

POLITENESS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SHEFFIELD;
PRACTICES, ACCOUTREMENTS AND SPACES FOR SOCIABILITY

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Abstract

For centuries, Sheffield and its surrounding hinterland of Hallamshire have been acknowledged as a distinct country famous for the manufacture of metal goods. In the eighteenth century, the discovery of new materials and technologies such as silver-plating, coincided with the rise of consumerism to create national and international demand for a wide range of fashionable and affordable table goods through which owners might demonstrate their taste, manners, discernment and sophistication. Sheffield became the centre of an industry that harnessed local technology, handskills, entrepreneurship with design, financing and marketing strategies to form a complex network of inter-dependent relationships whose success relied upon men who could afford to be neither parochial nor colloquial in their manners and outlook if their ambitions were to succeed.

Yet, histories of the region have consistently focused on the perceived homogenous, labouring and plebeian nature of a population that became increasingly radicalised as the century progressed. Lacking a resident aristocracy by which to set the social tone or offer direction, the notion of Sheffield as a consumer of fashionable tablewares or as a locale in which evidence may be found of its engagement with Peter Borsay's urban renaissance is one that has been consistently overlooked. Repetition of perceptions formulated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has resulted in Sheffield still being popularly perceived as much as a centre for political activism as the manufacture of cutlery.

Renewed interest in the eighteenth century as a period of social and cultural change has introduced new methodologies and understandings with which to explore the ways in which middling and provincial societies sought to establish their identities. They have highlighted how politeness offered them a flexible framework in which wealth and status could be displayed and a respectable niche in the social order secured. Whilst not creating a distinct social class, politeness facilitated the middling sorts in the brokering of new relationships that spanned parish boundaries and the establishment of identities that best served the needs and understandings of provincial societies.

This thesis will argue that Sheffield was home to an articulate, educated and urbane middle sector of society who employed the practices, accoutrements and spaces associated with politeness in the shaping of their identity and whose contribution to the social and cultural development of the region should no longer be overlooked.

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Abbreviations

ACM	Arundel Castle Manuscripts
Borthwick	Borthwick Library, University of York
CB	Church Burgess
CCA	Cutlers' Company Archive
JC	Jackson Collection
MC	Master Cutler
MD	Miscellaneous Documents
N.C.R.S.	Newspaper cutting relating to Sheffield, Sheffield Local Studies Library
SCA	Sheffield City Archives
SCL	Sheffield City Library
Step C	Stephenson Family Collection
T.H.A.S.	Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society
TC	Tibbitts Collection
WhM	Wharncliffe Muniments
YWD	Young Wilson Deeds

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Introduction: Politeness, Space and Material Culture in Eighteenth-Century Society; the potential for a middling society.

In 1760, Horace Walpole described Sheffield as 'one of the foulest towns in England in the most charming situation'.¹ Shaped by its landscape, people and metal industries, Sheffield and its surrounding hinterland of Hallamshire was perceived as a distinct country which eighteenth-century visitors viewed with some apprehension as they approached a town seemingly engulfed by smoke, noise and fire.

Walpole's description of Sheffield embodies many of the prejudices and anxieties felt by those venturing from London to explore provincial societies whose expansion, enterprise, and influence demanded their attention but whose place in the social order remained unclear. They feared that where industry and money held sway it was impossible that refinement and ease of manners, or sophistication, taste, decorum, and leisure to flourish without the moderating tone of a resident aristocracy. Employing stock dichotomies with which to measure provincial towns against metropolitan ideals,

¹Horace Walpole, 'Letter to George Montagu, 1st September 1760', in Peter Cunningham, (ed.), *The Letters of Horace Walpole Fourth Earl of Orford* (London, 1891), vol. 3, p.337.

at best Sheffield was perceived as 'homely', 'rugged', 'rough', and 'independent'.²

Seeking to contextualise provincial societies within a wider national framework, county and later historians repeated these convenient motifs with which to describe the people of Hallamshire. Other than in reference to its manufacturing capabilities, little effort was made to employ new terms or understandings with which to consider the social or cultural growth of the region. With an emphasis on the lives and practices of those engaged in the metal trades, Sheffield subsequently became a focus of study for economic, Marxist, labour, and social historians, and those exploring themes associated with history from below. A focus on the means of production has resulted in little attention being given to the region as a consumer. As a result, the region has become defined almost exclusively through its industrial heritage. In their various forms, these views have shaped perceptions of the region for some two hundred years to the extent that any contribution made by a middling sector of society to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the town during the eighteenth century has been dismissed as either implausible or extraneous.

I will argue that repeated use of outmoded descriptors and methodologies have resulted in the neglect of a vital sector of Hallamshire society whose ingenuity, sociability, entrepreneurship, and interests helped place Sheffield at the centre of a

² R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed. Sheffield, 1905), pp. 14, 39; Mary Walton, *Sheffield - Its Story and Its Achievements* (Sheffield, 1948), pp. 109, 136, 137; Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams* (London, 1921), p. 92; Caroline Reid, 'Middle Class Values and Working Class Culture in Nineteenth Century Sheffield', PhD. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1973), p. 42.

complex and sophisticated network of social and economic associations that were neither parochial nor plebeian in their outlook and manner. By utilising a wide range of sources and employing new understandings of eighteenth-century society, I will argue that Sheffield was socially and culturally far more diverse, urbane and hierarchical than has generally been portrayed. Employing probate inventories, Lorna Weatherill based her study of eighteenth-century consumer behaviour on the consideration that 'material goods were, [...] indicative of behaviour and attitudes', and that they possessed a 'symbolic importance as well as physical attributes and practical uses'.³ Use of inventories and other sources are used here to support the presence of an informed, articulate, learned, sociable, urban, and urbane middle sector of society whose contribution to the town requires long-standing perceptions of the region to be reviewed.

Literature Review

The shaping of Hallamshire as labouring, impoverished, industrial, and plebeian can be traced to the publication in 1819 of the Rev. Joseph Hunter's county history of Hallamshire and its capital Sheffield, in which the demise of direct manorial control by the Shrewsbury family in 1616 was portrayed as the end of a golden age.⁴ Hunter

³ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (2nd edn, London, 1996), p. 5.

⁴ Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York* (London, 1819) (hereafter, Hunter, *Hallamshire*).

opened his chapter on the 'Modern History of Sheffield', by quoting from a survey taken allegedly for Gilbert, VII Earl of Shrewsbury in 1615, which claimed that of 2207 inhabitants, 725 were 'all begging poore', 160 householders are unable to offer relief to others, and of the 100 householders who did give relief to others, only ten of them owned sufficient land to keep a cow.⁵ Hunter posed the question:

How it had happened that the town of Sheffield was in that state of poverty [...] and why we find not among its population the merchant, the substantial burgher, such as may be found at Doncaster and York, and in many other English towns now far below Sheffield in commercial importance.⁶

This parlous condition, Hunter concluded, was due to the combined effects of the absence of a resident aristocracy, the practice of manorial revenue being removed from Sheffield by the Norfolk family to their own estates, a lack of entrepreneurship, and the dominance of a metal industry whose cheap staple wares could not compete with loftier products made in London or Shrewsbury. Further constraints imposed by the restrictive regulations of the Cutler's Company, meant, 'no material wealth could be created out of such labour'.⁷

⁵ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p.117. The winter of 1615-1616 was particularly severe and such a picture may have been found in many towns of the time.

⁶ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, pp.117–118.

⁷ Revd. Alfred Gatty, *Hallamshire The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*: (2nd edn, London, 1869), p.14 (hereafter Gatty, *Hallamshire*).

As French notes, 'social descriptions cannot be divorced from the perspective and perceptions of the observer'.⁸ Yet, rather than addressing any attempt by Sheffield's middling society to acquaint itself with the social and cultural life which defined Peter Borsay's English 'urban renaissance', Hunter remained bound to the antiquarians' view of history based upon links with a classical past or at least the patronage of aristocratic families whose names were to be found on local charters, buildings, monuments and institutions.⁹ Yet Hunter's views acquired such authority that they formed the basis of subsequent histories with few venturing to offer evidence that challenged his conclusions. To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, in 1869 the Rev. Alfred Gatty produced an enlarged edition of *Hallamshire* to which he added his own material and that of the social reformer, Samuel Roberts.¹⁰ Having lost the 'gilding of the Tudor days' progress without an aristocracy was impossible. Elsewhere he wrote that, 'without either wealth or patronage' at the start of the eighteenth century Sheffield was but 'a mean colony of cutlers, in all its naked poverty'.¹¹ Again, in 1874, addressing the British Archaeological Association, he expressed the opinion that Sheffield had been 'up to about the middle of the last

⁸ H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007) pp. 11-14.

⁹ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989); Rosemary Sweet, 'The Production of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-century England', *Urban History* 23:2 (August 1996), pp. 176-177.

¹⁰ Gatty, *Hallamshire*.

¹¹ Revd. Alfred Gatty, *Past and Present Being a Biography of the Town During Eight Hundred Years* (Sheffield & London, 1873), p. 100.

century [1750] a mere settlement of forgers and grinders.¹² Constant repetition of these views has resulted in them becoming a ready motif for the town at that time.¹³

Providing much valuable information on its development during the eighteenth century and the activities of both labouring and middling populations, the brothers R.E. and J.D. Leader explored the history of the town, its people and industries. However, their numerous books and newspaper articles perpetuated the notion of a plebeian society where the attempts of new families to define themselves were described as inadequate imitations of their metropolitan superiors.¹⁴

With the publication in 1913, and reprint in 1968, of G.I.H. Lloyd's economic review of the cutlery industry, dichotomous understandings of Hallamshire society were transported into the twentieth century. Sheffield remained 'a poor, little, dirty, mean-built town'; a view repeated by Mary Walton in her popular history of Sheffield

¹² Sir George Reresby Sitwell, *The Hurts of Haldworth and their Descendants at Savile Hall, The Ickles and Hesley Hall* (Oxford, 1930), p. 276.

¹³ *Sheffield Register*, Saturday, 7 July 1787; *Gentleman's Magazine* lxxxi.2 (1811), p. 603; Gatty, *Hallamshire*, p.148; Gatty, *Past and Present*, pp. 78-79; G.I.H. Lloyd, *The Cutlery Trades An Historical Essay in the Economics of Small-Scale Production* (London, 1913), p.148; Walton, *Sheffield*, p.62, D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood 1660-1740* (Leicester, London & New York, 1991), pp. 230-231.

¹⁴ Examples of their main works include: R.E. Leader, (ed.), *Reminiscences of Old Sheffield its Streets and its People*, (Sheffield, 1875); R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed. Sheffield, 1905); R. E. Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York* 2 vols. (Sheffield, 1906); J. D. Leader, (ed.) *The Records of the Burgery of Sheffield, Commonly called the Town Trust* (London, 1897).

published in 1948.¹⁵ Collectively, these works portrayed early eighteenth-century Sheffield as lacking in civic dignity with an impoverished, uneducated, insular, and homogeneous population.¹⁶

In *A History of Labour in Sheffield* (1959), the Marxist historian Sidney Pollard conceptualised local metalworkers in a battle to defend their own and their region's identities from the encroachment of metropolitan elites. In doing so he endorsed the narrative, brought to public attention by George III's alleged declamation of Sheffield as radicalised, self-defining and hostile to middling sensibilities.¹⁷ In his extensive exploration of the origins of Hallamshire published in 1991, David Hey examined the social, cultural and economic development of the metal trades but gave little attention to the lives of Sheffield's wealthiest and most powerful inhabitants whom he acknowledged were not metal-workers, but attorneys, local gentlemen and members of the retail trades and professions.¹⁸ Moreover, in answering the question he poses as to the extent to which 'a manufacturing town such as Sheffield respond[ed] to the polite culture of assembly rooms, theatres, dignified public buildings, race courses and so on',

¹⁵ Lloyd, *The Cutlery Trades; Walton, Sheffield*; Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains of the late Samuel Roberts* (London, 1849); George Calvert Holland, *The Vital Statistics of Sheffield* (London, 1843).

¹⁶ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, pp. 118, 121-122, 125, Gatty, *Hallamshire*, pp. 148-149, 153-154, 157, 168; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 6, 9, 13; Walton, *Sheffield*, 95, 103, 109, 131.

¹⁷ Sidney Pollard, *A History of Labour in Sheffield* (Liverpool, 1959). David Renton, *Sidney Pollard A Life in History* (London, 2004), p. 2; George III, 'Ah, Sheffield, Sheffield: damned bad place, Sheffield', attributed to him when staying in Brighton in 1800, Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p.180.

¹⁸ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 280; Borsay, P., C. Brown and J. Barry, [review] 'David Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire, Sheffield and its Neighbourhood, 1660-1740*', *Urban History* 19 (1992), pp. 286-28.

Hey concludes the response 'was both tardy and modest'.¹⁹ Hey claims a significant constraint on Sheffield's ability to enjoy the fruits of middling sociability was an alleged puritanical preference for austerity amongst the region's large number of dissenters.²⁰

A few studies however have offered insights into the potential for a broader and more diverse eighteenth-century society. In 1764, the Rev Edward Goodwin published his 'Natural History of Sheffield' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in which he described a flourishing, wealthy, and improving town, supporting fashionable new facilities. The published letters and records of the Sitwell family reveal comfortable and fashionable homes whose lesser gentry, professional, and commercial occupants attended concerts, assemblies and exhibitions whilst the historian, Arthur Jackson, employed evidence used by Hunter to celebrate the rise of new families rather than mourn the demise of older associations.²¹ Neville Flavell more recently acknowledged the contribution of attorneys, merchants and others in advancing the town's housing and public building stock, but his survey is framed by economic rather than social or cultural considerations.²² Other specialised studies, such as those on theatrical activity and scientific lectures in eighteenth-century Sheffield, offer rare glimpses into the social and cultural interests of middling and elite life, whilst a few commentators have sought to

¹⁹ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 249, 280.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 214, 279-280.

²¹ Revd. E. Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield' in *Gentleman's Magazine* xxxiv (London, April 1764); Sir George Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells*, 2 vols, (Scarborough, 1900); Sitwell, *The Hurts of Haldworth*; 'Mr Arthur Jackson on "Old Sheffield"', *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 10 April 1893.

²² Neville Flavell, 'The economic development of Sheffield and the growth of the town c1740-c1820', Ph.D. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1996).

present Sheffield as no less urbane, diverse and sophisticated than many other towns of the time.²³ Kevin Grady's study of Georgian buildings in the West Riding helped place Sheffield in a contextual background of similar towns seeking to adapt new ideas to solve their problems and the town has recently been used as a case study to explore the spatiality of social and cultural change during the long nineteenth century.²⁴ Sam Griffiths argues that the numerous inter-dependent relationships that characterised the metal trades' modus operandi, whereby the completion of a single item required its passage through several distinct workshops, had a considerable impact upon the spatial organisation of the town and its provision of public space.²⁵ Julie MacDonald has invited new consideration of the perceived radicalism of Sheffield cutlers in the late eighteenth-century by arguing food shortages and the outdated constraints imposed by the Company of Cutlers were the main drivers of unrest as much as political agitation for its own sake.²⁶

²³ Frederick T. Wood, 'Sheffield Theatres in the Eighteenth Century' *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society (T.H.A.S.)* 6 (1944-50), pp. 98-116; Michael Brook, 'Dr Warwick's chemistry lectures and the scientific audience in Sheffield (1799-1801)' *Annals of Science* 11:3 (1955), pp. 224-237.

²⁴ Hannah Barker, "'Smoke Cities': Northern Industrial Towns in Late Georgian England', *Urban History* 31:2 (2004), pp. 175-190; Kevin Grady, *The Georgian Public Buildings of Leeds and the West Riding*, Thoresby Society 62.133 (Leeds, 1989); Sam Griffiths, 'Historical Space and the Interpretation of Urban Transformation: the spatiality of social and cultural change in Sheffield c.1770-1910', Ph.D. thesis (University College London, 2008).

²⁵ Julie MacDonald, 'The Freedom of Election' The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire and the growth of radicalism in Sheffield 1784-1792, Ph.D. thesis (University of Sheffield, 2005).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

These more textured considerations of Sheffield are supported by renewed interest in the eighteenth century which has highlighted the complex and varied ways in which middling societies were shaped, not just by their response to metropolitan ideals but by numerous interacting factors including the geography, economy, topography, tradition, communications, wealth, size and type of town they inhabited. They help reveal the limitations of earlier, rigid and dichotomous tools and understandings with which past been societies were explored. David Cressy has shown how, during the Elizabethan and Stuart periods, dichotomous juxtapositions were used to try to distinguish sectors of society according to circumstance and condition rather than by specific class. Common descriptors such as, 'the poorer sort', or 'the richer sort', 'the wiser' sort, or the 'simple', the 'ignorant', 'ruder', 'vulgar', 'lower', 'meaner' or 'baser' sorts', were replaced in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by references to moral standing and began to include acknowledgements of a middle class.

Commentators such as Gregory King and Patrick Colquhoun sought to juxtapose a virtuous, industrious, sober, steadfast, and credit-worthy middle group against a perceived libertine and idle aristocracy.²⁷ E.P. Thompson argued for an, 'immense distance between polite and plebeian cultures', juxtaposing the latter as a fluid, diverse

²⁷ D. Cressy, 'Describing the social order of Elizabethan and Stuart England', *Literature and History* 3 (March 1976), pp. 29-44; K. Wrightson, "'Sorts of people" in Tudor and Stuart England', in J. Barry and C. Brooks, (eds) *The middling sort of people: culture, society and politics in England, 1550-1800* (London, 1994), pp. 28-51.

and vigorous force, able to combine and create tradition in response to its environment, against a fixed, inflexible and hegemonic culture of politeness.²⁸

Peter Borsay's study of provincial life in late-Stuart and Georgian towns (1989) helped redefine a time of previously perceived stagnation to one of qualitative transformation and growth. The urban middle classes and neighbouring gentry became defined as much through their accommodation of new behaviour as by their background or wealth.²⁹ The relative stability of the period helped to create an environment in which wealth and living standards improved and new behaviour allowed alliances to be formed free from traditional hierarchies and the constraints of parish obligation. Urban expansion in market and manufacturing towns, resorts and county capitals generated increasingly complex and diverse populations who sought new ways to manage differences of age, gender, status, wealth, religion, politics, and occupation whilst still acknowledging rank.

