oct. 1778.

¹⁰⁷ See for example, NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Louisa Hartley to Francis Foljambe, 7 March 1806; 221/23 same to Lady Mary Foljambe, 11 March 1806; 221/10, same to same, 22 Feb. 1811.

¹⁰⁸ NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 10 Feb 1807.

¹⁰⁹ NAO DDSR 221/20, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 21 & 25 Feb, 1807.

¹¹⁰ NAO DDSR 221/19, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 30 May 1807

The oversight of purchasing by servants was largely an exercise in book-keeping. The kitchen account books of Lady Mary Foljambe, in an unknown hand, recorded the provisions used in the Aldwark household, both those brought in from the farm and those purchased from other suppliers. Lady Mary's role in this purchasing extended no further than checking the books on a four-weekly basis, providing cash for the payment of outstanding bills and initialling the account book to show that her scrutiny was complete.¹¹¹ The purchase of luxury food items was sometimes carried out by the mistress of the house. In addition to the regular entries for the payment of 'kitchen bills' Lady Mary Foljambe occasionally recorded the purchase of fresh fruit in her personal account book, suggesting that she had shopped for them herself.¹¹² Gertrude Savile mentioned a shopping trip where she and her mother went 'Bying fruit, Anchovies, Olives,' and on several occasions she recorded trips to Twinings in the Strand for tea, coffee and snuff or to Cosen's the grocer for tea, chocolate or sugar.¹¹³ The extent of her engagement with this domestic responsibility is evident in her entry for 6 November 1729;

Bought some sugar of Mr Cosen's. Without designing it, affronted him with telling him his weight of late has not been quite so good as usual that I believe I must never bye of him more.¹¹⁴

After the death of her mother Gertrude set up her own household and continued to buy these luxury goods herself, although her account books show that her servants received a weekly amount for other purchases under the heading of 'house'.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ NAO DDSR 215/42, Lady Mary Foljambe's kitchen account books.

¹¹² NAO DDSR 212/43, Lady Mary Foljambe's personal account books 1789-1801.

¹¹³ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 56; see also pp. 70, 74 for other trips where fruits were purchased and trips to the grocers are noted on pp. 46, 69, 74, 100, 136, 176 & 193.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Women's interest and involvement in their domestic environment is evident.

Barbara Savile's detailed instruction to her daughter Gertrude for the cleaning of a bed and bedroom in their London home run to two closely written pages.¹¹⁶

When the Savile's undertook the redecoration of their London house in 1727, Gertrude Savile noted in her diary that she had tidied her own 'Closett', that she had ordered the maid to scour the wainscote of the dining room; 'We are to be very clean and fine', and described her new bed-hangings with delight; "'Tis a red Varrantine lin'd with strip'd red and white Teapee'.¹¹⁷ When her brother and his family took lodgings in London for the season, Gertrude made several trips to ensure that the beds were aired in readiness for their arrival.¹¹⁸ Even Margaret, Duchess of Portland, was to be found tidying cupboards, albeit those containing precious items. Mrs Delany wrote of a morning spent helping her friend to 'reinstat all her fine china and japan in her cabinets'.¹¹⁹ Sophia Lumley wrote of her busy life in charge of her new household 'I have really been so busyunpacking about 50 boxes &c. & putting all things in order & settling bills,... in short we have all been in such a bustle, I have scarce sat down but at meals.'¹²⁰

Another domestic responsibility was the making of clothing. For Gertrude Savile cutting and making shifts, pockets, suits of night clothes, and head cloths were

¹¹⁵ M. Penn, (ed.), 'Account books of Gertrude Savile, 1736-58', *Thoroton Society Record Series*, XXIV (Nottingham, 1967), *passim*.

¹¹⁶ NAO DDSR 221/89, Barbara Savile to Gertrude Savile, 11 May 1723.

¹¹⁷ Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 61, 58.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹⁹ Llanover, *Mrs Delany*, Vol. III, p. 476. See also, *Ibid.*, pp. 2 & 23, which demonstrate that Mrs Delany was herself an assiduous housekeeper. Her letters from Ireland in 1751 refer to her pleasure in 'dusting and airing all the books in the library', and later she complained that her visitors 'did not leave me so much leisure for my domestic affairs as necessary what with breakfasts and *instructing and helping* Smith [the housekeeper].'

¹²⁰ NAO DDSR 221/8, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 17 July 1813.

regular and unremarkable occurrences, noted without comment or complaint, as were making alterations to her own clothing, such as removing the edging from a dress or unpicking a gown in readiness for alterations.¹²¹ Less acceptable was the need to mend her own stockings, a chore which she clearly saw as menial; she complained that her maid Ellen was ‘good for so little. She can’t mend stockings so that I can wear them, nor indeed do anything elce [sic]. Mending stockings 2 hours, the second with Ellen.’¹²² Other women, although evidently taking responsibility for ensuring that clothing was provided, were more inclined to regard all plain sewing as a task for servants rather than themselves. Although Sophia Lumley thanked Rose Haggit for a shirt patterns she had sent, she was keen to ensure that any candidate for the position of maid in her household was able to ‘understand *cutting out & making frocks*’.¹²³

What also emerges from the correspondence is that household management was not an exclusively female concern.¹²⁴ William, 3rd Duke of Portland showed greater knowledge of household matters than his wife in the early days of their marriage. Dorothy was at a loss as to how to go about arranging the closure of a house on her departure and asked her husband for advice: ‘Pray send me word everything you would have me do here otherwise nothing can or will be done.’¹²⁵

The Duke replied in full and without comment;

I suppose you will give 5 guineas to Thomas Mr Collins head servant who used to market & do many things for you at Follifoot

¹²¹ Saville, ‘Secret comment’, pp. 41-87 passim.

¹²² Ibid., p. 45.

¹²³ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 30 Dec. [no year]; 221/8, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, [postmark 1813]; 221/9, same to Mrs Porter, 12 Nov. 1812.

¹²⁴ See Shoemaker, *Gender*, pp. 117-120.

¹²⁵ NUMD PwF 10593, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 18 Sept. 1769.

and in proportion to the other servants ... you will have the earthenware that went from hence, and the utensils that were bought for our use there as you have enough of the first kind her & the latter certainly cannot be wanted that you will order the dimensions of the new room to be taken & see the papers that Mr Duncombe sent Collins to fit it up with... you will order the whole house to be fully cleaned after you have left it.¹²⁶

Dorothy continued to seek her husband's approval for her actions in managing servants. From her early decision to pass her rather stupid servant to her husband 'I hope you will not disapprove'; via her rather nervous 'I hope you will not take it amiss' in reference to her decision to reprimand an upper servant for the treatment of a lower; to her anxious 'I hope I have not ventured to do more than you will think right' in dismissing the cook, Dorothy at least gave the appearance of deferring to her husband on household matters.¹²⁷

The division of domestic responsibilities was also fudged in the Foljambe household. Francis consulted his wife on the hiring of a gardener, agreeing with her that one candidate was too bad-tempered to be considered.¹²⁸ He was also happy to assist his wife in finding a maid, promising to 'observe your directions about the abigail.'¹²⁹ When a dairy maid was required Foljambe consulted with his female friends in Scarborough on the matter of identifying a suitable candidate and then consulted his wife on the matter of wages and other duties.¹³⁰ He also took an active interest in the domestic interior. When absent from home in 1814 his first letter announced that he had ordered the red and scarlet carpets 'although

¹²⁶ NUMD PwF 10594, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 21 Sept. 1769.

¹²⁷ NUMD PwF 10584, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 27 May 1769; 10644, same to same, 27 July 1773; 10725, same to same, 1 March 1780.

¹²⁸ NAO DDSR 221/18, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 24 Aug. 1801.

¹²⁹ NAO DDSR 221/20, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 8 Sept. 1810.

¹³⁰ NAO DDSR 221/21, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 3, 5, 7 Oct. 1814.

they seemed very dear'.¹³¹ A couple of weeks later he raised the matter of furnishing the library; a discussion of the positioning of the clocks therein was then raised in four consecutive letters.¹³² His involvement was acknowledged by their housekeeper, Mrs Porter, who wrote confidently to Foljambe asking for instructions about redecoration, the ordering of candles and wine and the repair of tableware. Her tone suggests that she found her mistress indifferent to her problems; 'I judge Lady Mary has not found it convenient to send down one of the maids as one has not yet arrived ...'.¹³³

This chapter has explored domesticity and found that the respective roles of wife, mother and housekeeper had the potential to be either all-engrossing or of little consequence in the day-to-day lives of elite women throughout the eighteenth century. No woman, single or married, was entirely free of domestic responsibilities. The extent to which these took over her life, impinging upon her freedom to pursue other interests, was variable. In theory, married women who were mothers had the heaviest burden of responsibility, required to fulfil the roles of wife, mother and housekeeper. At the other end of the scale was the spinster who had only to contend with the business of keeping house. However, the main determinant of the combined weight of the domestic burden was not marital status; emotion, wealth and personal choice and character, all had a part to play.

¹³¹ NAO DDSR 221/21, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 31 Aug. 1814. Foljambe was not the only man to show an interest in carpets. See also Davidoff & Hall, *Family fortunes*, p. 387, who cite examples of nineteenth-century middle-class male interest in interior furnishing.

¹³² NAO DDSR 221/21, Francis Foljambe to Lady Mary Foljambe, 23, 26, 27, 29 Sept. 1814.

¹³³ NAO DDSR 221/49, G. Porter to Frances Foljambe, 14 Aug. 1812.

The demands of marriage sat lightly on the shoulders of this particular group of women. Love, respect and companionship were given and received without question, underpinned by mutual fidelity and loyalty. Wives enjoyed their husband's company. Married couples read together, hunted together, entertained together, walked and rode together. When husbands went away, whether to attend to business or pleasure, their absence was noted and regretted by their wives, as is repeated often in their correspondence and symbolised by the gifts that were sent as keepsakes and reminders of home. The absence of a husband was more burdensome to a wife than his presence. However, these marital partnerships, although companionate in nature, were not equal. Women perceived themselves as owing their husbands a duty of respect, obedience and loyalty within marriages that retained a patriarchal balance of power. The weight of this duty was leavened by emotional ties.

Motherhood was demanding of emotion, time and energy. Children were a source of pleasure and of anxiety; their health, welfare and education were all demanding of a mother's attention. The extent to which the emotional investment women made in their children was accompanied by maternal toil was less consistent. Those who could afford to do so made use of servants to perform many potentially time-consuming tasks. Feeding, routine care and attention, education, all could quite adequately be provided by others, under parental direction, and women who had the means to do so chose this option. Those who were financially less fortunate had fewer choices and their correspondence suggests a higher level of personal intervention in childcare and education. If servants could not be procured then the business of caring for children on a day-to-day basis fell to mothers,

albeit often with the assistance of a willing spinster sister. It cannot be denied that this responsibility was both stressful and time-consuming. The difference between the hands-on and the hands-off mother was the amount of time that they spent in the company of their children.

The time-consuming nature of household management was also subject to variation. Again the factor determining the degree of engagement with the minutiae of running the household seems to be money. If servants could be paid for to do the work, and upper servants could be found to manage that process, then there was little need for elite women to clean and cook. All women exercised a degree of control over their domestic environment, whether selecting a personal maid, ordering the purchase of special items of food, or organising the china in the cabinets to best effect. Again the difference between the wealthiest and the less wealthy was the extent of engagement with the domestic activity – was the act of purchasing the food performed by the woman at the head of the household or by her servants? Most women were perfectly happy to organise a division of labour, choosing their own role and leaving the rest to servants. Some women also shared some elements of household management with willing husbands; Portland and Foljambe seemed content to ignore Halifax's suggestion that male involvement in household matters was 'in some degree indecent'¹³⁴

Women of the Nottinghamshire elite did not feel obliged to be domestic drudges merely because they were women. Status combined with wealth liberated women

¹³⁴ Halifax, *Advice*, p. 290.

from domestic drudgery and offered elite women a range of options. Many of those who had the choice were happy to reserve the use of energy in the domestic sphere for the fulfilment of emotional responsibilities to husband and children, leaving servants to manage servants, clean, cook, sew, and feed and educate children. This method of organising domestic activities did not make them bad wives, bad housekeepers or bad mothers, it merely freed women from the more menial aspects of gender-defined roles and enabled them to participate more fully in the public world of the elite. The way in which women chose to use this ability to enter the economic, political and social worlds of the elite will form the basis of the following three chapters.

Chapter Five

POLITICS

*'... this is a subject that Ladies ought not to interfere in therefore I will quit it...'*¹

Eighteenth-century elite women did not exercise formal political power. By custom they did not vote or hold public office nor did peeresses in their own right take a seat in the House of Lords.² As contemporary William Alexander put it;

In Britain we allow a woman to sway our sceptre, but by law and custom we debar her from every other government but that of her own family, as if there were not a public employment between that of superintending the kingdom, and the affairs of her own kitchen, which could be managed by the genius and capacity of woman.³

Yet political action was an essential function of the eighteenth-century elite and women were unquestionably part of this privileged sector of society. Until very recently, historians of politics and of the elite, have echoed Alexander. By the omission of women from their work, they have demonstrated their belief that, before the introduction of female suffrage, there was no significant political role for women below the level of the monarchy.⁴ The historiography of English

¹ NUMD PwF 4547, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 1 Aug. 1766.

² The basis of this exclusion is the subject of continuing debate. J. Greenberg, 'The legal status of the English woman in early eighteenth century common law and equity', *Studies in eighteenth century culture* (1975), 4, p. 172, states that under common law the public law position of all women was that 'there was no place for them, except on the throne'. However, K. von den Steinen, 'The discovery of women in eighteenth century political life' in B. Kanner (ed.), *The women of England from Anglo-Saxon times to the present* (Hamden, CT. 1979), pp. 240-241, argues that the position was less clear cut; contemporary legal argument suggests that while it was accepted practice was for women not to vote, their exclusion was based on 'social attitudes rather than upon clear legal prohibition'. More recently S. Mendelson and P. Crawford *Women in early modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), note a change in attitudes to women's eligibility for franchise during the course of the seventeenth century, culminating in an explicit denial of women's rights to vote in Parliamentary elections in George Petyt's *Lex Parliamentaria* (1690).

³ William Alexander, *The history of women* (1779), vol. 2, p. 336.

⁴ Whilst women's presence at political events has not been entirely ignored, the contribution they made has been categorised as trivial. See for example, F. O'Gorman, *Voters, patrons and parties:*

women laboured under similar assumptions; the widespread adoption of the separate spheres model has served only to reinforce the belief that women had no place in the active/public/political world of men before the franchise was achieved, but were constrained by gender to remain within the passive/private/domestic sphere that was 'woman'.⁵ Given the absence of women in the history of politics and the elite, and the absence of politics in the history of women, it is hardly surprising to discover that there is little in the way of grand theory to act as a starting point for discussion.⁶ The case for reassessing the role of women in eighteenth-century politics was made with conviction in 1979, but while considerable progress has been made over the past twenty years, as recently as 2001, the introduction to some of the latest research into women's political roles has suggested that much remains to be explored.⁷

This latter volume also highlighted the need for 'an ongoing "rethinking of the political"', acknowledging the influence of the work of Habermas in promoting a more inclusive definition of the 'public' political sphere, but urging that, on the evidence of the research presented, a further broadening of this definition would assist our understanding of the part played by women in political life. The

the unreformed electoral system of Hanoverian England, (Oxford, 1989), p. 93, where women's participation in electioneering is described as the 'public flaunting of fairly innocent sexual and sartorial behaviour'. J. Perkin, *Women and marriage in nineteenth century England* (Chicago, 1989), p. 308., stated that apart from 'the occasional aristocratic lady who traded kisses for votes, no woman had taken an open part in elections at all' until the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

⁵ K Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998) pp. 2-4.

⁶ See Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, p. 345; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp. 2-3.

⁷ Steinen, 'Discovery', *passim*; A. Vickery 'Introduction' in Idem., (ed.) *Women, privilege and power British politics 1750 to the present* (Stanford, California, 2001), pp. 1-55.

inclusion of informal networks of kin and friends, previously categorised as 'private' allows access to another layer of political life.⁸

A review of the literature on elite women and politics, from the early modern period to the nineteenth century, in search of common themes and points of debate, serves to provide a rough theoretical framework for the discussion of new material and reveals a variety of ways in which women could play a part in the informal political life of their day.⁹ Their findings suggest a long-standing continuity in elite women acting as hostesses¹⁰, messengers and confidantes,¹¹ wielders of patronage¹² and, from the late seventeenth century as party politics gained in importance, as participants in parliamentary electioneering¹³. Even where these informal roles were not pursued, evidence is offered of women showing awareness of and interest in politics, actively seeking political

⁸ Vickery, *Women, privilege*, p. 3. J. Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an enquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, MA, 1989).

⁹ For the early modern period, B.J. Harris, 'Women and politics in early Tudor England', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1992); Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, pp. 345-430. For the eighteenth century, Steinen, 'Discovery', pp.229-258; L. Colley, *Britons forging the nation 1707-1837* (1996 edn., first pub. 1992), pp. 251-96; A. Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (1998); idem., 'A politician's politician: Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and the Whig party', in H. Barker and E. Chalus (eds.), *Gender in eighteenth century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (1997); E. Chalus, '“That epidemical Madness”: women and electoral politics in the late eighteenth century', in Barker and Chalus (eds.), *Gender*; Idem., "“To serve my friends”: women and political patronage in Eighteenth-century England', in Vickery, *Women, privilege*; J. S. Lewis, '1784 and all that: aristocratic women and electoral politics' in Vickery, *Women, privilege*. For the nineteenth century, M. Pugh, *The Tories and the people, 1880-1935* (1985), particularly ch. 3; P. Jalland, *Women, marriage and politics 1860-1914* (Oxford, 1986); Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*.

¹⁰ Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', pp. 156-163; Steinen, 'Discovery' pp.235-7, 243; Foreman, *Georgiana*, p.402; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp. 153-178; Jalland, *Women, marriage and politics*, pp. 190-95; Pugh, *Tories*, p. 43.

¹¹ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp. 182-5; Jalland, *Women*, pp. 195-204;

¹² Harris, *Women* pp. 260-68; Steinen, 'Discovery', pp. 232-3; Chalus 'To serve my friends', pp. 57-88; Reynolds, *Aristocratic*, pp. 185-7.

¹³ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, p. 379; Steinen, 'Discovery', pp. 235-7, 243; Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', passim; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp.129-142. Pugh, *Tories*, p.53. Jalland *Women marriage and politics*, pp. 204-10; Harris, *Women and politics*, p. 268, also cites a sixteenth century example of women campaigning in an election for knights of the shire.

information through their correspondence networks and, with the expansion of print culture in the eighteenth century, through newspapers and pamphlets.¹⁴

Where the roles of elite women in politics have been explored, the concept of separate spheres has been rejected as a useful description of reality. Foreman suggested that 'interlocking spheres' would be more appropriate model for the eighteenth century, and Reynolds used the anthropological model of 'incorporation' as more accurately descriptive of women's active engagement in what were essentially familial interests in the nineteenth century.¹⁵ The familial and domestic focus of informal politics, located within the great households of the early modern period and the country-house parties, salons, dinner and tea-tables of later centuries, blurred the distinctions between the public and the private, the social and political. Informal political debate often took place within a domestic setting and the operation of political patronage was rooted in personal relationships. Women had legitimate access to these socio-political arenas and were often encouraged to take an active part in pursuing family political interests. These roles were adopted by women as a natural extension of their responsibilities as the elite wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of men who exercised formal political power.¹⁶

Whilst these studies point to the potential for elite women to become involved in politics, they also acknowledge that female political activity ran counter to the

¹⁴ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, pp. 377, 380; A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter; women's lives in Georgian England* (1998), pp. 259-60.

¹⁵ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 404; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, p. 155.

¹⁶ Harris, *Women and politics*, pp. 260, 281; Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', pp. 151-53, 178; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp. 154-6.

strictures of didactic literature. In respect of the late-eighteenth century, debate has centred around the flood of printed works emphasising the private and domestic roles of women, the exclusion of women from listening to Commons debates from 1778, and the furore that surrounded Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire's courting of the public in the 1784 Westminster elections. Early interpretations of these public reinforcements of the notion that women had no place in political life suggested that women accepted this strengthening of gender divisions and retreated into domesticity.¹⁷ More recently Colley has argued that this apparent change in public opinion was indicative of the instability of the boundaries of separate spheres. Moreover, the renewed emphasis on the private role of women was used by women to legitimise their right to influence men and consequently they enjoyed an expanded political role in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ The fierce criticism of the Duchess of Devonshire has also been reinterpreted. Rather than being seen as a blanket rejection of the public political role of women, it is now seen as indicative of Georgiana over-stretching the limits of acceptable female behaviour. Female canvassing had been and continued to be acceptable; what was at issue for contemporaries was that by consorting with social inferiors on the streets of Westminster she had behaved with impropriety.¹⁹ The latest reassessment of contemporary reaction to Georgiana's canvassing argues that the

¹⁷ B. Landes, *Women and the public sphere in the age of the French Revolution* (1988). Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 402-3 suggests that nineteenth-century attitudes were a reaction against the 'lassitudes' of the eighteenth century which were perceived as having given women too much access to politics and business.

¹⁸ Colley, *Britons*, pp. 252-62. A similar point is made about the conservative backlash that followed the social and political upheavals of the mid seventeenth century by Mendelson and Crawford, *Women*, pp. 248-9.

¹⁹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 157-9; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, p. 152; Chalus 'Epidemical madness', pp. 172-3.

level of abuse was commensurate with the level of success achieved by her unconventional and overly-democratic canvassing techniques.²⁰

The extent and continuity of female participation in eighteenth-century elite political culture remains open to question. Steinen argued that whilst women 'might all affect political conduct, few did so with any demonstrable consistency.'²¹ Chalus, on the other hand, acknowledged that aptitude and enthusiasm were not universally distributed, but suggested that political activity was more widespread; 'Most women took part in the politicised social activities that played such an important part in obtaining, consolidating and maintaining political control'. However, 'fewer women electioneered' and only a 'select and highly political group of women were the most extensively and effectively involved in electoral politics.'²² Furthermore, Chalus emphasised the effect of family attitudes in determining the extent of women's electoral involvement; 'Women who were members of families who expected them to play a part were usually active; women who came from families without this tradition, or families that opposed it, were seldom heavily involved.'²³

In short, the current state of research suggests that political activity of a kind was part and parcel of the lives of many of the female elite in the eighteenth century.

Although gender limited the extent of their activity, the responsibilities of rank

²⁰ Lewis, '1784 and all that', pp. 90-91.

²¹ Steinen, 'Discovery', p. 233.

²² Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', pp. 154-5. F. O'Gorman, 'Campaign rituals and ceremonies: the social meaning of elections in England 1780-1860', *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), provides a useful analysis of the range of social activities that were part of the election process.

²³ Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', p. 167.

required a level of participation that went beyond the precepts of moralists. The field is still wide open for discussion and many questions have not yet been asked, let alone answered. The discussion that follows will explore the extent of women's involvement in the political life of the elite by focusing on what a particular group of women did and said in relation to politics. Comparisons will be made between women in the aristocracy and in the local gentry, and between women in politically-active families and those in less involved families. Consideration also will be given to the impact of the female life-cycle on political activity. Attention will turn first to the extent of women's awareness of and interest in the political events of the day, second to women's activities as facilitators of the political process, and finally to women's part in the exercise of political patronage.

All the women in this study were related in some way to men who held public office, either serving locally as Justices of the Peace, sitting as Members of Parliament or occupying a seat in the House of Lords. This fact of elite life did not mean that all women took an active interest in the politics of the day or even demonstrated any awareness of current affairs. Mrs Anne Warde²⁴, wife of St Andrew Warde of Hooton Pagnell, wrote twenty-one letters to her husband's uncle, John Hewett, MP for Nottinghamshire, and mentioned nothing beyond personal and family news, a feat not achieved by any other of Hewett's regular correspondents, male or female.²⁵ Her husband, though holding no public office took a small part in the political life of Yorkshire in the early 1780s, yet his

²⁴ Anne Warde of Hooton Pagnell is hereafter referred to as Mrs Anne Warde to distinguish her from her sister-in-law, Miss Anne Warde of Nottingham

²⁵ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1& 3-5, Correspondence of John Hewett, *passim*.

activities drew no comment from his wife other the occasional complaint that life in the country was tedious when he was absent.²⁶ This complete lack of comment was unusual; most women had something to say about headline news, current affairs, and the politics of the day.

The street politics of the eighteenth-century mob were a matter for comment by female town dwellers. Gertrude Savile and the Frost and Gawthern women of Nottingham recorded their experiences of civil disturbances. Looking back on the 1722 elections Gertrude reflected that;

In Spring the whole nation in an uproar about choosing a new parliament...In London a Civell War seem'd to be actually begun....The Women turn'd Furies, screm'd till they swell'd their Faces and distorted them and looked like fiends... There were the same accounts from all other places, but they did not in all carry their Cause with their fury.²⁷

Thirty-one years later she noted with satisfaction that 'The Election for Westminster which always used to make such terrible disturbance ... was chosen quietly'²⁸ Elizabeth Frost witnessed the violence of the Nottingham mob at first hand in 1779. In a long letter to her step-daughter Abigail she described the framework knitters' protest as 'a very alarming outrage' which 'Your father and I stood to see all there [sic] proceedingsI assure you I was terrified'²⁹ Abigail Gawthern's diary contains several references to the upheavals of the

²⁶ For evidence of Warde's political activities see NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 26 Jan. 1780 and 24 March 1781; Mrs Anne Warde to same, 15 March 1781. Anne Warde's complaints are to be found at DDFJ 11/1/4, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 2 Nov. 1779; DDFJ 11/1/5, same to same, 21 Jan. 1781.

²⁷ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 27

²⁸ Ibid., p. 301.

²⁹ A. Henstock (ed.), 'The diary of Abigail Gawthern of Nottingham 1751-1810', *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire record series*, 33 (Nottingham, 1980), pp. 150-52.

1790s in Nottingham.³⁰ In June 1790 she noted that the town was busy with canvassing for the election, then described 'great rioting' on the eve of the election and 'terrible rioting' which followed the announcement of the results on election day, observing the ebb and flow of the mob through the market square while 'we drank tea at Mr Lowe's in the Market Place'.³¹ Polling week in 1796 was equally eventful, Abigail noting 'a great disturbance' in the market place, broken windows and the use of troops to clear the mob.³²

News of military activity often provoked comment from women, particularly when they, or their families, were under threat. Arabella Thornhagh and her aunt Gertrude exchanged news about the progress of the rebellion in the autumn of 1745. Arabella's letters convey the atmosphere in Nottinghamshire; the mounting fear, the rumours that spread through the countryside, and the mobilisation of troops.³³ Gertrude, meanwhile kept a detailed record in her diary of events from a national perspective, charting the progress of the rebellion, the successes and eventual failure of the rebels and details of the subsequent retribution and public trials.³⁴ Similarly, the arrival of John Paul Jones in Hull in 1779 provoked a round of female news-mongering in the Hewett correspondence. Letitia Thornhagh wrote from York with news of Jones' landing.³⁵ A few days later Anne Warde passed on the 'particular account' received from her sister, whose husband was a

³⁰ See J V Beckett, 'Nottinghamshire in the 1790s' *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 94 (1990).

³¹ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 52.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³³ NAO DDSR 212/16/12-17, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 25 & 30 Sept., 5, 12, 14, 19 Oct. 1745.

³⁴ A. Saville (ed.), 'Secret Comment: the diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757', *The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, vol. 41 (Nottingham, 1997), pp. 259-75.

³⁵ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 24 Sept. 1779.

colonel in the militia, although Anne acknowledged that it was probable that 'by the news papers you must have gained more information than I can give you'.³⁶

Abigail Gawthern's diary for the 1790s demonstrates her awareness of the movement of troops through Nottingham.³⁷

In many instances interest was personal since men in the family were directly involved. The events in Hull of 1779 caused Sir George Savile's militia to be sent to Lancaster, Colonel Harvey's to Liverpool and Tom Lumley, who had recently joined the Navy, wrote to tell his mother that he was watching Paul Jones from the mouth of the river.³⁸ William Lumley saw active service in South America and the Mediterranean; the news from abroad became all the more important to his family while he was involved and his letters, while reassuring with regard to his personal safety, also conveyed the horror of active service.³⁹

Even when there was no immediate personal interest, the headline news provoked comment, particularly if there was an identifiable hero or villain, or preferably both. The fall of Minorca in 1756 was a matter of interest to Lady Scarbrough and her Aunt Gertrude. Barbara wrote to her Aunt as the news of the defeat broke:

this loss of poor Menorca [sic] at last is more terrible than all the rest; & don't you pity poor brave Blakeney vastly? I long to have him rewarded in some signal manner; & am as impatient to have the Dishon:[ora]ble Mr. B[ying]: (for so he is if guilty) punish'd for the loss of a place wch. must be imputed to him if he cannot clear himself of his accusation;⁴⁰

³⁶ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 2 Oct. 1779.

³⁷ Henstock, 'Diary' pp. 50-80, *passim*.

³⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 18 Sept. 1779.

³⁹ For example, see NAO DDSR 221/19, William Lumley to Mary Lumley, 10 July 1807.

⁴⁰ NAO DDSR 221/90, Lady Barbara Scarbrough to Gertrude Savile, 31 July 1756.

The same day Gertrude recorded 'The fatall news' in her diary, expressing the popular belief in Blakeney as hero and Byng as villain of the piece, but suggesting that Byng's guilt might be shared with others; 'Those who sent [him] knew very well that he woud not, or must not fight.'⁴¹ She followed the matter through to its conclusion in March of the following year.⁴² Byng's execution, after being tried and found guilty, provoked her to comment:

However much he was to blame,..... there were others much more so, and he suffer'd to stop the universal clamour and to save much Cunniger Villains than himself.⁴³

Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, would like to have attended the trial of Admiral Keppel in Portsmouth in 1779, but felt duty bound to remain in London with her three feverish children. She followed the trial avidly through the letters of her brother and husband who were both on the scene, and peppered her letters to the Duke with questions and comment about the latest news of the trial.⁴⁴ At the very least, news of national heroes or villains tended to provoke predictable reactions from the patriotic elite woman. Sophia Lumley joined in the national mourning at the news of the death of Nelson⁴⁵, and subsequently rejoiced in the continuing victories against Napoleon; 'What glorious news all that has come lately: it really does appear all things are coming to a happy crisis & that Buonapartes reign is near a close...'⁴⁶

⁴¹ Saville, 'Secret comment' p. 317.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 321, 327.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-30.

⁴⁴ NUMD PwF 10708-21, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 2, 8, 9, 11, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28 Jan., 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 Feb. 1779.

⁴⁵ NAO DDSR 221/9, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 8 Nov. 1805.

⁴⁶ NAO DDSR 221/8, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 30 Nov. 1813.

The correspondence of women who spent time in London, while their fathers, brothers and husbands served in the House of Commons or Lords, demonstrated the extent to which elite women were exposed to political information. In the early 1760s Lady Henrietta Bentinck and Lady Elizabeth Weymouth, the former enjoying the Season in search of a husband and the latter holding the post of Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, both kept their brother William, the future 3rd Duke of Portland, supplied with details of the political climate in London, of new appointments at court and of changes in the ministry, whilst he enjoyed his European tour.⁴⁷ Similarly, those who lived in provincial towns could be well informed about local politics; Anne Warde's correspondence with her uncle Hewett shows that she was privy to the local political gossip and understood the political process:

we begin to talk of the approaching election and also pretend to foresee a contest for the town, ... Sr. William Howe is so generally disliked that it is imagined that some person will be solicited to oppose him but who is not yet known, and Major Cartwright with the promise of three hundred votes intends to offer himself, but I fancy with little probability of success as before; three hundred out of two & twenty is a small number & I should think it a rather discouraging circumstance.⁴⁸

In London and the provinces, women could witness many of the spectacles and speeches of eighteenth-century politics for themselves. Throughout the eighteenth century women visited Parliament. Gertrude Savile mentioned visiting

⁴⁷ NUMD PwF 8711-13, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7 Dec 1760, 7 Jan. and 17 Feb. 1761. PwF 4497-8, 4503-4, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 Dec. 1760, 1 Jan., 17 & 31 March 1761.

⁴⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 7 April 1780. A contemporary, Abigail Gawthern, confirmed that these predictions about the two candidates were correct; 'Sep 9. Mr D. Coke and Mr R. Smith were chaired members for the town; Sir W. Howe and Major Cartwright were candidates, but declined.', Henstock, 'Diary' p. 37.

'Parliament House' and the House of Lords twice in 1730.⁴⁹ Lady Henrietta

Bentinck gave a rather off-hand account of her visit to the House of Lords to hear the speeches of the King and the Speaker on the dissolution of Parliament:

I believe I have not wrote to you since I was at the House of Lords; indeed I was charmed with hearing the King speak... the crowd there was beyond description I am determined not to add to it again in haste; many Ladies that were there never sat down...

She was disappointed by the poor delivery of the Speaker, but conceded that

'People that are judges say his Speech was a very good one'⁵⁰ In 1787 Abigail

Gawthern and her husband, a Nottingham white-lead manufacturer, took a trip to London and included a visit to the House of Lords where they saw the king make a speech.⁵¹

The provinces offered a range of socio-political events in which women participated; race meetings, assemblies and street processions provided a pleasant backdrop to informal politics. Abigail Gawthern's diary describes in some detail the ceremonies surrounding her father's election to Nottingham council in 1776, which drew 'the greatest concourse of people ever seen in the Market place, all with blue ribbons in their hats, both men, women, and children'.⁵² The record suggests however, that at the age of seventeen, she was more impressed by the visual impact of the procession, than by the politics. In addition to enjoying political spectacles, women could also make a direct contribution to them and this contribution was not always a matter of public record. Anne Warde noted that in

⁴⁹ Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 200-1.

⁵⁰ NUMD PwF 4504, Henrietta Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 31 March 1761.

⁵¹ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 45.

⁵² Henstock, 'Diary', p. 31.

describing the celebrations in the town following the acquittal of Admiral Keppel, the newspaper account had:

omitted mentioning the part the Ladies bore in the appearance of joy on that occasion I must not forget to tell you that they were at the assembly the following evening, adorned with orange & purple ribbons in honour of the admiral.⁵³

In London, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland took responsibility for ensuring that the Portland and Cavendish residences should be lit with flambeau to celebrate the same event.⁵⁴ Similarly in 1801, Abigail Gawthorn noted that to celebrate peace with France, 'we illuminated at Nottingham.....our house and Mr Nevill's a candle in each pane of glass; was obliged to illuminate the old house in Pepper Street.'⁵⁵

When not personally involved, women could rely on newspapers and other printed material for political information. Gertrude Savile's account books show that she purchased newspapers throughout her life. The earliest surviving reckonings show that in 1736, whilst in London, she made regular weekly payments of 4^{1/2}d for 'News'. When, in April of that year, she went to Rufford she kept up the habit, paying the postage to have newspapers sent from London.⁵⁶ When visiting Bath for her health in the winter of 1746-7 she again notes weekly payments of 5-7d per week for 'reading news', supplementing this with the *Bath Journal*, costing 2d and also paid an additional 6d on 29 November for 'reading the Kings speech,

⁵³ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4 Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett 22 Sept. 1779.

⁵⁴ NUMD PwF 10721, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 9 Feb 1779.

⁵⁵ Henstock, 'Diary', pp. 89-90.

⁵⁶ M. Penn, ed., 'Account books of Gertrude Savile, 1736-58', *Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, vol. XXIV (Nottingham, 1967), pp.108-14. Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, p. 259, notes that Mrs Shackleton arranged to have 'a Dish of Politicks every Post-Day' sent from London to her Lancashire home.

Lords Address, & four Votes'⁵⁷ Her interest did not wane in later years; in London in the months before her death she paid 1s 6d per week for her regular dose of news.⁵⁸ Abigail Gawthern, in the London area with her step-mother in 1780 at the time of the Gordon riots, did not witness the events for herself but noted that when they left London for Nottingham on 13 June, 'all tolerably quiet; bought a book with the whole transaction of the riot, a very true account'.⁵⁹

Moreover, Gertrude's diary suggests that she did not merely passively consume what the newspapers had to tell her. In the winter of 1742 she was moved to express her outrage at the 'Epidemical Madness' that she observed in the 'instructions to Parliament men' that she read in the press;

the more they are comply'd with, the more outrageous they are.. The Ministry [is] changed to stop their clamour... War entered into to satisfy their outrageousness. Instructions to make new laws ansintirely to change new our Constitution...⁶⁰

Even more accessible than newsprint was the conversation of politically active men within the home. The extent to which political discussion could permeate home-based family activities is indicated by the fact that Sir George Savile felt it necessary to ban it from his festive house party in the winter of 1778. This family affair brought together the Lumleys, Foljambes and Wardes families, with other close relatives, for a week or two of hunting dancing, music and gambling. St Andrew Warde, himself a reluctant politician, reported with evident satisfaction that;

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 132. The date suggests that she was interested in the state opening of parliament.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 138-40.

⁵⁹ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 36.

⁶⁰ Savile, 'Secret comment', p. 249.

There is no politicks talked here by desire of Sir George. I think it quite right as we have some very virulent Party Men here, and as this is a meeting for mirth and jollity there should be nothing to hinder it...⁶¹

In the home environment elite women could have access to first hand accounts of political activities, even if they did not witness them for themselves. Gertrude Savile delighted in hearing what her newly-elected brother had to say about the Commons:

He was at the Parliament House Yesterday for the first time and gave us an account of the debates there. Very entertaining; made me long to be a Parliament Man, but O! how sad it is to long for what is impossible.⁶²

Away from London, Gertrude may also have made an effort to enter into informal political discussion. About a month after arriving in Bath in the autumn of 1746 she paid a subscription of 5s 0d to 'The Ladies Coffee House', which, according to Smollett was a place where 'the conversation turns of politics, scandal and philosophy.'⁶³ However, there is nothing to suggest that she or any other woman in this sample sought information in any other form of public association.⁶⁴

Despite the ease with which women could gain access to information about politics, women rarely offered information or opinion on political matters without an accompanying self-deprecatory or placatory comment. For example, when

⁶¹ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/1, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 8 Jan. 1778.

⁶² Savile, 'Secret comment', p. 163

⁶³ Penn, 'Account books', p. 132; T. Smollett, *Humphrey Clinker* (first published 1771; Penguin Classics edn. 1985), pp. 69-70. See also Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 258, 342 n.82.

⁶⁴ M. Thale, 'Women in London debating societies in 1780', *Gender and History* 7, 1 (April 1995), pp. 6-7, 11. suggests that prior to the 1770s women were not admitted to debating societies because they were not thought able to contribute to serious debate and because behaviour at meetings could be rowdy and unsuitable for the polite woman. Also some elite women considered such actions as improper. See also D.T. Andrew, 'London debating societies, 1776-1799', *London Record Society*, 30 (1993).

Lady Scarbrough offered the above comments to her aunt on the fall of Menorca she introduced the subject by suggesting that her current level of interest was unusual:

I am surpris'd at myself that I have not given you a specimen of the language I have chiefly talk'd in lately, I mean that of a Politician, which I assure you I am grown prodigiously, & I think everybody must be so (tho' they were no before) if they give any attention to the accounts our newspapers bring...

Then, having expressed her views, she immediately discounted her own opinion; 'but I'm at best talking of what I don't understand , & that I may not hereby expose myself I will fly from the topick, to what is my more proper sphere...' and went on to describe her affection for her children.⁶⁵ Reynolds suggests that such self-deprecation may be interpreted on one level as conveying 'a sense of the inferiority of female opinion, which it would be rash to understate.' However, where such statements acted merely as a preface to a woman offering information, opinion or advice, then they may also be interpreted as providing a token nod in the direction of deference to male social peers, and served the purpose of helping to legitimise female intervention in politics.⁶⁶

Young women often had little interest in or knowledge of politics and were not afraid to say so. It is not difficult to accept as genuine, Lady Henrietta Bentinck's claim to her brother that '...you are not the least mistaken in your opinion of my taste for Politicks, it is certainly not the best improved since we parted', particularly when placed in the context of her visit to Parliament where the size of

⁶⁵ NAO DDSR 221/90, Barbara Scarbrough to Gertrude Savile, 31 July 1756.

⁶⁶ Reynolds, *Aristocratic*, p.8. See also Mendelson & Crawford, *Women*, p. 375, who demonstrate that this tactic was not confined to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

the crowd and the lack of seating for the ladies made more of an impression than the speeches.⁶⁷ However, as young wives demonstrated, a youthful lack of interest could be overcome. Dorothy, the young wife of William 3rd Duke of Portland, initially lacked confidence in the political arena, but was eager to please her husband by showing an interest in his political life. In the first year of married life she actively sought information from him on the progress of his political interests, declaring ‘for tho’ I am not a great Politician, yet I have not a desire of remaining quite ignorant.’⁶⁸

In the early years of their respective marriages, both Henrietta and Dorothy demonstrated increasing interest and confidence in political matters. The extent of their involvement mirrored their respective husbands’ level of political activity. Grey was involved in little active politics in the early years of married life. Henrietta’s letters to her brother in this period demonstrate that she was becoming more politically aware but still felt it necessary to exercise caution in offering him direct information or opinion. Alluding to Portland’s flirtation with the opposition in 1763, she told him of the views of her in-laws but ‘for my part my mouth is sealed up; & I am determined it always shall when the discours [sic] turns upon Politicks....’⁶⁹ A few weeks later she spoke her mind, but acknowledged that this was inappropriate: ‘It is certainly great presumption in me to find fault with the conduct of our present statesmen but it strikes me as a very injudicious step they have taken in turning the Officers out.’⁷⁰ When Portland was involved in

⁶⁷ NUMD PwF 4504, Lady Henrietta Bentinck to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 31 March 1761.

⁶⁸ NUMD PwG 37, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 11 July 1767.

⁶⁹ NUMD PwF 4519, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 9 Nov. 1763.

⁷⁰ NUMD PwF 4523, Lady Henrietta Grey to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 31 Dec. 1763.

controversy again in 1766 she offered sympathy but avoided offering an opinion by claiming ‘this is a subject that Ladies ought not to interfere in therefore I will quit it’⁷¹ However, once her husband became actively involved in electioneering in 1768, her attitudes changed. She actively sought to discuss her husband’s election hopes with her brother, and henceforth occasionally took responsibility for political communication between her brother and her husband without apology.⁷²

By contrast, Dorothy Portland was the wife of a politically active man from the start of her marriage and responded by entering upon a period of rapid political self-improvement. Following her initial expression of ignorance she wrote freely to her husband on political matters, requesting and providing information as necessary⁷³ She made no reference to her gender to excuse or temper her interventions, although on one occasion she jokingly referred to the attitudes of others. Referring to a petition received from the Mayor of Middlesea, she wrote;

I send you a card of *information* which *the mayor* sent me I believe with an intention that I should send it to you for I fancy he does not think me politician enough to be worthy of it...⁷⁴

Within five years of marriage, although still in her early twenties, she was able to tap into the Westminster intelligence network and to provide her husband with a detailed account of Parliamentary proceedings, concluding with a brief and

⁷¹ NUMD PwF 4547, Lady Henrietta Grey to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 1 Aug. 1766.

⁷² NUMD PwF 4557, 4559, 4560, 4588, 4603 Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 Sept. 1767, 28 Mar 1768, 16 May 1768, 22 June 1771, 7 Mar. 1775.

⁷³ NUMD PwF 10561-64, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, Mar. 29 & 31, Apr. 4 & 6 1768.

⁷⁴ NUMD PwF 10584, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke Of Portland, 27 May 1769.

unapologetic 'I have sent you all the intelligence I can pick up.' Her husband thanked her promptly for her 'very circumstantial account'.⁷⁵ By 1780 she not only wrote with authority about parliamentary proceedings, the latest political infighting, and plans for electioneering in the provinces, but also, by her mode of expression, made it clear how deeply she had become involved in the Whig cause. Describing the day's proceedings in parliament she reported;

Upon this question we divided, Lord North for the Order of the Day, & we against it; Lord North wishing to avoid Rigby's motion, our friends wishing to have it debated and decided; we were beat by six only...⁷⁶

She continued to follow the progress of the Bill with interest, noting that despite the latest political rumours 'We hope to do very well tomorrow in the House of Commons, these reports will not do us harm'⁷⁷ Three days later 'our' victory in the House of Commons was trumpeted; 'I hope you will think *we* did handsomely'.⁷⁸ Whilst Dorothy was clearly immersed in the news of the day, this interest did not exclude other responsibilities. The same letters also include news of their daughter Mary's reactions to smallpox inoculation.

Not only could women be politically well-informed, but it was also understood that women could contribute to the political process in support of their families; either by gathering and disseminating information or by actively promoting the

⁷⁵ NUMD PwF 10623, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 12 Mar. 1772; PwF 10625, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 16 Mar. 1772.

⁷⁶ NUMD, PwF 10727, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 9 Mar. 1780.

⁷⁷ NUMD, PwF 10729, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 12 Mar. 1780.

⁷⁸ NUMD, PwF 10731, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 15 Mar. 1780.

political interests of the family in person. Gathering information could be achieved informally at any social gathering by listening and watching. William, 3rd Duke of Portland, even as a young man, was convinced that a woman who shared his political interests could be of great use to him in this capacity. As yet unmarried, he turned to his sister Henrietta for help. Lady Grey, whilst not refusing, pointed out that she need not be the only resource at his disposal;

you are too good to me to say you want my eyes and ears in Gros:[venor] Street, you know you may always command me, & that it makes me infinitely happy to be of the least service to you on any occasion; but you must give me leave to say that if you would make use of your own , you would soon find no want of mine; & I could still add that there are means of procuring *other* Eyes & Ears that might improve your House extremely, & save you a great deal of trouble on many occasions.⁷⁹

Mary Foljambe showed sensitivity to her father's political interests when she and her husband spent a day at Welbeck with the Portland family 'Your health was among the toasts after dinner....I did not pick up any news or would send it to you;'⁸⁰ Hewett was evidently eager for more detail as in Mary's next letter she told him 'The person who toasted you at Welbeck was Lord E Bentinck'.⁸¹

Hewett also requested the benefit of the eyes and ears of his niece Anne Warde. Although much of her letters was dedicated to relating family news and local gossip she also passed on what she had seen and heard in relation to the political scene in Nottingham. Her first surviving letter to Hewett suggests that he encouraged her correspondence: 'You flatter me greatly dear uncle by allowing me the honour of continuing a correspondence with you from which be assured I

⁷⁹ NUMD PwF 44522, Lady Henrietta Grey to Duke of Portland, 31 Dec. 1763.

⁸⁰ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 6 Nov. 1779.

⁸¹ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 13 Nov. 1779.

receive the highest satisfaction...⁸² Subsequent letters indicate that Anne made a particular effort to include the political. Discussing the forthcoming Parliamentary election in Nottingham in 1780 she commented that 'Of our Political proceedings you know as much from the newspapers as I can tell you therefore I need say nothing on that subject , except that the petition which is talked of will meet with opposition from many as this town is unfortunately divided by party prejudices...'⁸³ The following month she acknowledged that she had not been altogether successful in gleaning information, but passed on what she could;

I can learn very little about the intended county meeting, but I understand that the Lord Sherriff has not only been applied to by a number of Gentlemen but also by Mayor Cartwright whose application has been met with little success... Mr Abel Smith (as you may suppose) is against the petition he says bribery has been exerted in Yorkshire... in order to tempt the freeholders to sign, but he will aver whatever his patron the Duke of Newcastle dictates to him.'⁸⁴

In addition to requests that women should keep their eyes and ears open and pass on anything of interest, on occasions women were asked to write letters and forward correspondence to assist the flow of political information. This was particularly the case during election campaigns, when men could be overburdened with correspondence or needed to be away from home. When Francis Foljambe stood for election as member for Yorkshire in 1783-4 he told his father-in-law that he was busy canvassing, but 'if you write to Mary she will communicate to me any news you may send.'⁸⁵ Similarly Lord Grey passed his pen to his wife Henrietta when he was otherwise engaged, but wished to keep his brother-in law

⁸² NAO DDFJ, 11/1/3, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 25 Jan. 1778.

⁸³ NAO DD FJ 11/1/5 Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 9 Feb. 1780.

⁸⁴ NAO DD FJ 11/1/5, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 21 Feb. 1780.

⁸⁵ NAO DDSR 11/1/1, Miss Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 24 Dec. 1783.

informed about his political activities. Henrietta provided the Duke of Portland with a detailed account of Lord Grey's struggle in the Leicester elections of 1768⁸⁶, and in 1771 regaled him with recent events in the Lancashire election. She ended the latter account by saying; 'It is by Grooby's [Lord Grey] desire that I have wrote this letter; he desires me to assure you of his warmest affection, and hopes you will excuse his not writing to you himself, as he is at present much hurried with Business.'⁸⁷ When the Duke of Portland was absent from London in the early spring of 1768, pursuing his political interests in Carlisle, his wife undertook to promote his cause, although she was careful to inform her husband of every step she took;

I went to Lord Frederick [Cavendish]as soon as you was gone yesterday who went directly to General Hodgson & spoke to him about what you desired, I find he will do as you wish him, but Lord Frederick will write to you by this days post. He will also take care of the Derbyshire man, I wrote a note to Mrs Woodhouse with the message Lord Torrington gave me if they bring the answer to me you may depend upon it directly....⁸⁸

Each subsequent letter in this period demonstrates that she continued to ferret out information, pass on requests and carry out instructions, working with both relatives and political allies to achieve what was asked of her by her husband.⁸⁹

When success ensued she was delighted, and willingly took her part in disseminating the good news. 'I immediately sent the letters as directed and

⁸⁶ NUMD PwF4559, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 28 Mar. 1768.

⁸⁷ NUMD PwF 4588, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 June 1771.

⁸⁸ NUMD PwF 10550, Dorothy duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7 Mar. 1768.

⁸⁹ NUMD PwF 10551-71, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7 Mar – 30 April 1768.

likewise acquainted all your friends with your success...⁹⁰

Taking responsibility for communicating information could take women into an arena where they lacked confidence. Although Mary Foljambe avowed that '... at present I feel myself much interested...'⁹¹ in the political news of the day during her husband's election campaign, her actions demonstrated that she was unsure of herself as a political operator. She preferred to rely on her father's judgement in dealing with a matter that had been brought to her attention;

Mr Tookes has just been here to shew me a letter he has had from Mr P Milnes of Wakefield wishing Sir G[eorge] S[avile] would desire his people to attend Mr F[oljambe] at the ellection, to which he supposes he can now have no objection & he fears there may be a lack of going. He wished me to communicate this to uncle S[carbrough]. I send it you that you may speak to him if you think it right & there is no time to lose.⁹²

However, once they had gained knowledge of the political arena some women approached their responsibilities with enthusiasm and expressed opinions confidently. The 1780 Westminster election prompted a series of excited letters from Dorothy Duchess of Portland to her husband, who was in Wigan, overseeing his political interests there, in which she combined anecdotal information with the latest figures on the poll and enclosed letters from his political agent in Nottingham.⁹³ Announcing that in Westminster Fox was ahead and Lord Lincoln

⁹⁰ NUMD PwF 10561, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 29 Mar. 1768.

⁹¹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 19 Dec. 1783.

⁹² NAO DDSR 11/1/1, Mary Foljambe to John Hewett, 23 Dec. 1783.

⁹³ NUMD PwF 10737-43, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 7-11 Sep. 1780.

trailing she added with evident satisfaction; 'Just as I would have it – all things seem to go better than I would have expected.'⁹⁴

Women were not confined to gathering information and passing on messages. A more direct contribution to the furthering of political interests could be made by female participation in the social events that were an integral part of the political process.⁹⁵ Within five days of Sir George Savile agreeing to stand as candidate for Yorkshire in 1728 his mother and sister went to visit a relative 'about the Election. She promised her interest.'⁹⁶ When John Hewett first stood as candidate for Nottinghamshire in 1747, his wife Arabella told Gertrude Savile that in addition to being 'obliged to have about threescore freeholders our Neighbours to dinner at Shireoaks' she had also supported her husband's efforts by making an appearance at the Members Ball in Nottingham; 'in order to pay my compliments to the Ladys at Nott[ingha]m ... where I had the honour of being acquainted with but few, however a few hours got over that difficulty, and we all parted very good friends and acquaintances.'⁹⁷ Arabella's daughter Mary was equally helpful in her husband's first foray into electoral politics in 1783. Frances Foljambe confided to Hewett; 'We were at the ball in Doncaster on Thursday, partly to find out in a quiet way how people were disposed...'⁹⁸ The following Autumn. Mary made a particular effort to attend Doncaster Races, despite being six months pregnant with twins, where according to Foljambe '... we met great numbers of our

⁹⁴ NUMD PwF 10738, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 8 Sep. 1780.