In 1989, Paul Langford's study of Georgian society introduced an increasingly dominant middling society who used politeness and polite values to gain influence, status, and power.³⁰ In the same year, Peter Earle's exploration of London's middle class revealed an affluent and consumerist metropolitan society, whilst later, Carl B. Estabrook's examination of the relationship between Bristol and its hinterland

²⁸ E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: class struggle without class?' *Social History* 3.2 (1978), p. 163.

²⁹ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*.

³⁰ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989).

population helped raise awareness of the complexity and diversity of life and experience between the metropolis and provincial towns and between towns and their satellite neighbours.³¹

Regional studies including Lorna Scammell's North-East England, John Smail's Halifax, Hannah Barker's northern provincial towns, H. R. French's Kent, and even Richard L. Bushmans's Delaware have helped demonstrate how reference to a fully formed national identity, the imposition of tripartite class systems, or dichotomous comparisons with metropolitan society cannot represent the ways in which eighteenth-century provincial societies were constructed.³² Emma Griffin claims dichotomies and generalisations are fraught with difficulties as individual communities organised their lives in different ways, uniting, combining and reforming old and new practices hitherto juxtaposed as elite or plebeian. Factors including, age, gender, religion, custom and locality contributed to fracturing the notion of plebeian and elite cultures as distinct

³¹ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class, Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1989); Carl B. Estabrook, *Urbane & Rustic England, Cultural Ties & Social Spheres in the Provinces 1660- 1780* (Manchester, 1998).

³² Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*; Estabrook, *Urbane & Rustic England*; Lorna Scammell, 'Was the North East different from other areas? Everyday consumption and material culture 1670-1730,' <http://seastorm.ncl.ac.uk/invs/paper1.html> [accessed 23 June 2000]; Hannah Barker, 'Smoke Cities'; H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People*; Richard L. Bushman *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, (New York, 1993).

entities, so that, 'actions, objects and beliefs are forever moving beyond the confines of the social groups to which they are supposed to belong'.³³

The growing availability and access to a range of domestic goods, clothes, literature, social activities, behaviour, fashions and public and private spaces offered the means by which arguably newly evolving middling societies could mark themselves out from the rest of society. However, these insights now indicate that the composition of middling populations and the ways in which they sought to establish their identities was far more flexible and fluid than previously understood. This suggests that much is still to be learnt regarding the construction of provincial societies and the ways in which they shaped their environment. Hannah Barker notes that of the industrial towns of northern England; 'we remain largely ignorant of the ways in which society in these places operated more generally: about the rise of the middling sorts, cultural consumption and sociability and the emergence of a widening public sphere'.³⁴

Employing new methodologies and exploring a wide range of sources, this thesis will argue that Sheffield was home to a middling sort whose impact upon the town and its social and cultural landscape has been widely overlooked. Such societies are now seen to have been more diverse and variable than perceived by earlier understandings of the period. Rather than assessing provincial societies on their ability to replicate metropolitan ideals, it is now understood that the selection, adaptation and deployment

³³ Emma Griffin, 'Popular Culture in Industrializing England', *The Historical Journal* 45. 3 (2000), pp. 619-635.

³⁴ Barker, 'Smoke Cities', pp. 175-190.

of behaviour, objects and spaces was determined by the needs and circumstances of individual societies as they sought to harmonise the conflicting demands of the worlds they inhabited. Whilst making any definitions more circumspect, these new understandings encourage an exploration of Sheffield's middling sort and a re-assessment of the region as a consumer of new goods as well as a producer of them.

Defining the Middling Sort

Whilst the term, 'middle sort of people' is an appropriate contemporary collective term for use by historians, H. R. French claims it remains problematic as a description of an active, cohesive social group in the early modern period: 'We should not expect to define the "middle sort" as a concrete social entity spanning a distinct number of occupations or a precise series of wealth categories'.³⁵ French highlights the chameleon-like nature of this sector of society when he repeats R. S. Neale's comment that, 'society in early modern England was "neither classless nor multi-class, neither order based nor class based, neither one thing nor the other, although dialectically it was both"'.³⁶ Whether by historians or contemporaries, from within or without, by occupation, locale, wealth, or behaviour, attempts to define the middling sort have produced a variety of overlapping and conflicting understandings. Membership could

³⁵ H.R. French, 'The Search for the "Middle Sort of People" in England, 1600-1800', *The Historical Journal* 43.1 (2000), pp. 277-293.

³⁶ R. S. Neale, *Class in English history, 1650-1850* (New Jersey, 1981) p. 96 quoted in French, 'Middle Sort of People', p. 278.

further vary from region to region, so that an individual considered middling in one arena might not be so in another, or may choose not always to be considered so, and that these arenas could be social, cultural, economic, geographical, or any combination of these. David Cannadine also points out that an individual or group's classification could further vary according to the context and observer.³⁷

Richard Jenkins argues for a constant dialectic between internal and external perspectives and distinguishes between external categorisations of the group as it is defined by others, and group identification, that is the group as it is experienced, expressed, or known, from within. Jenkins argues that group identification, such as a middling sector of society, requires a 'symbolic language' in order to provide a mask of similarity beneath which individuals can gather, be collected, or differentiate themselves from others through verbal and non-verbal means such as their use of dress, manners, speech patterns, and possessions.³⁸

The lack of a fixed and uniform term with which to define, understand, or locate the middle sort contrasts sharply with the rigid interpretations conveyed by dichotomous understandings of society and increases the possibility that Sheffield supported a sector of society that in some way perceived itself as middling. However, as can be seen, locating groups in Sheffield with characteristics similar to those found in

³⁷ David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (Yale, 1998) p. 19; H. R. French, 'Social Status, Localism and the 'Middle Sort of People' in England 1620-1750', *Past and Present* 166 (Feb. 2000), pp. 69-70.

³⁸ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (2nd edn, London, 2004) pp.12-25, 110.

middling societies elsewhere does not ensure they saw themselves as middling or, as noted by Cannadine and Jenkins, how they were perceived by others. Although some general characteristics may be identified, as each society was shaped by its particular environment and circumstance, careful exploration is required to determine the nature and construction of individual middling societies.

Based upon the sociologist W. G. Runciman's four broad systactic categories of 'a small elite, [...] a larger group of managers, businessmen and professionals; [...] the general body of wage workers; and [...] a deprived, impoverished and sometimes criminalised underclass', David Cannadine stresses the persistence of a largely inflexible model of eighteenth-century society.³⁹

Peter Earle placed the rise of metropolitan middling society between 1665 and 1720 whilst John Smail claims the transformation of a broad and difficult to distinguish middling group of Halifax merchants, manufacturers and professionals, into a more stratified, elite, and urban middle-class population began during the period 1750-1770. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall place the rise of their middling populations in Birmingham, Essex, and Suffolk between 1780 and 1850 with the French Revolution acting as key to the growing radicalism of society.⁴⁰

³⁹ Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p.18.

⁴⁰ John Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture: Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660-1780*, (Ithaca and London, 1994); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1997).

Earle's study of probate inventories supplied to the London Court of Orphans revealed an affluent and industrious middling sort employing wealth acquired through inheritance, loan, or gift, to secure financial, material and social improvement for themselves and their families. With personal fortunes of between £500 and £5,000, and a few in excess of £10,000, their inventories revealed a consumerist society furnishing new spaces with fashionable goods on a scale hard to replicate in provincial towns.⁴¹ Whether on the scale of a 'rich Levant merchant' or 'small shopkeeper', Earle's middling sort was distinguished by its ability to accumulate wealth and improve upon its social and material position.⁴²

Rosemary Sweet considers the early eighteenth-century middling sort to have required an annual income of at least £50 to £80, with an upper limit of around £2,000.⁴³ The majority of Sweet's middling sort had an annual income of between £150 and £200 and made up around 20 to 25 per cent of urban populations. Comprising between 20 and 40 per cent of the population, Maxine Berg claimed the most common criteria for the provincial and middling sorts of the mid eighteenth-century was an annual income of between £40-50, and an obligation to contribute to the poor rates. Comprising some 50 per cent of the population and forming the local social and political elites of towns and villages, Lorna Weatherill's middling sort were 'economically, socially

⁴¹ Earle, *English Middle Class*, pp. 3 -14.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴³ Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture*, (New York, 1999), p. 180.

and politically important'.⁴⁴ Their annual income ranged between £40 to £200 per annum with only the lesser gentry and wealthier tradesmen earning more. Paul Langford refers to contemporary calculations when assessing the size of his middling sort. Citing assessments made by Joseph Massie and Malachy Postlethwayt, he notes that if an annual income of £50 was the criterion, then some 20 per cent of the population would be middling, rising to 40 per cent if the level was dropped to £40, although either sum was unlikely to sustain a middling family in London.

Others have sought to identify the middle sorts less by wealth or occupation but by their relationship to other sectors of society. Up to the end of the eighteenth century, E.P. Thompson perceived the middling sorts as 'professional and merchant groups bound down by lines of magnetic dependency to the rulers, or on occasion hiding their faces in common action with the crowd'.⁴⁵ Langford claims more than anything else, the middle orders were defined not by any commitments to a distinct middle-class culture and a deep-seated opposition to the gentry and peerage, but by, 'their passion for aping the manners and morals of the gentry more strictly defined, as soon as they possessed the material means to do so.' The 'middle class revolution' Langford describes was thus one by "conjunction" rather than confrontation or

⁴⁴ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005); Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 13-14, 98.

⁴⁵ Thompson, 'Class struggle', p. 151.

subjugation.⁴⁶ Rather than a series of distinct social groupings, eighteenth-century society was a continuous hierarchy and differences between the middling and upper orders became increasingly blurred as their commercial interests increasingly bound them together.

Direct aristocratic involvement with Sheffield had ended with the demise of the Talbot line in 1624 and the transferral of property through marriage to the remote Norfolk family. Rosemary Sweet notes how in such cases urban communities defined themselves less by reference to elite groups but by their rituals, histories, and allegiances, with members of the middling sort often expressing resistance to the acceptance of metropolitan practices. Sweet notes how other loyalties such as those amongst dissenters could also create local allegiances and identities, 'foreshadowing the material identity of class'.⁴⁷ Although Smail claims emerging middling societies shared, 'key features related to economic, political, and social developments', he too acknowledges the considerable part local factors could play in determining their nature so that eighteenth-century middling identities remained largely unconsolidated.⁴⁸ These findings suggest any middling society in Sheffield may have distinct characteristics as it sought to blend new practices with acknowledgement of its traditions.

⁴⁶ Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 61, 67, 79, 692; William Walker, 'Ideology and Addison's Essays on the Pleasures of the Imagination', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24.2 (2000), pp. 65-84.

⁴⁷ Sweet, *English Town*, p. 195.

⁴⁸ Smail, *Origins*, p. 226.

Peter Earle located his middling sort within the urban environment, inhabiting the space between the 'upper' and 'mechanick' parts of society.⁴⁹ Boundaries on either side were blurred and movement within each sector was possible as changing fortunes could cause families and individuals to pass through internal gradations. Margaret Hunt defines her middling sort as, 'shopkeepers, manufacturers, better-off independent artisans, civil servants, professionals, lesser merchants, and the like'.⁵⁰ John Styles' middling sort were the increasingly wealthy and consumerist, 'farmers, husbandmen, tradesmen and artisan-retailers', to whom Lorna Weatherill added the growing ranks of professional and semi-professional occupations.⁵¹ Allowing potential members of Sheffield's middling population to live in its more rural hinterlands, these broad definitions perceived membership coming from both urban and rural arenas. In determining their form and structure, Dror Wahrman claims that urban and rural middling sorts in provincial towns were faced with the choice of accepting in some degree either a culture based on metropolitan ideals or one that defended the traditions of their society against external intervention.⁵²

John Smail defined his middling society of Halifax with harder boundaries, greater wealth, and control over their environment. Here, an elite group of wealthy

⁴⁹ Earle, *English Middle Class*, pp. 3 -5.

⁵⁰ Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996) p. 15

⁵¹ John Styles, 'Manufacturing, Consumption and Design', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 537.

⁵² Dror Wahrman, 'National Society, Communal Culture: An Argument about the Recent Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Social History* 17.1 (Jan. 1992), p.45.

merchants and industrialists formed their own social groups of those able to secure substantial amounts of credit, employ large numbers of anonymous workers, build large, new fashioned homes, and largely exclude their wives from manufacture.⁵³ Smail's commercial and professional middling sort also took increasing control of the public sphere, rendering it more institutionalised and uniform, and characterised by, 'a distinct set of values, gender relations, and practices'.⁵⁴

John Styles and Michael Snodin amongst others have sought to define the middling sort more by shared interests and behaviour than wealth and occupation and the tangible expression of such affiliations is of value when trying to locate such groups.⁵⁵ David Hume's middle sort lived firmly in the urban environment and in describing them as literate, sociable, consumerist, and eager for refinement and pleasure, he defined them more by their interests and behaviour than by their economic and political status.⁵⁶ Maxine Berg and Rosemary Sweet describe their middling sort as drawn to the facilities of knowledge, refinement, and pleasure that towns and cities could offer. Highlighting traits as diverse as 'hospitality, generosity, propriety, sobriety,

⁵³ Smail, *Origins*, p.223.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 208. Michael Snodin and John Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts, Britain 1500-1900*, (London, 2001), p. 180.

⁵⁶ David Hume, 'Of Luxury', *Political Essays* (1752) revised and published in 1760 as, 'Of Refinement in the Arts' in Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p.208.

social rivalry, and much else', Sidney Mintz further stresses the sociable qualities of his middling sort.⁵⁷

For Paul Langford, politeness, industry and moral earnestness, the pursuit of new forms of sociability, domesticity, education, knowledge and leisure, helped define a middling sort for whom 'spending, social aspirations and the marshalling of wealth were as important as getting it'.⁵⁸ Helping to establish some unity between upper and middling levels of society whose wealth or status gave them access but increasingly marginalised those lower down the social scale, Peter Borsay's urban renaissance took place in provincial towns where assemblies, theatres, and other new forms of classically-inspired public space served to attract middling and elite sectors of the population.⁵⁹ Locating such facilities and identifying when they were built, and who did and who did not attend them, can help in the construction of networks that offer some indication of the nature of local middling societies.

The style and form of domestic dwellings and the ways in which they were furnished have become a further valuable means of trying to locate the middling identity. Margaret Hunt stresses the importance of family life to the middling sort and Rosemary Sweet describes middling life as essentially domestic, bound up with the

⁵⁷ Sweet, *English Town*, p.188; Sidney W. Mintz, 'The Changing Roles of Food in the Study of Consumption', in Brewer and Porter (eds) *Consumption and the World of Goods*, p. 266.

⁵⁸ Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 60-68

⁵⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 311-313.

family and household.⁶⁰ Carole Shammas notes that 'eighteenth century households did seem to show a preference for goods that could be consumed *en famille*.'⁶¹

Increased wealth allowed more attention to be given to the furnishing of sociable and private spaces within the home and for them to become a means of advertising status, modernity, wealth, and taste to friends, family and associates. Helen Clifford describes how ownership of some objects moved beyond their utilitarian use to offer 'a form of communication, creating coded behaviour, only decipherable by the initiated'.⁶²

The variable and fluid nature of middling populations, their levels of wealth, range of occupations, patterns of consumption, the ways in which tradition, civic pride, new ideas and behaviour were selected, rejected and combined, shows how continued reliance on dichotomous descriptions of society fail to offer consideration of this nebulous sector of society. This allows further exploration to be made of the construction of Sheffield society and raises the possibility that it supported a middling population. The ways in which local circumstances and new ideas shaped individual societies means reliance on a limited range of considerations, or seeking only those traits present in other middling societies could easily fail to reveal such a complex and nebulous sector of society. Thus, evidence needs to be sought from as wide a range of sources as possible to explore the ways such a society may have defined itself. One of

⁶⁰ Sweet, *English Town*, pp. 184-187.

⁶¹ Carole Shammas, 'The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America' *Journal of Social History* 14.1 (1980), p. 14.

⁶² Helen Clifford, 'Precious Metalwork in Early Modern England', in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds) *Consumers and Luxury Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850*, (Manchester, 1999), p. 160.

the ways in which middling societies sought to gain control over their environment and distinguish themselves from other sectors of society was to employ politeness. In addition to an awareness of the malleability of middling populations, understanding how they may have deployed politeness to give shape and meaning to their world suggests it could be a valuable tool in helping to further explore the presence and identity of such society in Sheffield.

The Role of Politeness in Eighteenth-Century Society

In the increasingly complex arena of urban environments, politeness was a tool that could be appropriated by tradesmen, professionals, merchants and gentry to facilitate immediate and direct communication, freeing transactions and debate from the constraints of deference and hierarchy whilst leaving the established social order intact. Premised upon agreeableness, politeness facilitated greater flexibility and freedom in its associations than courtesy, civility or gentility, although these older forms persisted alongside localised codes of conduct.⁶³

Michael Snodin and John Styles claim politeness offered a 'model of how people should behave to one another [...] that did not deny the legitimacy of social rank, but

⁶³ A. Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 279; Abel Boyer, *The English Theophrastus* (London, 1702), quoted in Lawrence E. Klein, 'Historiographical Reviews: 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century'', *The Historical Journal* 45.4 (2002), pp. 873-874.

required the different ranks to mix with each other in an agreeable manner'.⁶⁴

Lawrence Klein identifies key words that became associated with various aspects of politeness including, 'refinement', 'manners', 'character', 'breeding', and 'civility', together with a range of qualifying attributes such as, 'free', 'easy', 'natural', 'graceful', and many others.⁶⁵ Offering a mechanism that helped in the construction of social, institutional, and political identities, bodily comportment, social interaction, dress, the nature of intellectual and artistic life, the organisation of space, and material and visual cultures, politeness was an essential arbiter of middling behaviour and identity.⁶⁶ For the middling sorts full mastery of the self and environment could only be achieved if goods, spaces, and comportments were governed by behaviour that gave shared meaning and understanding, and for many this mastery was secured through politeness.

Although Estabrook maintains the persistence of a strong divide between urban and rural sociabilities, Jon Stobart claims that 'towns formed central places for the surrounding countryside, giving rural dwellers access to a new polite material culture comprising both consumer goods and leisure services'.⁶⁷ Politeness was essentially an urban phenomenon and it was these rapidly expanding urban communities that attracted the concerns of contemporaries such as Walpole. Contemporary literature frequently promoted the view that politeness and commerce were incompatible and

⁶⁴ Snodin, and Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts*, p.183.

⁶⁵ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Liberty, Manners and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal* 32:3 (1989), p. 583.

⁶⁶ Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 869.

⁶⁷ John Stobart, 'Leisure and Shopping in the Small Towns of Georgian England: a Regional Approach', *Urban History* 31 (2005), pp. 489, 499.

irreconcilable forces. Writes Rosemary Sweet: 'True politeness could not exist in places where money was quickly gained and lavishly spent'.⁶⁸ Prohibiting the pursuit of leisure, learning or the arts, the perceived wanton dash for luxury in manufacturing towns such as Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield resulted only in vulgarity for, 'to be truly polite one needed the leisure and education of a gentleman'.⁶⁹ The form and presentation of politeness, or the lack of it, became a key means of appraising the quality of a town, and of expressing anxiety about the destabilizing rise of new wealth in unknown hands.

Such perceptions followed the eighteenth-century practices of employing dichotomous descriptors by which to assess the quality of people and their environments; a practice which continued to shape understandings of politeness as a precise and rigid code in the twentieth century. Norbert Elias portrayed politeness as part of the civilising process exerted on those below by the upper classes, whilst E.P. Thompson considered the gulf between polite and plebeian cultures as unbridgeable.⁷⁰ Proscriptive and inflexible interpretations have now been replaced by more nuanced understandings of how politeness may have had a more symbiotic relationship in the construction of regional identities. Paul Langford observes that social anthropologists' use of politeness to describe 'the deference which individuals display when confronting

⁶⁸ R.H. Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002), p. 365.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society', p. 163; Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (1939) trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1994), p. 34.

other individuals in everyday situations' fails to convey the complexity of meaning and nuance the term possessed to contemporaries.⁷¹

Despite its benefits to the pursuit of commerce, the potential impact of politeness on the physical, social and cultural development of Sheffield has been widely overlooked as commentators have considered those who may have contributed to the creation of appropriate public spaces as being too few, too poor, and too remote from aristocratic direction to have made an impression on the town.⁷²

Rosemary Sweet argues that provincial towns did not seek to import an unabridged form of metropolitan politeness or accept the yoke of politeness from above by which London-centric literature could measure their success. Instead, acknowledging politeness as a valuable means of managing urban life, they adapted it to best suit their own needs and understandings, combining it with existing traditions at different times and in different ways.⁷³ Outlining the independent vigour with which middling societies of northern industrial towns utilised their traditions to shape urban culture, Hannah Barker also challenges the notion of metropolitan dominance and national models of politeness.⁷⁴ Rather than contextualising the metal trades as constantly in conflict with new behaviour it thus becomes possible to conceive them as one of the filters by which

⁷¹ Paul Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Journal* 12 (2002), p. 311.

⁷² Sheffield Local Studies Library: 'Newspaper Cuttings Relating to Sheffield vol. 15, p. 135; Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography* quoted in David Flather, 'Freemasonry in Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 44 (1931), p. 133.

⁷³ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 366.

⁷⁴ Barker, 'Smoke Cities', p. 175.

Sheffield's middling society adapted politeness to meet their particular needs and traditions.

Langford described politeness as having two distinct functions, which he labelled the 'Shaftesbury' and *Spectator* modes. Offering greater informality than associations based upon a post-courtly gentlemanly elite, the *Spectator* model of Addison and Steele stressed the sociability of the coffee house. Easing the daily transactions of urban and commercial life, this form of politeness enabled those who lacked the traditional material attributes of social status – rank, land, education and political influence – to achieve it by embracing attitudes and behaviour which allowed these attributes to be circumscribed.⁷⁵ The 'Shaftesbury' model enabled the assimilation of new money and new people into the existing social hierarchy without challenging its authority or stability. The 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury claimed that meeting in new, urban locales enabled the social orders to mix and 'polish one another and rub off our corners and rough sides by a sort of amicable collision'.⁷⁶

For Maxine Berg, politeness dictated commercial urban lifestyle, and Paul Langford and Lawrence Klein agree that politeness was an essential component in the rise of commerce and commercial people.⁷⁷ Lawrence Klein argues that 'what made eighteenth-century Britain a polite society was not its horizontal division between polite

⁷⁵ Langford, 'Uses of Politeness', p. 312.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Klein, (ed.) *Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, (Cambridge, 1999), p. 31; Langford, 'Uses of Politeness', p.312.

⁷⁷ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 869.

and non-polite persons but rather the wide access of a range of persons to activities and competencies that contemporaries considered “polite”.⁷⁸ The association between politeness and commerce is one that could have found resonance in Sheffield on a number of levels. Frank O’Gorman claims the increasing wealth and political power of the aristocratic Whig oligarchy was partly due to their willingness to collaborate and negotiate with the middling orders and their positive disposition to the commerce, industry and finance upon which much of their wealth and power was based.⁷⁹ The Company of Cutlers in Sheffield was forced to turn to the Whig party for support when they overturned the Tories at the start of the eighteenth century. Klein’s description of Shaftesbury’s classically inspired society as one where sociability, taste, virtue, and politeness offered Whigs a framework with which to challenge the authority of church, court, and civility may have been attractive to a town such as Sheffield that had a substantial dissenting population who lacked traditional networks and associations to further their causes.⁸⁰

Difficulties remain in assessing how far down the social scale politeness penetrated or how it was deployed. Paul Langford argues whilst politeness did impinge on plebeian culture, new behaviour may have been more a voluntary adaptation to changing circumstances than the acquiescence to prescriptive codes of behaviour such

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 869.

⁷⁹ Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832*, (London, 1997) pp. xiii, 106, 108-09.

⁸⁰ Lawrence E. Klein, ‘The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 18 No. 2 (Winter, 1984-1985), pp. 186-214.

as those claimed by Elias or Thompson.⁸¹ Klein suggests that the incorporation of lesser and country gentry into civic administration and the moralising impact of Protestantism, which had long been in operation prior to the rise of polite attitudes, may also have influenced modes of public behaviour. Rosemary Sweets notes that for William Hutton the politeness of Derby and Birmingham 'lay as much in religious toleration, morality, education and good order as in the trappings of leisure and consumption'.⁸²

Polite behaviour could be expressed in different ways, at different times, in different locations and by different people using different goods. Politeness was not a static set of rules travelling fixedly through the century to which individuals and groups slavishly subscribed. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, politeness was a new behaviour, which Paul Langford claimed 'helped provide a means of escape on the part of the well-born from the trammels of the even better-born'.⁸³ Gaining ascendancy during the second decade of the eighteenth century, *Spectator* and 'Shaftesbury' modes of politeness had at their core 'the art of sociability, the art of pleasing in company'.⁸⁴ As its ease and fluidity were replaced over time by more standardized and rigid codes of etiquette, politeness may have become perceived as quaint or outmoded. Paul Langford claims that towards the end of the century

⁸¹ Elias, *Civilizing Process*, p. 34; British Library: Add. MS 27827, f. 144, quoted in Paul Langford, 'Uses of Politeness', p. 326; D. George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1925), pp. 17-18.

⁸² Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', pp. 368-369; William Hutton, *A History of Birmingham* (2nd ed. Birmingham, 1783), p. 260; William Hutton, *The History of Derby* (1791), p. 186.

⁸³ Langford, 'Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', pp. 312-313.

⁸⁴ Boyer, *The English Theophrastus*, p. 106.

politeness became an instrument of social warfare used as much to exclude as well as include. The cost of mass politeness was the loss of that ease and liberty of manners so much desired in the earlier part of the century with the substitution of a highly formulaic code.⁸⁵ The speed, form, and assimilation of politeness varied as much as the nature of those who employed it so that at a single time different societies may have perceived it as novel or outmoded, accessible or exclusive.

Thus, whilst Klein describes politeness as a distinctive characterization of eighteenth-century British culture, and Langford claims it became, 'synonymous with basic standards of civil behaviour', politeness neither informed nor united all sectors of society, nor was used in the same manner, at the same time with the same results by those who engaged with it.⁸⁶ Care is needed in attributing polite status to individuals as occasion, association and circumstance could influence behaviour.⁸⁷

Politeness and the Shaping of New Spaces

Within the domestic environment, politeness encouraged the reorganisation of space, so that medieval forms of ceremony, hospitality, and communality were replaced

⁸⁵ Langford, 'Uses of Politeness', pp. 314-315.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.311; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p.873.

⁸⁷ Stobart, 'Leisure and Shopping', pp. 479-480.

by comfort, specialisation, and privacy.⁸⁸ Reflecting the demise of medieval notions of household, the division of the home into more private arenas was driven by a desire to establish greater distance between the family and other household members, whether servants, apprentices or lodgers. Ursula Priestley and Penelope Corfield employed inventory analysis to trace the growing specialisation within urban domestic spaces in Norwich, suggesting new practices and behaviour forced the creation of additional rooms, subdividing or re-designating existing spaces to provide arenas for a greater range of specialised or gendered activities.⁸⁹ Such changes occurred earlier and more frequently in urban rather than rural areas with the rate at which new spaces were incorporated into the home varying between towns.⁹⁰ Communal, accessible, and multi-functional halls were replaced by smaller and more intimate parlours, dining rooms, and chambers, to which family members could withdraw. Similarly, the porous and widely accessible, multi-purpose 'house' in smaller dwellings, where food preparation and consumption took place alongside space to rest, work, and socialise was replaced by spaces which separated these functions.

Frank E. Brown claims the provision of parlours represented a move toward a more private way of life. Insulated from working areas such as kitchens and butteries,

⁸⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 270-271; Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven & London, 1978), pp. 121, 158.

⁸⁹ Ursula Priestley and Penelope Corfield, 'Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1982), pp. 93-123.

⁹⁰ Shamma, 'Domestic Environment', pp. 7- 16.

parlours were less permeable and set aside from everyday life.⁹¹ Eleanor John shows how in London, communal halls were replaced by dining rooms or parlours during the period 1660-1680. At the same time, food preparation was removed from halls to kitchens whilst more modest houses acquired a parlour, or more often a dining room, with larger households having both. On upper floors, chambers could offer a variety of functions, often combining sleeping accommodation, entertaining space, and storage.⁹² Changes that facilitated the potential for polite and equitable sociability in private and comfortable spaces were often described in contemporary literature as ‘decorous’, ‘neatness’, ‘decency’ and ‘convenience’.⁹³

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), the German archaeologist and philosopher, emphasized the noble simplicity and sedate grandeur of Greek forms, and British architects, such as Robert Adam and William Chambers, were amongst those who took classical idioms and ‘worked out a style of ornament which expressed to perfection the sophistication, gaiety, and elegance which polite society aimed at’.⁹⁴ Klein has shown how associations with politeness, refinement and Enlightenment thinking could be inferred from a home designed with reference to elegantly and

⁹¹ Frank E. Brown, ‘Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space Organisation in Seventeenth-Century London’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28.3 (1986), pp. 558, 589-90.

⁹² Eleanor John, ‘At home with the London middling sort’, *Regional Furniture* 22 (2008), pp. 30-36.

⁹³ Dell Upton, ‘Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia’, *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 2/3 1982, p. 102; J. Styles, and A. Vickery, (eds) *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, (London & New Haven, 2006) p. 10; David Dewing, *The Geffrye Museum of the Home* (London, 2008), p. 20.

⁹⁴ Girouard, *English Country House*, p. 198.

appropriately-decorated spaces in classical forms accompanied with new goods to support learning, leisure, and sociability.⁹⁵

However, politeness may not have been the sole or prime arbiter of change and it remains difficult to ascribe polite practices with defined spaces within the home.

Amanda Vickery and John Styles also note how in propertied households the movement of family, servants, apprentices, and others meant they were constantly contracting and expanding, so that 'fixed internal arrangements must have been the exception'.⁹⁶

Rooms could assume different definitions at different times of the day according to the goods assembled within them, the occasion, and status of participants, so that a single space could possess multiple meanings. Vickery and Styles describe how the creation of smaller, more intimate and private spaces within the home was in part a response to the general noise and commotion found in most eighteenth-century households.⁹⁷

Establishing a fixed distance between family and servants is also seen to have been more complex. Michael McKeon and Tim Meldrum have demonstrated the multiple forms of existence between family and servants in metropolitan households and the diversity of understandings offered by notions of public and private within the domestic sphere.⁹⁸ Lawrence Klein argues that the use of dichotomous terms imposes constraints

⁹⁵ Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 886.

⁹⁶ Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁸ Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*, (Maryland, 2005); Tim Meldrum, Domestic Service, Privacy and the Eighteenth-Century Metropolitan Household', *Urban History* 26 (1999), p. 83

and limitations upon understandings of space and that their use by contemporaries was too conditional and fluid to be accurately interpreted by modern historians.⁹⁹

Although the ability to confer distinction even within a single space remained important, not all households chose to redefine and specialise space, even when they had the opportunity to do so. Lorna Weatherill describes how cooking in a multi-purpose space, often called a 'house' was not just a convenience in smaller dwellings but could embody both practical and symbolic actions as families preferred to sustain communal traditions rather than embrace more private forms of commensality.¹⁰⁰

Hannah Barker and Jane Hamlett have recently argued that 'among this [small business households in northwest English towns between 1760 and 1820] lower level of the middle classes at least, it appears that company and physical proximity were often more highly prized than a more modern understanding of private family life'.¹⁰¹

Lena Orlin claims the creation of private spaces in Tudor households was based less on an increasing desire for privacy than the increasing consumption of luxury goods, necessitating new and appropriate places for their display. Furthermore, rather than personal privacy being 'something desirable and something progressive', Orlin argues it

⁹⁹ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions About Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 29.1 (1996), pp. 97-109.

¹⁰⁰ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 150-152.

¹⁰¹ Hannah Barker, and Jane Hamlett, 'Living above the Shop: Home, Business, and Family in the English "Industrial Revolution"', *Journal of Family History* 35.4 (2010), p. 324.

was much less valued than has been claimed and, in fact, 'privacy inspired an uneasy mixture of desire and distrust'.¹⁰²

A similar range of understandings can be found in how politeness may have informed the construction of civic space. Rosemary Sweet describes how politeness required towns to offer ease of access by widening, straightening, paving, and lighting streets.¹⁰³ A town equipped to accommodate the polite mind was easy to navigate and well organised with commercial, residential, retail and industrial sectors clearly marked. Civic and prestigious buildings were recognized by their pre-eminent location, size, and classical architecture. Klein explains, 'Since politeness was often identified with classical idioms, polite architectural taste was classical'.¹⁰⁴

Klein, Sweet and Borsay emphasise the benefits of assemblies, theatres, gardens, shops, newsrooms and racecourses as facilitators of public politeness and mechanisms that helped establish middling alliances bound by shared interests and understandings.¹⁰⁵ By emphasising the cultural and artistic benefits of politeness, Sweet argues they, 'broke the bonds of feudalism and allowed liberty, refinement and the arts to flourish, by encouraging social interaction and stimulating creativity'.¹⁰⁶ Citing the impact of the Scottish Enlightenment and in particular the works of David Hume and

¹⁰² Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 10-11.

¹⁰³ Sweet, *The English Town*, pp. 76-84.

¹⁰⁴ Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 886.

¹⁰⁵ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 356; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 869; Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 150-172.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

Adam Smith, Rosemary Sweet emphasises the cultural and artistic influence of politeness and its role in stimulating creativity and sociability amongst commercial and urban societies.¹⁰⁷ Underpinned by literacy and a newspaper culture, scientific and literary societies, concerts, plays, assemblies, balls, were essential components of polite life.¹⁰⁸ The presence of assembly rooms, theatres and coffee houses was a key marker of a shift in the forms of entertainment and sociability the polite visitor might expect. These new facilities offered the families of professionals, merchants, retailers, industrialists, and the lesser gentry the opportunity to meet in polite, controlled, and urbane surroundings.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, traditional forms of entertainment accepted and 'included people from all levels of society and tolerated coarse behaviour by rude peasants along with the refined conduct of gentle ladies should they choose to attend'. Richard Bushman notes that just as in England, the organisers of traditional events in Philadelphia and New England, 'showed no concern that the presence of the wrong people would mar the occasion. The opposite was true for polite entertainments'.¹¹⁰

Clearly identifiable by their size and architecture, facilities that could accommodate polite sociabilities added to the repute of a town, and its attractiveness to visitors and investors as they offered the hope of finding refined and agreeable

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰⁸ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p 157; Walton, *Sheffield*, p 133; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), pp. 72-82.

¹⁰⁹ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge, 1985); Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*; Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 356; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 869.

¹¹⁰ Bushman, *Refinement of America*., pp. 49-50.

company away from the unregulated coarseness of the street. Mark Girouard comments on the peripatetic nature of much of polite society as groups constantly travelled, met, reformed and moved between London, Bath and the facilities of provincial towns. Comparisons of the quality of facilities and company encountered were inevitable.¹¹¹ Mrs Lybbe Powys was surprised at the quality of the assemblies held at Chesterfield whilst Nathaniel Spencer criticized those in Newcastle as too narrow a place for polite company to enjoy public diversions'.¹¹²

Local understandings, circumstance and materials often modified the classical form of public and private buildings. Richard L. Bushman notes whilst classical architecture steadily gained influence in England, 'to the end of the century and beyond, an eclectic style that incorporated touches of classical decoration without going over wholly to classical forms continued to shape many buildings'.¹¹³ Matthew H. Johnson highlights a growing divergence between polite forms of classical architecture and the emergence of hybrid vernacular styles that tried to accommodate modern uses of space in traditional forms.¹¹⁴ Rather than being identified by style, Johnson claims that spaces acquired meaning through repeated actions, forming a common visual code by which

¹¹¹ Girouard, *English Country House*, p. 191.

¹¹² Nathaniel Spencer, *The Complete English Traveller; or a New Survey and Description of England and Wales* (1771), p. 537; C. J. Climeson (ed.), *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys 1756-1805* (1899), p. 25.

¹¹³ Bushman, *Refinement of America*., p. 101.

¹¹⁴ Matthew H. Johnson, 'Rethinking Houses, Rethinking Transitions: Of Vernacular Architecture, Ordinary People and Everyday Culture,' in D. Gaimster and P. Stamper (eds), *The Age of Transition the Archaeology of English Culture 1400-1600* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 149 – 151.

individuals learn how to behave because such actions have happened in that place so many times before. In the absence of purpose-built spaces, the practice of hiring temporary rooms in taverns and inns, schoolrooms and town halls, meant that polite spaces had constantly to be defined and defended.