⁹⁵ Chalus, 'Epidemical madness' pp. 156-63.

⁹⁶ Saville, 'Secret comment', p.117.

⁹⁷ NAO DDSR 212/16/21, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 5 Aug. 1747.

⁹⁸ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/1, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 13 Dec. 1783.

political friends' and he was pleased to tell that 'my dear Mary seems not to have suffered from her civility'⁹⁹

Equally important was a knowledge of when it was inappropriate for women to intervene in political sociability. Some occasions were specifically male in focus and propriety demanded that a woman should not participate. Arabella Hewett did not appear at the election breakfast provided for voters at Rufford by her brother Sir George Savile, although this was given on behalf of her husband. On this occasion, she restricted herself to 'peeping' at the steady stream of county gentlemen who streamed through the doors from 3am and reappeared on their way back to the north of the county after voting.¹⁰⁰ On other occasions family interests were better served by a wife staying at home. The Duchess of Portland's plans to join her husband on the campaign trail in Carlisle were curtailed by the discovery that she was pregnant. Although she was still keen to join him, medical advice was that the 'fatigues' of an election campaign, 'such as dancing &c.&c.' should be approached with caution.¹⁰¹ The need to provide an heir was more important to the family than the Duchess' participation in electioneering.

Other female social skills could be useful in promoting the political profile of a family. Dorothy Duchess of Portland showed herself to be both sensitive to the importance of appearances in politics and willing to intervene when necessary. Portland's younger brother Edward was attracting criticism for his failure to

⁹⁹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 2 Oct. 1784.

¹⁰⁰ NAO DDSR 212/16/21, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 5 Aug. 1747.

¹⁰¹ NUMD, PwG 72, Lucy Boyle, Viscountess Torrington to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 9 Nov. 1768.

attend the House of Commons. Dorothy told her husband that although he had been reprimanded by Lord Torrington and Mr Topham, 'he does not or will not understand that his appearance there is of any signification'. She then suggested that if the situation continued she might intervene; 'I believe I shall venture to mention it to him myself as I have the vanity to think I have as much if not rather more weight with him than those who already have [spoken]'.¹⁰² The Duke responded gratefully, acknowledging his wife's superior skills in handling a delicate situation, and her clear understanding of the importance of the public profile of the family;

In talking to him myself I am either too cool for fear of losing my temper or too hot & short to make any impression. You have certainly much more command of yourself & I think there can be no one who from their situation & connection can be so well authorised or from their disposition, temper & manner can be so well qualified to speak to him upon a matter in which his duty to himself, his family, & his Publick equally call upon him to put himself to a few hours inconvenience. I therefore greatly approve & highly commend your intention, I shall be happy to hear you have executed it & as sincerely wish that no other person would interfere on points of this nature.¹⁰³

Women could also take part in the extensive canvassing that accompanied a contested election.¹⁰⁴ Dorothy, Duchess of Portland's participation in the Westminster election of 1784 has received less attention than that of her sister-in-law Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, both in the contemporary press and in

¹⁰² NUMD, PwF 10627, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 23 Mar. 1772.

¹⁰³, NUMD, PwF 10628, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy Duchess of Portland, 26 Mar. 1772.

¹⁰⁴ See Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', pp. 171-5

subsequent historical discussion of the event, although the evidence suggests that Dorothy participated fully in the courting of the Westminster electors.¹⁰⁵

Contemporary reports provide evidence that Dorothy, like Georgiana and several other aristocratic women, appeared on the streets of Westminster from the early days of the poll to drum up support for Fox, dressed in the Whig party colours of blue and buff and sporting a foxtail in her hat. According to Wraxall;

These Ladies, being previously furnished with lists of outlying voters, drove to their respective dwellings. Neither entreaties nor promises were spared. In some instances even personal caresses were said to have been permitted, in order to prevail upon the surly or inflexible...:

although only Georgiana was said to have conveyed 'common mechanics' to the hustings in her coach.¹⁰⁶ The popular press linked Dorothy and Georgiana. 'The Two Patriotic Duchesses on their Canvass' of 3 April 1784, shows both women dressed identically and both attempting to gain support with kisses and cash, but Dorothy was depicted as the less attractive and by implication, less successful of the two canvassers (see Fig. 9).¹⁰⁷ A toast from a Captain Morris at a dinner given for 800 voters at the Freemason's Arms suggested that the two women were linked in the minds of Whig supporters: 'The Duchess of Devonshire and Portland, and other fair supporters of the Whig cause.'¹⁰⁸ When Georgiana withdrew from canvassing pleading exhaustion, Dorothy continued to campaign

¹⁰⁵ For Georgiana's electoral activities in 1784, see Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 136-159: this account, which also refers to the part played by Dorothy, Duchess of Portland suggested the argument that is pursued in the following paragraphs. See also; Idem., 'A politician's politician' pp. 184-7; Lewis, '1784', pp. 89-122 also highlights the roles of both Georgiana and other aristocratic women in the 1784 Westminster election.

¹⁰⁶ Henry Wheatley, *The historical and posthumous memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall* (1884), III, p.346.

¹⁰⁷ Rowlandson. BM Cat. 6494.

¹⁰⁸ *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 28 Apr. 1784.

Figure 9



Publ'd by W. Humphrey 227. Strand.

THE TWO PATRIOTIC DUCHESS'S. OR THEIR CANVASS. 1784

Requesting the favour of an early Poll.

of Portland

Drs. Devonshire

Rowlandson

Writen Linc. P. 99. 193. 116

and made the first approach to get her sister-in-law to return. 'Everybody is so anxious for you return that I do hope you will come to town... if we should lose this at last, they will think it is owing to your absence.'¹⁰⁹ In another letter Dorothy too claimed exhaustion; 'I am worn out almost and must beg of you to come tomorrow, there are a great many votes you can command and No One else.' She reassured her sister-in-law; 'now if you only stop at peoples doors it will be quite sufficient & really your presence is quite expected - so tomorrow morning pray be here early.'¹¹⁰ Dorothy herself remained in public view until the triumphal procession through the streets of Westminster to celebrate the Whig victory.¹¹¹

Dorothy's actions were entirely consistent with her earlier behaviour. As discussed above, in sixteen years of marriage she had gained a great deal of political experience and her letters for 1780 show how close she was politically to her husband and his fellow Whigs. By taking to the streets in the 1784 campaign she was merely taking a further step in promoting the interests of her family, with the wholehearted support and encouragement of her husband. Moreover, by joining with her husband in encouraging Georgiana to continue her efforts in the polls she demonstrated her commitment to the political outcome, rather than concern for the individual.

¹⁰⁹ CH 611, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 13 April 1784. These sentiments were reiterated by the Duke of Portland the following day, see CH 612, William 3rd Duke of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 14 April 1784.

¹¹⁰ CH 610.4, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, April 1784.

¹¹¹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 153-6.

Recent historical research has uncovered a long-standing continuity in the contribution that the female members of the elite could make to the operation of patronage. Ward has demonstrated that medieval women used their network of kin and friends to exercise influence and to thereby increase the power and standing of their family.¹¹² Harris' study of the Tudor nobility and gentry found that women 'participated with enthusiasm, persistence and success in all the activities connected to forming, maintaining and exploiting patronage networks'.¹¹³ Furthermore, 'Upper-class women were just as ready as upper-class men to take advantage of their kin networks andsocial relationships to secure offices, annuities and other favours for their relatives and dependants.'¹¹⁴ In the opening rounds of the debate about women and politics in the eighteenth century Steinen suggested that this continued into the eighteenth century and beyond, and subsequent research by Chalus and Reynolds has supported this contention.¹¹⁵ Women sought patronage for themselves and their family, acted as a conduit through which the patronage of their own family might be accessed and in some circumstances were able to use patronage networks to control the political activities of others.

Women of some social standing felt confident to approach a patron in their own right and often did so in seeking to improve the position of their immediate family.¹¹⁶ Lady Mary Foljambe wrote to the Duke of Portland to ask him to promote the cause of her sister's husband, Winchcombe Hartley. She first

¹¹² J. Ward, *English noblewomen in the later middle ages* (1992), p. 107.

¹¹³ Harris, 'Women and politics', p. 260.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

¹¹⁵ Steinen, 'Discovery', pp. 232-3; Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', pp. 163-6; Reynolds, *Aristocratic*, pp. 185-7.

identified herself as the daughter of a peer; 'the daughter of one whom you honoured to his last day with your particular friendship', then emphasised that the subsequent request was made on behalf of her sister 'whose situation in life with a large & increasing family has become most uncomfortable & irksome so undeservedly different from what she had been accustomed to in former days'. This established, she asked that Hartley's post in the Cape be improved or that he be found something equivalent in England.¹¹⁷ Awaiting the return of her husband from his second trip to the Cape, Lady Louisa approached her sister for further assistance; 'I see by a newspaper...that the office of Register in Yorkshire is now vacant... I daresay you recollect sometime since Mr. H's anxiety to obtain it'. She suggested that Foljambe might have some influence in obtaining the post for Hartley.¹¹⁸

Lady Henrietta Grey sought her brother Portland's assistance, with the approval of her husband, in finding a situation for Grey's brother, Booth. She underlined her wishes by stating, 'if you should have the opportunity of serving him I shall ever look upon it as an obligation confer'd upon myself'.¹¹⁹ Some years later she approached both her brother and her brother-in-law, Lord Weymouth to request that her husband be considered for political advancement. Her approach to her brother was casual in tone; 'Have you heard who is likely to have the L[or]d Lieut[enan]cy of Cheshire? You know it is what Grooby has long wished for...' However the seriousness of the request for consideration was emphasised by her adding that she had already approached her sister Lady Weymouth, to ask Lord

¹¹⁶ Harris, 'Women and politics', pp. 268-70.

¹¹⁷ NAO DDSR 221/58, Lady Mary Foljambe to the Duke of Portland, undated draft.

¹¹⁸ NAO DDSR 221/10, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 13 Oct. 1809.

Weymouth to put in a good word with the King, but pointing out that Portland's words would have more weight as he was a minister.¹²⁰ Despite her efforts the post went elsewhere.¹²¹

Not all requests for gaining advantage through patronage were granted. Lady Weymouth made it clear that there were, in her mind, clear guidelines about how and when assistance should be given. Although a Lady of the Bedchamber with some influence at court herself, she refused her brother's request for help in obtaining a political appointment;

I do not see how I can, as for asking for anything of that Post for you it should be done by my Father & if he has not interest enough to get it for you , or does not approve of its being done, it wou'd be very improper for me to do anything about it.¹²²

Women who were related to the rich and powerful were also viewed by non-family members as conduits through which access could be gained to influence. Both Lady Weymouth and Lady Grey were asked by others to seek favours from their brother William, 3rd Duke of Portland. Lady Weymouth passed on wide-ranging requests; Lady Waldegrave sought his influence with the King to obtain lodgings, Lady Charlotte Finch recommended a candidate for the post of King's Waterman, a William Dixon was well recommended for a post in the Courts of Penrith, and the son of Lord Weymouth's steward was thought suitable for the position of solicitor in the Post Office.¹²³ Lady Grey asked Portland to place a

¹¹⁹ NUMD PwF 4538, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 5 Aug. 1765.

¹²⁰ NUMD PwF 4572, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 3 July 1770.

¹²¹ NUMD PwF 4574, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 15 July 1770.

¹²² NUMD PwF 8713, Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Feb. 1761.

¹²³ NUMD PwF 8720, 8722, 8714, 8724 Lady Elizabeth Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 14 Feb. & 9 Aug. 1766, 9 Aug. 1763, 22 Nov. 1766.

John Peploe as an ensign in the Irish Regiment, but stated clearly that Grooby was 'opposed to her asking'.¹²⁴ The chain of patronage could be lengthy. Dorothy, Duchess of Portland wrote to her sister-in-law Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire:

I have just received a letter from Charles Greville entreating me to make a request to you ...that you should write to Lord Northington to beg him to put him into some regiment as soon as he can'.¹²⁵

A more direct form of political patronage was open to widows who controlled family interests during the minority of the heir, or to women who owned property in their own right, as their position as landowners gave them influence over the voting behaviour of neighbours and tenants.¹²⁶ Margaret, Dowager Duchess of Portland who owned property in her own right, inherited from her mother, saw it as part of her remit to direct the voting of others. Shortly after her son William succeeded to the dukedom she intervened to prevent him from voting against her wishes. She raised the subject in a letter, suggesting that he had perhaps fallen under bad influences, then went on to exert her own good influence. She began by implying her reluctance to interfere in political matters, another version of the self deprecation that Reynolds has suggested was used by aristocratic women when they had a specific end in mind.¹²⁷

My dearest it is impossible for me to be silent any longer tho' upon a subject very disagreeable to me at all times & particularly so at present but I chuse this method of mentioning it rather than speaking to you.

Nevertheless, she then went on to express her concern;

¹²⁴ NUMD, PwF 4538, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 5 Aug. 1765.

¹²⁵ CH 528.1 Dorothy Duchess of Portland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, [undated, but catalogued as 1783].

¹²⁶ For examples see Steinen, 'Discovery', pp. 242-3; Reynolds, *Aristocratic*, pp. 132-9; Chalus, 'Epidemical madness', p. 164-6. J. Cannon, *Aristocratic century: the peerage of eighteenth – century England* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 137 demonstrates that a widow controlling family interests

I must desire you will inform me if you intend to support the Kings measures or join the Opposition. If your connections and engagements induce you to that resolution I shall only say I am very sorry for it.¹²⁸

Her suit was successful and the Duke was soon receiving congratulations from his sister for having bowed to maternal pressure for 'the *good of the Family*'.¹²⁹

Mother and son clashed again years later, although this time it was a matter of how a third party should vote. Again the Dowager Duchess stood firm and exercised her right to direct others. Dorothy, Duchess of Portland had written to one Leivers, asking that he should follow the Duke's lead when voting. The reply she received was not favourable;

his answer was that he had received letters some little time ago from Mr Berkley & Mr Chester & that your mother desired him to vote for the latter, she was then from home but said he would inform her what were your desires upon the subject., which he did & came here this morning to tell me that the Dutchess (sic) had given her *word of honour* some months ago that he should vote for Mr Chester & she could not possibly depart from it, so there is an end of that matter.¹³⁰

The experiences of the women under consideration here have demonstrated the extent to which politics permeated every part of eighteenth-century elite life. It entered the home with men who were politically active, and in newspapers and pamphlets, to be discussed over dinner and tea tables. The social world of the elite

was not an uncommon occurrence; in the eighteenth century 70 per cent of peerage families endured a period of minority.

¹²⁷ Reynolds, *Aristocratic*, p.8, n. 23.

¹²⁸ NUMD, PwF 767, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland (undated but catalogued as 1763).

¹²⁹ NUMD PwF 4519, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 9 Nov. 1763.

¹³⁰ NUMD PwF 10774, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 29 Apr. 1776.

was inextricably linked with the political calendar; the London season coincided with parliamentary sittings and in the provinces assemblies and race meetings coincided with the quarterly assizes in the provincial towns, and local elections provided more assemblies, breakfasts and spectacle on the streets. In this highly politicised social environment it was possible, and, in some families, perfectly acceptable, for a woman to focus entirely on the entertainment that elite social life offered and to restrict her concerns and interests to the personal and domestic. Yet most women demonstrated some knowledge of the politics of the day, some were well informed and a few participated actively in the political affairs of their family.

Levels of activity could wax and wane through the female life-cycle. Young single women showed little interest in politics. The extent to which this aspect of preparation for adult life was neglected is underlined by the steep learning curve experienced by the wives of politically active men in the early years of marriage. Young wives, such as Dorothy Duchess of Portland, quickly learned that political interest, knowledge and action was regarded as an asset by their husbands.

Women responded by seeking to improve their knowledge through enquiry and reading and, in so doing, attracted their husbands' encouragement and approval and gained an additional role as scribes, messengers and confidantes. Men also recognised the value of women's social skills as listeners, observers and arbiters in the political arena, and used them appropriately. Neither were the persuasive powers of women ignored. When necessary, women were asked to assist in influencing the voters and their wives, either on the streets of Westminster or in the assembly rooms of Nottingham.

Young wives had other responsibilities which could restrict political pursuits. For the most prestigious families, producing an heir was a high priority, and whilst remaining at a husband's side during a political campaign that took him from home might serve the dual purpose of assisting his political career and helping to promote conception, once pregnant the social whirl of electioneering could be considered too risky for mother and child, or ill-health could prevent participation. Motherhood and politics were not entirely incompatible; elite women had servants to help with childcare, and were able to combine active motherhood and, for example, extensive political correspondence, with relative ease and this became easier as children grew older. When women became widows, if they controlled property, they could exercise considerable political influence, and demonstrated that they felt that this was entirely legitimate.

The extent to which a politically naïve young woman was transformed into a skilled political wife, depended upon a combination of two main factors, rank and male political activity. Amongst the families studied here, the higher the rank, the greater the expectation that women would be politically active when necessary. The wives of peers took on a broad, semi-permanent role as political scribe, confidante and messenger, successfully combining this additional responsibility with childbearing and motherhood. This is not to suggest that the wives of the gentry were excused political duties. It was expected that the wife of a back-bench MP would participate enthusiastically in judicious socialising and write a few letters when it mattered, and generally, this is what they did without complaint. When a man held no political office, and harboured no political ambition, his wife

had no need to extend herself beyond the domestic and social roles available to the elite woman.

Not all female political activity was determined and directed by men. Although most women gave a nod in the direction of male supremacy in the political realm by adding self-deprecatory comments to any expression of political opinion or a request for a political favour, this did not mean that they were incapable of independent action. Most women did not rely entirely upon men for their political information, but sought it out for themselves in newspapers and pamphlets, or kept their eyes and ears open when topics of interest were discussed in a social setting. The spinster Gertrude Savile was not required to assist her brother or her nephew in their political career, but she nevertheless took great pains to find out about and record details of local, national and international politics. Margaret, Dowager Duchess of Portland, heiress and widow, used her economic and social independence to pursue her own political path, without deference to her son.

Not being able to vote or to hold public office did not prevent women from entering the political world of the eighteenth century, albeit on limited terms.

Most women were willing participants in the social aspects of political life and avid readers of newspapers, which combined the social and political news of the day. When family interests were at stake, women were prepared to take responsibility for gathering and communicating political information, by letter or in person. Moreover, elite men encouraged women to assist them in achieving their political aims and valued the contribution that women could make. Elite women accepted the constraints that gender placed upon their formal political

activities but, when necessary, dutifully and in some cases enthusiastically, embraced the political responsibilities that rank could impose.

Chapter Six

SOCIAL LEADERSHIP

This chapter explores the part women played in the maintenance of the social leadership exercised by the elite. Social pre-eminence, although buttressed by political and economic power, had to be worked at. Social inferiors and social equals alike, needed confirmation that leadership rested in the right hands; 'Those born to the landed ranks were required to demonstrate by their behaviour that they were entitled to their exalted status.'¹ The elite was not restricted to a single arena in which to display their superiority. A country house at the centre of an estate provided a convenient location both for the maintenance and extension of ties of friendship and kinship with other land-owning families and for reinforcing vertical relationships within the local community. Employment, patronage, hospitality and charity were the 'duties of the land' for which the land-owner was expected to take responsibility and by which social deference was reinforced.² Those who sought to extend their influence beyond the local area also needed to maintain visibility in urban society. From the mid-seventeenth century London had become increasingly attractive and necessary to the ambitious. The capital housed both the royal court and parliament and was also the business and social centre of England.³ For those who did not aspire to the London season, the administration

¹ L. Pollock, 'Living on the stage of the world: the concept of privacy among the elite of Early Modern England', in A. Wilson (ed.), *Rethinking social history: English society 1570-1920* (Manchester, 1993), p.89.

² J.V. Beckett, *The aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (1986), pp.324-50, L. Stone and J.C.F. Stone, *An open elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1983), pp.203-30; A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter* (1998), pp. 95-6.

³ Beckett, *Aristocracy*, pp. 364-8; G. E. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (1963), p. 156.

of justice and the promise of entertainment combined to draw landowners and their families to the rapidly expanding provincial towns, where regular 'seasons' developed in parallel with those of the capital.⁴

Until comparatively recently, the role of women in the business of maintaining the social profile of the eighteenth-century elite, has received scant attention from historians. At best, when the consideration of female activities was not omitted altogether, women were accorded a complaisant social passivity; 'they visited, they attended balls, played cards, read novels, rode to hounds and wrote letters – but none of this made any discernible impression on the times.'⁵ At worst women were portrayed as social butterflies, eager for the amusements of town life, with no thought for the social responsibilities of rank.⁶ A somewhat different picture emerged in Vickery's study of the eighteenth-century Lancashire gentlewoman, which demonstrated that the role of women in maintaining social authority was neither insignificant nor frivolous. Mrs Shackleton and her social peers diligently pursued the wide-ranging social activities that served to reinforce both personal

⁴ For the expansion of urban life see, P. Borsay, *The English urban renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town, 1660-1800*, (Oxford, 1989); P. Corfield, *The impact of English towns 1700-1800* (1982). J. Ellis, 'Regional and county centres 1700-1840' in P. Clarke, (ed.) *The Cambridge urban history of Britain*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge 2000), pp. 673-704. For the ever-widening range of urban diversions available in London and the provinces, see P. Clarke and R. A. Houston, 'Culture and leisure 1700-1840' in *Cambridge urban*, pp. 575-613; J. Ellis, *The Georgian town 1680-1840* (2001) pp.76-82; Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 228-84; R. Porter, 'Material pleasures in the consumer society' in R. Porter and M. M. Roberts (eds.), *Pleasure in the eighteenth century* (1996), pp. 19-35. On the development of Nottingham as a regional centre in the eighteenth century, see A. Henstock, 'The changing fabric of the town, 1550-1750' in J. Beckett (ed.), *A centenary history of Nottingham* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 114-128; J. Beckett and C. Smith, 'Urban renaissance and consumer revolution in Nottingham, 1688-1750', *Urban History*, 27, 1 (2000), pp. 33-5.

⁵ Mingay, *English landed society* p. 226; Stone and Stone, *An open elite*, pp. 315-6, describe a similar scenario of a busy but 'humdrum' existence for the majority of elite women in the countryside.

⁶ Beckett, *Aristocracy*, p. 366; F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The gentry in England, 1500-1700* (Stanford, Ca., 1994), pp. 313-4; D. W. Howell *Patriarchs and parasites: the gentry of south west Wales in the eighteenth century* (Cardiff, 1986) p. 176.

and familial status and reputation in both town and country, participating appropriately in the sociability, hospitality and benevolence that reinforced social status.⁷

This revised scenario of the more socially responsible eighteenth-century woman fits well within the context of studies of elite women in other centuries. From the Medieval period to the nineteenth century there is evidence of women using the country house as an arena for promoting the interests and asserting the authority of their families.⁸ It also sits well with a handful of studies of eighteenth-century individuals which have revealed the charitable activities and attention to social duty of privileged women. The application of Elizabeth Montagu to charity and to the social responsibilities of land-ownership is revealed by Beckett and Larson, and Andrews' study of Lady Margaret Spencer points to the 'nexus of gift and obligation, of property and protection that existed at least among the more concerned members of the female upper-classes in the late eighteenth century'.⁹ Moreover, this concerned minority were sufficiently committed to their benevolent aims to eschew compliance; instead they 'challenged and tested' male authority in their attempts to influence their fathers, brothers and husbands for the benefit of others.¹⁰ Although women may, on occasion, have questioned male judgement, both Gerard and Prochaska suggest that the increase in women's

⁷ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 195-223.

⁸ J. C. Ward, *English noblewomen in the later middle ages* (1992), pp. 50-69; K. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 28, 57-60; J. Gerard, *Country house life: family and servants, 1815-1914*, (1994), pp. 115-140.

⁹ J. V. Beckett, 'Elizabeth Montagu: bluestocking turned landlady', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* (1986); E. S. Larson 'A measure of power, the personal charity of Elizabeth Montagu', *Studies in eighteenth century culture*, 16 (1984); D. T. Andrews, 'Noblesse oblige. Female charity in an age of sentiment' in J. Brewer and S. Staves (eds.), *Early modern conceptions of property* (1995), p. 275.

¹⁰ Andrews, 'Noblesse oblige', p. 276, See also Larson, 'Measure of power', p. 198.

charitable activity at the end of the eighteenth century and its continuing importance in the nineteenth century was motivated not by a desire for a change in the social order, but by a commitment to the *status quo*.¹¹ Charity, as bestowed by the Victorian 'Lady Bountiful' was an effective means of promoting and reinforcing paternalistic attitudes and social deference.¹²

Vickery's study also reveals that the assiduous pursuit of social duty in and around the country house could be successfully combined with a keen appetite for the social and cultural stimulation offered by the eighteenth-century towns.¹³

There has also been a shift in historians' understanding of the significance of this feature of elite woman's life. From a position where participation in the cultural delights of the London season or its provincial equivalent was understood as merely an exercise in pleasure and self-indulgence, a way of passing the time for women with no other responsibilities, has emerged a multi-layered perception of the same activities and events which suggests that while pleasure was important, of at least equal significance was the opportunity that 'public' entertainments presented for social display.

At the theatre, in the pleasure garden, the exhibition room, the assembly room, even the lecture hall and the rooms of certain learned societies audiences made publicly visible their wealth, status, social and sexual charms.... The ostensible reason for a person's presence – seeing the play, attending an auction, visiting an artist's studio, listening to a concert, was often subordinate to a more powerful set of social imperatives. The audiences were not

¹¹ J. Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy' *Victorian Studies*, 30, 2 (Winter, 1987), p.184; F. Prochaska, 'Women in English philanthropy, 1790-1830', *International Review of Social History*, 19 (1974), pp. 438-9;

¹² Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful' p.187. See also Gerard, *Country House*, pp. 122-8; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp. 71-2.