Even when classical designs were employed, the presence of such buildings did not necessarily ensure polite behaviour. By the end of the eighteenth century, the spread of assemblies, theatres, coffeehouses, and libraries had brought about considerable change to the built environment and services offered by most towns, but they did not always bring them recognition as centres of politeness.¹¹⁵ Masculine sociability was facilitated by the growth of clubs, societies, inns, and coffee houses where politeness could be deployed in convivial surroundings to the benefit of commercial enterprise and social networks. However, in her exploration of 'flash talk' in eighteenth-century coffee houses, Helen Berry questions politeness as a paradigm for gentlemanly behaviour claiming that assumed 'polite' locales could offer the opportunity to engage in rough or profane language.¹¹⁶ When describing how John Mackay viewed Shrewsbury coffeehouses as no more than alehouses with airs and graces, Rosemary Sweet points out that simply commandeering titles associated with

¹¹⁵ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', pp. 362-66.

¹¹⁶ Helen Berry, 'Rethinking politeness in eighteenth century England, Moll King's coffee house and the significance of 'flash talk'', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11.6 (2001), pp. 65-81.

politeness did not ensure its performance, nor did it guarantee that locally contrived definitions corresponded to metropolitan understandings.¹¹⁷

In addition to the smoke and pollution noted by Walpole, studies by Sam Griffiths and Alan Williams have indicated how the physical and cultural presence of the metal trades permeated the form and topography of Sheffield so that acquiring space for large, new classical buildings, or the widening of streets may have been achieved only with considerable compromise to polite understandings of civic development. Benjamin Heller remarks that, 'Historians have not worked out the ways in which politeness facilitated sociability in everyday contexts, nor have they thought about how it could function in the poorly regulated space of the street'.¹¹⁸

Despite these considerations, searching for evidence of the creation of specialized and sociable spaces within the home and the erection of classically-inspired public buildings can offer some insight into how local societies were changing and how some may have been employing new behaviour to mark their identity. Further evidence may be found by exploring ownership patterns of a range of new goods that became associated with politeness as associations with its performance was an important means of identification for middling societies.

¹¹⁷ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 357.

¹¹⁸ Benjamin Heller, 'The "Mene People" and the Polite Spectator: The Individual in the Crowd at Eighteenth-Century London Fairs', *Past & Present* 208.1 (2010), p. 132.

Politeness and New Goods: Consumers and Consumption

The eighteenth century witnessed a considerable increase in the range and variety of consumer goods which the middling sorts could access and afford. As homes increasingly became places of sociability, rest and leisure, they became equipped with a mixture of old and new goods that could both ease the tasks of daily life and add comfort, colour, and interest. Furthermore, through an association with more discreet notions of taste, refinement, politeness, and decorum, some members of the middling sorts employed a range of goods to help strengthen their identity and status.¹¹⁹

Brewer and Porter have shown how the rise of consumer societies was far more complex than the, 'mere enumerations of the accelerating rates at which pots and pans, geegaws and jigsaws were acquired'.¹²⁰ 'Creating coded behaviour, only decipherable by the initiated', objects were perceived as capable of conveying values and meanings to help communicate the attitudes, learning and politeness of their owners, but amongst different users, different goods had the potential to convey different meanings.¹²¹ Decorum, 'the keystone of the code of manners that came to be known as politeness', may also have produced different relationships to 'concepts such as "politeness" or "gentility", or differences in the symbols and signifiers that these concepts possessed within' various groups.¹²² Affecting many in the middle ranks, Sara Pennell writes of the dilemma faced by those 'whose standards of living had risen

¹¹⁹ Sweet, *English Town*, pp. 184-187.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²¹ Clifford, 'Precious Metalwork', p.160.

¹²² Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, pp. 16-17.

sufficiently to permit of participation in new consuming worlds, but whose cultural authority over such goods was fluid and incomplete, just as their political and economic status was fragmentary and contested.’¹²³

Hence, whilst Berg and Klein, for example, stress the association between the ritual of tea drinking and polite behaviour, the presence of tea equipage can only suggest the potential for polite enactments. Politeness was neither a unique or exclusive attribute, nor a standardised performance, and its associated goods could convey multiple roles according to the time of day they were used, together with the occasion, location, assemblage and participants involved.¹²⁴

Sidney Mintz, Elizabeth Scott, and Karen Harvey have highlighted how different groups could use the same goods in different ways and with different meanings, so the understandings conveyed, for example, by the labouring classes drinking tea at work could be very different from those embodied in the ritual of taking afternoon tea by higher-class groups.¹²⁵ Sidney Mintz notes that although, ‘The English did not democratise the consumption of gold, diamonds, ermine, ivory or frankincense ...they did democratise the consumption of sugar, tobacco, and the stimulant beverages’ [tea,

¹²³ Sarah Pennell, ‘Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England’, *The Historical Journal* 42:2 (1999), pp. 549-564, 559.

¹²⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 230; Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’ p. 885.

¹²⁵ Mintz, ‘The Changing Roles of Food’, pp. 261-173, Elizabeth M Scott, ‘“A Little Gravy in the Dish and Onions in a Tea Cup” What Cookbooks Reveal About Material Culture’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1:2 (1997); Karen Harvey, ‘Barbarity in a Teacup? Punch, Domesticity and Gender in the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of Design History* 21:3 (2008), pp. 205-221.

coffee, chocolate]. In doing so, goods acquired their own meanings and associations with politeness may not always have been maintained or, if so, then achieved with fewer and cheaper goods.¹²⁶

Tea drinking played an important role in the new ritual of female domestic and polite sociability.¹²⁷ Maxine Berg describes how the middling-sort of households made the tea equipage and porcelain teaware their central luxury expenditures and amongst the better off, it allowed a display of female manners and fashionable possessions; 'tea drinking and the equipage and chinaware that went with [it...] both increased personal availability, and acted as a marker of ranks'.¹²⁸

In the second half of the century, falling prices gave greater access to tea, bringing with it new worries concerning the deployment of appropriate materials and spaces for consumption by different members of society.¹²⁹ In the 1770s and 1780s, Elizabeth Shackleton of Colne, Lancashire, had a common and best set of table and tea wares which were used in different combinations and different spaces according to the participants and the occasion. Servants and tenants used common ware for meals in the kitchen, whilst superior tradesmen and tradeswomen were given tea using the same service but in the parlour or dining room. Only those of equal or above the status of the

¹²⁶ Mintz, 'The Changing Roles of Food', pp. 261-173.

¹²⁷ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 158, 214-15.

¹²⁸ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 232; Mary Douglas, 'Why do People Want Goods?' in S. H. Heap and A. Ross (eds), *Understanding the Enterprise Culture: Themes in the Work of Mary Douglas* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp.19-31, 24-6.

¹²⁹ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p.230.

owner were given the best goods – silver, blue and white china and damask tablecloths in the dining room.¹³⁰ Tea drinking facilitated an important form of polite sociability amongst artisans and tradesmen who sought the best possible wares to offer tea in shops as well as at home.¹³¹ In his *Dissertation upon Tea*, the Sheffield medical practitioner, Dr Thomas Short associated the consumption of tea with doing business, holding conversations, and acting and speaking intelligently.¹³²

As a mechanism for conspicuous consumption, Thorstein Veblen's notion of emulation has been widely employed to help explain the rise of consumerism in eighteenth-century England.¹³³ The middling sort used possessions to help align themselves with a sophisticated, urbane and affluent way of life which led to increased output, and a greater diversity of goods in cheaper forms.¹³⁴ Thus, manufacturers such as Wedgwood found a ready market amongst the middling sorts for cheap reproductions of costly foreign goods whose status had been established by previously

¹³⁰ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter, Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (New Haven & London, 1998), pp. 204-207.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-8.

¹³² Thomas Short, M.D., *A dissertation upon tea, explaining its nature and properties by many new experiments; and demonstrating from philosophical principles, the various effects it has on different constitutions. To which is added The natural history of tea; ... Also A discourse on the virtues of sage and water, and An enquiry into the reasons why the same food is not equally agreeable to all constitutions* (London, 1730).

¹³³ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (London, 1899, Penguin edn, 1979).

¹³⁴ H. J. Perkin, 'The Social Causes of the British Industrial Revolution' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 18 (1968), pp. 123-43; Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life Civilization & Capitalism 15th-18th Century* vol. 1, trans. Sian Reynolds, (London, 2002), p. 324.

being accessible only to the 'Great People'.¹³⁵ Finding that inventories show that the most highly regarded social groups were not always the first to own new goods, Lorna Weatherill has challenged the process of emulation, claiming access was a key aspect in their acquisition:

A higher proportion of tradesmen and professional people owned the goods associated with 'frontstage' areas of the house [...] Likewise, whilst the gentry were among the earliest to record china and hot drinks, they were not in advance of the dealers and the crafts.¹³⁶

Helping individuals to shine in their own social circle, Overton claims goods that could support new social rituals, such as utensils for hot drinks, saucepans and table forks, 'appear to originate with those involved in the professional services, often, but not exclusively, in an urban setting'.¹³⁷ Cissie Fairchild describes the growing availability of cheap copies of formerly costly items as a part of the 'populuxe' trade which in eighteenth-century Paris were used as a means of emulation, whilst English middling society saw them as accessible and affordable additions to their own material culture and identity.¹³⁸ Noting the changing ways in which silver was described in inventories, Helen Clifford shows how during the period 1650-1750, consumer preference moved

¹³⁵ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 195; Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Bentley, 23 August 1772, in A. Finer and G. Savage (eds), *The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood* (London, 1965).

¹³⁶ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 194-196.

¹³⁷ Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean, Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households 1600-1750* (London & New York, 2004), p. 166.

¹³⁸ Cissie Fairchild, 'The Production and marketing of populuxe goods', in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), pp. 228-248.

from valuing the intrinsic value of silver to one that stressed its fashion and artistry which did much to foster the Sheffield silver-plate trade following its discovery by Thomas Boulsover in 1742.¹³⁹

Believing their politeness was superior to aristocratic luxury and metropolitan fashion, Maxine Berg's provincial and middling consumers sought expression not through excess, but through the acquisition of newly designed products reflecting simplicity, taste, knowledge, personal choice and 'improvement'. Goods which fulfilled these requirements included Wedgwood vases, Soho tea-urns, and Sheffield cutlery.¹⁴⁰ John Styles claims the popularity of such goods was partly due to the marketing strategy of manufacturers who encouraged the acquisition of semi-luxury, 'populuxe', or cheap imitations of expensive goods by offering consumers an idea of a new artefact's potential that they could recognise.¹⁴¹

Such findings do not in themselves demonstrate that some sectors of provincial urban society formed for themselves a distinctive material culture that represented their growing sense of a shared identity, as the meanings attributed to goods could be influenced by a range of factors. They could, for example, reflect the distinctions reported by Henry French between the goods acquired by genteel 'clean' and ungentleel

¹³⁹ Clifford, 'Precious metalwork', p. 148.

¹⁴⁰ Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 234

¹⁴¹ John Styles, 'Manufacturing, Consumption and Design', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), pp. 540-541; John Styles, 'Product Innovation in Early Modern London', *Past and Present* 168 (2000) pp. 124-69, 165-166.

‘dirty’ trades, or between parish elites and their neighbours to mark out their status within local hierarchies.¹⁴² Pierre Bourdieu employs the phrase ‘cultural capital’ to describe how different social circles had different patterns of consumption with different goods, behaviour and rituals, not all of which copied elites and could reject them; an argument used by Amanda Vickery to explain consumption patterns of minor Lancashire gentry which did not copy those of London.¹⁴³

Comparing three Yorkshire communities, Eleanor Love has described how new, ‘populuxe’ and traditional goods could be vested with particular social values in different geographical regions. Each region exhibited a high degree of social cohesiveness in their patterns of consumption, which could override assumptions made simply according to wealth, occupation, or status.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Henry French argues for smaller, parish-based patterns of consumption whereby chief inhabitants sought to gain distinction from those around them through the acquisition of a distinctive material culture. Rosemary Sweet notes a tendency for groups such as dissenters to create local allegiances and identities that could be expressed through their material culture.¹⁴⁵ David Hey argues that Hallamshire’s large dissenting population contributed to a puritanical aesthetic, causing Sheffield to have had little engagement with Borsay’s

¹⁴² French, ‘The Search for the “Middle Sort of People”’, p. 283.

¹⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London, 1984), pp. 260-317; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter, Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven & London, 1998).

¹⁴⁴ French, *Middle Sort of People*; Eleanor Love, ‘Material Culture in Early Modern England: The Role of Goods in the Creation of Social Identities in Three Yorkshire Communities, 1660-1780’, Ph.D. thesis (University of York, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ Sweet, *The English Town*, p. 189.

urban renaissance.¹⁴⁶ However, William Kilbourne argues that eighteenth-century American Puritans subscribed to the view that, 'so long as the individual controlled wealth and not the reverse, then the enjoyment of the results of success were tolerated so long as they were not excessive'.¹⁴⁷ Carl Estabrook claims that the 'overtly and gregariously extraparochial activities of religious non-conformists were essential [...] to the greater measure of urban-rural convergence experienced near the end of the early modern period [1780]'.¹⁴⁸ Entrepreneurial, independent and ambitious, politeness may well have been a valuable tool in helping dissenters to expand their social and commercial horizons in Sheffield and beyond. These new considerations encourage a reconsideration of Sheffield's engagement with new behaviour and the goods and spaces supporting them.

An absence of goods with the potential to support polite actions should not be seen as indicative of non-polite behaviour. Whereas Borsay claims surplus wealth was the key to a different style of living, Henry French, Lorna Weatherill and Eleanor Love show that not everyone with the means to acquire new goods chose to do so.¹⁴⁹ Though not without challenge, Overton *et al* question assumptions that poverty inhibited the acquisition of new goods. Analysing inventories from Kent and Cornwall, they argue

¹⁴⁶ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 216, 296

¹⁴⁷ W. E. Kilbourne, 'Rational Consumption: A Brief Historical Analysis', in Uday S. Tate (ed.), *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators* (Houston, 2003), p. 94.

¹⁴⁸ Estabrook, *Urbane & Rustic*, p. 228

¹⁴⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 172; French, *Middle Sort of People in Provincial England* p. 150, Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p.196; Love, 'Material Culture in Early Modern England'.

that households in Kent enriched their material and social cultures as the century progressed whereas the region's remoteness and lack of commercial diversity meant those in Cornwall witnessed a decline in consumption.¹⁵⁰ Overton suggests the disappearance of older objects was a cyclical process, which simply saw them being replaced with new goods which acted as conveyers of social status only for as long as ownership was associated with novelty and wealth. Klein, however, maintains that the ownership of some new goods was aligned more with the status accrued via the behaviour they could support than the wealth needed to acquire them.¹⁵¹

Familial or peer pressure could further contrive to perpetuate the goods, spaces, and practices associated with long-standing identities.¹⁵² Maxine Berg notes that bequests often imbued items which otherwise possessed little material worth with familial or personal value. Shaping assemblages unique to particular families or regions, bequeathed items could be esteemed and handed down regardless of their association with outmoded fashions or behaviour.¹⁵³ Especially in more remote and rural areas, others preferred to invest their wealth not in new goods but in traditional status signifiers such as silver, land, livestock or property. Others again were uncomfortable

¹⁵⁰ Shammass criticizes the evident discounting of wealth as a factor: Carole Shammass [review], 'Shammass on Overton *et al*, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750*' (London & New York, 2004), <http://eh.net/content/shammass-overton-et-al-production-and-consumption-english-households-1600-1750> [accessed 24 August 2009].

¹⁵¹ French, *Middle Sort of People in Provincial England*, p. 150; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century' p. 885.

¹⁵² Berg, 'Women's Consumption', p. 428.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

with conspicuous consumption, fearing excessive indulgence might lead to claims of poor or inappropriate taste, or a lack of decorum and propriety.¹⁵⁴

The 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) declaimed luxury goods as 'lady-fancies' to be resisted. Acknowledging the economic benefits of increased trade, Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) extolled the consumption of goods by merchants and middling sorts whilst criticising luxuries as frivolous expenditure by the gentry and aristocracy.¹⁵⁵ Raymond Williams describes how eighteenth-century consumers had first to disassociate the acquisition of new goods from medieval notions of greed, indulgence, and waste as proclaimed, amongst others, by Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), and Rousseau (1712-1778) who believed luxury and non-essential goods resulted in threats to the established social hierarchy and moral corruption.¹⁵⁶

David Hume (1711-1776) defined luxury goods as pictures, frivolous jewellery, libraries, ornamental architecture, and furniture. As consumption became reclassified more as an expression of public sociability and less as a private vice, Hume welcomed the greater availability and range of goods across the social spectrum, acknowledging

¹⁵⁴ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*; Eleanor Love, 'Material Culture in Early Modern England': French, *Middle Sort of People*, p. 150.

¹⁵⁵ Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, '*Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*' vol. 1 (London, 1790) p. 269, quoted in Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p.16; Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, Chapter 10, *Of Extravagant and Expensive Living; Another Step to a Tradesman's Disaster* (London 1724).

¹⁵⁶ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2nd edn, Oxford & New York, 1983), pp. 78-79; Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees (Remark B)* (1714).

the benefits this would convey to both consumers and the economy.¹⁵⁷ Combining notions of decency, propriety, decorum, and neatness, the application of good taste helped constrain excess, ensuring virtue triumphed over the showy, gaudy, or ostentatious pursuit of luxury: 'polite men and women would hardly pursue a reputation for flouting decorum'.¹⁵⁸ Taste ensured rooms were decorated and furnished according to the status of their owner so that established hierarchies were not flouted and the upwardly mobile could advance with discretion.

Many households continued to offer both old and new forms of sociability, or combined them into their own understandings. Amanda Vickery observes that whilst cosmopolitan and courtly ideals of politeness had become major forces by the 1690s, 'in the provinces, the Georgian gentry staged both old and new forms of hospitality on different occasions and in different rooms of their manors'.¹⁵⁹

Klein cautions that whilst much of contemporary society had access to politeness through a broad range of advice literature, it remains important to distinguish between actual behaviour as distinct from discourse, and the extent to which such literature actually did change attitudes.¹⁶⁰ For many, politeness remained an aspiration rather

¹⁵⁷ David Hume, 'Of Commerce II.1'; 'Of Refinement in the Arts II.2' (1742), in Eugene F. Miller (ed.), *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (Library of Economics and Liberty, 1987), <http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL24.html> [accessed 24 August 2009].

¹⁵⁸ Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 292 – 293.

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes Consumption and Social Identity in Early Eighteenth century England', in A. Bermingham and J. Brewer (eds), *Consumption of*

than a description of daily life.¹⁶¹ As noted by Helen Berry, ‘there is a great deal of difference between isolating a key word such as ‘politeness’ as a means of gaining insight into long-distant *mentalités* and transforming the quest for references to such words into a historical fetish. Such an approach elides contemporary resistance to (or even blissful unawareness of) the top-down attempts of ‘polite’ didactic authors to influence cultural change’.¹⁶²

Whilst some sectors of society regarded politeness as a valuable tool others, who might otherwise equally be perceived as middling, preferred to maintain more traditional forms of association. Introducing new behaviour into the close familial and commercial networks found across Hallamshire may have meant politeness had equally limited appeal or necessitated considerable accommodation of traditional practices. Philip Carter notes how, ‘polite society, its purpose and locations varied from person to person at any given moment and, across time’, and Tim Hitchcock comments that the ‘practicalities of refined behaviour’ were constantly being compromised by, ‘circumstances and relations shot through with rival identities of age, social status, religious and political affiliation’.¹⁶³

Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text (London, 1997), pp. 369-373; Klein, ‘Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century’, pp. 874-878. For example: John Hill’s *The Exact Dealer* (1688) of ‘Benefit of Traders, and Artists of sundry kinds...and direct Men how to improve themselves, and rise by Industry in Trading and Managing Affairs’.

¹⁶¹ Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 10.

¹⁶² Berry, ‘Rethinking politeness’, p. 81.

¹⁶³ P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800*, (Harlow,

Exploring the influence of politeness on the spatial and material culture of Hallamshire is thus fraught with difficulties but it offers a means of locating a middling population and of seeing how they sought to gain control over their environment. As John Styles and Amanda Vickery note, 'The things people owned, displayed, and coveted are now prominent in historical interpretations of the eighteenth century, whether in depictions of the English as a polite and commercial people, or in the interweaving of consumer politics and the American Revolution'.¹⁶⁴

Sources and Methodology

These wide ranging and sometimes conflicting debates about what it was to belong to the middling sort and how they may have employed understandings of politeness to help shape and order their world highlight the restrictive nature of dichotomous interpretations such as labouring and 'rough' and plebeian, so favoured by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians. Renewed interest in provincial histories has revealed the complex and varied nature of eighteenth-century society, and how goods, spaces, and behaviour could be variously organised to help express identities which accommodated both local and wider understandings of middling society. By examining a wide range of sources and employing new understandings, it may be

2000) p. 40; Tim Hitchcock [review] 'P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society 1660-1800*, <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/195> [accessed 16 April 2010].

¹⁶⁴ Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, p. 1.

possible to claim that Sheffield supported a much more diverse, complex and hierarchical population than has hitherto been presumed.

In her history of the town, Mary Walton claimed, ‘the people of Sheffield, of whatever degree, remain obstinately uncommunicative’, and it is true that the region has offered forth few diaries that describe the period.¹⁶⁵ Much of the evidence used in this study is gained from sources earlier historians would not have considered relevant to the pursuit of their histories. Evidence that may help locate and identify past behaviour is found in a variety of documentary sources whose fleeting, fragmentary, and disparate accounts offer only brief insights into the lives they record. Regional studies have made considerable use of probate inventories from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries to help identify patterns of ownership and the forms of material culture supported by provincial societies. They are employed in Chapter Two to see if patterns may be identified that might indicate a middling society employing new goods to help express their identity. The plans and schemes of homes and public buildings found in papers belonging to three generations of the Fairbanks, surveyors to the town between 1736 and 1848, give details of decorating schemes, room layouts, alterations and improvement to a variety of public and private buildings as well as changing street layouts. Rules and subscription lists to assemblies, race meetings and hunt balls reveal the names of those participating in new social activities and the behaviour expected of them. In addition to local and national affairs, newspaper

¹⁶⁵ Walton, *Sheffield*, p. 67.

advertisements and handbills indicate the range of goods that could be accessed by local populations, the shops where they could be acquired and the concerts, plays, readings, lectures, book-sales and debates they could attend. Examining gazetteer's account books helps identify those who subscribed to London newspapers and the social circles in which they moved and shared information. The minute books of the Cutlers Company, together with accounts, seating plans, and reminiscences of individual Master Cutlers reveal the changing practices and rituals to the region's foremost social event, the annual Cutlers' Feast.

Although he shares Hunter's view of the plebeian nature of Hallamshire society, the works of R.E. Leader are particularly useful as he details the everyday associations of the region's eighteenth-century families together with their habits and environment. Little use has been made of the edited collections of letters between the inter-connected Sitwell, Sacheverell and Hurt families written during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and who were landowners, attorneys, speculators and merchants in the region. The correspondence between family, friends, clients and agents in Sheffield, London, Derby and Renishaw, reveals a flourishing society, acquiring new and fashionable goods with which to furnish their homes, reading widely from newspapers, travelling, and enjoying new forms of sociability. The habitu  of this affluent, refined, and sophisticated sector of society is described in a variety of equally overlooked sources. Their homes were sketched by Samuel Buck in his *Yorkshire Sketchbook*, and in his article, 'The Natural History of Sheffield', published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in

1764, the Revd Edward Goodwin describes a well-ordered town with good connections to the metropolis, modern buildings, wide streets and a host of civic facilities for the fashionable socialite.¹⁶⁶

All sources have their strengths and weaknesses and individually, such everyday ephemera offers valuable but inconclusive, and limited insights into the daily lives of those who created them. Yet, exploring as wide a range of material as possible can help minimise their individual limitations and prejudices to allow something as close as documentary sources may permit to an understanding of how some of those living in Hallamshire may have been influenced by politeness.¹⁶⁷ Richard Glassby's warning that modern attempts to reconstruct past thoughts, behaviour and environments are fraught with difficulty ensures any conclusions must remain tentative. Nevertheless, these sources are probably as close to representing the attitudes and opinions of the eighteenth-century middling sort as is likely to be achieved.

The evidence employed in this study varies qualitatively, quantitatively and over time. Probate inventories, and gazetteers' accounts are useful in the first half of the century, evidence for assemblies span the middle years, local newspapers cover the second half of the century, the Angel and Tontine fall into the latter part of the century, whilst the details supplied in the Masters' Accounts for the Cutlers' Company exist from

¹⁶⁶ Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells*; Samuel Buck, *Yorkshire Sketchbook; Reproduced from British Library: Lansdowne MS.914*, (Wakefield, 1979); Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield'.

¹⁶⁷ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (2nd edn, Harlow, 1991), pp.65-66.

the time of the Company's formation in 1624 until the present day. In order to try and explore as fully as possible the potential for Sheffield to have supported a middling society and how they may have employed new behaviour, the period under study extends from c1680 to c1830. Underneath the grime and smoke that so deterred contemporary commentators, I will argue it is possible to find buildings and facilities with the potential to support polite behaviour and an outward-looking, urbane and sociable society whose presence demands attention. The assertion made by Revd. Gatty that until the mid-eighteenth century Sheffield was 'a mere settlement of forgers and grinders' is one this thesis will vigorously challenge.¹⁶⁸

Chapter One introduces the country known as Hallamshire of which Sheffield was the capital. The area is defined and a brief outline explores the social, economic and corporate development of the town during the course of the eighteenth century. The principal histories of the region are then introduced and examples of their criticisms are taken and traced through subsequent works to show how eighteenth-century understandings informed later histories. In each case, new or neglected sources are introduced which challenge these views and help establish the potential for a middling and polite society.

Chapter Two uses probate inventories to further challenge perceptions of the region as plebeian and homogeneous. It discusses their limitations and the need to treat conclusions based on them with caution. It introduces some of the major changes

¹⁶⁸ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 276.

taking place in the eighteenth century with regard to the furnishing and styling of homes and describes some of the assemblages associated with the ability to support polite behaviour. Evidence from inventories is explored that indicates the parishes that formed Hallamshire had distinctive patterns of wealth, occupation, and consumption with new goods being most widely found in the town of Sheffield. Further exploration of inventories suggests those owning new goods in quantity also tended to have more specialised spaces within their homes and such premises were most readily discernable amongst the region's professional, larger merchants and manufacturers, in particular those who were acknowledged as Mister or Gentleman.

In Chapter Three, three urban locales are explored to try and discern the ways in which politeness may have been expressed in public. As opportunities for the display of polite behaviour were readily conveyed by the material and spatial culture of dining, the first study explores the Cutlers' Feast and how the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire, may have employed some of the goods for whose manufacture it had become famous in the pursuit of polite forms of dining to help secure its commercial aims.

With their frequent association with polite behaviour, attention turns to the Sheffield Assemblies, which were established in the 1730s and continued throughout the eighteenth century. Subscription lists, and rules governing admission and conduct, the location, funding and premises of assemblies are explored to assess the extent to which those held in Sheffield accorded, or varied, from those held in other provincial towns. The third study in this chapter explores potentially different forms of sociability

exhibited through the buildings, services, and facilities of Sheffield's leading inns, with particular emphasis on the Angel and the Tontine. I consider activities taking place in the Tontine Inn to try to determine whether perceptions of its association with formal and establishment expressions of politeness caused it to become a focus of political agitation. The potential influence of Whiggism and its use of politeness to help foster social and economic networks are explored, especially in connection with the Cutler's Company and the substantial and influential body of Non-Conformists who worshipped at Sheffield's Upper Chapel.

The Conclusion draws together these strands to argue that during the eighteenth century Sheffield was much more socially and culturally diverse than has hitherto been acknowledged. It will state that evidence gleaned from a wide range of sources points to the presence of a small, urbane, literate, mobile and sociable middling society who subscribed to a spatial and material culture that had the potential to support polite behaviour.

Chapter One: 'Instinctively...mean and unattractive': Challenging Perceptions of Sheffield.¹

Following a brief outline of the history of Hallamshire, the formative histories of the region are explored to show how the thinking and influence of antiquarian scholarship has continued to shape the historiography and perception of Sheffield. The region had a distinctive pattern of self-determining governance determined by three independent, and not always harmonious independent bodies. Combined with the smoke and noise from the metal trades, which suffused the town, antiquarians saw little opportunity for the refinements of life to flourish. Parochialism, lack of civic planning, poor provision for the arts, science or literature, and lack of aristocratic engagement were themes often repeated by antiquarian scholars.

The quote in the title to this chapter is taken from Mary Walton's *Sheffield, its Story and its Achievements*. Published in 1948, this popular history summarises many of the enduring and negative impressions employed by historians when considering the town. Walton acknowledges her debt to earlier works, claiming: 'no one can write about Sheffield without becoming deeply indebted to four local historians – Joseph Hunter, Alfred Gatty, and the brothers John Daniel and Robert Eadon Leader. Their work is deeply entwined in this, as in every other book on the subject'.² Spanning the period from 1819 to 1948, the underlying approach of these works followed that first set by Joseph Hunter whose

¹Mary Walton, *Sheffield: Its Story and Its Achievements* (Sheffield, 1948), p. 69.

²*Ibid.*, p. 7.

antiquarian narrative described ancient lineages, buildings, and charitable and ecclesiastical institutions for elite audiences. Hunter's focus on the demise of a resident aristocracy in 1616 led him to believe the region was left in a retrograde condition with an impoverished, unenlightened, and insular population was widely repeated.³ In contrast, the county histories of other regions adapted to reflect the growing importance of towns and the rise of new middling populations. Of the four histories of Newcastle published between 1694 and 1801, Rosemary Sweet writes how they show that:

In terms of both content and authorship, the writing of history moved out of the preserve of the gentry and educated elite to become the perquisite of any literate citizen and they demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between the urban historian and the society for which he was writing.⁴

Few works have considered the role of Hallamshire's middling sort and their anecdotal approach and frequent reliance on Hunter has resulted in perpetuating eighteenth-century understandings of provincial societies. Using a wide range of often overlooked evidence, I will argue that Sheffield did support an active and dynamic middling society whose social and cultural impact on the town requires further exploration.

³ Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*, (London, 1819), pp. 118, 121-122, 125 (hereafter Hunter, *Hallamshire*); Revd A. Gatty, (ed.) *Hallamshire, The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*, (2nd edn, London, 1869), pp. 148-149, 153-154, 157, 168, (hereafter Gatty, *Hallamshire*); R.E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edn, Sheffield, 1905), pp. 6, 9, 13; Walton, *Sheffield*, pp. 95, 103, 109, 131.

⁴ Rosemary Sweet, 'The Production of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England', *Urban History* 23:2 (August 1996), p. 172.

Hallamshire and the Town of Sheffield

Use of the term 'Hallun' or 'Hallam' first appears in reference to the most southerly Anglo-Saxon shire of Northumbria. Following the Conquest, it was used to describe the area over which the Lords of Sheffield Castle and later, The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire, claimed jurisdiction. Sheffield Castle is now known to have been one of the largest in England, and was probably founded on an existing Anglo-Saxon site by the first lord of Hallamshire, William de Lovetot during the reign of Henry II. He established Sheffield as the region's administrative centre, instituting weekly markets and a new church. In the reign of Henry VIII, Leland considered Hallamshire to consist of the lands owned by the Earls of Shrewsbury and their forebears, giving its boundaries a somewhat elastic consistency. The boundaries of Hallamshire have been variously defined, but are generally accepted to include the parish of Sheffield and the substantial 50,000-acre parish of Ecclesfield, with its Chapelry of Bradfield to the north and west. In 1614, the scythe and sickle makers of several north Derbyshire villages joined The Cutlers' Company, which had mounted a vigorous campaign to defend its members from the hearth tax. This added the North Derbyshire villages of Norton, Norton Lees, Meersbrook, Greenhill, Woodseats, Bradway, Dore and Topley to the Company's authority. In 1624, an Act of Incorporation acknowledged the variable definitions of the region and granted the newly formed Company of Cutlers jurisdiction over Hallamshire together with a further 'Six Miles compasse of ye same'.⁵

⁵ R. E. Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York* (Sheffield, 1906), vol. 1, p. 7.

This latter area extended the potential jurisdiction of The Company as far north as Holmfirth and to the Lancashire and Cheshire borders in the west, where for all other purposes Sheffield was a remote town with little impact on daily affairs. For the purposes of this study, Hallamshire is defined as the town and parish of Sheffield with those areas immediately abutting its borders under the jurisdiction of the Company, namely, the parish of Ecclesfield and its Chapelry of Bradfield to the north and west, the North Derbyshire villages of Norton, Norton Lees, Meersbrook, Greenhill, Woodseats, Bradway, Dore and Totley. To the east lay Rotherham, Hallamshire's second town and this is included in order to give some sense of Sheffield as a regional centre. Collectively, this area was recognized as a distinct country, defined by its terrain, industries, and people. Hallamshire was, 'that southern corner of the West Riding [now South Yorkshire] where Yorkshire ends, where Derbyshire begins and of which Sheffield is the capital' (Fig.1.1).⁶

⁶ E. Mensforth, *Extracts from the Records of the Cutlers' Company* (Sheffield, 1972), frontispiece.

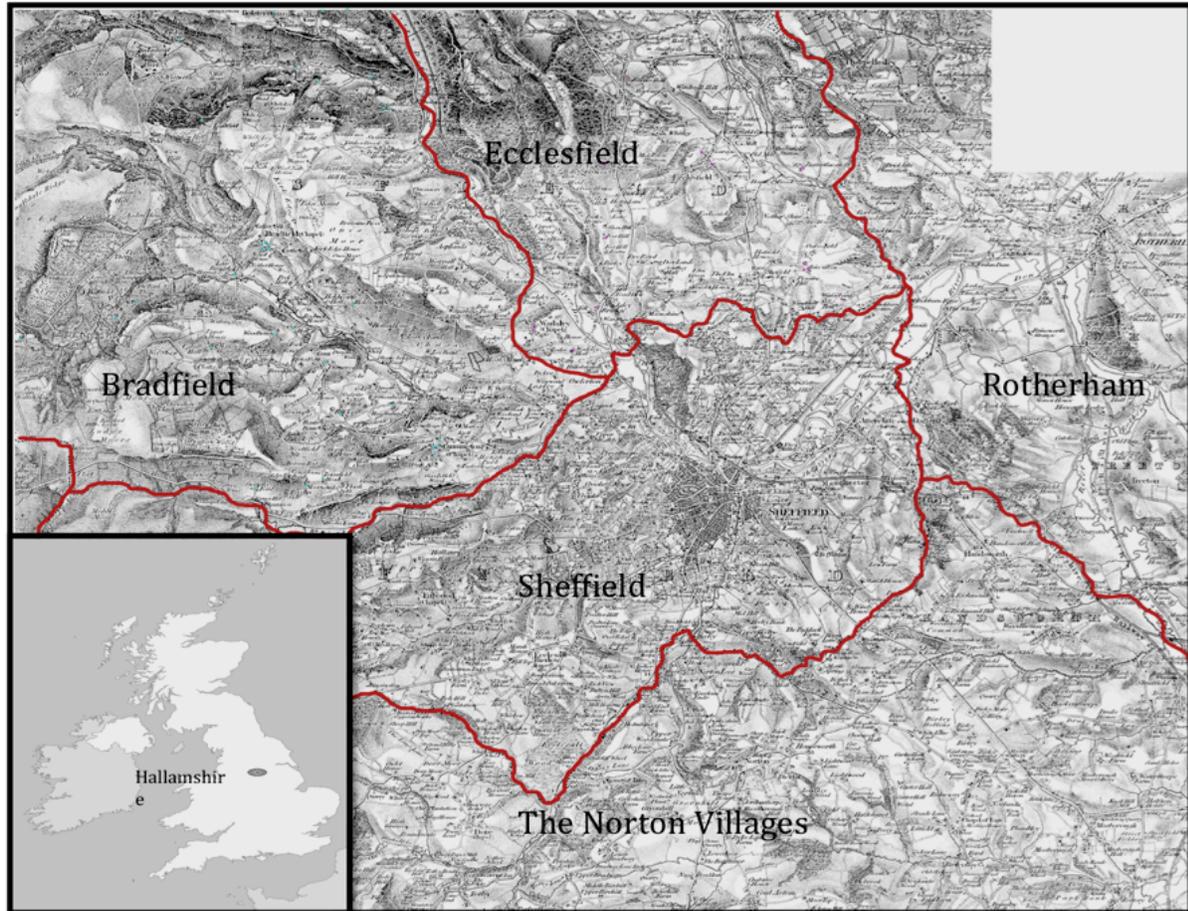


Fig. 1.1 Parishes and villages forming the country known as Hallamshire with Rotherham to the east
©Cassini Maps Created from Ordnance Survey Old Series Edition maps,
first published between 1805 and 1874

Wrigley and Schofield claim that during the pre-industrial period between 1690 and 1740, the population of England grew only slowly, but aided by improved communications, growing demand for new goods, relatively high wages and demand for skilled labour, the population of Hallamshire underwent considerable growth⁷. Between 1672 and 1736, the population of the town of Sheffield more than trebled and that in the surrounding hinterland

⁷ E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 207-210.

doubled.⁸ The parish of Sheffield consisted of six townships with that of Sheffield being the most densely populated and most heavily engaged with the metal trades. In 1700, the population of Sheffield was variously estimated to have been between 3,500 and 5,000 with a further thousand across the parish.⁹ By 1736, this had risen to 9,095 for the town and 14,105 inhabitants for the parish and by 1801, this had increased to 31,314 living in the town and 45,758 across the parish.¹⁰ In comparison, Rotherham remained a much smaller town with an estimated population of 1,000 in 1700, rising only to 3,070 by 1801.¹¹

Covering almost 78 square miles, the parish of Ecclesfield was one of the largest in England. Scattered amongst farmsteads and villages, its population was concentrated in the township of Ecclesfield, which sustained a number of trades and crafts, together with a schoolmaster and surgeon. In 1801, the population of the parish of Ecclesfield was estimated to be 5,114, with a further 4,102 in the Chapelry of Bradfield. The North Derbyshire villages are more difficult to assess, as they were too small for individual statistics to be collated and only perceived as an entity through their affiliation to the Cutlers' Company. However, John Bartholomew's *Gazetteer of the British Isles*, published in 1887, gave the population of the parish of Dronfield as 10,483 across 16,001 acres, and that of Norton parish as 3,759 across 4,437 acres. In 1901, the Sheffield County Borough was extended to formally include parts of

⁸ David Hey, 'Sheffield on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* 14 (1987), pp.1-10

⁹ Sidney Pollard, 'The Growth of Population', in D. L. Linton, (ed.) *Sheffield and its region: a scientific and Historical Survey* (Sheffield, 1956), p. 172.