¹³ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 225-284. Vickery also points out that although the place of women in the social and cultural life of the eighteenth century has often been asserted by historians, little research has yet been done which can dispel 'the exceeding murkiness of historical knowledge'; *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

passive but incorporated culture as part of their own social performance.¹⁴

The art of the 'social performance' was a crucial element in the elite woman's contribution to her family's social standing.¹⁵ This inevitably exposed women to public scrutiny. Urban society offered many good opportunities for an elite woman to display herself to good advantage in public. On the one hand, this kind of public display was precisely what was required of an elite woman, on the other, the morality of women appearing in the public arena was a matter raised with some frequency by contemporaries. As Brewer points out;

Much of the public sphere ... was seen as potentially compromising for women, a zone whose very attractions were its dangers and which could only be entered with proper caution and restraint.¹⁶

However, Vickery has demonstrated that, despite the reservations of moralists, women 'clothed in the armour of conscious virtue' had little to fear from entry into the social whirl of the eighteenth-century town and continued their vigorous participation in its delights throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁷

This chapter will begin by establishing the annual timetable of several elite women's lives, tracking their movements between town and country, and will then explore women's contribution to social leadership in both the urban and the rural environment by focusing on three activities; the business of maintaining ties with

¹⁴ J. Brewer, *The pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (1997), p. 69.

¹⁵ J. Ellis, 'On the Town', *History Today* (12), 45 (December 1995), p. 23; Pollock 'Living on the stage', p. 89.

¹⁶ J. Brewer, ' "The most polite age and the most vicious" Attitudes towards culture as a commodity, 1660-1800', A. Bermingham and J. Brewer (eds), *The consumption of culture 1600-1800* (1995), p. 355. See also Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp. 76-81.

¹⁷ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 228, 276-82.

other elite families by visiting and receiving visitors; the benevolent role of dispensing charity, patronage and gratuities; and finally the art of creating the right impression through social display. In this analysis, attention will be paid to women's actions and attitudes and an assessment will be made of the impact of character, rank, and life-cycle in defining a woman's social duties and pleasures.

Where it is possible to track the movements of individuals it is evident that most women moved between their country estates and the town on a regular basis, moving with the established rhythms of the social season. What those rhythms were was subject to a wide range of variables; male activities, children, health and personal inclination could all play a part in determining women's geographical movements, according to personal circumstance. Those in the highest echelons of the Nottinghamshire elite, whose husbands had political business in London and owned estates in other counties, tended to spend a greater proportion of their time away from the county. For example, during the 1770s Dorothy, Duchess of Portland usually visited Welbeck twice a year, the family often spending Christmas and a couple of months in the summer in the countryside. This pattern was not immutable. In 1777 she took her children to another family property, Bonnington in Hertfordshire and in 1778 they stayed at Teignmouth for the summer.

The less wealthy and less prestigious spent more time in the county and less in the capital. In the early years of her marriage, Lady Mary Foljambe consistently spent seven to nine months of the year, between July and April, based in the countryside at Osberton, punctuated with trips to visit family at Rufford and

Sandbeck, and outings to Doncaster races. Most years the remaining three to four months were London-based. The month of May was invariably passed in the capital, but in some years visits were then made to spa towns in the early summer before the annual retreat to the countryside in July or August.¹⁸

In contrast, Abigail Gawthern spent most of her life in an urban environment. Although her father, and later Abigail herself, owned a small estate and country house at Holme, near Newark, her main residence was on Low Pavement in Nottingham. An analysis of Abigail's movements between 1792 and 1810, the years of her widowhood covered by her diary, show that she generally visited Holme once a year between August and October, although she did not leave Nottingham at all for the first three years of widowhood. Between 1795 and 1805 when her children were of an age to enter society she also took them on extended trips outside the county. Most years they went north and east, visiting Scarborough, York, Harrogate in Yorkshire or Sutton in Lincolnshire. In 1802, when Abigail's daughter Anna was eighteen they spent spring and early summer in London and three years later enjoyed the summer season at the fashionable resorts of Bath, Bristol and Weymouth.¹⁹

When the spinster Gertrude Savile gained financial independence, personal inclination and health combined to determine her movements. Having leased a country home at Farnsfield in Nottinghamshire in 1737, she stayed there from July of that year until October 1738. She preferred the retirement of the countryside,

¹⁸ NAO DDSR 212/43, Personal account book of Lady Mary Foljambe, 1789-1801.

¹⁹ A. Henstock (ed.), 'The Diary of Abigail Gawthern of Nottingham 1751-1810', *Thoroton society record series*, Vol. 33 (1980), pp. 58-149.

and reluctantly returned to London, 'not a journey designed for pleasure', to consult doctors about her persistent lameness. In May of the following year she returned to Farnsfield and stayed there until the autumn of 1741. For the next two years she reverted to the convention of spending summer in the country and winter in town, then, in October 1743 following her brother's death, moved to London permanently, a decision which is not explained.²⁰

Whether in town or country, the visit, according to Lady Sarah Pennington's advice, was a necessary social ritual; 'a Tribute, by Custom authorised, by good manners enjoined in'.²¹ When titled women were at their country estates, it was evident that they viewed this tribute, the exchange of which established and re-established links with other elite families in the local community, as an inescapable duty. The year after she was married Lady Henrietta Grey told her brother that;

it is really absolutely impossible for us to think of leaving this County till the latter end of September or perhaps the beginning of October; the Neighbourhood is immense here & we have not yet accomplished one fourth of the Visits we have to return, which there is an absolute necessity of doing before we go away; for many reasons which if you knew I am sure you would also allow were too strong to be waived on any account....²²

The demands of entertaining the 'Neighbourhood' was a frequently used excuse for not paying longer-term visits to family members. In 1774, Henrietta pointed

²⁰ A. Savile (ed.), 'Secret comment; the diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-57', *Thoroton society of Nottinghamshire Record Series*, Vol. 41, (1997), pp. 238-252.

²¹ Lady Sarah Pennington, *An unfortunate mother's advice to her absent daughters: in a letter to Miss Pennington* (1761), p. 44. Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp. 202-9, for the practice of visiting amongst the Lancashire gentry. See also L. Davidoff, *The best circles: society, etiquette and the season* (1973), pp. 41-46, for the subsequent development of the complexities of Victorian etiquette relating to visiting. Stone and Stone, *Open Elite*, pp. 211-14, also comments on the high proportion of time spent in making and receiving visits.

²² NUMD PwF 4516, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Aug. 1763.

out that as her pregnancy had prevented her maintaining the required level of sociability the previous summer, it was all the more urgent that she should now attend to her social duties;

We expect a good deal of company to make some stay with us, & as I was not able last year to return any Visits, I have so many engagements upon my hands, that I scarce ever have a day at my own disposal.²³

Whether or not these excuses were genuine is, of course, open to question but their repeated use suggests that the fulfilment of social duties took precedence over the pleasure of a family visit for purely recreational purposes. Even when she did succeed in joining her brother at Welbeck the matter of visits from the local gentry was a cause of concern for Henrietta. She enquired anxiously whether 'you seriously intend having the Ladies in your Neighbourhood come to your House when we are with you; I fear it will not be possible for us to return their visits.'²⁴

Women of the peerage frequently complained that the business of visiting left them bored and exhausted, invaded their privacy or interfered with the pursuit of their own particular interests. Young women complained most often of the tedium. Mrs Delany recorded the dismay of the teenaged Lady Elizabeth and Lady Henrietta Bentinck on being commanded to accompany their mother to visit the Duchess of Somerset. 'Lady Betty entreated the Duchess to let her stay at home to paint, and Lady Harriet went unwillingly'.²⁵ Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, aged seventeen, visiting her Aunt, Lady Walpole's country home, grumbled to her

²³ NUMD PwF 4601, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 6 Aug. 1774. See also PwF 4567, same to same, 7 Sept. 1769.

²⁴ NUMD PwF 4517, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Sept. 1763.

²⁵ Lady Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany* (1861), Series 1, Vol. 3, p. 246.

husband; 'Thank God one dismal week is over & I hope the two others will pass away a little quicker, the first of them I am afraid will not as it is to be taken up in visiting all the county of Norfolk'.²⁶

Also, for a young couple in the early days of marriage, the continual stream of visitors, paying their tribute to the newly established household, could be a bar to intimacy. In the year after her marriage Dorothy, Duchess of Portland complained on several occasions that her reunions with her husband would be spoiled by visitors. She wrote from Chiswick; 'I am vexed to the greatest degree that I shall not be alone when you come for I am sure Dr Hinchcliffe will dine here & I believe my Brother and maybe my uncles'.²⁷ Later in the year at Welbeck, awaiting her husband's return from Carlisle, she noted that Lord and Lady Spencer, Lord John Cavendish, Mr Kaye and the Staffords were all staying with her; 'I'm afraid I shall have a very uncomfortable meeting with you when you come'.²⁸ Her husband, equally concerned to rejoin his wife was of the opinion that receiving visitors, although not ideal, was better than meeting whilst visiting the Rockinghams at Wentworth Woodhouse; 'I shall be too impatient ... to see you *comfortably* to think of meeting you anywhere but home'. He also suggested that she hint to other guests that his visit would be short, in the hope that this might deter them, a ploy which failed on this occasion.²⁹

²⁶ NUMD PwG 49, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Aug. 1767.

²⁷ NUMD PwG 31, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 21 Apr. 1767.

²⁸ NUMD PwG 58, Dorothy, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 10 Sept. 1767

²⁹ NUMD, PwF 10542, PwG 56, William 3rd Duke of Portland to Dorothy, Duchess of Portland, 30 Aug. & 7 September 1767.

Although established married women were more accepting of the rituals of hospitality, they could find them tiring and time-consuming. Margaret, Duchess of Portland confided in her teenage son that she would be 'glad when our visits are over and returned' and in her next letter complained that 'the perpetual course of visits we have been in has made me unfit for anything.'³⁰ During her widowhood the Duchess' country home at Bulstrode attracted an endless stream of long and short-term visitors, whom it was difficult to avoid. Mrs Delany, a semi-permanent resident in the Duchess' home, recorded a December day in 1760 when she and the Duchess were 'in the garden and very sorry to be summoned to company'.³¹ Unexpected guests disturbed their private relaxation. On another occasion the Duchess and Mrs Delany were dismayed by the sighting of a coach and six approaching through the park on a day when they had 'resolved to enjoy our amusements luxuriously'.³² Those who showed consideration for the Duchess's pursuit of her interests were commended;

these last two days have been delightful & I have been so lucky not to be interrupted in the enjoyment of them for tho' my Coz: Cavendish came she heard I was gone to the Birds and wo'd not stay.³³

Below the social level of the peerage, the duties of visiting appear to have been less onerous and women's comments generally suggest that they found both visiting and receiving visitors were pleasurable activities, signifying social acceptance, and providing enjoyment and entertainment. For those setting up a new household, the establishment of a round of regular visits was an achievement

³⁰ NUMD PwF 742, 743, Margaret Duchess of Portland to William, Marquis of Titchfield, 19 June 1752.

³¹ Llanover *Delany*, Series 1, Vol. 3, p.620.

³² Llanover, *Delany*, Series 2, Vol. 1, p.238,

which indicated social approval within the neighbourhood.³⁴ Anne Warde, enjoying her second winter in Nottingham after her and her father's move from Hooton Pagnell told her uncle; 'I am now visiting away most furiously; and so many people visit me that I find it difficult to discharge my debts properly and in due time'.³⁵ Similarly, on setting up a home for her brother-in-law and nieces in Bishopsgate, the spinster Sophia Lumley noted with satisfaction that 'I have been very gay this year; having dined out among our neighbours 6 times ... all within a walk... and I have now 20 morning visits in all'.³⁶ For Gertrude Savile, there was seldom any pleasure in either receiving or making visits. In her diary entry for 8 February 1728 she listed the ten women from whom visits had been received that day, followed by the cry; 'O my spirits may well be galled. Where shall I hide? O such a day! Let me not think on't'.³⁷

For those living a quiet life in the country the exchange of visits with family, friends and neighbours appears to have been more representative of conviviality than duty. Such contact provided welcome conversation and entertainment and a break from the routine. Arabella Thornhagh, writing from Shireoaks in 1761, informed her friend that the latest news from London was valuable currency on such visits. '... we talk of nothing else wherever we go, and we go or somebody comes every day almost'.³⁸ The Foljambes of Aldwark and the Wardes of Hooton Pagnell usually spent the winter on their respective country estates, with

³³ NUMD PwF 765, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 10 Aug. 1763.

³⁴ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, pp.203-4 describes how a newcomer could be absorbed into an existing elite community.

³⁵ NAO DDFJ 11/1/ 5, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, 9 Feb. 1780.

³⁶ NAO DDSR 221/8, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 30 Nov. 1813.

³⁷ Savile, 'Secret comment', p. 102.

occasional excursions to York, Doncaster and Nottingham and relished the diversion of visitors and visiting. In the autumn of 1779, the Foljambes, after a few 'very agreeable' days at Doncaster Races, moved the family to Mary's father's estate at Shireoaks in Nottinghamshire for a few days hunting. There they received visits from cousins, the Misses Boawres, and Mr Eyre, a neighbour, and spent a 'very pleasant day at Welbeck', visiting the Duke and Duchess of Portland, and staying for a dinner at which many 'bumpers' were drunk. From Shireoaks the family went on to spend a few days at Rufford with Lord and Lady Scarbrough and Sir George Savile. On returning home after a month away, Mary was soon complaining that that they had seen no one but the local curate, but looked forward to a visit from her uncle and cousin, Mr and Miss Warde, later in the month, followed by a large family gathering at Rufford for the New Year.³⁹

Those in less robust health than Mary Foljambe were less mobile and even more reliant on receiving visitors at home for amusement. Mrs Anne Warde was often unwell, and unable to accompany her husband on his sociable travels around the countryside. In the winter of 1780 she reported that her brother had spent a few days with her at Hooton Pagnell and was pleased that another visitor, Mrs Fenton, had promised to return to keep her company when Mr Warde went to Rufford for the annual New Year's party.⁴⁰ In the event, evidently feeling sorry for herself, she was not sure whether the effort of receiving visitors outweighed the pleasure of having company;

³⁸ BRO D/E HY F112, Arabella Hewett to Mary Hartley, 15 Aug. 1761.

³⁹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Mary Arabella Foljambe to John Hewett, 2 Oct., 4, 6, 13, 18, Nov., 3, 7, 22 Dec. 1779.

⁴⁰ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 10 Dec. 1780.

Tho' I rejoice to see my friends yet [I] am too weak to be able to exert myself without feeling the bad effects; for the last week Mr Warde has been at Sandbeck: the tediousness of absence has been lessened by my uncle and aunt Dodsworth, & my brother sometimes calling upon me⁴¹

The visiting of family members could also be used as a deliberate means of reinforcing family ties for a specific purpose. Whilst the Foljambe's were always careful to visit the ageing Thornhagh aunts when in York, in 1780 they also took care to pay particular attention to Mrs Trafford, an elderly widowed second cousin who had recently inherited a considerable fortune. Mary assured her father; 'We have dined and had tea twice with Mrs Trafford...'⁴² Hewett's sister, reporting on the same set of visits commented; 'I think we did everything that was right'⁴³ A few months earlier, Mrs Trafford had lent Hewett £1000.⁴⁴

Whilst the visit was an essential element in the creation and maintenance of social links with individual families, landed families were also expected to pay attention to the community at large. Benevolent activity took many forms. Here attention will focus on three ways in which women contributed to the obligation to dispense bounty: the giving of money to charitable causes, the use of personal influence to benefit others and the ritual distribution of gifts and tips to servants and the community.

⁴¹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 21 Jan. 1781.

⁴² NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Mary Arabella Foljambe to John Hewett, 6 April 1780. See also 11/1/3 Francis Foljambe to John Hewett, 10 April 1780, who reported an additional visit to Mrs Trafford and concluded that 'she seems to take to us mightily indeed she seems very fond of everything that is Thornhagh or connected with the name'.

⁴³ NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 10 April 1780.

⁴⁴ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 21 Nov. 1779; St. Andrew Warde to same, 11 Dec. 1779.

Women's account books suggest that regular charitable gifts of money to the poor were an integral part of female spending patterns, although the method of giving and the amount given varied.⁴⁵ Gertrude Savile made a donation of a few shillings to 'the poor' every Sunday, whereas Lady Mary Foljambe recorded what were apparently random gifts of a few pence, or a shilling or two, awarded to 'a poor man' or 'a poor woman', usually donated 'on the road', a charitable act which was often criticised by moralists as 'an Encouragement to idleness'.⁴⁶ Such habits were often modified over time, reflecting changes in personal circumstances or in the climate of giving. Gertrude's weekly offering increased gradually over the years, from 2s 6d in 1736 to 9s in 1758, perhaps in response to her own slowly improving financial position. From 1792-6 Lady Mary dispensed no more than a couple of pounds a year in casual charity and from 1797 her method of giving changed. The doling out of shillings and sixpences on a whim appears to have ceased, to be replaced by a more substantial, and also more premeditated charitable instinct. In 1797-8, she gave larger sums of money, a guinea or half guinea to a few individuals, and began to make subscriptions to two charitable organisations, the Westminster charity school and the Westminster lying-in hospital, increasing her overall charitable donations to around seven pounds per annum.⁴⁷ The reasons for this change are not noted, but the timing suggests that Lady Mary, like many other women at this time, may have been persuaded that

⁴⁵ M. Penn, 'The account books of Gertrude Savile 1736-58', *Thoroton Society Record Series*, XXIV (Nottingham, 1967), passim; NAO DDSR 221/43, Account Book of Lady Mary Foljambe, passim.

⁴⁶ Pennington, *Unfortunate mother*, pp. 78-82; J. Fordyce, *A father's legacy to his daughters* (1774), p. 20, made a similar point.

⁴⁷ The relatively low levels of donation were not a peculiarly female trait. Stone, *Open elite*, p. 317 points out that the proportion of money donated to charitable causes amongst the elite 'rarely, if ever, ...approached the amount of money or time spent on gambling'.

this was a 'better' way of making charitable donations in a climate of political uncertainty.⁴⁸

In the eighteenth-century town there were opportunities for women to combine sociability with charity. Abigail Gawthern's diary records her attendance at charity concerts in the Nottingham assembly rooms, organised to provide relief for 'distressed gentlewomen'. In 1782 she noted the fund-raising events for the newly opened infirmary, which included a church service with a collection and a concert in the assembly rooms in the evening. In subsequent years an assembly replaced the concert, and attracted support from the gentry and aristocracy of the area.⁴⁹ Another local cause, involving an outing, supported by Mrs Gawthern on an annual basis, was the church service and collection on behalf of the 'charity children' at the churches of St Peter and St Nicholas.⁵⁰

Widows and spinsters who had the legal right to dispose of their property in a will often took this opportunity to make charitable gifts to the poor.⁵¹ Again there were variations in the manner and purpose of giving. For some a simple direction to benefit the poor of the parish was all that was needed. Barbara, Countess of Scarborough left money to 'the poor' of all the parishes in which her late husband had been a landowner, reflecting in death the responsibility she had had in life as

⁴⁸ Prochaska, 'Women in English philanthropy', p. 430. She notes that there was a 'dramatic rise' in women's subscriptions to charitable organisations in the period 1790-1830.

⁴⁹ Henstock, 'Diary', pp. 40, 45, 49, 103, 110, 119, 124, 131.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 129, 137.

⁵¹ It should be noted that not all female will-makers made provision for charitable gifts. For example, Miss Anne Warde, although specific in her provision for family, friends and servants, made no mention of 'the poor' or any charitable institution; see HP/9/8, Will of Anne Warde, written 20 May 1773, codicil, 22 April 1780, Prob. 8 Nov. 1781. Similarly HP/9/35, Will of Mary Thornhagh, written 29 April 1749, prob. 6 July 1758.

the wife of the Earl.⁵² Others were very specific about who should benefit from their charitable instincts. Barbara Savile made it clear that only those that she defined as truly deserving were to be assisted;

And my will is that Fifty Pound be taken out of my money in South Sea Annuity Fourty Pounds of which shall release and set at liberty so many prisoners as are imprisoned for under Five Pounds each person as far as that Forty Pound will reach without nameing me or from where it came I desire the prisoners may be such whose misfortunes, not Idleness and Vice have brought them to prison.

As for the distribution of the remaining ten pounds;

Two pound be given to poor old Widow Butler, Two Pound to the Woman who hath the Evill to whom I used to give, Two Pound to the Pale woman calld Hazerd, One Pound to very old Mrs Bloom if living, One Pound to Mrs Moyles, the remaining part of the Fifty Pounds to be given to poor housekeepers. But none at the dore.⁵³

Between these extremes of general and specific charitable provision were gifts to charitable organisations. The Thornhagh sisters, residents of York in their latter years, both left money in their respective wills for the benefit of city charities. The York County Hospital, the Asylum and the Blue and Grey Coat schools for boys and girls received £120 between them from the sisters. Sarah also left £20 to the recently founded spinning school, adding a personal opinion to her gift; ‘... toward the carrying on such a laudable institution.’⁵⁴

Elite women’s understanding of the obligations of rank in the field of charity is evident in their comments about the generosity or otherwise of their peers. Abigail

⁵² NAO DDSR 212/41/1-7, Will of Barbara Countess of Scarbrough, written May 1793, codicils 23 Feb., 8 April, and 20 July 1797.

⁵³ NAO DDSR 225/23/10, Will of Barbara Savile, written 20 July 1733.

⁵⁴ NAO DDFJ 15/8/33, Will of Letitia Thornhagh, written 6 Nov. 1781, proved 20 March 1792; DDFJ 15/1/34, Will of Sarah Thornhagh, written 29 March 1788, proved 20 March 1792. For

Gawthern recorded the death of a local spinster, noting that ‘...she was very charitable to the poor, relieved numbers in distress, allowed several so much a week and left it them for their life.’⁵⁵ Those who did not meet charitable expectations were the subject of gossip. Letitia Thornhagh told her brother that a wealthy York woman had died recently, leaving an estate of £30,000, but had bequeathed nothing ‘to charitable uses’.⁵⁶

As discussed above, in the chapter on politics, women were alert to, and adept at, the use of social and familial networks to secure political office and employment both for family and social inferiors. Similar skills were also used to obtain benevolent aid for those perceived to be in need. The Duchess of Portland was successful in her application to the king for a pension of £200 for an old friend. Mrs Delany noted that; ‘She has been a zealous and kind friend, and has acted in this affair as few in her station have the inclination to do...’, adding a few days later that the Duchess’s benevolent exertions had taken their toll; ‘she has been engaged with so many distressed people that it has very much sunk her’.⁵⁷ The Duchess also approached her own family to act in a benevolent capacity. She asked her son to find modest accommodation for a Mrs Johnes [sic] who was ‘left in a very distressful circumstances & with difficulty can support herself’.⁵⁸

further details of these York charities and the part played by women in setting them up see E. Gray, *Papers and diaries of a York family, 1764-1839*, pp.53-66.

⁵⁵ Henstock, ‘Diary’, p. 107; see also p. 65 for Abigail’s praise of a Miss Partridge whose ‘humanity prompted her to relieve... the wants of her fellow creatures.’

⁵⁶ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 4 Jan. 1779.

⁵⁷ Llanover, *Delany*, Series 1, Vol. 3, pp. 23-5, 34.

⁵⁸ NUMD PwF 790-1, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 18 Sept., 6 Oct. 1766.

When women felt strongly about their cause they could demonstrate considerable persistence in pursuing their benevolent aims, even if this brought them into direct conflict with other family members. Lady Mary Foljambe was dogged in maintaining pressure on her brothers to assist the daughters of their sister Lady Louisa Hartley. After Louisa's death, the Lumleys had agreed an annual maintenance payment of £800 with their father Henry Winchcombe Hartley, to provide for the girls education. In 1815-16 Hartley repeatedly sought further assistance and directed his requests via the widowed Lady Mary. She had insufficient means to help the girls herself, but responded by petitioning her brothers on Hartley's behalf, in defiance of explicit instructions from them not to interfere and in the face of their exasperation and wrath. Her justification was that she felt this to be 'a duty'.⁵⁹

Women also took personal action for the provision of benevolent aid to elderly servants who were too old or infirm to continue in service. Mary Arabella Foljambe kept a weather eye on the welfare of her father's old housekeeper, reporting regularly on her failing health and sending servants to keep the old woman company; 'it is very dull for her when she is ill to have nobody to speak to'.⁶⁰ Margaret, Duchess of Portland took responsibility for a servant referred to

⁵⁹ Lady Mary Foljambe's letters to her brothers on this matter have not survived, although at NAO DDSR 221/18 there is an unsigned, undated and incomplete draft in what appears to be Lady Mary's handwriting in which she expressed her 'reluctance to give any additional trouble to her brothers on a subject in which they have already had so much', but invokes the notion of 'a duty' to justify her actions. Hartley's letters requesting her assistance and her brothers' responses to her appeals provide additional confirmation of the part that she played in this exchange. See DDSR 221/23, Winchcombe Henry Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 11 Oct. 1815, 16 July 1916; 221/10 Same to same, 7 Nov. 1815; 221/10 Savile Henry Lumley to same, undated [postmark 1815] 221/12, William Lumley to same, 15 June 1816; 221/25 John Lumley Savile to same, 28 Aug. 1816.

⁶⁰ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Mary Arabella Foljambe to John Hewett, 7 Dec. 1779; see also 4 Nov. 1779; DDFJ 11/1/5, Same to same, 1 Feb. 1780, 22 Jan., 8 Dec. 1781

by Mrs Delany as 'poor Mrs C.' who was suffering from 'total loss of memory', and was sent to retirement in the country, 'with some trusty person to attend her'.⁶¹ Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough left £40 to Nurse Alcock 'for her long and faithful services... & making it my earnest request my family will never forsake her'.⁶² Her daughters respected their mother's bequest, sending 'old nurse' regular cash payments and occasional presents.⁶³ Lady Frances Crewe spoke of her family's benevolence to an old woman 'who was the Guardian and Nurse of us all in infancy' and towards whom they all had 'the most affectionate regard'.⁶⁴

This essentially paternalistic relationship between employer and servant was also evident in the custom of providing tips or 'vails' to servants who, although employed by others, gave service to a member of the employing classes whilst visiting travelling or setting up temporary lodgings.⁶⁵ Women were not excused from the obligation to participate in this exchange. When Gertrude Savile stayed at her brother's country home at Rufford between April and November 1736 she distributed nearly £7 in tips to Sir George's servants. (this was in addition to paying out a similar sum for the wages of her maid and manservant for this period).⁶⁶ When she settled in her own country house at Farnsfield in

⁶¹ Llanover, *Delany*, Vol 2, series 1, p. 497.