¹⁰ George Calvert Holland, *The Vital Statistics of Sheffield*, (London, 1843), p. 27; G.I.H. Lloyd, *The Cutlery Trades An Historical Essay in the Economics of Small-Scale Production* (2nd edn, London, 1913), p. 151.

¹¹ Kevin Grady, *The Georgian Public Buildings of Leeds and the West Riding Thoresby Society*, 62.133 (Leeds, 1989), p.4.

the civil parishes of Beauchief and Norton whose population at the time was 11,959. Discussed in Chapter Two, each area had a distinct pattern of occupations and levels of wealth and whilst metalworking dominated the town of Sheffield and some of the Hallamshire villages, many parts of the region were largely agricultural and had little to do with the industry.

Tucked into the foothills of the Pennines, five fast flowing rivers dissected moorlands and steeply wooded terrain to the north, south and west of Sheffield, providing the waterpower and charcoal needed to help establish the region's cutlery, flatware, and tool trades. To the east, floodplains provided farmland and links to river and highway systems and later, level sites for the development of the iron and steel industry. Geoffrey Chaucer's reference to a 'Sheffield thwitel' in the Reeves tale was acknowledged to reflect the region's long association with the manufacture of cutlery.¹² By 1662, Sheffield had become the principal town in England for the manufacture of common knives, along with tools, scythes and other bladed instruments. Expansion abroad followed so that by 1721 the 'Cutler's Company claimed that more than half their products were sold abroad', especially to America.¹³

In the 1740s, production was augmented by Benjamin Hunstman's invention of the crucible steel process and Thomas Boulsover's discovery of Sheffield plate. The latter in particular prompted a considerable expansion and a serious engagement with the luxury and populuxe markets as local manufacturers became increasingly involved in the

¹² Thomas Fuller, *Worthies of England* (London, 1662), ed. P. Austin Nuttall (London, 1840), vol. 3, p. 395.

¹³ David Hey, *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads* (Leicester, 1980), p. 158.

production of fashionable tableware and decorative items. Workmen from Birmingham and London with knowledge of the latest designs were hired and production of styles complementing the designs of Lamerie, Chippendale, Adam, Hamilton, Wedgwood and Flaxman enabled Sheffield to compete in, and briefly dominate, the market for polite goods in silver and plate during the eighteenth century.¹⁴ With the exception of the silver-plate manufacturers, all metal workers had to adhere to the rules set down by the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire which registered and controlled the number of apprentices, issued hallmarks, determined working practices, and fined those caught producing shoddy goods or breaking the rules.

Creating close-knit commercial, familial and social networks, which spanned urban and rural divides, most metalworking businesses consisted of small, family-based units specialising in a particular process so that the completion of a single item could require co-ordination between several different premises. Work was often seasonal and was augmented by a variety of activities, especially various forms of husbandry. Much has been made of the persistence of an independent and highly skilled artisan class of 'little mesters', operating from small workshops where they regulated their own working hours and

¹⁴ Frederick Bradbury, *History of Old Sheffield Plate Being an account of the origin, growth and decay of the industry and of the antique silver and white or Britannia metal trade*, (Sheffield, 1912), pp. 30-31, 186-194; Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains of the late Samuel Roberts*, (London, 1849), p. 37; Sheffield City Archives: MD 3624, Charles Dixon, 'Recollections and Reminiscences of the Dixon family and other Familys [sic] in Connection with them with a brief sketch of some of the Nobility, Gentry, Merchants & Tradesmen, Sculptors, Poets, Historians and Mechanics, Philanthropists, Eccentrics and Characters with an Account of the Rise and progress of some of the Principle Trades in the Town of Sheffield and the Neighbourhood with a Glossary of words and some old Sayings & maxims a list of Country Feasts Wakes and Statutes with an Account of the Customs prevalent at Holidays and Public Occasions' (2 vols, 1847).

commanded relatively high rates of pay.¹⁵ The notion of an independent 'robust artisan' is one that is well established in Sheffield's historiography but is not without challenge.

Grayson and White, for example, argue that the control and influence of factors did much to harmonise and discipline the practices and habits of little mesters, suggesting perhaps the perpetuation of rough practices may have been less widespread than often claimed.¹⁶

The perception of a town dominated by the metal trades in which visitors struggled to distinguish masters from men has long been used as a convenient metaphor by which to describe Sheffield, but other industries did flourish, and their domination may not have been as complete as often portrayed. Using parish baptism and burial records, David Hey claims the town had few urban gentry and enjoyed only the range of retailers and craftsmen to be expected in a market town. Between 1698 and 1733, he estimated some 50-60% of the adult working population was connected to the metal trades, giving Sheffield a 'distinct character of its own'.¹⁷ However, parish records were often poorly maintained and offer few periods of consistent data. Neither do they include Sheffield's significant Dissenting population, estimated in 1794 to have formed half the town's population and to which many of the region's wealthiest and most influential families belonged.¹⁸ Between 1624 and 1814, 28,500

¹⁵ David Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood 1660-1740* (Leicester, London & New York, 1991), pp. 304-306.

¹⁶ Ruth Grayson and Alan White, "'More myth than Reality": the Independent Artisan in Nineteenth Century Sheffield', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 9.3 (1996).

¹⁷ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 99-101

¹⁸ George Tolley, *We, of our Bounty A history of the Sheffield Church Burgesses* (Durham, 1999) p. 148-152; Kenneth L. Patton and Clyde Binfield, *A Public Meeting House in Sheffield Upper Chapel, 1700-2000* (Sheffield, nd); J.E. Manning, *A history of Upper Chapel, Sheffield: founded 1662, built 1700, for the worship and service of almighty God: a bicentennial volume with an appendix containing Timothy Jollie's Register of baptisms* (Sheffield, 1900);

apprentices were registered with the Cutlers Company of Hallamshire but, less than half (47%) actually took out their freedoms, so the numbers spending their working life as cutlers may have been much smaller than first appears.¹⁹ In a review of female consumption in eighteenth-century Birmingham and Sheffield, Maxine Berg's use of insurance records has shown that 'in both towns more than half the firms insured in the 1770s and 1780s were outside the manufacturing sector'.²⁰ Trade directories did not reach Sheffield until 1774 but they too reflect an increasing commercial diversity. Whilst it is not possible to determine the numbers employed, 64.9% of the listings in *Sketchley's Sheffield Directory* of 1774 were associated with the metal trades, but when *Gales and Martin* produce their *Directory* in 1787, the figure had fallen to 39%. Hey acknowledges that within the cutlery trades, 'the proportion of the workforce that was occupied in this area remained constant as the population grew during the eighteenth century'.²¹ In her review of northern industrial towns of the late Georgian era, Hannah Barker points out that because of their importance as regional service centres, towns such as Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester were never truly industrial insofar as in addition to the

Sir Frederic Morton Eden, *The state of the poor: or, an history of the labouring classes in England, from the conquest to the present period;... together with parochial reports... With large appendix*, (London, 1797) vol. 3, pp. 868-875.

¹⁹ David Hey & Joan Unwin, 'The Company, 1624-1860', in Clyde Binfield and David Hey, (eds), *Mesters to Masters A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire* (Oxford, 1997), p. 33.

²⁰ Maxine Berg, 'Women's Consumption and the Industrial Classes of Eighteenth Century England', *Journal of Social History* 30.2 (1996), p. 416.

²¹ David Hey, *A History of Sheffield* (Lancaster, 2005), p. 83.

production of metal and cotton for which they were famous, they derived a substantial proportion of their income from a variety of other specialized services and retail facilities.²²

Scattered across the region and living in a variety of substantial houses and farms were the region's wealthier families. To the north and east, the Wilsons of Broomhead, Morewoods of Bradfield, Carrs of Birley, Rawsons, Parkers and Shirecliffes of Ecclesfield, and Fells, and Milners of Attercliffe, managed various farming, mining, forging, tanning and mercantile concerns. Villages to the south around Greenhill, Norton and Dronfield had a long tradition of farming and scythe-making, enabling families (including the Blythes of Meersbrook, Sitwells of Renishaw Hall, Clarkes of Norton Hall, Gills of The Oaks at Norton, the Moorwoods of Hazelbarrow, and Barkers of Norton Lees) to accumulate considerable wealth by local standards.

Resident over several centuries and involved across the spectrum of local trades and governance, Hey identifies these names as belonging to a group of core families who shared long-established customs and values compacted through kinship, trade and locality.²³ The Sitwells and Wilsons were amongst families whose younger sons joined the professions, whilst others such as the Brights, Foljambes, Wortleys, Shirecliffes, and Jessops, were routinely apprenticed to cutlers and saw no stigma in joining the trade or living in their masters' households. Leader and Sir George Sitwell also argue that their presence had a

²² Hannah Barker, "'Smoke Cities': Northern Industrial Towns in Late Georgian England', *Urban History* 31.2 (2004), p. 180.

²³ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 197-201.

positive influence upon the manner and behaviour of their fellow-workers.²⁴ Hey notes that the high repetition of local surnames in the Company records helped foster a strong sense of community within the trades. This was further enhanced through the apprenticeship system whereby 'family trees of learning' passed knowledge from master to apprentice often between several generations in the same trade.²⁵ In contrast with the sharp urban-rural divide portrayed by Estabrook in and around Bristol, Hey argues that attributing polarised behavioural descriptors of urban and rural to Sheffield and Hallamshire would obscure a more accurate reading of the holistic and mutually-supporting relationship between the town and its surrounding hinterland, with core family members often serving the region as parish officers or on one Sheffield's three independent governing bodies.²⁶

Established by charter in 1297, the Town Trustees were the oldest organisation in the region and were charged with maintaining order and the town's infrastructure. The Church Burgesses were formed in 1554 and were responsible for the maintenance of the parish church, the repair of bridges and common-ways, and relief of the poor. Both institutions were, and remain, self-perpetuating and self-electing bodies. Formed in 1624 and arguably the most influential body in the region, although rarely the wealthiest, The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire was consistently more prominent in the public arena than either the Town Trustees or Church Burgesses and its annually appointed Master Cutler was acknowledged as the town's principal citizen. The Company's role was to control

²⁴ R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edn, Sheffield, 1905), p. 12; Sir George Reresby Sitwell, *The Hurts of Haldworth and their Descendants at Savile Hall, The Ickles and Hesley Hall* (Oxford, 1930), p. 278.

²⁵ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 75-79.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

and protect the metal trades and all who produced goods with a cutting edge were obliged to be members. The discovery of silver-plate in the mid-eighteenth century introduced a new, independent group of manufacturers who could freely direct their businesses, leaving those under the jurisdiction of the Company to be increasingly hindered by its refusal to amend archaic rules.

The holding of multiple offices was not uncommon, so that (for example), Robert Sorsbie (d. 1700), Thomas Diston (d. 1703) and Christopher Broomhead (d. 1728) were each appointed Town Trustee, Church Burgess, and Governor of the Grammar School, with Sorsby and Broomhead also holding the post of Master Cutler in 1669 and 1696 respectively. Until at least the mid-eighteenth century, all office holders could be directly approached for help and, at the expense of greater formality and organisation, the ability to access local administrators on a personal basis may have contributed to a persistence of familiar and informal practices.²⁷

Trustees and Burgesses were drawn from the ranks of the area's gentry, mercantile, and professional bodies living in Sheffield and the surrounding countryside. They were usually amongst the wealthier members of society, often successful in a variety of trades or professions and often members of other influential bodies such as Governors of the Sheffield Grammar School, or churchwardens. The Trustees favoured shopkeepers and retailers whilst Burgesses were selected from a variety of gentry, trades, yeomen and professional backgrounds. All were required to express sympathy towards the working of

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 247.

the Church and in the early part of the century the 'low' nature of local churchmanship did not prevent dissenters such as Field Sylvester from serving as burgesses²⁸. Most Master Cutlers were wealthier than the members they represented, but generally less wealthy than the Burgesses or Trustees and some could fall on hard times. Having already paid for him to be released from goal, the Masters' Accounts for 1748 record 'Cotton Watkins an old Master 45 weeks charity at 2/6 per week for his support'.²⁹

Hey notes how between 1681 and 1740, membership of the Burgesses transferred from the core families to new families in new houses, a feature noted with considerable dismay by Hunter and Leader who mourned the loss of the older gentry families of the Brights, Spencers, Hanbys, Birleys and Saundersons.³⁰ Mary Walton described this period as one in which the development of Sheffield suffered considerably due to the want of 'any strong body of men with wealth and education', who could contribute to the social and intellectual life of the town.³¹ Leader commented that 'the trend of influence' during the first half of the eighteenth century was 'retrograde', as 'it was exceedingly striking to notice how many of the leading families who had given distinction to the neighbourhood and tone to its society [...] had gone away'.³²

In direct contrast, Arthur Jackson notes the positive influence to the region of new families and wealth. No longer based upon tradition, gentry or land, this new wealth and

²⁸ Tolley, *We, of our Bounty*, pp. 192-251.

²⁹ Archives of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire: D1/1, Accounts of the Masters Cutler, Edward Windle M.C. (1748).

³⁰ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 217-221; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 9.

³¹ Walton, *Sheffield*, p. 103.

³² Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 9

influence was vested in ironmasters, such as the Fells, Milners, Barlows, Speights, and Parkins; lead merchants including the Clays, Nodders, and Lees; the attorneys, Chappell, Sitwell, Banks, Wright, and Battie, and doctors, Waterhouse, Lee and Carr.³³ Entrepreneurs such as Thomas Diston and Field Sylvester came to the town to become ironmasters and merchants and were not precluded from serving office on one of the town's governing bodies.³⁴

Spanning urban and rural divides many new families were dissenters or non-conformists who supported the Whig cause and engaged in rational forms of dissent as discussed by John Seed.³⁵ Figures based on the Compton ecclesiastical census of 1676 indicate an estimated 10% of the population in Sheffield to be dissenters compared with a national figure of 4%. In 1715, John Evans's List of Dissenting Congregations put the number attending the town's Upper Chapel at 1,163, or between 16-17% of the town's population, not counting those who came from further afield. Whilst the majority of the local population appear to have attended neither established nor non-conformist places of worship, many of those attending the Upper Chapel were from the town's leading families and able to exert considerable influence.³⁶

Eighteenth-century politics frequently merged and reformed allegiances between Whig and Tory, town and country, church and Dissenter, but following the Act of 1689,

³³ 'Mr Arthur Jackson on "Old Sheffield"', *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 10 April 1893.

³⁴ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 247.

³⁵ J. Seed, 'Gentlemen Dissenters: The Social and Political Meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *The Historical Journal* 28.2 (1985), pp. 299-325.

³⁶ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 254-255.

Peter Earle notes how a man who was a Dissenter or sympathetic to their cause would nearly always be a Whig, whilst a man who was an ardent Anglican would nearly always be a Tory.³⁷ The use of such dichotomous terms still require caution as eighteenth-century definitions of Tory and Whig often merged and overlapped. Addison, for example considered 'an honest Englishman is a Tory in church matters and a Whig in politics'.³⁸ From the 1730s, further complications arose when the terms 'court' and 'country' became idioms of greater significance than Tory and Whig, so that country Whigs and Tories could become aligned against courtly Whigs.³⁹ Writing in 1741, David Hume stated that since the 1688 Revolution, Tories had come to be seen as the party of order and Whigs as the party of liberty. A Tory is a 'lover of monarchy, tho' without abandoning liberty; and a partizan of the family of Stuart', while a 'Whig may be defin'd to be a Lover of Liberty, tho' without renouncing Monarchy; a Friend to the Settlement in the Protestant Line'.⁴⁰

In his study of the writings of the third earl of Shaftesbury, Klein stresses that this association between politeness and Whiggism as a defining motif of eighteenth-century cultural life in which the traditional authority of ecclesiastical and courtly institutions was replaced by a model of a public critical culture regulated by the standards of polite and gentlemanly conversation.⁴¹ On the other hand, Markku Peltonen argues politeness was not a wholly Whig concept and differences in its interpretation did not readily divide on

³⁷ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class, Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1989), p. 267.

³⁸ Peter Smithers, *Life of Joseph Addison* (Oxford, 1954), p. 28.