⁶² NAO DDSR 212/41, Will of Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough, written 20 July 1797.

⁶³ NAO DDSR 221/50, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 1 Aug. 1805; 221/11, same to same, 1 Oct. 1806; 221/49 Lady Louisa Hartley to same, undated, [context suggests 1806], same to same, 14 Oct. [no year]

⁶⁴ NUMD PwG 130, Lady Frances Crewe to Dorothy Duchess of Portland, July 1791.

⁶⁵ On the matter of 'vails' or tips paid to servants when away from home, see B. Hill, *Servants: English domestics in the eighteenth century* (1996), pp. 76-92. She argues that vails were representative of paternalistic relations between masters and servants and the opposition to this custom, that gathered strength in the mid eighteenth century was a response to the encroachment of a wage economy. See Also J. J. Hecht, *The domestic servant class in Eighteenth century England* (1956), pp 158-68. She contends that although the custom of giving vails had become less prevalent by the 1760s it continued in some upper-class families well into the nineteenth century. The consequences for the visitor of not paying vails are described as 'insults and ill-treatment'.

⁶⁶ Penn, 'Account books', pp. 109-10..

Nottinghamshire in 1739, when visiting in the village she paid her dues to neighbours' servants.⁶⁷

A similar pattern of 'gifting' those who provided service, whilst in the employ of another, emerges in Gertrude's accounts for her trip to Bath in the 1750s.⁶⁸ On the journey she tipped servants in the inns where she slept and ate, and from the moment she arrived in Bath she was obliged to dip into her purse on a regular basis to acknowledge services provided. She noted that she gave 2 shilling 'to the musick that wellcomed me' on arrival and 'Gave according to custome upon first going into the Bath, for a breakfast as they call it, to the guid [sic], & slip woman 2-6, to the two maids of the lodgings 2-6, & to the chairman 1s.' All these worthies also received Christmas boxes and were similarly rewarded for their services when she left the following March.⁶⁹ Although there was a growing opposition to the custom of giving vails from the mid-eighteenth century, Lady Mary Foljambe continued the custom, noting in her accounts for 1795 that she had given 2s 'to the maids on the road' between Aldwark and London and 'given the maids at the lodgings' in Bristol, £1 10s 6d when she departed after a stay of several weeks.⁷⁰

Women who owned property were also expected to make a contribution to community celebrations. Gertrude Savile met her obligations to the villagers of Farnsfield by putting her hand in her pocket at the requisite times The 'men who

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-26.

⁶⁸ Again see Hill, *Servants*, pp. 81-2, for the custom of paying vails to servants whilst travelling and when at resorts such as Bath.

⁶⁹ Penn, 'Account books', pp. 129, 132-3, 136-7.

⁷⁰ NAO DDSR 221/43, Account book of Lady Mary Foljambe, pp. 13 & 18.

goes about on Plow Mun[day]' claimed two shillings; '42 children who came as customery a valantining' were given a penny each and on 5 November a two shilling contribution was made to the bonfire. At the end of the year, sixpence was donated for holly and ivy for the parish church and the bell-ringers and parish clerk were given Christmas boxes.⁷¹

The social performance was a combination of appropriate personal demeanour and deportment and participation in a suitable range of social activities, both within the home and in the public eye. Those who concerned themselves with the education of the young women of the elite were clear in their advice. The deportment of a young woman 'must answer her Quality, and be elevated, majestic and noble... an easy Grace, a lively cheerful Air should accompany all she says and does.'⁷² This was, however, no excuse for unnecessary airs and graces; 'A superiority of Rank or Fortune is no Licence for a proud, supercilious behaviour.'⁷³ As discussed above in Chapter Three, young women were taught from an early age that the 'the eyes of the World' were upon them. When a woman lacked the requisite social graces, her social performance was a frequent cause of concern, both to the individual and to her family. Gertrude Savile's diary records in painful detail, the discomfort she experienced in the public view and her unsuccessful attempts to mask her gaucheness. On her first visit to Bath in 1721 she highlighted her lack of physical grace and low self-confidence;

⁷¹ Penn, 'Account books', pp. 119-126, 128-130. As a leaseholder Gertrude Savile's obligations to the community were limited. Beckett, 'Elizabeth Montagu' pp. 157-8 provides an example of the broader range of benevolent activities that a female landowner with tenants might engage in, including the provision of feasting and educative projects.

⁷² J. Nelson, *Essays on the governance of children* (1763), p. 329.

⁷³ Pennington, *Unfortunate mother*, p. 88.

Coud I, who all my life have come Cowdly into a room like a Dog with his Tale between his Legs, unregarded, and happy I thought myself if I was so, all at once without practice, tread through a large asembly with Majestick steps, or Trott by them with a fashionable Rusticity, or Amble with a Gentile [genteel] Scuttle?...My utmost desire or aim was only that I might not be the ridicule and scorn of people; my dread and terour to be taken notice on...⁷⁴

Six years later, as a woman of thirty, the situation had not improved. After a visit to the theatre she complained;

What should I do any more in Publick? ...the World was not made for me, nor I for the world. I have but 2 things to choose. One, to show myself a disagreeable and ridicualous figure... the other to hide myself and let people invent what they please for reasons for my perticularity. The latter I must choose; I can no longer support the first. Want of Assurance has undone me.⁷⁵

In another two weeks she forced herself to accept an invitation to a concert, and on her return reported;

I have no command over myself... Fitt to be a publick specticle indeed.... At last set out with swell'd Eyes, stupidity in my face, dress'd like a ridiculaous charicter in a play, to show myself in one of the most polite, crowded places, and met with all I expected... Had I stood in the Pillory I shoud not have been exposed more to my disadvantage.⁷⁶

Even when her performance in public was not especially humiliating Gertrude was acutely aware of her shortcomings. On a visit to Court she castigated herself with lacking the social skills necessary for 'the pleasure of picking up aquentance, and pretty Fellows, and chating in corners etc.'⁷⁷ Even in the relative security of the domestic environment her introversion made her uncomfortable. A pleasant

⁷⁴Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 79. There are many other instances of Gertrude's discomfort in public recorded in her early diaries for the years 1721-2 and 1727-31; see for example pp. 94, 157-8.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.157-8

evening with close friends was followed by the comment; 'A little in a gay temper but not proof against Company... What is it that manacles not only my Actions and Tongue but my very Thoughts when I have spectators.'⁷⁸

Those who were unable to comport themselves within an acceptable range of behaviour were subjected to comment from their peers. Gertrude received little sympathy for her lack of social graces. Her mother found her 'perticular' and was severely critical of her daughter's behaviour. Gertrude's inability to conform to her mother's wish for a reasonable and well-behaved, daughter made them the subject of 'Town and Country talk'⁷⁹. Although Gertrude was considered difficult, she was expected to at least try to maintain the proprieties. Her brother was incensed when, in her forties she decided to retire from fashionable society, unwilling to struggle with her dislike of public appearance any longer. Sir George, evidently concerned for the family reputation, sent her a severely critical letter, provoking the following spirited defence of her solitary lifestyle, which fully acknowledged her own short-comings;

I thank you Sir for the concern you show for my Charicters suffering in my present way of life. I hope I do nothing so scandalous as to deserve it shoud. I chose to live out of the World because I was not fitt to live in it; because I had not spirit and courage enough to support a proper Charict[e]r in a more publick way of life. And I continue so ste[a]dy in my dislike of the World, the vain showish parts of it ... & I have not the least wish; nor coud any think tempt me , to go into it again. I woud much rather (if I must) be sensured in Private than expose myself in Publick.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.108.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 142, see also pp. 136, 139, where other well-meaning friends informed Gertrude of the gossip about her.

⁸⁰ NAO DDSR 212/13/37, Gertrude Savile to Sir George Savile, 29 March 1738.

Gertrude was not alone in preferring privacy to public exposure, but others, whilst confiding their preferences to other family members, were willing to ensure a sufficient level of public exposure. Barbara Savile, fully in the public eye following the announcement of her engagement to Lord Scarbrough, expressed her lack of enthusiasm for the delights of Doncaster races;

where everybody... was mighty busy running from breakfast to the concert, from the concert to dinner, from dinner to the Course, & from the Course (after dressing) to the Assembly, & from the Assembly (after dancing a great deal) to bed: this I daresay you will allow to be full & I shall grant it to be trifling , employment...⁸¹

Her enthusiasm for race meetings did not improve. Four years later she confessed;

It is a great satisfaction to me that we miss one of our great fatigues this year, in not going to York Races; they (I mean races in general) are far from amusing to me at any time, nor ever make up in diversion for all the trouble that attends them...

Nevertheless, she conceded, with some regret, that 'we must not think of escaping' Doncaster.⁸² As she grew older, she apparently gained a reputation for social laziness. Miss Anne Warde remarked that she was honoured to receive a visit from her kinswoman; 'tho' Lady Scarbro' had assured me she intended us a visit before she left Rufford, I imagined her dislike to moving wou'd get the better of her inclination in our favour.'⁸³

In the early 1800s the performance of the next Lady Scarbrough, Henrietta, wife of Richard, 6th Earl, were reported back to her sister-in-law in the country. A mutual acquaintance Mrs Vyner noted that she had been unable to see Lady

⁸¹ NAO DDSR 221/90, Barbara Savile to Gertrude Savile, 4 Oct. 1752.

⁸² NAO DDSR 221/90, Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough to Gertrude Savile, 31 July 1756.

⁸³ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Miss Anne Warde to John Hewett, undated, [context suggests Feb- March 1780].

Scarborough since she arrived in London; 'she is so engaged with Balls and Assemblies which are going on in a great style at least 3 & 4 a night'. The writer was concerned for the health and appearance of those who participated to the full; 'I have seen two who for 4 days last week were seldom at home till four & five in the morning & who by way of rest take the opera.... I can only say it is not of advantage to good looks... never did I see two such hags'. The ladies in question and Mrs Vyner came to the conclusion that Lady Scarborough 'stands it very well and that she is handsomer than ever, but then she is very strong and can afford to lose flesh'⁸⁴.

While it is clear that elite women were expected to, and did, put in an appearance at local race meetings or assemblies from time to time, and enjoyed the delights of the London season, the extent to which they took active responsibility for organising communal social events is not clear from the evidence available here. There are nevertheless some indications of female ownership of such events. A masqued ball was thrown at Welbeck in 1768, possibly to celebrate Dorothy, Duchess of Portland's return to Nottinghamshire after the birth of her son three months earlier. A surviving list of guests mentions 124 members of the landowning classes who were present at Welbeck for a ball, referred to in another contemporary report as 'given ... by the Duchess of Portland was the most brilliant of anything of the kind ever seen in those parts'.⁸⁵ This kind of event

⁸⁴ NAO DDSR 221/32, E. Vyner to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated[context suggests 1808-13].

⁸⁵ NAO DDFJ 11/1/8, List of the company at the masqued ball at Welbeck, September 28 1768. Over 124 names are listed, with details of their costume for the evening, ranging from Dukes and Duchesses, through Earls and Countesses and titled and untitled gentry families. It is interesting to note that all the families under scrutiny here were represented at the ball, with the exception of the Gawthorns of Nottingham; *London Chronicle*, XXIV, p.344, 6-8 Oct. 1768,' quoted in L. S. Sutherland (ed.), *The correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1960), p.15, fn 3.

brought local land-owning families together under one roof for the evening, reinforcing a sense of community. As a widow, Abigail Gawthern celebrated the completion of her refurbishment of her Nottingham town house by throwing a ball and a dinner for fifteen couples from her circle of friends in the town.⁸⁶

Whilst the art of social performance was tested most severely in the spotlight of public entertainments, the way in which elite women spent their leisure time in the privacy of their own home could also contribute to their standing and reputation amongst their peers. As the chapter above on domestic life has demonstrated, elite women, if they so wished, had the leisure to enjoy many diversions with a domestic focus. Decorative needlework was a source of satisfaction and self-esteem for some; Gertrude Savile claimed in a moment of depression 'Let those who are Gay enough go to see shows and take Divertions... My Tent is my most elegant Diversion and all I shall ever be fit for.'⁸⁷ Her skills were praised by her family, as were the embroidery skills of Mary and Belle Foljambe in the early years of the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ In middle-age Margaret, Duchess of Portland, aided and abetted by her friend Mrs Delany, was tireless in her pursuit of needlework, handicrafts and home improvement projects. Mrs Delany reported from Bulstrode in the autumn of 1760;

The Duchess of Portland has in hand twelve toilettes, a carpet to go round her bed, knotting of various kinds, besides turning, which goes on successfully... The great cave is begun... I am making some shell work ... over the Duchess's windows in the dressing room... This with visiting the cave every day, and directing the workmen are our morning employments.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 59.

⁸⁷ Savile, 'Secret comment', p. 107. 'Tent' was frame needlework.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 234; DDSR 221/20, Anne Ludlow to Lady Mary Foljambe, 2 Jan. 1805.

⁸⁹ Llanover, *Delany*, Series 1, Vol. 3, p. 621.

The playing of a musical instrument and the study of music was also a legitimate pastime for the leisured woman in the domestic environment.⁹⁰ When in her early thirties Gertrude Savile recorded many hours spent at the harpsichord and in later years continued to purchase sheet music for her own study and enjoyment.⁹¹

Margaret Duchess of Portland, having packed her morning with handicrafts included music and other 'work' in her programme for the afternoons.⁹² Perhaps the most widespread domestic pastime was reading. For example, Gertrude Savile read widely throughout her life, enjoying novels, plays, biographies, newspapers and periodicals such as the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* – 'the best things that were ever writt' and sermons.⁹³ Reading matter was both purchased and borrowed; Gertrude subscribed fortnightly to an early form of lending library for 'reading books'.⁹⁴

Such domestic pursuits served a purpose beyond mere occupation and entertainment. In addition they promoted women's engagement with elite culture and created common points of reference with others of similar background and experience.⁹⁵ The exchange of information about such private activities in letters also contributed to the creation of a public image of the accomplished and

⁹⁰ R. Leppert, *Music and image: domesticity, ideology and socio-cultural formation in eighteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1988) argues that music served a dual function in the lives of elite women, emphasising both their status and their femininity and confining them to domesticity.

⁹¹ Saville, 'Secret comment', see, for example pp. 45, 94, 108, 117; Penn, 'Account books', p. 117.

⁹² Llanover, *Delany*, Series 1, Vol. 3, p. 621.

⁹³ See Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp. 171-2 for a discussion of the range of reading materials available to the eighteenth century reader.

⁹⁴ J. Raven, 'From promotion to prescription: arrangements for reading and eighteenth century libraries' in J. Raven, H. Small and N. Tadmor (eds.) *The practice and representation of reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 175-201, explores the development of the lending library and reading practices in the eighteenth century.

⁹⁵ Brewer, *Pleasures*, p. 196.

appropriately occupied elite woman. For example, sharing opinions and ideas about the novels of the day reinforced familial and social links, and provided an opportunity for women to show that they had both read and understood the issues raised by the latest literature. Gertrude's nephew, Sir George Savile, sought her opinion as to the merits of Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* 'a book about which there are so many different and opposite sentiments'.⁹⁶ As Mrs Delany was pleased to note, private reading of another of Richardson's novels, *Sir Charles Grandison*, gave Lady Elizabeth and Lady Henrietta Bentinck the opportunity to form and express their own views on the novel.⁹⁷ Arabella Hewett, reading Rousseau's *Julie, ou la nouvelle Heloise*, hot off the press in the original French in 1761, was eager to discuss the moral issues raised by actions of the eponymous heroine.⁹⁸ 'The dispute is not whether she did right, but whether, if she did wrong, she is not very excusable.' In the same letter she also continued a discussion with her correspondent, Miss Hartley, on whether, in literature; 'it was not allowable sometimes for variety to fancy the farthest way about', enclosing an extract from the 'Cronicle' [sic] which illustrated her point.⁹⁹

Collecting was another form of engagement with culture in which women could participate and which could also provide women with the opportunity to demonstrate their superior discernment and in some cases, their spending

⁹⁶E. Milner and E. Benham *Records of the Lumleys of Lumley Castle* (1904), pp. 220-2, Sir George Savile to Gertrude Savile, 3 Dec. 1750.

⁹⁷Llanover, *Delany*, Series 1, Vol. 3, p. 261.

⁹⁸J. J. Rousseau *Julie, or the new Heloise* (First published 1761; 1997 ed. translated by P. Stewart and J. Vache), pp. xii-xiii, 649-50, makes it clear that the early English language editions of this novel changed the name of the heroine to Eloisa. The first English edition to use the name of *Julie*, did not appear until 1774. Discussions of this kind were common. See S. H. Myers, *The bluestocking circle: women, friendship, and the life of the mind in eighteenth century England* (1990), pp. 86-7 which describes the written discussion between Catherine Talbot and Lady Catherine Grey on the matter of personal choice in marriage in relation to *Clarissa*.

power.¹⁰⁰ Miss Anne Warde thanked her uncle for his contribution to her coin collection and Lady Henrietta Grey collected manuscripts.¹⁰¹ Margaret Duchess of Portland stood out in this field, using her wealth and discriminating taste to collect shells, stones, paintings, sculpture, and china, amassing an enormous collection of curiosities and art. At a sale in 1759 she spent over £1800 on paintings, buying works by Rubens, Van Dyke, Raphael and Rembrandt.¹⁰² In the 1770s Mrs Delany noted that ‘Among the Duchess’s acquisitions I forgot to mention china, of which she has added to her closet some exquisite pieces (about fifty) lately brought from Holland’¹⁰³ Her collecting, although wide-ranging was by no means indiscriminate. She dismissed an offering of some paintings from her son, politely but firmly; ‘I beg pardon for keeping the box of paintings so long but till today I had not the opportunity to look at them they seem prettily done but I shou’d be at a loss where to dispose of them.’¹⁰⁴ Following her death, the press reported that the Duchess had spent over £100,000 on the contents of ‘The Portland Museum’, lauded her ‘unremitting industry’ over a period of fifty years in putting the collection together, and finally noted that the thirty-eight-day sale of its contents recouped less than £12,000 for her son.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ BRO, D/E HY F112, Arabella Hewett to Mary Hartley, 9 Aug. 1761; see also same to same 4 Aug. 1759, in which Mrs Hewett chose to display her learning by writing to her friend in fluent Spanish.

¹⁰⁰ Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination*, p.253-5, 260, looks at the different ways in which collections were put together by elite men.

¹⁰¹ NAO DDFJ, 11/1/4, Anne Warde to John Hewett, 1 March 1779; NUMD PwF 4516, Lady Henrietta Grey to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 17 Aug. 1763;

¹⁰² Llanover, *Delany*, series 1 vol. 3, p.495.

¹⁰³ Llanover, *Delany*, series 2, vol. 2, pp. 371-2, 384

¹⁰⁴ NUMD PwF 895, Margaret Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 16 March 1775.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 20 & 24 April, 12 June 1786.

Women with sufficient enthusiasm and resources could make their mark on the cultural life of the day by acting as patrons of the arts or sciences. The most widely practised form of artistic patronage exercised by women in this study was the employment of a portrait painter.¹⁰⁶ Gertrude Savile, following the example of the rest of her family, accused herself of being 'guilty of a strange piece of vanity' having spent five guineas on a portrait 'no more like me than if the painter had never seen me'¹⁰⁷ The Portlands noted their disappointment with Romney's portrait of Dorothy Duchess of Portland and Lady Mary Foljambe commissioned Grimaldi to paint keepsake miniature portraits of her sister, Lady Louisa Hartley and her children, before their departure for the Cape.¹⁰⁸

Again, Margaret, Duchess of Portland's activities as a patron demonstrate the extent to which an elite woman could promote and support the artistic and scientific life of the day. Her support and encouragement of the Bluestocking circle has received attention elsewhere, but it is clear that, in pursuit of her own particular interests she also gave far wider support to the artistic, literary and scientific communities.¹⁰⁹ Her passion for botany and zoology led her to seek assistance from artists and natural scientists in cataloguing and recording the appearance of plants and animals. For example in the autumn and winter of 1769-70, she employed the Rev. John Lightfoot, to help her catalogue fungi and other plant-life. Mrs Delany reported;

¹⁰⁶ Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp. 208-210, for the range of purposes for which portraits were commissioned by the elite.

¹⁰⁷ Saville 'Secret comment', p.196. See also pp. 175-6, 182-4.

¹⁰⁸ NUMD, PwF 10636, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland; NAO DDSR 221/49, Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe 20 Nov. 1806.

¹⁰⁹ See Myers, *Bluestocking* pp. 19-44, on the importance of Bulstrode to the bluestocking circle.

we are now in the chapter of Agaricks and Boletus's &c. &c. this being the time of their perfection, and her Grace's breakfast room, which is now the repository of sieves, pans platters, and filled with all the productions of *that nature*, are spread on tables, windows, chairs, which with books of all kinds...make an agreeable confusion.¹¹⁰

The painter Ehret, amongst others, was employed to provide botanical drawings; 'Mr Ehret is very busy for the Duchess of Portland, he has already painted above a *hundred and fifty English plants*'.¹¹¹ Elizabeth Elstob, a distinguished but impoverished scholar was employed to educate the Duchess's children.¹¹² The Duchess and her husband supported the poet Edward Young; he corresponded with her at length and dedicated his work, *Night Thoughts* to her.¹¹³ Another distinguished literary visitor and correspondent was Rousseau.¹¹⁴

Throughout the century women demonstrated an awareness that their common social and cultural values were a powerful unifying force, establishing the elite as a sector of society who were both separate from and superior to the rest of society. At the beginning of her visit to Bath in 1722, Gertrude Savile was quick to point to the social difference between herself and a companion. Mr Preston was referred to as 'a Gentleman in appearance (tho' he be not so) ... I soon perceived

¹¹⁰ Llanover, *Delany*, Series 2, Vol. 1, p. 238, , see also p. 240-1 for further details of the Duchess' study of fungi. Reverend John Lightfoot, (1735-88), was a fellow of the Royal Society, published the 'Flora Scotia' in 2 Volumes, and catalogued the Duchess of Portland's collections. See also PwE 14-29, correspondence between John Lightfoot and Margaret Duchess of Portland, and PwE 63 for lists, in the Duchess' hand, of plants found by her 1769-70.

¹¹¹ Llanover *Delany*, Series 2, Vol. 1 p.173. See also PwE 4-5, James Bolton to Margaret Duchess of Portland, 25 Dec. 1776 and 6 April 1782, the former accompanying a fulfilled commission and the latter requesting that she might use his artistic services again, enclosing drawings of birds.

¹¹² Llanover, *Delany* Series 1 Vol. 2, pp. 14, 18, 33, 56.

¹¹³ Myers, *Bluestocking*, p. 36; Young's correspondence with the Duchess, 1740-47 is available in H.M.C. *Bath MSS*, Vol. 1, pp. 254-307.

¹¹⁴ R.A. Leigh, (ed.), *La correspondance complete de Rousseau*, Vols. XXX-XL (Oxford, 1991), passim. There are twenty five surviving letters between the Duchess and Rousseau for the period 1766-76.

he was not vastly beyond me in understanding, nor indeed in learning....but he was bred an Attorney, and to get money that way had been his chief studdy.' By the end of the stay relations between them had declined further, her dislike of him fuelled by 'some impoliteness perticular to people who only grow Gentlemen by their own aquired Money',¹¹⁵ Gertrude commented unfavourably on the social origins of the new husband of her mother's cousin Jane, Mr Bird, a cheesemonger; 'a sensible man, tho' not polite... I did not think she woud have married so mean a man', although her feelings were somewhat mollified by the knowledge that he had £7000.¹¹⁶ Arabella Thornhagh was happy to claim membership of a select group of women in the county of Nottinghamshire in justifying her decision to remain in the country during the Season;

... you know a Woman woud think herself out of the World if out of the Fashion, now that of Nottinghamshire happens to be to spend Winter as well as summer in it; the Great Ladys have set the example, and even of the Members Familyes who are themselves obliged to attend the Parliament, none think of stirring from our side of the County,¹¹⁷

The Duchess of Portland and Mrs Delany, were often quick to note their superiority of taste and discernment. On one occasion they were greatly amused by the reaction of socially, and culturally, inferior visitors to Bulstrode;

the chief thing that attracted their view in the great drawing-room was- what do you think? Not Raphael's Holy Family, Vandyke's Sleeping Boy, Bernini's Dog or Gibbon's carvings &c. ; but - *the spinning wheel*...¹¹⁸

A certain superiority is also evident in Mrs Delany's description of the Duchess' conversation with, in their eyes, a rather ignorant sea captain;

¹¹⁵ Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 31, 35-6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 186.

¹¹⁷ NAO DDSR 221/16/8, Arabella Thornhagh to Gertrude Savile, 10 Dec. 1744.

¹¹⁸ Llanover *Delany*, Series 2, Vol. 2, pp. 276.

The Duchess is at present very happy in the company of Captain Maccnamara, Capt. of an East Indiaman, the Rhoda: he brought her fine corals and is to bring her fine shells; the man seems to have no great judgement about them, and it would divert you to hear the Duchess and I tutoring him on the subject, and coaxing him to bring us the treasures of the deep.¹¹⁹

Having explored the actions and attitudes of this specific group of women in respect of their position as leaders of society, it is difficult to square the oft-expressed notion of the elite woman as frivolous pleasure seeker with the evidence, which suggests that women entered into the pleasures of eighteenth-century life with an underlying sense of the responsibilities of rank in the social arena. Three aspects of elite women's social lives have been considered in some detail in this chapter, visiting, benevolence and the social performance, and it is evident that in each of these areas women recognised an obligation not only to do the appropriate thing, but also to be seen behaving appropriately.