³⁹ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Kat Club, Friends Who Imagined a Nation* (London, 2008), p.50.

⁴⁰ Smithers, *Life of Addison*, p. 28.

⁴¹ L. E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness, Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994).

political lines. Further, whilst acknowledging the 'Whig theorists of post-1688...[were] not only moving civility and politeness from the courtly context to the urban context but above all linking it closely with commerce – indeed perceiving politeness as an offspring of commerce', he claims that not all Whigs supported the view whilst others disputed the link.⁴²

David Hey asserts that the Town Trustees, together with the majority of the town, its leading families, and the Cutlers' Company, generally supported Dissenting and Whig causes. But Leader disagrees, arguing that whilst many of its leaders were Dissenters, by the late seventeenth century, 'the Cutlers' Company was already beginning to acquire for itself that flavour of Toryism which, not unfamiliar in our own times, had even then placed the Cutlers' Hall in antagonism, politically, with the Whiggish Town Trustees and the democratic sentiments of the people'.⁴³ Tory sympathies within the Cutlers' Company may have inclined them towards the preservation of traditional and paternalistic hierarchies and forms of sociability. Whilst popular causes such as improvements to roads and rivers could generate collaboration, the disjointed and potentially politically antagonistic nature of local governance meant undertaking large-scale development of the town would remain problematic.⁴⁴

⁴² M. Peltonen, 'Politeness and Whiggism, 1688-1732', *The Historical Journal* 48.2 (2005), pp. 407-408.

⁴³ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 293; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p 226.

⁴⁴ A. Yadav, *Historical Outline of Restoration and 18th-Century British Literature: Whig and Tory*, <http://mason.gmu.edu/~ayadav/historical%20outline/whig%20and%20tory> [accessed 20 August 2010]; Field, *The Kit-Kat Club*, p. 72; D. Smith, *Conflict and Compromise Class Formation in English Society 1830-1914, A Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield*

The overlapping nature of local governance and the fluidity of structure and approach mean the alignment of political views or forms of behaviour with particular groups must remain tentative. Despite events in the latter part of the eighteenth century which gave Sheffield a reputation for radicalism, the Revd Goodwin remarked in 1764 that the region's flourishing trade, general welfare and stability of the community was due to the population's close and 'necessary connections in business with each other'. In particular, he noted 'that very little of the party prevails here and Christian moderation seems to take great place amongst people of all different religious denominations'.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, a combination of religion, politics, rising wealth, entrepreneurship, and greater contact with the outside world meant changes were beginning to take place that indicated local society was becoming more socially and culturally diverse, with new needs and requirements. Before considering what these changes were and who engaged with them, a consideration of how contemporary visitors perceived the town and the criteria upon which their judgements were made will help show how their views have become fixed into understandings of the region.

Eighteenth-century perceptions

The complex, changing and challenging environments presented by towns where

(London, 1982), p.10; G. P. Jones, 'Early Industrial development' in D. L. Linton, (ed.), *Sheffield and its region: a scientific and Historical Survey* (Sheffield, 1956), p.181; Walton, *Sheffield*, pp.142 ff, 167 ff.

⁴⁵ Reverend E. Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield', *Gentleman's Magazine* xxxiv (April 1764).

urban and rural, the middling and plebeian, the polite and impolite, classical and medieval architecture, all jostled amidst the noise and pollution of industry presented a bewildering and unfamiliar townscape to many contemporary viewers. Reliant on contemporary advice literature and mindful of the corrupting influence on morals and manners of the passing of wealth into the unregulated hands of commerce and the uncontrolled indulgences of luxury, for many travellers the region would have represented the tangible expression of the stock anxieties of their day. The cultivation of politeness and the arts could not be expected in towns dominated by trade. As Aikin argued; 'few commercial towns have in any considerable degree united a taste for literature with the pursuit of wealth.'⁴⁶ Lacking a resident aristocracy by which to set the social tone and give direction, unable to readily discern either a noble past or the influence of classicism on the modern townscape, the enquiring visitor approached Sheffield with little anticipation of finding a polite society.

Towns which could offer visitors little or no evidence of a glorious present, as opposed to a glorious past, could suffer greatly from such comparisons. Genteel society appreciated the aesthetic and historical value of Roman antiquities and ancient churches but it also expected 'spacious, dry and airy streets', smart housing and modern amenities.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles around Manchester* (London, 1795) p.353, quoted in R. H. Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), p.365.

⁴⁷ J.M. Ellis, "'For the Honour of the Town": Comparison, Competition and Civic Identity in Eighteenth-Century England', *Urban History* 30.3 (2003), pp. 328-329.

The description given in 1789 by the Honourable John Byng, later Viscount Torrington, as he approached Sheffield from the south summarises the stark contrast which confronted the visitor between the town and its surrounding countryside: 'From the hill, at our walks end, we cou'd discover Sheffield spires, at the end of the vale; in front the setting sun; behind us the town of Nottingham; and in the valley beneath, the furnaces vomiting forth their amazing fires, which make this country in an eternal smoke'.⁴⁸ In addition to claiming Sheffield was one of the foulest towns in England, Horace Walpole described the road between Wentworth Castle and the town as, 'insufferable', to which Arthur Young added that the road between Rotherham and Sheffield was, 'execrably bad, very stony, and excessively full of holes'.⁴⁹ In 1759, Charles Burlington claimed the streets of Sheffield were

⁴⁸ The Honourable John Byng, *The Torrington Diaries, containing the tours through England and Wales... between the years 1781 and 1794: A Tour in the Midlands: 1789*, (London, 1935) vol. 2, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Walpole, 'Letter to George Montague, 1st September 1760', in Peter Cunningham, (ed.), *The Letters of Horace Walpole Fourth Earl of Orford*, vol. 3 (London, 1891) pp. 337; Arthur Young, *A six months tour through the North of England*, (2nd edn, London, 1771), vol. I p. 122. Arthur Young, *A six months tour through the North of England. Containing, an account of the present state of agriculture, manufactures and population, in several counties of this kingdom, particularly, I: The nature, value, and rental of the soil. II: The size of farms, with accounts of their stock, products, population, and various methods of culture. III: The use, expence, and profit of several sorts of manure. IV: The breed of cattle, and the respective profits attending them. V: The state of the waste lands which might and ought to be cultivated. VI: The condition and number of the poor, with their rates, earnings, &c. VII: The prices of labour and provisions, and the proportion between them. VIII: The register of many curious and useful experiments in agriculture, and general practices in rural occonomics, communicated by several of the nobility, gentry, &c. &c. Interspersed with descriptions of the seats of the nobility and gentry; and other remarkable objects: illustrated with copper plates of such implements of husbandry, as deserve to be generally known; and views of some picturesque scenes, which occurred in the course of the journey.* (2nd edn, London, 1771), vol. 1, p. 122

<http://find.galegroup.com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/ecco/infomark.do?&contentSet=ECCOArticles&type=multipage&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&docId=CB128841403&source=gale&userGroupName=tou&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE> [accessed 24 Nov. 2011].

'narrow, and most of the houses appear black from the great clouds of smook constantly issuing from the forges.'⁵⁰ Visiting in 1801, Lady Caroline Stuart-Wortley simply claimed that she had never before visited such a 'stinking, dirty and savage place'.⁵¹

Much of what was written may have been true but their comments were informed by the concerns of the day. Burlington remarked of Sheffield that, 'Indeed, elegance is not to be expected in a town where there are so many people employed in useful manufactories'.⁵² The Honourable John Byng simply asserted that, as a gentleman born:

I dread trade, I hate its clamour: as a gentleman born, I scowl at their (over) advantages. It is in the trading towns, only, where rioting and discords begin: and yet they want representatives; why of all places they are the last that should be represented; for their members will be most falsely, and violently chosen and their towns for ever convulsed by faction.⁵³

Not all who visited the region expressed such negative sentiments. Some were intrigued by the industry and the countryside surrounding Sheffield and were more prepared to consider the town on its own merits. In 1762, Thomas Gray, 'liked the situation [of Sheffield] in a valley by a pretty river's side, surrounded with charming hills: saw the handsome parish-church'. Arthur Young, too, described the countryside surrounding

⁵⁰ Charles Burlington, *The Modern Universal British Traveller; or, a new, complete and accurate Tour through England, Wales, Scotland... Articles respecting England by Charles Burlington, Esq.* (London, 1779), p. 563; Walpole, 'Letter to George Montague 1st September 1760', in Cunningham (ed.) p. 337.

⁵¹ Sheffield City Archives: Wharnccliffe Muniments, Wh M/506-540, Lady Caroline Stuart-Wortley, Letter, 1801.

⁵² Burlington, *Modern Universal British Traveller*, p. 563; Walpole, Letter to George Montague, 1st September 1760', in Cunningham (ed.), p. 337.

⁵³ Byng, *The Torrington Diaries: A Tour to the North*, (London, 1935) vol. 3, 4 June 1792.

Sheffield as a 'bewitching landscape'.⁵⁴ During his journey through England between 1724 and 1726, Daniel Defoe visited Sheffield where he admired its size and industry, its spacious parish church and handsome spire, fine hospital and substantial mills.⁵⁵

The invention of Sheffield plate in 1742 by Thomas Boulsover did much to stimulate Sheffield's entry into the production of fashionable items with factory tours and new shops attracting visitors in search of tablewares to the region. In 1781, Lady Hester Newdigate journeyed from Buxton eager to purchase Sheffield goods directly from the manufacturers. Mounting a successful defence against her husband's protestations, she wrote to him claiming, 'I don't know how to lessen expense, without lessening Comforts. That last word properly introduces ye subject of Sheffield goods'. Travelling on good roads through outstanding countryside and finding a 'good supper and charming Beds', she 'saw the Plated Manufactory through all its branches which is very curious indeed, made myself rich in conveniences' which she described in terms of neatness, order and convenience to her husband.⁵⁶ In July 1763, the *Sheffield Public Advertiser* reported how the Duke of York

⁵⁴ British Library: *Egerton MS 2400*, ff. 156-157, Thomas Gray to Thomas Wharton, 4 December 1762; Young, *A six months tour through the North of England* (London, 1770), vol. 1, pp. 131-132.

⁵⁵ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro' the whole Island of Great Britain, 1724-26*, (London, 1962) vol. 2, p. 183; Young, *A six months tour through the North of England*, (London, 1770), pp. 131-132.

⁵⁶ Lady Newdigate Newdigate, *The Cheverels of Cheverel Manor*, (London, 1898) quoted in J. E. Tyler, 'A Visit to Sheffield in Eighteenth Century', in *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, 3, pp. 112-115.

made a detour en route to Scarborough and 'called at Mr Joseph Hancock's, where he looked at several goods of the manufactory of this place'.⁵⁷

Shopkeepers began to acquire premises in fashionable parts of town in which customers could peruse their goods at their leisure in elegant, clean and spacious surroundings. Items could be bought immediately from stock without having to wait for orders to be placed with manufacturers, and customers were tempted to make further purchases through displays of associated goods, which could also be readily purchased. Upon removing to his new, large, and commodious shop in the High Street in 1768 the goldsmith and Jeweller Isaac Cosins sought to attract those wishing to create facilities for polite and elegant dining in their homes with his displays of Sheffield Plate, English and continental glass and china goods and teas.

To acquaint his Friends and Customers, that he has got a large and fresh assortment of the following Goods, viz: Solid Silver Plate, Tankards, Pints, Cups, Half Pints, Castors, Salts, Soop Spoons, Table Spoons, Tea Spoons, Tea Tongs and a great variety of similar articles. Likewise a great variety of Foreign and English China, Teas, etc – Looking and Drinking Glasses, Delf and White Stone Wares, London, Birmingham and Sheffield Goods.⁵⁸

Placing his announcement in the *Sheffield Public Advertiser*, Cosins harnessed improving transport conditions to increase the variety of his stock and attract new customers.

⁵⁷ *Sheffield Public Advertiser* No. 168 5th- 12th July 1763.

⁵⁸ *Sheffield Public Advertiser* No. 440 17th – 24th September 1768.

Antiquarian interpretations of Hallamshire

None of these comments proclaims a polite society, but neither do they sustain one that was singularly rough and plebeian. The problems faced by Sheffield and the solutions it sought followed a pattern that could have been witnessed in many other towns of the time. Yet, it is the negative sentiments that appear to have informed and underpinned the writings of the region's three principal antiquarians of the nineteenth and early twentieth - centuries, Joseph Hunter, the Revd Alfred Gatty and R. E. Leader. Even though their views were occasionally challenged, the authority commanded by their combined works set the tone for future historians who have continued to perpetuate their understandings of the region.

Joseph Hunter, F.S.A. (1783-1861), was the author of *Hallamshire The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*, (1819), which he followed with a two volume *History of the Deanery of Doncaster* (1828-31). His four-volume collection of regional pedigrees, *Familiae Minorum Gentium* was published posthumously in 1894. In 1869, the Revd Alfred Gatty D.D. (1813-1903), Vicar of Ecclesfield, revised and enlarged *Hallamshire*, later publishing his own works, *Sheffield: Past and Present Being a Biography of the Town During Eight Hundred Years* (1873) and his account of life in the parish of Ecclesfield, *A Life at One Living*, published in 1884. Robert Eadon Leader (1839-1922) produced numerous works and newspaper articles in particular, *Reminiscences of Old Sheffield Its Streets and Its People* (1875), *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century*, (1905) and his *History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York*, completed in 1906.

Hunter was born in Sheffield where he was brought up in the guardianship of the Revd. Joseph Evans, a local dissenting Presbyterian minister and given a basic classical education at Attercliffe College. Hunter was then apprenticed to the cutlery trade but on completion of his apprenticeship he left to train as a Presbyterian minister in York. He gained an appointment in Bath where he spent much of his life and where he became a leading member of the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution and Sir Richard Colt Hoare's 'Stourhead Circle'.⁵⁹ Occasionally returning to the area and borrowing books and manuscripts from owners in the region, it was whilst living in Bath that Hunter published *Hallamshire* and his two-volume *South Yorkshire*. Following his appointment as subcommissioner of the public records, Hunter moved to London in 1833 when, for the first time, he could make first-hand use of the documents there, previously claiming they were too difficult to access.

Whilst in London he became a prominent member of the Society of Antiquaries together with another local antiquarian, Samuel Pegge, (1704–1796), the Cambridge educated vicar of Whittington and member of Spalding Gentlemen's Society. Sources used by Hunter included manuscripts from the British Museum and Bodleian Library in Oxford, especially the works of Roger Dodsworth, (c.1585-1654), the self-taught Yorkshire antiquary, whose material had been given to the Library by the antiquary Richard Gough (1735-1809).⁶⁰ Acknowledgements in his 1819 edition of *Hallamshire* show Hunter was also

⁵⁹ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, pp. 153-154; David Crook, 'Hunter, Joseph (1783–1861)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14225> [accessed 6 April 2011].

⁶⁰ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. ix-x.

in contact with the Revd Edward Goodwin the former curate of Attercliffe whose positive and optimistic account of Sheffield had been published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1764 and was in sharp contrast to the tone adopted by Hunter.⁶¹ Whereas Goodwin described a flourishing commercial town with efficient links to the metropolis, good houses in the principal streets, plentiful markets and fairs, high wages amongst the labouring classes, and an array of handsome, classically inspired public and religious buildings, in his preface to *Hallamshire*, Hunter chose to caution his readers of the uninspiring scope of his subject.

While the volume is not deficient of matter which bears upon the general history of this great kingdom, yet it undoubtedly contains much that will appear of interest only to those who have some natural connection with the places or persons described; and even of those who have this natural connection, there may be some to whom it may appear that the pages contains too much of genealogical matter, as they are not of the few who, in the words of old Gervase Holles, "are listening after the memory of their ancestors".⁶²

Rosemary Sweet has shown how these contrasting approaches typified the conflicting attitudes towards the towns during the eighteenth century. Some saw them as rapidly expanding cradles of urban civilisation and economic growth, essential to the spread of polite society, the stability of society, and promotion of the arts, science and architecture. Others followed a long literary tradition founded in the Old Testament portrayal of Sodom and Gomorrah as 'towns as centres of evil and vice', seeing their

⁶¹ Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield'.

⁶² Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. viii.

squalor, anonymity, and lack of regulation as threatening the existing social order.⁶³ Yet another school of thought branded towns devoid of the cultural life of polite society whilst at the same time condemning the cultural pretensions of merchants, tradesmen, and manufacturers who were 'too fond of maximising their profits to risk the levels of expenditure necessary in the cultivation of true taste'.⁶⁴

Born in London and educated at Eton, in 1839 family connections thrust Gatty into the incumbency of Ecclesfield Church. In the same year, he married Margaret Scott, authoress of children's books and daughter of Nelson's chaplain and linguist, Alexander John Scott. Consoled only by the fact that the Oxford Movement was regenerating the Church and money from mining and manufacturing was available for improvements, he was to remain there 63 years despite claiming, 'the parish was rude and rough, notoriously so'.⁶⁵ Within living memory, he claimed there had been periodical bull and bear baiting, for which a bull and two bears were maintained, whilst dog and cock fighting were also popular sports.

Hunter's descriptions of the region were greatly embellished by Gatty whose evidence for life in Sheffield during the eighteenth century incorporated material taken from the autobiography of Samuel Roberts (1763-1848), a successful Sheffield silver-plate manufacturer, friend of James Montgomery and William Wilberforce and noted writer on social reforms and local affairs. Resolving 'never to publish anything that he was not

⁶³ Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (New York, 1999), p. 223.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁶⁵ Revd. Alfred Gatty, *A Life at One Living* (London, 1884), pp. 24-25.

convinced was favourable to morality and religion', Roberts had directed his attention towards the moral conduct and improvement of local metal workers and his recollections may have been exaggerated in order to highlight the benefits of reforms with which he was subsequently involved.⁶⁶ Gatty too may have wished to emphasise the poor condition of the region in the eighteenth century to highlight improvements in which he was involved during his long incumbency at Ecclesfield.