Elite women were assiduous in maintaining social networks. Their diligence in ensuring that they maintained contact with neighbours, friends and family through the medium of the visit is clearly demonstrated. Women of all ages often found this activity dull, tiring and distracting, but accepted the necessity for the social contact that visiting guaranteed. It made them and their family accessible to their social peers, created and cemented new social links and re-enforced existing networks of friendship and kinship. Complaints were most vociferous amongst women from peerage families, those women with the widest sphere of influence to support and maintain through personal contact. Women from the county gentry

¹¹⁹ Llanover, *Delany*, Series 1, Vol. 3, pp. 262..

were more likely to welcome all the forms of social contact that their more confined social circle offered.

Women's contact with and concern for social inferiors also gives some indication of their sense of social responsibility. Women gave money to assist those less fortunate than themselves throughout their lives. Although the sums given were of no great significance, their regularity suggests that charitable giving was an embedded in the lives of elite woman. This habit was also evident in charitable bequests made by women will-makers. Those who failed to use their testamentary powers to make such gifts were often the subject of gossip amongst other elite women. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the women under consideration here were directly involved in charitable work, or were motivated to do anything more to assist the poor apart from giving a little money. In line with general trends in eighteenth-century society women seem to have been increasingly keen to use institutions to mediate between themselves and the deserving poor; the church, the infirmary, the orphanage and the asylum received the monies women donated for the good of the needy, rather than relying on their own judgement. Women reserved personal involvement for the business of using their social and familial connections for the benefit of others. Such personal patronage was usually reserved for the support of family members or social equals fallen on hard times.

Women were also active in the business of maintaining the social profile of the elite in the community by acts, which although not charitable, were indicative of the benevolence of the landed classes towards the community at large. Women,

like men, who owned property were expected to supported community events by providing cash, and to provide the tips and vails that routinely supplemented servant's wages. In the eyes of the general population, gender did not excuse women from the routine expenses of privileged rank.

The ideal elite woman was able to appear in public with confidence and was also able to bear the scrutiny that her rank attracted with equanimity. Gertrude Savile's record of her struggle with this aspect of elite life illuminates not only her failure to achieve the ideal, but also the pressure that was brought to bear upon her to do so. Her failure was perceived to reflect not only upon herself, but also upon the rest of her family. Gertrude was the exception that proves the rule. Most women in this study appear to have had little difficulty in putting on a public face, even if, in a few cases, their correspondence hinted at lack of pleasure in all aspects of social activity.

Even domestic occupations such as needlework, music and reading were a means of confirming the elite status of a women. The practice of appropriate feminine skills, learned from childhood, was an indication of a suitably leisured lifestyle. The exchange of information and opinion on the subject of these pursuits informed women's correspondence and re-emphasised the common experiences they shared with others of similar status. All of this was undertaken with a clear understanding that, as long as the proprieties were observed, it was right and proper for an elite woman to engage with the social world created by and for the elite. Infirmary, extreme youth or old age, childbirth and mourning were all legitimate reasons for women to be absent from elite society. Personal inclination

was no excuse. Women were expected to make an effort to overcome their preferences and fears and to enter society with a modest confidence.

This survey of elite women's activities in the field of social leadership has demonstrated that women's responsibilities were taken seriously by all sectors of eighteenth century society; by women themselves, by their families and friends, by their social equals and their social inferiors. Elite women were well aware of the distinctions of rank that underpinned the social order and made a range of self-conscious contributions to the maintenance of that social order.

Chapter Seven

PROPERTY

[Women are] ... at all times kept in a state of dependence, by the restrictions of a severe legislation, which in the management and disposal of what property is allowed them, commonly cramps the freedom of their will.¹

This chapter will explore three aspects of elite women's relationship with property in the eighteenth century. First, marriage settlements, wills and other legal documents will be used to determine what stake women had in the wealth of the elite, and evidence sought in these and other family papers concerning the extent of control that women exercised over their stake-holding. Second, women's day-to-day economic activities and responsibilities will be examined and finally attention will be paid to the attitudes of both women and their families to female property ownership .

Eighteenth-century law recognised two major categories of property; real property and chattel property. The former was all land and building, the latter all moveable property including money. Property ownership was subject to five separate bodies of law; common law, equity, ecclesiastical law, manorial law and statute law.² Common law was clear as to what a woman was entitled to at each stage in her life. A daughter as a younger child was entitled to a portion of her parent's

¹ W. Alexander, *The history of women*, (1779), Vol. 1, p. 210.

² A.L. Erikson, *Women and property in Early Modern England* (1995), pp. 5-6, provides a succinct summary of the principle functions of each of these bodies and pp. 21-45 a comprehensive discussion of how each of these jurisdictions operated in respect of women and property. See also L. Holcombe, *Wives and Property*(1983), pp. 19-47 for the operation of common law and equity in relation to married women and property; J. Greenberg, 'The legal status of the English woman in

personal estate; once she reached majority she gained the legal status of *feme sole*, and had the right to control and dispose of her property as she pleased. Daughters only inherited land in the absence of sons: if there was more than one daughter then land was to be divided between them equally. When a woman married she entered a state of *couverture* and her husband gained control of all property that she brought to the marriage, real or chattel. A widow emerged from *couverture*, effectively regaining the rights of a single woman in respect of property ownership and was entitled to dower, one third of her husband's estate, for her maintenance.

Equity could be used to modify the common law relating to women's property rights at each stage of the female life-cycle. Such modifications were frequently, but not exclusively, defined in a 'strict settlement', a document drawn up in preparation for marriage, setting out the distribution of family property during the respective lifetimes of the husband, the wife and their children. The size and provenance of a daughter's portion could be defined. Daughters could be excluded from becoming heiresses by entail male. Provision could be made for a wife to have 'separate property', providing her with an income of her own during marriage.³ A widow's dower could be replaced by jointure, an annual cash payment from the late husband's estate.

early eighteenth century common law and equity', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 4 (1975).

³ S. Staves, *Married women's separate property in England, 1660-1833* (1990), provides an extended discussion of the operation and implications of the practice of setting up trusts to provide married women with a source of income that remained outside the control of their husband.

The effect that the increased use of strict settlement had on the property rights of women has been the subject of an extended debate. Many modern historians have accepted the eighteenth-century legal interpretation of equity as 'ever disposed to exert its authority in relief of women'.⁴ Habakkuk, Bonfield and Stone have argued that strict settlement increased the economic security of women; portions were more generous and, being decided at the time of the parents marriage, less subject to parental whim. The jointure, by virtue of being a fixed cash sum to be paid out of the estate, was more easily administered than dower and therefore more likely to provide benefit to the widow.⁵ On the other hand Spring has maintained that strict settlement eroded women's property rights, particularly their rights in real property: daughters were less likely to be heiresses, portions for younger daughters were less generous, and widows 'faded into insignificance' as their dower right to one third of a husband's landed property was replaced by the jointure, an annual cash payment.⁶ This debate, although raising important issues, remains inconclusive in the absence of substantive research. Also, the focus on the provisions made in legal documents, rather than the execution, or otherwise, of

⁴ Anon, *The laws respecting women* (reprinted edition New York, 1974; first published 1777) p. xi. Modern legal historians have also tended to see equity as a beneficial innovator, particularly in respect of the property rights of married women; see Staves, *Married women's separate property*, pp. 11-12; Holcombe, *Wives and property*, pp. 37-39.

⁵ H. J. Habakkuk, 'English landownership, 1680-1740' *Economic History Review*, X (1939-40); idem, 'Marriage settlements in the eighteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., XXXII (1950); idem, *Marriage, debt and the estates system: English landownership 1650-1950*. L. Bonfield, 'Marriage settlements and the "rise of great estates": the demographic aspect', *Economic History Review*, XXXII (1979); idem, 'Marriage settlements and the "rise of great estates"', *Economic History Review*, XXXIII (1980); idem, 'Marriage, property and the "affective family"', *Law and History Review*, I (1983); idem, *Marriage settlements 1601-1740* (Cambridge, 1983); idem, ' "Affective families", "open elites" and strict family settlement in early modern England', *Economic History Review*, XXXIX (1986); idem 'Strict settlement and the family: a differing view', *Economic History review*, LXI, (1988).

⁶ E. Spring, 'The family, strict settlement and historians', *Canadian Journal of History*, XVII (1983); idem, 'Law and the theory of the affective family' *Albion*, XVI (1984); idem, 'The strict settlement: its role in family history', *Economic History review*, XLI (1998); idem, *Law, land and family; aristocratic inheritance in England 1300-1800* (1993).

these provisions, has prevented a true understanding of how property was actually distributed.⁷

With regard to eighteenth-century elite women's economic activity, there has been less a debate and more an assumption of female passivity in the economic sphere. Until recently women have been characterised by historians of the elite economy as cash conduits; brides brought money into, sisters and widows took money out of, the family coffers and little attention has been paid to the part that women played in the management of estates or other economic assets.⁸ Yet the evidence of a handful of studies suggests a long-standing tradition of elite women making an active contribution to the economic well-being of the family. From the medieval period to the nineteenth century women managed fortunes and estates,⁹ generated income¹⁰, were consummate consumers;¹¹ single women and widows took active responsibility for the redistribution of economic resources at

⁷ See J.V. Beckett, 'Family matters', *The Historical Journal*, 39, 1 (1996), p. 255; S. Staves, 'Resentment or resignation? Dividing the spoils among daughters and younger sons', in J. Brewer and S. Staves (ed.) *Early modern conceptions of property* (1995), pp. 199-206; idem, *Married women's separate property*, pp. 203-8.

⁸ Staves, *Married Women's separate property*, p. 203. For example, G. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (1963), p. 28; 'within landed society daughters were the medium through which rising families accumulated wealth...and had to be generously dowried to achieve a suitable match.' Or Bonfield, 'Affective families' p. 344. 'widows were detrimental to the family interest because they required the estate to support a second, somewhat more modest household for a varying period.'

⁹ J. C. Warde, *English noblewomen in the later middle ages* (1993), pp.108-28; M. McClain, *Beaufort the Duke and his Duchess 1657-1715* (2001), pp. 88-9, 116-17; the estate management undertaken by Lady Oxford during widowhood in the mid-eighteenth century is outlined in A.S. Turberville, *A history of Welbeck Abbey and its owners*, Vol. I (1939), pp. 393-407. J.V. Beckett, 'Elizabeth Montagu: bluestocking turned landlady', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* (1986); Idem., *Byron and Newstead: the aristocrat and the abbey* (2002), pp. 143-153 for Byron's mother's role in the management of the Newstead estate on behalf of her son; A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter*, (1998), pp. 151-2; K. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford, 1998).pp. 26-70.

¹⁰ Vickery, *Gentleman's daughter*, (1998), pp. 154-5.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 162-294. See also L. Weatherill, 'A possession of one's own: women and consumer behaviour in England 1669-1740' *Journal of British Studies*, XXV, (April 1986); idem, 'Consumer behaviour and social status in England, 1660-1750', *Continuity and Change*, ii (1986); idem, *Consumer behaviour and material culture 1660-1760* (1988).

death through will-making¹² and wives often shouldered the responsibilities of executors of their husbands' will.¹³

Some progress has also been made towards addressing Pollock and Staves' criticisms of historians' tendency to categorise women's economic interests as separate from, or even in opposition to, those of their families.¹⁴ Studies by Davidoff and Hall and Reynolds of the nineteenth century middle-classes and the aristocracy respectively have highlighted the extent to which women were 'incorporated' in the economic life of the family.¹⁵ In both social groups, the female contribution was often 'hidden', but women could be 'vital partners' in the management of economic enterprises.¹⁶ Women represented absent husbands, provided support and assistance with routine management tasks and viewed these economic activities as an integral part of their role within the family. This concept deserves further consideration in the context of the eighteenth century. Staves has

¹² Erickson, *Women and property*, pp. 204-222. Erickson suggests tentatively that widows who were eligible to make wills were more likely to do so than similarly qualified men. See also S. Lebsack, *The free women of Petersburg: status and culture in a southern town, 1784-1860* (New York, 1984), pp. 130-4, found that in mid-nineteenth century Virginia; 'Propertied women who had the capacity were more likely than were propertied men to dispose of their assets by will - actively, that is, and with deliberation.'; a wife was only entitled to make a will if her husband gave permission; see Erickson, *Women and property*, pp. 139-43 for an assessment of wives' will-making.

¹³ Erickson, *Women and property*, pp. 156-61; S.D. Amussen, *An ordered society: gender and class in Early Modern England* (1988), p. 84. Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (1982), p. 94. By contrast G. Main, 'Widows in rural Massachusetts on the eve of the revolution', in R. Hoffman and P.J. Albert (eds.) *Women in the age of the American revolution* (1989) pp. 77-8, found that rich men were more likely than poor to name a wife as executrix.

¹⁴ L. Pollock, '“An action like stratagem”'; courtship and marriage from the middle ages to the twentieth century', *The Historical Journal*, 30,2 (1987), p. 498; Staves, *Married women's property*, p. 203.

¹⁵ L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family fortunes; men and women of the English middle-class, 1780-1850* (1987), pp. 272-315; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, pp. 6-7 & 43-70. Both studies draw upon the concept of 'incorporation', as applied to women's economic activities in sociological studies of the role of wives of small businesses owners and of executives. See R. Scase and R. Goffee, *The real world of the small business owner* (1980), p. 94; J. Finch, *Married to the job, wives' incorporation in men's work* (1983). S. Ardener and H. Callen (eds.) *The incorporated wife* (1984), pp. 1-24.

¹⁶ Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, p. 272; Reynolds, *Aristocratic women*, p. 60.

also argued that the construction of femininity in the eighteenth century engendered female acceptance of women's economic subordination within the family.¹⁷

In exploring women's stake-holding and activities in, and attitudes to, economic matters, the distance between the legal provision and the reality needs careful consideration, as does the impact of the life-cycle. The young woman and older spinster as *feme sole*, and the widow, would, according to legal dictates, appear to have had the greater opportunities for ownership of and access to economic resources than married women. Is this reflected in their respective levels of economic activity? Did women really gain economic freedom of control as *feme sole* or widow, or was freedom limited by family attitudes and pressures? Were married women as economically inactive as their disadvantaged legal status suggested they might be?

Most women's personal stake in family wealth was defined in monetary terms. In the marriage settlements of the Portlands, Saviles and Lumleys, not one bride brought her husband land as part of her portion, not one married woman was given control over real property and the arrangements negotiated for widowhood were based on cash payments. However, as was demonstrated above in chapter four, 'Marital Decisions', with reference to portions, women's stake-holding in the eighteenth-century elite economy was not based solely upon the arrangements made in marriage settlements. Women also gained access to family property through the medium of wills and other gifts, both those of immediate family and

¹⁷ Staves, 'Resentment or resignation?', pp. 196-9.

more distant relatives. Although such bequests to women were often money they also transferred goods and occasionally, landed property. This first section will look at what daughters, wives and widows received from the family and the level of control they exercised over their property.

In theory the legal status of *feme sole* offered a young woman who had reached the age of majority and remained single, full control over her portion. In practice this control was only achieved if the portion was actually handed over to a young woman, a privilege which some did enjoy. When, in 1767, the Wardes of Hooton Pagnell made arrangements for the payment of a portion to their elder daughter Marianne on her marriage to Stanhope Harvey of Womersley, the younger daughter Anne, aged sixteen received a down-payment of £50 on her portion and promise of the balance of £2900 on her marriage.¹⁸ Seven years later, around the time that her father handed over control of the family estates and fortunes to his son and heir St. Andrew Warde, Anne signed a receipt for £2,900, the balance of her portion.¹⁹

Other cases are less clear cut. Although there is no remaining record of the moment of transfer, incidental evidence suggests that Mary Arabella and Frances Thornhagh, daughters and joint heiresses of John Thornhagh/Hewett, had substantial amounts of capital transferred to them at the age of twenty one and annuities to the value of £13,500 were purchased in their respective names.²⁰

¹⁸ HP/2/16 & 19, transfer of £2950 to Frances Warde and £50 to Anne Warde, 10 Feb. 1767; bond to pay additional £2900 to Anne on marriage, also 10 Feb. 1767.

¹⁹ HP/2/29, receipt from Anne Warde acknowledging receipt of £2950, 14 Oct. 1774.

²⁰ NAO DDFJ (A) 15 7/12, Abstract of the marriage settlement between Francis Ferrand Foljambe and Mary Arabella Thornhagh, mentions £6500 in 3 per cent annuity stock and £6500 in reduced

Frances's correspondence indicates that she received the income from these, and used it to pay her own bills and the wages of her personal servants, although still living under their father's roof.²¹ What is not clear from this is the degree of control that young women had over their capital.

Also it should be emphasised here that the parental portion was not necessarily the only source of income for a young woman. Although Abigail Gawthern was heir to her father's estate, she also had an inheritance from Archbishop Secker. In 1772, at the age of sixteen she wrote to the trustees of this bequest, with the support of her father, enquiring how much she was to receive in interest on the capital sum, prompting a kind and courteous reply.²² When she was twenty one she noted in her diary that she received Secker family heirlooms in the form of a pair of silver candlesticks and a silver epergne.²³ Letters from the trustees of Secker's estate confirm that six months later the money was being transferred to Abigail's sole control. Mr Porteous wrote first to confirm that the procedure had been set in motion. Having settled the accounts relating to the trust, 'tomorrow my banker will envoy the Letters of Money to the Bank... & on Tuesday the Stock will be transferred to you'. Enclosing the necessarily paperwork he concluded 'On Tuesday you will be in possession of your fortune & this closes up the whole business.' Three days later he wrote again apologising for the delay and assured

annuities, purchased with money given to her by her father. DDFJ 15/8/37, Petition from Francis Ferrand Foljambe to the Lord High Chancellor, 5 July 1784, confirms that Frances was in possession of annuities of similar value to her sister.

²¹NAO DDFJ 11/1/3, Sir George Savile to John Hewett, 6 & 13 Jan 1778; Savile mentions the arrangements for payment to Frances of the remittance on her Calder shares and notes that he assumes she intends to pay her servants herself. See also 15/8/43 (b), E. Tanner to Sir George Savile, 5 Jan. 1778, Frances Thornhagh to same, 26 Jan. 1778.

²² LPL Ms 1715, fo. 5-6.

²³A. Henstock, (ed.), 'The diary of Abigail Gawthern of Nottingham 1751-1810', *Thoroton Society Record Series*, Vol. XXXIII (1980), pp. 14, 34.

her 'that we shall put your fortune into your hands with as much readiness & pleasure as you can receive it.'²⁴ This £6000, invested in annuities, formed the basis of Abigail's portion when she married Francis Gawthern four years later.

On a less significant scale, it is evident that young women could also be indulged by their elder siblings. Lady Louisa and Lady Sophia Lumley both received incidental gifts of money and had their bills paid for them by their brother.

Richard Lumley Savile's personal account book shows several such payments. In 1795 he gave his wife seven guineas 'for my sisters Hats last year'; in 1798 he gave Sophia 10 guineas 'for her journey' and a further £20 a few weeks later. Louisa also received 25 guineas.²⁵

Other young women were less fortunate. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in the Lumley family two generations of daughters struggled to receive even interest on their portions. As the elderly Anne Lumley Saunderson approached death, she detailed a history of monies outstanding to her from her parents' marriage settlement and other legacies. She calculated that her 'fortune' was £18,000, but was resigned to the fact that 'I never shall (or my heirs) near realize that sum...& as to interest I never can possible have it, of which much is due'. The blame for her financial suffering was placed on the 'unfortunate affairs' of her deceased brother, Richard 4th Earl of Scarbrough and her brother-in-law Lord Ludlow.²⁶ It

²⁴ LPL MS 1715, Fo. 7-9, B. Porteus, Bishop of Chester to Abigail Frost, 4 & 7 Jan. 1779. See also fo. 18, George Stinton to Abigail Frost, 18 Feb. 1779.

²⁵ SH EMA/111/3, Account of private expenses of Richard Lumley Savile, opened 1 July 1795. My thanks to Lord Scarbrough for bringing these examples of fraternal generosity to my notice.

²⁶ DD SR 221/10, Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated. See also SH EMA/105 Account book for Richard, 4th Earl of Scarbrough, 1754-69. This shows that payments to Lady Anne were made during this period, but were erratic both in the timing of the payments

is not surprising that the same estate, inherited by the George, 5th Earl of Scarborough struggled to pay interest on the portions of the next generation of daughters. The letters of Lady Scarborough to Richard Basset from the time of the 4th Earl's death make frequent requests for 'regularity in remittances' on behalf of her daughters.²⁷ The unmarried daughters of Lord Ludlow, first cousins to the Lumleys were even worse off. Their aunt Saunderson warned that 'your poor Cousins, do the most I can for them, will scarce have sufficient in these dear times to live like gentlewomen.'²⁸

Even less fortunate, at least in her own estimation, was Gertrude Savile who had no portion from her father's estate. In 1721 at the age of twenty four she reflected upon her financial position noting that her father died when she was only three, and according to Gertrude 'left me a helpless orphan, unprovided for and thrown upon my brother's bounty'. This was a position she found intolerable. In Gertrude's mind there was a clear distinction between a 'natural' financial dependence of a woman on a father or husband, and an 'unnatural' dependence on a brother; '...neither father nor husband. Nature makes the dependence upon the one, and choice upon the other, easy...'. As a sister, dependent on the generosity of her brother, rather than able to claim a stake in the family money by birthright,

and the amounts received. In 1755, 59, 63-3 and 67-9, no payments are recorded to Lady Anne. In the remaining nine years under consideration here she received, on average. £120 per annum, but actual payments ranged from £25 in 1766 to £200 in 1762. Also SH EMC/2/7 Lady Anne Lumley Saunderson to Richard Basset, 22 Aug. 1802, in which a detailed account is given of the interest due to her from the estate of Richard, 4th Earl of Scarborough, between 1769 and 1801, totalling £3306 18s 6d. The extent and the causes of the Lumley family's financial problems during the course of the eighteenth century are defined in T. W. Beastall, *A north country estate: the Lumleys and Saundersons as landowners, 1600-1900*, (Chichester, 1975), pp.78-113. In short, Richard, 4th Earl of Scarborough died in 1782, leaving debts of over £70,000.

²⁷ SH 2/EMC/2, Lady Scarborough to Richard Basset, 1784-1790.

²⁸ DDSR 221/10, Anne Lumley Saunderson to Lady Mary Foljambe, undated.

Gertrude cast herself as 'such a depending, abject wretch', but knew that she had little alternative but to accept this situation; 'What I must doe, God knows, if his providence does not provide for me' because '... he has a vast estate and I have nothing'.²⁹

The sources which might explain Gertrude's dependence on her brother have not survived. All we know is that shortly after the death of their father in 1701, George then aged 22, inherited the Savile estates and title from his father's cousin Sir John Savile, 6th baronet. This gave George a considerable fortune, some of which he chose to use to improve the financial position of his sisters. Gertrude acknowledged that their sister Anne had 'already received a fortune from him which married her'³⁰. Prior to the complaints recorded in her diary Gertrude herself had been promised a portion of £3000 by her brother in the event of her marriage, and two annuities, one of £150 per annum and another of £50 per annum were to be paid to her after her brother's death if she remained single.³¹ Until the mid-1730s Savile made his sister an allowance for her living expenses; her diary for 1722 notes;

'On the 25th of March Brother was pleas'd to give me £40 for half a year's Allowance which he said he woud continue to me while I staid in his House, for Cloathes and Divertions; and when from his Family...as much more.'³²

²⁹ A. Saville (ed.), 'Secret comment: the diaries of Gertrude Savile 1721-1757', *Thoroton Society Record Series, Vol. 41* (1997), pp. 14 -15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³¹ NAO DDSR 225/26 Abstract of deeds or bonds made by Sir George Savile in favour of his sister Gertrude, 1717-1723.

³² Saville 'Secret Comment', p. 26

That this allowance continued, is evident from the subsequent occasional references to Gertrude receiving sums of £50 and £100 from her brother.³³

Savile's generosity, although not always appreciated by his sister, was a signal of his sense of responsibility towards her, allowing her to benefit from his social and financial elevation.

The separate property of married women is evident in the promises of 'pin-money' made in marriage settlements and family correspondence relating to the negotiations leading up to marriage.³⁴ Gertrude Savile reported that in the bargaining that preceded her brother's marriage to Mary Pratt; 'Every grand article agreed upon; Pin-Money, at first insisted upon, given up.'³⁵ When Lady Louisa Thynne was to be married to Lord Aylsford, her mother noted that the groom was 'desirous to do anything that can shew his regard to her'. Included in the package that was under discussion was £400 pin-money and also the additional proposal that the bride 'shoud have a certain part of her own fortune at her own disposal.'³⁶

Although the scant evidence is by no means conclusive, it appears that the larger the portion brought to the marriage, the greater the chance that the settlement would include a provision for pin-money. In the three surviving marriage settlements agreeing a portion of more than £20,000 there was an arrangement made for pin-money. Lady Margaret Harley was to receive £500 per annum,

³³ Ibid., pp. 85, 112, 117.

³⁴ Provision for pin money could also be made pre- or post-nuptially; see Staves, *Married women's*, pp. 132-3, & pp.131-161 for a broader discussion of the topic; also comments in Spring, *Law*, pp. 53-4, Habakkuk, *Marriage*, pp. 79-80.

³⁵ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 34.

³⁶ NUMD PwF 8747, Elizabeth, Lady Weymouth to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 22 Oct. 1781.

Dorothy Cavendish £600 and Arabella Savile £820. The source and management of this form of separate property varied. Lady Margaret's £500 was to come from properties held in trust for this purpose by her father, Lord Oxford with the proviso that her husband 'is not to intermeddle or have any controlling power over.'³⁷ When Lady Margaret's son married in 1766, his bride Dorothy Cavendish was to have pin-money of £600, to be paid from rents issuing out of specific Portland estates. This sum was to increase to £800 after the death of the Dowager Duchess.³⁸ The arrangements for the payment of pin money in the marriage settlement of Arabella Savile and John Thornhagh included a clause that stipulated that if Thornhagh was more than thirty-one days late in making the quarterly payments due to his wife, she was entitled to seize possession of land from the specified estates of equivalent value to the outstanding payment.³⁹ When Abigail Frost and Francis Gawthorn married in 1783, the settlement entitled Abigail to continue to receive the interest on her portion of £6705 'for her own use notwithstanding marriage'.⁴⁰ What we do not have in this case, or in any of the others mentioned above, is evidence of whether wives actually received the 'pin-money' promised or what they did with it.

Married women's separate property could also be created by other family members after a marriage. Barbara Savile specified that all the cash, goods and property that she bequeathed in her will to her married daughter and her niece was

³⁷ NUMD P1 D, Marriage settlement of the second Duke and Duchess of Portland, 10 July 1734.

³⁸ NUMD PwF 9672, Proposals for a settlement on the marriage of the most noble William Duke of Portland with the Right Honourable Lady Dorothy Cavendish, 1766.

³⁹ NAO DDFJ 15/5/8 (1) Marriage settlement of John Thornhagh and Arabella Savile, 1744.

⁴⁰ LPL Ms 2165, ff. 39-41, details of the marriage settlement of Francis Gawthorn and Abigail Frost, written in Abigail's own hand, undated.

to be for their 'sole and separate use & Benefit and not to be subject or lyable to the debts controll or intermeddling' of their respective present or future husbands. Moreover, this will deemed that the signature of these women was sufficient receipt for payments made to them, notwithstanding the rules of *couverture*.⁴¹ In the same document Barbara sought to prevent her daughter's estranged second husband, a Belgian, Baronne D'Ognys, from getting the benefit of the bequests, even going to the extent of forbidding the removal of household goods from English soil.

There is no evidence of a trust for married women's separate property being made for Lady Louisa Lumley either before or after her marriage to Winchcombe Hartley. However seven years after the marriage the family took informal measures to place control over their continuing economic contribution to the marriage in Louisa's sole care. Exasperated affection, combined with the knowledge that Lady Louisa's economic problems reflected badly on the family, prompted the Lumleys and Frances Foljambe to bail out the Hartleys on a regular basis. After an expensive trip to Bath at the end of 1804 the family were united in their determination to prevent further exploitation of their good will towards their sister. Richard Lumley Savile wrote to Lady Mary Foljambe;

I confess that in my acts of affection to Louisa I expected to be a dupe to the tricks and extravagances of an artful [.] in some degree, but not to the amount this last business makes it ... the whole sum expended £330, besides some occasional assistance which I am sure they have had from my brother Scarbrough... I am

⁴¹ NAO DDSR 225/23/10, Will of Barbara Savile, 20 July 1733. A similar clause was used in the will of Sarah Thornhagh. Although she did not specify that the money and goods to female relatives was to be 'separate property', she did indicate that married women should be sufficient signatories for the receipt of their legacies 'notwithstanding *couverture*'; see DDFJ, 15/3/34, Will of Sarah Thornhagh, made 29 March 1788, proved 20 March 1792.

the dupe of an Extravagant fellow, who makes Louisa the cat's paw, to get all the money she can from her family.⁴²

Their immediate solution was to make further payments from the family directly to Louisa, an arrangement which was apparently acceptable.⁴³

Lady Louisa assured her sister Mary that she had placed her money beyond her husband's reach; 'in such a manner as he could have no control over it ... I assure you that all our money now passes through my hands & an account [is] kept of all our outgoings by myself.'⁴⁴ What happened to the money after Louisa extracted it from her separate account remains open to question.

All widows in this study were entitled to receive maintenance in the form of jointure, the amount agreed in their marriage settlement. Although heirs did not formally dispute their mother's right to this form of maintenance from the family estate, they were frequently late in making payments. George, 5th Earl of Scarborough struggled just as much to scrape together his mother's jointure as he did to find the interest payments on his sisters' portions.⁴⁵ Margaret, Duchess of Portland received no payments of jointure from her son between November 1767 and June 1769, resulting in arrears due of £2400.⁴⁶ Economies could be made by the heir providing his mother with a home. George, 5th Earl of Scarborough invited his mother to return to her marital home at Sandbeck, after observing her

⁴² NAO DDSR 221/32, Richard Lumley Savile to Lady Mary Foljambe, 24 Jan. 1805.

⁴³ SH EMA 263(a), Richard Lumley Savile's account with Messrs Child & Co, 1805-1815. From 1805-7 Richard Lumley Savile paid £250 per annum to Lady Louisa Hartley. The payments were reduced to £200 per annum after he succeeded to the Earldom in 1809. Shortly after Louisa's death in 1811 he also paid £150 to Winchcombe Hartley.

⁴⁴ NAO DDSR 221/49 Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 12 Nov. 1805.

⁴⁵ SH, 2/EMC/2, Lady Scarborough to Richard Basset, 1784-1790.

⁴⁶ NUMD PwF 815, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Margaret, Dowager Duchess of Portland.

difficulties in finding an affordable house elsewhere.⁴⁷ However, such an accommodation was not always possible. When Lady Mary Foljambe was widowed in November 1814, by the terms of her husband's will she was given twelve months to vacate Osberton, her marital home of the previous twelve years. The house was to be held in trust and let to provide income until the heir, Foljambe's grandson from his first marriage, reached majority.⁴⁸ No other accommodation was provided for the widow and although the trustees treated her with courtesy and consideration they required her to comply with the conditions of her husband's will. Two months after Foljambe's death they told her politely but firmly;

Any arrangement for your residence there [Osberton] after the year appears to us impracticable consistently with our duty & the dispositions which have been made & that it will therefore be necessary for you to be provided with another residence at the expiration of the time;⁴⁹

Lady Mary's jointure of £1200 per annum allowed her to rent another house, Aston near Worksop, but her departure from Osberton 'this dear deserted place', was difficult and distressing, despite her stepson's compliance with her requests for favourite pieces of furniture from her marital home.⁵⁰

For the newly widowed the unaccustomed responsibility for financial management could be burdensome. In the year following the death of her husband, Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough, on taking responsibility for the

⁴⁷ Milner & Benham, *Records*, p.267.

⁴⁸ NAO DDFJ (A) 15 7/12, Abstract of the will of Francis Ferrand Foljambe.

⁴⁹ NAO DDSR 221/10, Francis Foljambe jun. to Lady Mary Foljambe, 27 Jan 1815.

⁵⁰ NAO DDSR 221/78 Lady Mary Foljambe to Countess of Scarbrough, 25 Aug. 1815; 221/17, Francis Foljambe jun. to Lady Mary Foljambe, 18 Dec. 1815; 221/23 same to same, 16 March 1817.

management not only of her own jointure, but also of the interest on the portions of her six youngest children, recognised the weight of her responsibilities and asked the 5th Earl's agent to;

make allowance for ... the backwardness of apprehension on a matter in which I am so little versed ... I shall most readily avail myself & endeavour to profit of every advice or information for conducting myself with prudence & fidelity to every part of my dear Family.⁵¹

Although she was initially assisted in her responsibilities as guardian by her brother Sir George Savile, and her brother-in-law, John Hewett, day-to-day decisions about financial matters fell to Barbara. The deaths of both Hewett and Savile, in 1784 and 1787, respectively, made her increasingly reliant on her son and his agent for advice.⁵²

Some widows were in the fortunate position of having sources of income other than their jointure. It was not unusual for widows to be appointed guardian of their minor children with control over the deceased husband's estates until such time as the heir came of age. Abigail Gawthern took control of her husband's estate after his death in 1791. Their marriage settlement and Francis Gawthern's will empowered Abigail to manage both his landed estate and a share in his leadworks business. Although she had the option of selling the latter she chose to maintain her interest in the business to be passed on to her son Frank when he was twenty-one. When a widow was also an heiress, in her own right, her position was even stronger. In 1801 Abigail also inherited her father's estates at Holme and Granby, small properties in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire and his town house in

⁵¹ SH EMC/3/9/3, Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough to Richard Basset, 21 June 1783.

⁵² SH, 2/EMC/2, Lady Scarbrough to Richard Basset, 1784-1790.

Nottingham, placing her in control of a considerable fortune.⁵³ Barbara Savile and Margaret, Duchess of Portland were both empowered in their widowhood as a result of maternal bequests. Barbara acknowledged in her will that she enjoyed ownership of and income from landed estates in and around the Newcastle area 'the chiefe partdescended to me from my Mother.'⁵⁴ Margaret, Duchess of Portland declared with pride, that thanks to her mother she was 'independent'.⁵⁵ Lady Oxford had given her only child a lifetime interest in substantial landed estates in Nottinghamshire providing enhanced income and responsibilities.

Women who owned and controlled land took their responsibilities seriously. The maintenance and improvement of the estate and the welfare of tenants and employees were matters of concern for both Gertrude Savile and the Duchess of Portland although the methods they used to exert their influence varied according to inclination and aptitude. When Gertrude Savile inherited her cousin Newton's estates she had no experience of estate management and there is no evidence to suggest that she ever visited her own estates. Initially she relied on her cousin Dr. Ogle, to manage them for her with 'great Justice, Genourosity and Friendship as long as he lived.'⁵⁶ After his death she employed Ogle's servant Gabriel Hall as to collect rents for her for an annual fee of two guineas.⁵⁷ Hall kept her well

⁵³ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 15.

⁵⁴ NAO DDSR 225/23/10, Will of Barbara Savile, 20 July 1733.

⁵⁵ NUMD PwF 787, Margaret Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 19 June 1766.

⁵⁶ Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 229-30.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

informed by letter; it appears that Gertrude took a keen interest in agricultural matters, trusted his advice and with his guidance treated her tenants fairly.⁵⁸

When Abigail Gawthorn was widowed she addressed her economic responsibilities with vigour. She entered into a major refurbishment of the house in Nottingham, maintained a sharp eye on the running of the leadworks, and after the death of her father and step-mother, when she gained full control of the Frost properties, sold off the Granby part of the estate and focused her energies on improvements at Holme. When business was done in her name she noted that it was she who had signed the necessary papers.⁵⁹

Margaret, Dowager Duchess of Portland, demonstrated enthusiasm for hands-on estate management, although this brought her into conflict with her son. The Duke complained to his mother that both he and the stewards were placed in an impossible position by her orders;

as soon as the stewards doubted the validity of my directions, which they certainly had reason to do by receiving contrary notes or at least particular ones from your self, my authority could no longer have weight...⁶⁰

She was equally enthusiastic about retaining control of the income from her estates. After several months of confusion she informed her son;

For the future it would be better for us both that all my stewards shou'd pay my estates into Child's hands that I may receive it when I want it...& the delay puts me to great inconvenience. ...Nothing would give me greater satisfaction whenever I have any overplus to

⁵⁸ See DDSR 212/14 for the correspondence between Gertrude Savile and Gabriel Hall. 221/14/14-20 for specific examples of Gertrude's decision-making regarding tenants and repairs, and her advice on how to cure cows of the 'common dredfull distemper'.

⁵⁹ Henstock, 'Diary', pp. 58-108.

⁶⁰ NUMD PwF 825, William, 3rd Duke of Portland to Margaret Duchess of Portland, 8 June 1770.

share it with my Dearest son & as things stand at the present I have the great mortification to be deprived of that pleasure.⁶¹

Portland, and the stewards who worked both for him and his mother, continued to ignore this instruction.⁶² The Duchess stood her ground and by March of the following year, Portland had complied with his mother's request.⁶³

Disagreement amongst family members over economic matters was the exception rather than the rule. For the most part women co-operated with other family members in the pursuit of common economic interests. Sarah Thornhagh, when a spinster in her sixties, corresponded regularly with her nephew, St. Andrew Warde, discussing the management of her considerable financial assets, the bulk of which were to pass to Warde after her death. In 1789 she noted that a Mr Allison was locked in York debtor's prison until such time as he sold his estate to pay Sarah her dues, adding 'I wish to leave no Affairs imbroiled [sic] after me'.⁶⁴ The following year she recorded her frustration that this unresolved problem prevented her from being able to profit from the favourable financial climate;

This is a fine time now for Dublin [sic] the funds for those that has money to dispose of. A friend of mine that had just sold out when the stock was the hiest & is now buying at great profit; my Affairs remains the same as when I saw you or elce I woud do the same.⁶⁵

Later that year she mentioned that this debt was 'now on the verge of being quite

⁶¹ NUMD PwF 775, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 16 Sept. 1765. See also PwF 1581, Joseph Briggs to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 18 Feb. 1764.

⁶² NUMD PwF 787, 792, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 19 June, 24 Oct. 1766.

⁶³ NUMD PwF 1599, Joseph Briggs to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 3 Nov. 1766; PwF 1841, Richard Brown to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 2 May 1767.

⁶⁴ HP/27/2, Sarah Thornhagh to St. Andrew Warde, 27 March 1789.

⁶⁵ HP/27/3, Sarah Thornhagh to St. Andrew Warde, 16 May 1790

settled' and went on immediately to outline her intention of using the money to invest in 'a good mortgage offered me some time agoe for £3000 but I had not the money at the time' and went on to ask Warde to join with her to the extent of £200 in raising the capital sum.⁶⁶ At her death Sarah's estate included over £18,000 in bonds and mortgages issued by her.⁶⁷

Financial co-operation was also evident in a range of economic activities that women undertook on behalf of their families. On a day-to-day basis, women were given responsibility for relatively low-key economic activities in the absence of men. Sir George Savile, writing from Rufford, directed his sister Gertrude to act on his behalf in London. She paid his outstanding grocery bills, cashed drafts and on one occasion signed a rental agreement on a London house for him, although she acknowledged that the latter was 'an undertakeing quite new to me'.⁶⁸

Chapter Four, 'Domestic Life' above, demonstrated how women routinely managed housekeeping expenses, but these responsibilities could be taken a step further, particularly if the family got into financial difficulties. During the Duke's absence on business in 1780 Dorothy, Duchess of Portland stepped in to work with the steward to manage the household debt. She sacked the cook, decided which bill had to be paid, kept an eye on the agent's pursuit of a substantial loan and 'press'd him as much as I decently could to get you a few hundreds'.⁶⁹ As

⁶⁶ HP/27/3, Sarah Thornhagh to St. Andrew Warde, 7 Oct. 1790.

⁶⁷ HP/9/43, Executors accounts for Sarah Thornhagh, 12 March 1792.

⁶⁸ NAO DDSR 212/13/6-7, 9-10, Sir George Savile to Gertrude Savile, 8 April, 17 June, 1723; Savile, 'Secret comment', pp. 62-3.

⁶⁹ NUMD PwF 10725, 10743, 10754, 10755, Dorothy Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 1 March, 11 Sept., 11 & 13 Oct. 1780.

mentioned above (see p.254) Lady Louisa Hartley made sure that gifts of money from her family were kept safe from the extravagances of her husband.⁷⁰

Personal networks were used by women to intervene when they perceived that the economic interests of the family were in need of protection. The widower Patientius Warde's spending habits led his daughter-in-law Mrs. Anne Warde to declare 'I think him totally unfit to manage his own affairs'.⁷¹ Warde had debts of over £1000 but signalled his intention of further borrowing from the Nottingham banker, Mr Wright. Anne reported that this had been prevented by the quick thinking of the cousin who was staying with him;

Miss M[allory] thought there was a chance of success therefore was so good as to wait upon Mrs T Wright & mention'd in as delicate a manner as possible that Mr W[arde] had run out & his son wished him to retrench his expenses & not enlarge his debts. Mrs W[right] said that tho' they should be glad to serve Mr W[arde] they would not do it at the risk of disobliging his friends.

An application for a loan in another quarter, where Miss Mallory had no female acquaintance, was also prevented by her asking a third party to intervene on her behalf.⁷²

Women were also effective information-gatherers, collecting crumbs which could be used to the advantage of the rest of the family. The Hewett and Warde interest in the affairs of their cousin Mrs Trafford, was actively promoted by Hewett's sister Letitia. Immediately upon hearing of the possibility of Mrs Trafford's interest in Sir John Mosley's estate, she urged her brother to get St Andrew Warde

⁷⁰ NAO DDSR 221/49 Lady Louisa Hartley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 12 Nov. 1805.

⁷¹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 2 June 1782.

⁷² NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, Mrs Anne Warde to John Hewett, 27 May, 2 June 1782

or Francis Foljambe to take an active role in assisting the Trafford claim. When cousin Trafford was successful, Letitia continued her diligence on behalf of the family. She passed on Hewett's offer of renting Osberton to Mrs Trafford and also acted as a go-between in settling the details of Hewett borrowing £1000 from her estate.⁷³ Even after Margaret Duchess of Portland had handed over estate management to her son, she continued to pass on scraps of information about boundary disputes, tenants and purchase opportunities that she thought might be of interest and benefit.⁷⁴

Some women made their economic assets work for other family members by loaning capital to family members in return for regular interest payments. In 1748, Gertrude Savile paid over £1375 of her capital to her nephew Sir George Savile, and £700 to her cousin's husband Mr Ogle, in return for which she was to receive annuity payments at a favourable rate.⁷⁵ The executors' accounts for Sarah Thornhagh showed that at the time of her death there were loans of over £12,500 outstanding from the Foljambes and from Sir George Savile's estate.⁷⁶ Such loans were not indiscriminately granted and family members were protective of women's interests. Although Cousin Trafford had been persuaded to lend Hewett £1000, later the same year Warde refused to broker a similar application from Lord Richard Scarbrough, 'as I don't imagine he is a good paymaster'.⁷⁷

⁷³ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 24 Sep., 23 Oct., 1 & 21 Nov. 1779.

⁷⁴ NUMD PwF 872-5, 879, 890, Margaret Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 2, 10, 14 Aug., 11 Sep. 1772, 30 May 1773, 23 Sep. 1774.

⁷⁵ Saville, 'Secret comment', p. 285.

⁷⁶ HP/9/43 Executor's accounts for Sarah Thornhagh, 12 March 1792; see also NAO DDFJ, 11/1/1, Part 1, Sir George Savile to John Hewett, 3 July 1780, for earlier discussion of Savile's borrowing from the Thornhagh sister.

⁷⁷ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, St Andrew Warde to John Hewett, 22 & 29 Nov. 1779.

Women could also play a formal role in the business of transferring assets from one generation to the next. They often took active responsibility for the administration of probate affairs, acting as appointed executor or as the administrator for the estate of an intestate family member.⁷⁸ Letitia Thornhagh appointed her sister Sarah as executor of her estate, and Gertrude Savile noted her activities in tying up her sister's estate; 'As administratrix to Lady Cole's received at South Sea House the dividend due upon her Annuity Stock. Paid the moiety of it (viz:- £800) to Sir George, and had the other half transfer'd to myself.'⁷⁹ Men also appointed women as executors. Margaret Duchess of Portland acted with confidence when appointed executor to the estate of her late husband's tutor, John Achard. Writing to her son of the death of her 'faithful and worthy friend', she continued in a practical vein; 'he has made me executrix & I shall write to Leivers to put a seal on all his drawers & cabinets until I can come to town'⁸⁰ Not all women displayed this level of self assurance. When Elizabeth Thornhagh made her sisters Sarah and Letitia joint executors of her estate, they obtained assistance from Sir George Savile.⁸¹

Women's relationship with their economic assets was not only about protecting and conserving the economic interests of the family. While this was important, women also gained personal enjoyment from the management of economic assets and the purchasing power of money. Margaret Duchess of Portland described land

⁷⁸ Erikson, *Women and property*, p. 34.

⁷⁹ NAO DDFJ 15/8/33, Will of Letitia Thornhagh, 6 Nov. 1781, proved 20 Mar. 1792. Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 232-3.

⁸⁰ NUMD PwF 830, Margaret Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 26 Aug 1770; PwF 832, Copy of John Achard's will.

⁸¹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, Sir George Savile to John Hewett, 28 May 1780.

adjoining Bulstrode on which she was to have first refusal, and told her son with glee; 'You can't imagine how excited I am with the thoughts of these two farms'⁸² Barbara Countess of Scarbrough took an active interest in the harvest at Sandbeck. In her husband's absence she not only kept him informed of the progress of the haymaking but also took decisions about manpower;

I never saw so fine a crop of hay ... the man...allows it to be very fine, but complains there are not mowers enough at it; I have thought so too & as he and John Pye both say so, I have ventured to give Mr Bill directions to get two more & I hope you won't disapprove of it as it is a pity to have it long in hand ... and not verify the proverb of 'hay & sunshine'

In the same letter she also gave her husband information about a potential purchaser for the bracken and reported on the condition of a mare and two foals.⁸³ She also wrote to her aunt, Gertrude Savile, confessing that she and a friend had been out in the fields, helping (or hindering) with the hay-making; 'indeed the prodigious quantity of Hay there is this year wou'd never I believe have been got in without *Our* help, w[hi]ch you may imagine was very *considerable*'. She also expressed a keen interest in the development of the kitchen gardens, comparing them favourably to Rufford, and anticipating their produce; 'you can't imagine how desirous I am to have them finished'.⁸⁴

Using money to purchase property of all kinds also brought women great pleasure. Gertrude Savile, having spent much time as a young woman arguing with her

⁸² NUMD PwF 765, Margaret Duchess of Portland to William, 3rd Duke of Portland, 10 Oct. 1763.

⁸³ NAO DDSR 221/15, Lady Barbara Scarbrough to Richard, 2nd Earl of Scarbrough, [undated but context suggests July 1756]

⁸⁴ NAO DDSR 221/90, Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough to Gertrude Savile, 31 July 1756.

mother about the use of the coach, recorded both the expense of and her delight in the acquisition of her own coach and pair;

My Health suffering much for want of Exercise and my lameness making me unable to have any but from a coach, I bought a Second Hand one, which with new harness, painting etc cost me ...£38. 13s. 0d in all. And agreed for a pair of Horses and Coachman for 3 days a week till Michaelmas, at £7. 13s.0d per week, and for the standing of the Coach that time, 20s. Used it for the first time of Midsummer day. How thankful I ought to be for God Almighty's bounty to make me able to bear this Expence, to allow me so great a benefitt and pleasure.⁸⁵

Margaret Portland often indulged her passion for the purchase of art work. 'I bought a sweet head of Sir Joshua Reynolds yesterday that I have long wanted it is a study by Corregio.'⁸⁶ Lady Sophia Lumley almost bankrupted herself in setting up a household for her nieces. The short-lived pleasure she received from this well-intentioned but financially misguided disposal of capital was unbounded. Her letters for this period exhibit an exuberance evident neither before or after, as money provided her with the illusion of independence and a household of her own. As she moved in July 1813, she told her sister that she had been in 'such bustle' but was 'much better and happier than I was'. Her pleasure continued through the summer, 'every day seems too short for us' and by November was reporting gleefully; 'I have been very gay this year; having dined out among our neighbours 6 times ... and I have now 20 morning visits'.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ NAO DDSR 221/8, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 17 July, 11 Aug., 30 Nov. 1813.

⁸⁵ Saville, 'Secret Comment', p. 282. For details of earlier disputes between mother and daughter about the coach see *Ibid.*, pp.131-170, *passim*.

⁸⁶ NUMD PwF 855, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 24 Sep. 1771.

⁸⁷ NAO DDSR 221/8, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 17 July, 11 Aug., 30 Nov. 1813.

The ultimate act of economic responsibility was to make a will. Women perceived will-making as a duty of property ownership. Letitia Thornhagh told her brother; 'it is right for every wone [sic] to doe it; so to dispose of their affects, accord[in]g to their own minds;'⁸⁸ Women also demonstrated their awareness of the consequences of failing to make a will. Gertrude Savile told her brother that; 'I was easy in ye neglect of it: & thought I ran no hazard, knowing... what I had from my Cosen would fall to you Sr'.⁸⁹ Even women who had not yet reached the age of majority might take the trouble to record how they wished their property to be distributed. Abigail Gawthern recorded in her diary for 1771 that after her nineteen year old sister had died; 'I received a few of her things ... her clothes she desired a Miss Jenkins of Canterbury might have; she made a will but Mrs Secker pretended she could not find it'.⁹⁰

Apart from fairly minor gifts to friends and small charitable bequests there was an expectation that women's property would, for the most part, be left to their family. Women who did not meet this expectation were the subject of gossip. The Thornhagh sisters considered themselves unlucky to have missed out on the largesse of one such York woman;

I think I mentioned in my last Mrs Jenkins being dead; she [h]as leftmy Cousin Trafford a thous[a]nd P[oun]d ; Mrs Stott & a Mrs Skillingleat each a thousand ; they are ... in distressed sercomestances that I hear she has done a great deal of good... In short she has disposed of thirty thousand in lagacies ;& ordered the estate to be sold; for payment; she [h]as left no relation Anything if we had but been so lucky has to have visited her we might have stood a chance of a thousand.⁹¹

⁸⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 12 Dec. 1779.

⁸⁹ NAO DDSR 212/13/37, Gertrude Savile to Sir George Savile, 29 March 1738.

⁹⁰ Henstock, 'Diary', p. 27.

⁹¹ NAO DDFJ 11/1/4, Letitia Thornhagh to John Hewett, 4 Jan. 1779.

St Andrew Warde was distinctly uneasy about his sister Anne's will, worrying that her disposal of her personal effects omitted certain key family and friends.⁹² His concern that she made no mention of her sister's Marianne's husband - '(an odd tempered man) nor his children likely to be benefited by the disposal of Miss W[arde's] effects' - led him to comply with Marianne's requests for Anne's burial to ensure that he was 'clear from all future blame from that quarter'. Also he worried that 'my sister has not remembered Mrs Bury: as she has on all occasions been a sincere and attentive friend to her ought not I to make her some present such as one of her rings; as a token for favours conferred on my deserved relation.'⁹³

The few women's wills available for consideration here show conformity in their bequests; the bulk of property, whether in the form of goods, money or landed property, was left to close family members. The spinster Miss Anne Warde bequeathed her entire portion of £3000 to her brother, and provided an annuity of £80 for her father. Her jewellery was left to family and her clothing to servants. The only bequest that fell outside this close circle was that to a cousin, Miss Elizabeth Mallory. In addition to a selection of personal goods, Anne also added that she wanted her 'friend' to receive an annuity of £50 per annum for life, 'if she remains unmarried by the age of forty'.⁹⁴ The Thornhagh sisters, spinsters who pooled their finances in life, showed a similar consideration for each other in their

⁹² HP 9/8 Will of Anne Warde, written 20 may 1773, cod. 22 April 1780, prob. 8 Nov. 1781.

⁹³ NAO DDFJ 11/1/5, John Dixon to John Hewett, 29 Sep. 1781; St. Andrew Warde to same 25 Sep. 1781.

⁹⁴ HP 9/8 Will of Anne Warde, written 20 may 1773, cod. 22 April 1780, prob. 8 Nov. 1781.

respective wills.⁹⁵ Elizabeth who died first left most of her property to her surviving sisters Letitia and Sarah. Letitia then gave her sister a life interest in her entire estate. It was only after Sarah's death that their respective bequests to other family members, nieces, nephews, their spouses and children, were to be fulfilled. The widows Barbara Savile and Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough, both took into account the fact that some of their children had already received more than others from the family fortunes. Barbara Savile stated her position on this matter clearly;

As my Son Sr George Savile has an ample fortune of his own and as the chiefe part of mine descended to me from my Mother I acquainted him with my intention of disposing of what I have mostly to my Daughters and was extremely pleased with the hansom manner in which he gave his ready consent to it and aprobaton of it.⁹⁶

Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough bequeathed most to her two unmarried daughters Sophia and Louisa; each received £1500, the furniture from her London house, all lace and household linen, sundry items of jewellery, family paintings and the residue of her personal effects. Next in her testamentary pecking order were her unmarried younger sons, both established in careers in the armed forces, who received small cash legacies and a few items of sentimental value. Her married daughter, Lady Mary Foljambe, George the Scarbrough heir and Richard, her second son and heir to the Savile estates, received only token legacies.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ HP/9/37, Will of Elizabeth Thornhagh, written 2 Nov. 1749, proved 6 Dec. 1780; DDFJ, 15/3/34, Will of Sarah Thornhagh, written 29 March 1788, proved 20 March 1792; DDFJ, 15/8/33, Will of Letitia Thornhagh, written 6 Nov. 1781, proved 20 March 1792.

⁹⁶ NAO DDSR, 225/23/10, certified copy of will of Barbara Savile, 20 July 1733 and codicil, 20 Aug. 1733.

⁹⁷ NAO DDSR 212/41/1-5. Will of Barbara, Countess of Scarbrough, written May 1793, codicils dated 8 April & 20 July 1797.

Also of importance in assessing women's stake in the elite economy is a consideration of the attitudes displayed towards female property rights by women and their families. As far as money was concerned, with the already noted exception of the heavily indebted Lumleys, the families under consideration here generally gave daughters, wives and mothers their financial dues. Portions and jointures were usually paid on time, or at least interest payments on capital sums handed over regularly with only occasional slight delays. Sir George Savile, 8th baronet, was even-handed enough to ponder whether he was paying the Thornhagh sisters sufficient interest on the loan they had made him.⁹⁸

Although women generally received their dues, their financial activities did not escape family scrutiny. When the financial stakes and the perceived risks were high a family could take strong measures to protect financial interests. Although Frances Thornhagh had been given control of her substantial portion when she reached majority, ten years later her increasingly erratic behaviour led her family to rein in that control. Early in 1778 she gave ready consent to granting power of attorney to her uncle. Later that year her behaviour deteriorated further and she was sent to Mr Willis' establishment in Lincolnshire for treatment. When this and subsequent medical attention failed to bring about any marked improvement she was declared 'a lunatic and not sufficient for the government of herself or her estate' from 1 June 1781. After the death of her uncle Sir George Savile in 1784, custody of her estate and her person was transferred to her brother-in-law, Frances Foljambe; £1000 per year was allocated from her estate of over £20,000 for her

⁹⁸ NAO DDFJ 11/1/1, Part I, Sir George Savile to John Hewett, 3 July 1780.

maintenance in a secure household in Hoddesden, Hertfordshire, and there she remained until her death in 1804.⁹⁹ Frances' fortune was thus protected from her 'extravagant' behaviour.

Even in less extreme circumstances young women knew that their financial decisions were a matter for family consideration, comment, and if necessary, action. When Lady Sophia Lumley was in her twenties she struggled to maintain appearances on the interest generated by her portion. She determined to economise by giving up her mare and stable boy; 'as both these things I do really find so very expensive ... & is literally money thrown away'. Yet she was fearful of her brother's opinion of this behaviour, begging her sister not to mention the matter as she wished to 'settle' it with him herself.¹⁰⁰ The financial consequences of her subsequent house purchasing activities were family wide. Within two years she had spent all but £400 of her capital and her brothers had to bail her out.¹⁰¹

When it came to women's rights in landed property, there is evidence to suggest that, regardless of the legal position, men could be reluctant to accept the moral legitimacy of such claims and that women could be fiercely defensive of their position as landowners. The clashes between William, 3rd Duke of Portland and his mother, detailed above demonstrate his resentment of her authority over her inheritance from her mother. He knew that the estates would eventually be his, but

⁹⁹ DDFJ 15/8/37, Petition from Francis Ferrand Foljambe to the Lord High Chancellor, 5 July 1784. DDFJ 15/8/38 contains a statement from a Frances Vanderpool confirming that Frances Thornhagh had lived for 'upwards of twenty years at Hoddesden', and annual accounts for the upkeep of the household servant wages.

¹⁰⁰ NAO DDSR 221/18, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 9 July [no year].

¹⁰¹ NAO DDSR 221/49, Winchcombe Henry Hartley to Francis Foljambe, 2 March 1812; DDSR 212/49 contains a statement of Lady Sophia Lumley's payments and expenditure for this

would have preferred not to have to wait to benefit from them. He tried many times to persuade the Dowager Duchess that it was in the best interests of the family for her to place his estates under his control in return for an annual payment of rent. When his marriage settlement was in negotiation he requested that his wife's jointure be secured on her estates. Margaret pointed out to her son that as her estates provided 'barely a support for me' they would struggle to support his widow as well in the unlikely event that they should both outlive him.¹⁰² A subsequent letter suggests that her decision was based on principle rather than finance;

I have long since made a resolution never to make any alteration in regard to my estate but to receive the produce of it as long as I live ... I know you have the best intentions in the world for me but as by my Mothers will I am independent I am determined to keep myself so & must beg you will never mention it to me again¹⁰³

Although the Duchess continued to pronounce her 'great reluctance...to make any changes in my mother's disposition', she finally agreed to relinquish control of her estates in return for an annual cash payment from her son and an agreement that she could live at Bulstrode, and to 'gratify my Dearest Son in everything you desire'.¹⁰⁴

Gertrude Savile and her brother Sir George Savile wrangled until the latter's death over Gertrude's right to the landed estate left to her by her cousin Newton. As

household. In DDSR 221/20, Lady Sophia Lumley to Lady Mary Foljambe, 5 May 1815, hints that she has already drawn her brother's, 7th Earl Scarbrough, attention to her plight.

¹⁰² NUMD PwF 783, Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 11 June 1766.

¹⁰³ NUMD PwF 787 Margaret, Duchess of Portland to William 3rd Duke of Portland, 19 June 1766.

¹⁰⁴ NUMD PwF 826, 842 Margaret Duchess of Portland to William 3d Duke of Portland 9 June 1770, 29 June 1771.

soon as the family heard of Gertrude's good fortune, her brother staked his claim in the estate. He informed Gertrude that, in his view, she had been left the estate in settlement of a debt of £500 outstanding between himself and Newton; 'I imagine he judged (and very rightly) that it would be as much to my satisfaction as he has disposed it.'¹⁰⁵ During the following five years Gertrude also inherited land from her mother and sister, and gained sufficient income from her landownership to secure her financial independence. Sir George, under financial pressure from legal expenses, became increasingly agitated about Gertrude's intentions regarding the disposal of her landed property after her death. In response to a 'Strange, Cruell, Tyrannical and I think, unjust and mean letter'¹⁰⁶ from her brother, in which he made financial demands upon her, Gertrude admitted that she had not made a will, adding pointedly that she was;

easy in ye neglect of it: & thought I ran no hazard, knowing... what I had from my Cosen would fall to you Sr; and depending upon your Honour (which I had always thought sacred) to dispose of it , in a just and proper manner.¹⁰⁷

According to Gertrude's diary, Savile's response was to 'threaten me ... Was forced to comply' with a demand that she sign two bonds: one to ensure that her executors would repay cousin Newton's debt to her brother, with interest from the time of his death, and the second to ensure repayment to his estate of every penny that she received as an allowance from the previous Lady Day to her death, also with interest.¹⁰⁸ Four years later this was still a cause of resentment. Gertrude continued to complain that her brother was 'dishonerably squeezing from me not

¹⁰⁵ NAO DDSR 212/13/19-20, Sir George Savile to Barbara Savile, 24 Aug. 1730.

¹⁰⁶ Saville, 'Secret Comment', p. 235.

¹⁰⁷ NAO DDSR 212/13/37, Gertrude Savile to Sir George Savile, 29 March 1738.

¹⁰⁸ Saville, 'Secret comment' p. 236.

only what my Mother left me, but what my Cousin Newton design'd me...
 Strange, unjust and vile treatment.¹⁰⁹ Their dispute was not resolved before Sir
 George died in 1744. He left Gertrude a token legacy of £100 in his will, in
 addition to annuities of £200 agreed before Savile's marriage.¹¹⁰

What is evident from this exploration of women's stake in the elite economy is the extent to which, whatever the legal position or family intentions towards women's property ownership, what actually happened was something of a lottery. Some women ended their lives better off than might have been expected and others were disappointed. Gertrude Savile, an unexpected late arrival in the family for whom no provision was made by her father, slowly edged her way towards financial independence, helped along the way by support from her brother, and legacies from her cousin Newton, her mother and her sister. In her own words she was transformed from 'a depending abject wretch' to 'independent of all'¹¹¹ By contrast, Lady Anne Lumley, also a spinster, set out with the great expectations of a young woman with a fortune of £18,000 and ended her life struggling to live in a genteel fashion as her family failed to fulfil their financial promises to her. In between these two extremes were those who received more or less what was promised, but who experienced their share in different ways. Frances and Mary Arabella Thornhagh, the only surviving children and joint heiresses of their father, John Hewett, were dealt a strong financial hand. Born to parents whose marriage settlement did not exclude daughters from inheriting the family estates in the absence of sons, they were both given at least partial control of their cash portions

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 247

¹¹⁰ NAO DDSR 225/24, Copy will of Sir George Savile, 9 June 1743; DDSR 225/26 abstract of deeds or bonds made by Sir George Savile in favour of his sister Gertrude, 1717-23.

at the age of twenty one. Yet neither ever exercised any control over the landed estates that they inherited between them when their father died. This was the privilege of Francis Foljambe, who had married Mary Arabella and who took control of her share of the Hewett estate, according to the principle of *couverture*. He also controlled Frances' share as legal guardian of her estate during her insanity. Foljambe's good fortune was to outlive both his wife and his sister-in-law; in time he inherited the entire Hewett estate.

While such case studies are illustrative of the wide range of possible outcomes for a woman in the elite property stakes and of the wide range of variables that impacted upon these outcomes, it is also possible to make some generalisations about women's property ownership based on the experience of this small group of women. First it is clear that while all elite women had some recognised entitlement to ownership of money or goods, few owned landed property at any stage in their life. The few who did inherit land, like the spinster Gertrude Savile and the widow Margaret, Duchess of Portland, cherished their privilege, identifying landownership as the source of their much-valued 'independence'. Moreover, women who owned property seemed to spend much time under siege from their close male relatives, only too eager to take control of what they perceived as rightfully theirs.

While it is true that in some families, the payment of portions, or the interest upon them, was performed grudgingly and in arrears, this was not always the case. One young woman, Anne Warde, did take receipt of the capital sum due to her as a

¹¹¹ Saville, 'Secret comment', pp. 14 & 325.

portion as specified in her parent's marriage settlement. Another, Abigail Gawthern, although living at home with her parents, took receipt of a substantial bequest at the age of twenty one. For most women the practice of loaning their capital back to the family in exchange for interest payments, suggests that female 'ownership' of money was often only a temporary state. Capital was attached to the family money pot on a long piece of elastic. Whether women controlled their capital or not, what they did with it was always subject to family scrutiny and if it was perceived to be at risk it was likely that the family would intervene.

While the family looked out for women's economic interests, and in some instances improved their financial position, women at all levels of the elite also took active steps to promote the economic interests of the family. They took responsibility for managing money: paying household bills, recording expenditure, managing debt, were all routine activities for women of all ages, whether acting as daughter, wife, widow or spinster. They also observed and assessed opportunities for other family members to gain economic advantage, recommending sources of borrowing and opportunities for buying and selling land and produce. Such information and influence was often obtained through informal female networks.

Women who were able to make wills did so for the benefit of close family. This small sample of will-makers tended to be selective in their choice of beneficiary, balancing the claims of close kinship with a knowledge of what individuals already owned. Both mothers who made wills gave most benefit to those children who had received least from other sources. There were also examples of trusts for

married women's separate property being established by a mother for her daughters.

While some women did clash with their families over economic matters, particularly where land was involved, for the majority co-operation rather than conflict was the order of the day. Women did not view themselves, nor were they viewed, as external to the family economy. At every stage in their lives they were aware that their economic actions had repercussions for both for themselves and for their families. Those who owned property of any kind had a duty to themselves and to their families to preserve and exploit this privilege to best advantage. Those that had little or no property of their own could make small, informal, but nonetheless significant, contributions to the family economy.

CONCLUSION

*'Wherever one turns they were present, infinitely present...'*¹

In its exploration of the lives of women in a small group of elite Nottinghamshire families between 1720 and 1820, this thesis has sought to marry three separate strands of historical investigation. The histories of women and of gender, through a reading of contemporary representation and discourse, have done much to promote an understanding of the social construction of womanhood in the eighteenth century and to define the roles that were predicated for women by their gender. The history of elites has been chiefly concerned with how this particular social group maintained its position at the head of eighteenth-century society, defining and exploring the formal exercise of power by men in the social, economic and political arenas. This study set out to explore the range and extent of female activity in all aspects of elite life, domestic, political, economic and social, to ask how this range of activity was achieved within the social construction of elite womanhood and to assess whether the activity that is uncovered can be deemed significant in the maintenance of elite pre-eminence.

Within the confines of a small geographical area and a limited number of families women's correspondence and other family papers have been found to contain a wealth of information that suggests that women were not merely 'infinitely present' but also widely active within the broad spectrum of elite concerns. The broad evidentiary basis for the study suggests that the pessimism implicit in such

¹ N. Zemon Davies and A Farge, 'Women as historical actors' in idem, (eds.) *A history of women in the west III. Renaissance and enlightenment paradoxes*, (1993), p. 1.

statements as 'the sources for the history of women are severely limited' is mistaken, at least in the particular case of elite women.² The outlook is more optimistic. It has been suggested that the way forward is to 'move the boundaries of established models... to ask new questions, which in turn reveals new sources, or at least new ways of using old sources'.³ This study has demonstrated that by adjusting the historian's perspective on the elite to include a consideration of women, and using sources generated by women, new evidence emerges of the feminine contribution to the profile of the elite. This approach does not seek to question elite hegemony but it does raise questions about historians' understanding of how this was achieved. The work also builds on the growing body of evidence available in the fields of family, economic, social and political history which, in recent decades, has established the roles that elite women adopted within these specific areas of elite life.⁴ This study has used the evidence provided by women's and family papers to determine the extent to which individual women engaged with each and every one of these areas of influence and concern, and to establish precisely how this was achieved within the social and legal framework of eighteenth-century society.

The individuals selected for study were not chosen on the basis of previous knowledge of their activities in eighteenth-century society, but were selected as

² R. Shoemaker, *Gender in English society, 1650-1850* (1998), p. 13.

³ H. Barker and E Chalus, 'Introduction', in idem (eds.), *Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representations and responsibilities* (1997), p. 24. As these authors acknowledge, they are in broad agreement with the views on the boundaries of history expressed in A. Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history' *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), pp. 412-3.

⁴ See introductions to Chapters 2-7 above.

members of families who formed part of the stable and enduring elite of the county of Nottinghamshire in the eighteenth century. This approach has embraced elite diversity. The wide-ranging and extravagant concerns of, for example, the extraordinary Margaret, Duchess of Portland bore little surface resemblance to the more limited field of action enjoyed by Mrs Anne Warde of Hooton Pagnell, less wealthy and often sickly. The confident Abigail Gawthern, as daughter, wife, mother and widow experienced urban and country life in a way that was quite different to Gertrude Savile, an introverted spinster. These contrasts merely serve to underline the impact of so many variables on the lives of women. Personality, wealth and health, social and marital status, all made a contribution to how women experienced membership of the elite.

This study has uncovered the range of women's involvement in the promotion of the interests of their particular social status. Women were active in every aspect of elite life, as recent work in so many strands of historical research has demonstrated. A close reading of family papers suggests that much of the contribution that elite women made to the maintenance of the elite was part of the fabric of their daily lives. Considered in isolation these small details have little resonance. Considered as a cumulative contribution they illuminate the variety and underlying purpose of elite female activity.

This study has demonstrated how girls learned from an early age how best to convey to the family and society at large how they embodied the privileges of rank and the subordination of women. The infant Mary Beresford Foljambe learned by the time she was two years old that print culture was an important part

of her life, but that in gaining access to this privilege she had to negotiate the rule of patriarchy that gave parentally-condoned precedence to her elder brother's desire to hold the book. Women became more skilled at negotiating the conflict between the requirements of gender and status as they grew in age and experience. Gertrude Savile, at one and the same time accepting of but unhappy with her brother's attempt to restrict her independence, argued staunchly for her right to seclusion in the countryside, on the basis that her flawed social performance was more damaging to family reputation than her self-imposed exile. In so doing she both avoided a direct challenge to male authority and tacitly acknowledged her responsibilities as a member of an elite family to present an image that was commensurate with her rank.⁵

While eighteenth-century moralists castigated elite women for their abandonment of hearth and home, women of the Nottinghamshire elite continued to demonstrate their domestic concerns in their letters, illuminating their nurturing of marital and maternal relationships and the management of provisioning and servants. What is evident is that, within elite families who enjoyed sufficient wealth to employ the requisite servants, there was no shame in using this resource to the full.

Delegating the mundane to others was what elite wives, mothers and housekeepers expected to do, and were expected to do by others. This was not a denial of the domestic responsibilities of the female elite, but rather an outward manifestation, visible to all, of the privilege of rank. The correspondence examined contains no criticism, either specific or general, of women's neglect of husband, or children,

⁵ See L. Pollock 'Rethinking patriarchy and the family in seventeenth-century England', *Journal of Family History*, 23, 1 (1998), p. 6, where it is argued that that family members 'did not accord

or lack of attention to domestic details. Complaints about domesticity were the preserve of women who did not have the resources that they expected, either as a result of a downward turn in fortune such as Lady Louisa Lumley experienced when she married the lawyer Henry Hartley, or as servants failed to deliver what was expected, as was so often the case for Gertrude Savile.

Women's immersion in the political life of the eighteenth century elite was shaped by the law and custom that excluded them from formal political activity. What this study has confirmed is that within these constraints women generally adopted roles that were reflective of the relative political involvement of their respective families. Arabella Thornhagh/Hewett rose to the challenge of entertaining the county in her dining room or currying favour with women at the Nottingham assembly when her husband first sought election as MP for Nottinghamshire in the 1740s. Dorothy, Duchess of Portland entered into the fray with the approval and encouragement of her husband at the Westminster election of 1784, while in the same year Mary Arabella Foljambe simply passed on messages to support her husband's political debut. Their engagement with this activity was not, however, passive. Personal correspondence and diaries reveal that women had opinions about all aspects of political activity and expressed enthusiasm for or disapproval of particular aspects of the political process. Moreover, women took active steps to gain access to political information, asking questions of others, ordering and reading newspapers, participating in discussions both within and outside the household and via their correspondence and observing, and in some cases

deference automatically but rather in such a manner to keep all their relationships in balance', in the interests 'of future well-being'.

participating in political events played out on the streets of eighteenth century towns.

The boundaries of women's involvement in the economic world of the elite were flexible. Most women had, and took seriously, the responsibility of keeping a simple account of the money that passed through their hands and when necessary were quite prepared to expand this area of responsibility. Mrs Anne Warde of Hooton Pagnell took a lead in recording and communicating her father-in-law's financial problems when her husband was ill, and Dorothy, Duchess of Portland grasped the reins of financial crisis management during her husband's absence.

Widows and spinsters who owned landed property in their own right were interventionist and opinionated in its management, as the correspondence between Gertrude Savile and Margaret, Duchess of Portland and their respective land agents has demonstrated. Women who had a degree of control over financial assets were ever alert to the possibility of improvement and growth. As the investment practices of the Thornhagh sisters demonstrated, women also took active steps both to take personal advantage of opportunities that arose and to advise other family members of them. Those women who made a will demonstrated their sense of the responsibility of privilege in the manner in which that property was ordered to be distributed after death. Acknowledging their privilege through relatively small charitable bequests, the bulk of women's fortunes were redistributed among family members. Most property returned to the family; money that had been extracted from the family coffers in the form of portions, jointures or inheritance were, returned there in the form of testamentary

bequests. Landowning women, like the spinster Gertrude Savile or the widows Barbara Savile and Margaret, Duchess of Portland actively promoted their own economic interests and defended their right to enjoy their share of landed property to the full while they lived, but accepted an obligation to return this benefit to the communal purse after death.

Women's activities in the field of social leadership were legion. Their tireless participation in the rituals of visiting contributed directly to the maintenance of social networks and helped to maintain elite visibility in the local area both in their immediate social circle and in the broader community. Coupled with this and achieving a similar end was the arrangement of social events that demonstrated personal and familial achievements. Abigail Gawthern celebrated the refurbishment of her Nottingham town house by holding a ball for fifteen couples in the drawing room and providing them with supper in the dining room. On a somewhat grander scale Dorothy, Duchess of Portland brought the county gentry together at Welbeck for a masked ball. Women also took responsibility for the public celebration of national and political events, wearing appropriate political colours for an assembly or arranging for the illumination of the street in front of the house to celebrate a victory in the polls.

Elite responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves was evident in women's actions in the distribution of charity, the payment of tips and vails and the wielding of patronage. Charitable giving was a regular part of women's lives, donations to the poor being offered through the church and through direct gifts to the visibly needy and by subscription to charitable organisations, social acts that

acknowledged the financial advantage they enjoyed. Women were also obliged to acknowledge the services rendered to them by servants through the payment of gratuities and to participate in the use of social networks in the practice of patronage.

These activities were also part of wider responsibility for social leadership which incorporated the need for a social performance. The scrutiny and comment of social peers and inferiors on a woman's comportment, appearance and manner only served to emphasise the importance of the art of self-presentation. Gertrude Savile castigated herself and was criticised by others for her inability to overcome her shyness, for not being able to chatter and dance and walk across a room with confidence. St. Andrew Warde was aghast at the activities of the 'Ladies' at Harewood. The social performance was also manifested in the way in which women emphasised their cultural superiority and good taste in art and literature.

A sense of duty is evident in women's accounts of their visiting rituals, their distribution of charity and tips, and in their manifestations of social and cultural superiority. Women were self-consciously aware of the image they projected and also aware that their social interaction with social peers and social inferiors had repercussions for the individual, the family and the elite as a whole.

Women of the eighteenth century Nottinghamshire elite were by no means confined to the local area, in thought or deed, in any aspect of their lives. At a domestic level, although all families owned property in the county, elite women set up and presided over and enjoyed extended visits to households in

Nottingham, in the countryside, in other counties, in resort towns and in London as necessary. Political, economic and social interests although frequently rooted in the county were not restricted to Nottinghamshire. Women, like men, owned property in other counties, were interested in international, national, regional and local news and gossip, and went to parties in town, country and capital. Wealth and family interest may have impacted upon the extent of physical movement and the range of available locations to set up home and life, but women of the Nottinghamshire elite were able to see beyond the confines of parish and county and act out their lives on a broader stage.

From the perspective of the eighteenth-century elite woman, twenty-first century academic definitions of 'separate spheres' and 'public' and 'private' have little meaning. The world in which the women and men of the eighteenth-century elite operated had many aspects to it, but it is evident that women took on roles in every one, domestic, economic, political and social, both in the 'privacy' of the dressing room or the 'public' space of the ballroom. They accessed political information by means of 'private' conversation or the 'public' media of the printed word. Their demonstration of elite superiority was implicit in the way in which they ran their households or managed money and estates.

Continuity of elite female experience and responsibility is evident, both over the *longue duree* and in the context of the eighteenth century. Between 1720 and 1820 there were changes in educational practice, in sentiment, in the expansion of print culture and the entertainments of the town, to name but a few. These alterations in the material circumstances of elite life did not impact upon their belief in their

right to economic, political and social superiority, they merely changed the means at their disposal to support it. Gertrude Savile was less broadly educated, more robust in her written response to the world around her and travelled less than her brother's granddaughters, the Lumley sisters. Despite these differences in the material world Mary, Louisa and Sophia Lumley and Gertrude shared a similar ethos of social superiority and the privileges and responsibilities that ensued. These responsibilities and privileges were little different from those of the medieval noblewoman or the Victorian aristocratic woman.

At every level in the elite, from the peerage to the village gentry, and at every stage of the female life-cycle, women were included in elite strategies for survival. As well as securing the future as the bearers of children, economic provision was made for women as children, wives, spinsters and widows. Use was made of their literacy, numeracy and social skills in political life, property management and social life. Women responded to the opportunities offered by eighteenth-century elite patriarchy in a positive fashion, making the best use of the resources available to them. Their activities in the domestic, economic, political and social world conformed to an ideal of elite womanhood which combined both the privilege of status and the constraint of gender.

This study has shown that women of the local and county gentry and the peerage in Nottinghamshire shared the 'unassailable belief in the social consequence and intrinsic authority of the propertied' that shaped the lives of Lancashire women.⁶

⁶ A. Vickery, *The gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (1998), p. 11.

By shifting the boundaries and asking a different set of questions the particular set of women's narratives on which this study was based have revealed that responsibilities of the female elite were broader than has previously been recognised, encompassing not only domestic and social obligations but also activities which underpinned the foundations the political and economic power of the elite. Throughout the eighteenth century women of the Nottinghamshire elite worked within the boundaries of gender and status, to support the ethos of elite pre-eminence in many large and small ways. The activities of individual women considered in isolation are of limited historical significance, but considered cumulatively they should not be ignored by historians of the elite, of women or of gender.

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PwG Correspondence of Dorothy, Duchess of Portland

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