Hailing originally from Essex, Leader's family settled in Sheffield first as partners in the silver-plating firm, Tudor, Leader and Nicholson, and then as editors and proprietors of the *Sheffield Independent*. A Liberal, on two occasions Leader unsuccessfully stood for parliament. He edited the paper in association with his brother, John Daniel, and both became noted local historians, R. E. Leader so much so that, in a biographical note, the Revd W. Odom affirmed that, 'his authority on all matters relating to old Sheffield was unquestioned, and his accuracy was acknowledged on all hands'.⁶⁷

Endorsing Mary Walton's acknowledgment of their combined influence on the region, Gatty and both Leaders chose to maintain Hunter's antiquarian interpretation despite the rise of a new genre of urban history, which moved increasingly from a focus on buildings, lineage and charters to 'the people of the town and their concerns'.⁶⁸ In 1801, for

⁶⁶ Samuel Smith, 'Roberts, Samuel (1763–1848)', rev. C. A. Creffield, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) online edn, Jan 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23772> [accessed 6 April 2011]

⁶⁷ Revd. W Odom, *Hallamshire Worthies, Notable Men and Women of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1926) p. 17.

⁶⁸ Rosemary Sweet, 'The Production of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-Century England' *Urban History* 23:2 (August 1996), p. 185.

example, John Baillie had published his *Impartial history of the town and county of Newcastle upon Tyne*, written with the middling sort in mind and which generally applauded their influence upon the town. Similarly, in his *History of Nottingham*, John Blackner (1770-1816), claimed the trade of the town 'had brushed off the rust of barbarism and brought politeness, social harmony and freedom to society'.⁶⁹ As Rosemary Sweet observes:

The most crucial transformation was the transition from an account written for the urban elite, to one which was aimed at a much broader section of society. Although essentially the same material was used, the different emphases given by the writers and the manner in which they presented their material provided illuminating comparisons.⁷⁰

One of the few contemporary voices to challenge the hegemony of Hunter, Gatty and Leader was that of local surgeon and historian, Arthur Jackson. Writing in 1919, Canon Odom of Sheffield described how Jackson took exception to Hunter's claim that during the early eighteenth century, Sheffield's 'inhabitants were less distinguished by the refinement of social life than by feelings of independence and rugged honesty, by hospitality and a rude and boisterous conviviality'.⁷¹ The occasion was a lecture given by Jackson to the Press Club's smoking concert in April 1893 in which he referred to the more positive views of the region given by the Revd Edward Goodwin and records of the Sitwell family, later to be made more widely available in Sir George Sitwell's exploration of his ancestors'

⁶⁹ John Baillie, *An impartial history of the town and county of Newcastle upon Tyne and its vicinity* (Newcastle, 1801); John Blackner, *The History of Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1815), pp. 194-195;

⁷⁰ Sweet, 'The Production of Urban Histories', pp. 172, 184-188.

⁷¹ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p.153, quoted in Revd. William Odom, *St Paul's Church, Sheffield: Its Ministers and Associations* (Sheffield, 1919) p. 2-3.

correspondence.⁷² Almost ten years later Leader felt it necessary to declaim Jackson. In *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century*, which he published in 1901, Leader states in a footnote that whilst based on the same sources as those employed by Hunter himself, Jackson's view that Sheffield had more culture and comfort than supposed by Hunter, remained unproved.⁷³ Yet, as Jackson himself noted, 'they could never forget the good work Joseph Hunter did for his native town, but 30 years had placed in their reach opportunities for research which Hunter never had'.⁷⁴

These opportunities included new methodologies and understandings which revealed new information and the ways in which antiquarians had perceived and written their histories. Rosemary Sweet argues that antiquarians played an essential role in polite culture and did much to provide the raw material from which subsequent historical narratives were fashioned.⁷⁵ 'Antiquarianism was part of the polite culture of learned societies', and antiquarians saw themselves pursuing a rigorous discipline which informed the political and religious debates of the day. Their explorations of regional identities contributed to a wider sense of a national past and a national heritage, both of which it was believed, 'would engender public spirit at home and enhance the nation's reputation abroad'.⁷⁶ Critics, however, claim their contributions lacked empiricism, fieldwork, and intellectual rigour. Furthermore, unlike the prevalence of classicism in art and architecture,

⁷² Jackson, 'Old Sheffield'.

⁷³ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Jackson, 'Old Sheffield'.

⁷⁵ R.H. Sweet, 'Antiquaries and Antiquities in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34.2 (Winter, 2001), p. 181.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 198.

seeking the works of historical worthies, pageantry, and links with a glorious past meant many antiquarians favoured a romantic view of history.⁷⁷

Striving to find ways of describing the distinctive nature of the country known as Hallamshire, antiquarians were in little doubt that Sheffield was unable to sustain polite society. The absence of a resident aristocracy and abundance of classical ruins, the lack of parliamentary representation or figures engaged with national events meant the region was perceived as a backwater in decline. Some of their comments contained substantial truths, and much of the material they brought to light is of great value in exploring and understanding the social and cultural construction of eighteenth-century Sheffield. Yet, as Jackson was aware, new understandings and new sources were beginning to offer more textured and complex readings of the social and cultural construction of the region than those presented by dichotomous, antiquarian, and metropolitan-orientated understandings of provincial and industrial societies.

In tracing how examples of how some of these themes have become embedded in the region's historiography it is possible to show understandings of local society have been severely restricted by continued reliance on motifs that rely on a limited range of sources and understandings. For each of these themes, introducing new evidence from a wider range of sources shows how it is possible to argue that the region supported a sector of society that was attuned to change and willing to deploy new behaviour, goods and spaces to help them express their middling identity.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 186.

The wider world: communications and access to new goods

Lodged between the Pennines to the west and floodplains to the east, Sheffield never became a central distribution centre for regional goods, or enjoyed sufficient proximity to other centres for it to develop a broad range of activities beyond involvement in the metal trades.⁷⁸ The town was not on any major road or water route and the transportation of people and goods could be both arduous and costly. A perceived reluctance to travel and lack of enterprise caused Hunter and Gatty to comment that during the first half of the eighteenth century, Sheffield manufacturers 'were content to wait at home for the arrival of the casual purchaser', and that there, 'were no correspondencies opened with houses on the continent'. 'Exports were largely delivered via London merchants whose agents resided at Sheffield under the denomination of factors'.⁷⁹

Whilst Hunter, Gatty, Roberts, Leader, and Walton left readers with the impression that Sheffield had little access to new goods, others argue that the region was much less isolated and enjoyed a wide range of new and exotic commodities. David Hey has shown how an intricate network of packhorse and stage-wagon routes linking the region to the inland port of Bawtry provided the means by which ideas, news and goods were regularly transported in and out of the region.⁸⁰ An Act was passed in 1726 allowing the building of a canal from Bawtry to Tinsley, some three miles from the town centre of Sheffield, by which heavy goods could be transported and which gave Sheffield direct access to inland and

⁷⁸ A. J. Hunt, 'The Morphology and Growth of Sheffield', in D.L. Linton, (ed.) *Sheffield and Its Region*, pp. 240-241.

⁷⁹ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, pp. 118, 121; Gatty, *Hallamshire*, pp. 145, 153.

⁸⁰ David Hey, *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads* (Leicester, 1980), p. 98.

coastal waterways. In 1710, stage-wagons commenced regular runs between Sheffield and London and from 1756, aided by vigorous support from The Cutlers' Company, a series of turnpike trusts began to improve links with the wider world and reduce transport costs. From 1760, stagecoaches provided easier and faster transport for people and goods between the capital and other towns. By 1787, *Gales and Martins Directory for Sheffield* listed several inns and taverns from which numerous daily coaches and carriers departed to nearby towns including Halifax, Lincoln, Leeds, Mansfield, and York as well as further afield to Edinburgh, Hull, Carlisle and Birmingham.

Along these routes travelled packmen carrying highly prized Sheffield blades to sell in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and by Elizabethan times, to export through Chester. In 1537, Henry Reynshaw was importing iron ore from Spain with other supplies coming from Austria, Sweden, Germany, and Russia. In 1637, John Taylor's *Carriers' Cosmographie*, recorded the weekly transport of goods between Sheffield and London, with heavier goods passing by water via Bawtry to the coast. In 1692, following the death of his agent Mr Watson, who had gone to sell knives there on his behalf, anxious correspondence from the Quaker ironmaster John Spencer of Cannon Hall was dispatched to William Beaumont in Narra, Sweden.⁸¹ In 1691, turmeric, liquorice, aniseed, cinnamon, coriander, caraway seeds, cloves, tobacco and sugar were amongst the shop stock listed in the inventory of Sheffield grocer, Martha Hancock and, in 1705, Joseph Lee another Sheffield grocer, carried a similar range of goods together with supplies of Jamaica pepper, Spanish juice (liquorice),

⁸¹ Sheffield City Archives: *Spencer Stanhope Papers*, Sp St 60502, W. Beaumont to Mr. John Spencer, Narra, 28 May 1692.

turmeric, ginger and mace.⁸² During his tour of the north of England in 1770, Arthur Young exhorted visitors to examine Sheffield's silk mill whose raw materials came from Bengal, China, Turkey, Piedmont, America and Italy.⁸³

Evidence from household accounts shows fashionable cutlery, serving dishes, glassware and furniture were being acquired from local sources and further afield. Under the ownership of Robert Blackburne, (d. 1727) and his son-in-law William Fenney, fashionable glassware was available from Bolsterstone and later Catcliffe glassworks to the north and east of Sheffield and where a wide variety of coloured and plain bottles and decorated tablewares in soda-lime and lead glasses were produced. As in the case of Helen Berry's Beilby glassware of Newcastle, production at Bolsterstone was widely considered to consist only of window glass, bottles and utilitarian glasses⁸⁴. However, excavations by Denis Ashurst have revealed innovative process and goods being made there between 1650 and 1758 whilst anecdotal evidence suggests the quality of Bolsterstone glass meant it fetched high prices in London.⁸⁵ Ashurst stresses that 'the important point is that Bolsterstone was making glass vessels in the Nailsea style prior to the opening of the Nailsea Glassworks in 1788' and that 'there is good reason to suppose that Bolsterstone

⁸² Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Martha Hancock, widow, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, June 1691; inventory of Joseph Lee, grocer, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, February 1705.

⁸³ Young, *A six months tour through the North of England*, (London, 1771) vol. 1, pp. 124-125.

⁸⁴ Helen Berry, 'Regional identity and material culture', in K. Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, (Abingdon & New York, 2009), pp. 147-153.

⁸⁵ Joseph Kenworthy, *The Early History of Stocksbridge & District Bolsterstone Glass house, and its place in the history of English Glass Making* (Sheffield, 1914), p.6.

serviced the local elite', including the Earl of Strafford.⁸⁶ Enforcing the notion that the region had good access to new ideas and fashions, together with a highly skilled workforce, the repertoire of styles manufactured at Bolsterstone included 'forms typical and fashionable of the time, in the case of the stems those being baluster, pedestal and air-twist. This was also true of the bowls, the main forms being bell, waisted, ogee, conical, trumpet, thistle, and funnel shaped'.⁸⁷

Friends and relatives in London often solicited goods from Sheffield suggesting an efficient transport system between the town and the metropolis. Following the marriage and move to London of their daughter Ann, the factor George Elliot and his wife Catherine frequently stayed with her. Writing from London in May 1746, Catherine wrote to another daughter at home in Sheffield.

This is to desire you wood by for your Brother Tomey 12 white stone
Dishes 2 and 2 of a size 2 Duzn of plates 1 Duzn of Breckfast plates 6
sasebotes the hansomest you can meet with flowers round the Eges
if you meet with them you must by them at the shoppes for ye
market ones is but Wasters.⁸⁸

Writing from London to her sister in Sheffield the same year, Rebecca Cooper added the postscript, 'Ps Mrs frosts Compliments Begs you'll send half a doz Desearth Knifes and Forks

⁸⁶ D. Ashurst, 'Excavations at the 17-18th century Glasshouse at Bolsterstone and the 18th century Bolsterstone Pothouse, Stocksbridge, Yorkshire', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 21 (1987), p. 181.

⁸⁷ Kenworthy, *The Early History of Stocksbridge & District Bolsterstone Glass house*, p. 19.

⁸⁸ Sheffield City Archives: Stephenson family papers, StepC No 43, LD 1576, Elliott and Hare Correspondence 1743-49, 7 May 1746.

Ivory Handles'.⁸⁹ In return, parcels of tea and oysters were dispatched from London passing puddings, hare and hanged beef on their way from Sheffield to the capital. In 1699, the Sheffield attorney William Adams, recorded purchases in his account book of, 'teapots and a Chocolate pott together with a tea table costing £1.7.6.' and in November 1701, he 'Paid to Thos Youngs of Sheff: the somme of 2 pounds 3 shillings and 6 pence in full payment – for 4 little tables and 1 great sofa'.⁹⁰ Francis Sitwell (1694-1741), an attorney of Bridgehouses a small hamlet just outside Sheffield, often bought goods as he travelled the country on business as well as from local retailers. His clients included the Dukes of Leeds and Norfolk, Lord Malton, Lady Hewett, and Mr Foljambe of Aldwark, Mr Edmunds of Worsbrough, Samuel Shore of Meersbrook, and Strelley Pegge of Beauchief Abbey. Their business required frequent trips to Derby, London, Doncaster, York and Nottingham, to which he added travel with friends to Scarborough, Manchester, Birmingham and Cambridge.⁹¹

Those in the provinces who could afford to do so, acquired luxuries from London and other places of import or manufacture. In 1704, Sitwell paid 1s 2d per stone to have furniture delivered from London to Sheffield for his lodgings at the home of his legal partner Thomas Wright. It was joined by Port, French, and Florence wines from London and Hull, clay pipes from Mr Wyld of Rotherham, wigs from Sheffield and York, tea, coffee, chocolate,

⁸⁹ Sheffield City Archives: Stephenson family papers, StepC 1-67, LD 1577, Elliott and Hare Correspondence 1743-49, letter, 1 July 1760, London.

⁹⁰ Sheffield City Libraries: Wilsons of Broomhead Hall Deeds, M173 pp. 17-31, Adams, W., attorney; diary and accounts, 1699-1703.

⁹¹ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, pp.255 – 256.

anchovies, capers, olives and oysters, tobacco, clothes, and books from London and Sheffield.⁹²

Sheffield had a growing cabinet trade with manufacturers producing styles to accompany the latest fashions in tableware. With a business established some time before 1748, William Hall an upholsterer and cabinet-maker in High Street, advertised his wares on ornate billheads engraved by George Corbould of Ball-Alley, Lombard Street, in London. Decorated with images of mirrors, beds, tea tables, kettle stands, tea caddies, chairs and china in rococo and chinoiserie styles, his billhead proclaimed, 'Sells all sorts of Household Furniture, India and other China-ware; variety of best Flint Glass, with great choice of Paper-Hangings &c, as cheap as in London'. (Fig.1.2).⁹³

The engraving may not have accurately represented Hall's stock but may have reflected an idealised lifestyle in which fashionable goods supporting behaviour could be used to help the middling sort mark out their status, decorum and identity. Few cabinet-makers labelled their goods at the time and in the absence of surviving records it is difficult to know the scope and nature of Hall's clients. A billhead dated 1761 is addressed to a Mr Joshua Spooner for the purchase of various timber lengths, six elm chairs, a corner chair, corner cupboard and a spring table. Another is found amongst the Sitwell papers and may

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.253-281;

⁹³ *Ibid.*; Geoffrey Beard and Christopher Gilbert, (eds.), *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840* (Leeds, 1986).

refer to purchases made by Mr Hurt Sitwell either for Mount Pleasant, his home in Sheffield, or Renishaw to which he succeeded in 1776.⁹⁴



Fig.1.2 Trade card of William Hall upholsterer and cabinet-maker, Sheffield 1761, Sheffield Archives SC 648.⁹⁵

Contemporary improvements undertaken at Renishaw by another Sheffield firm of cabinet-makers and upholsterers are known in more detail and indicate the range of services and goods that could be bought locally. In 1776, William and Thomas Brailsford (fl. 1774 - 1839) of High St and later Norfolk St., were employed to convert the former best bedroom known as the Great Parlour Chamber at Renishaw into an upstairs drawing-room, fitting it up with new mahogany doors and modern architraves and mouldings. The

⁹⁴ Sir George Resesby Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells*, vol. 2, pp. 223-224.

⁹⁵ Sheffield Archives SC 648, *Trade card of William Hall*.

bedroom reserved for Mr Phipps, Hurt Sitwell's cousin, was fitted out with 'three festoon window-curtains of Mazarine blue Morrine, a mahogany four-poster bedstead with hangings of the same material'. Mr Sitwell's room was furnished in crimson worsted damask and other chambers each in 'superfine Pea Green Morrine, yellow, and best Saxon blue with white half-inch cheque'.⁹⁶

In the mid 1770s, William Brailsford received commissions from the fifth Duke of Devonshire to undertake architectural carvings in the Adamesque style at Chatsworth and to supply furniture and carpets to the value of £2000. They also supplied carpets to Lord Rockingham at Wentworth Woodhouse in 1781, brass frames for the Great Ballroom at Buxton Assembly Rooms and window curtains to Hardwick Hall in 1783.⁹⁷ William Brailsford subscribed to Sheraton's Drawing Book in 1793 and their work was of sufficient quality for an unscrupulous dealer to have tried to pass it off as that made by the London cabinet maker John Linnell, and charge the latter's prices; 'Burgon, an unscrupulous dealer, sold some chairs that were probably made by John Linnell to Mr & Mrs Sitwell. Burgon then sold to a Mr. Walker goods he had bought from Mr Brailsford, an upholsterer in Sheffield, claiming they were made by Linnell and charged Linnell prices'.⁹⁸ Adverts for the sale of William Brailsford's shop and stock in 1804 reveal an extensive business catering for the fashionable and middling markets:

⁹⁶ Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells*, vol. 2, pp. 224-225.

⁹⁷ Ivan Hall, 'A Neoclassical episode at Chatsworth', *Burlington Magazine* 122.927 (June 1980), pp. 400-414.

⁹⁸ Patricia Anne Kirkham, 'The Careers of William and John Linnell' *Furniture History* 3 (1967), pp. 36-37.

Mahogany and other chests of Drawers; . . .Washstands; dressing Tables, pier and swing glasses . . .two sets of mahogany dining tables. . .Beautiful sets of mahogany chairs, with hair seats and brass nails, also inlet - seats; mahogany Bedsteads, and bed Pillows; a large quantity of hair - seating, of different widths... night Tables, card Table, fire Screens; painted, stained and fancy Chairs, looking glasses of various patterns; several thousand yards of new fashioned paper Hangings with rich borders to correspond; six Sofas of various patterns...⁹⁹

With a population nearing 46,000, Sheffield had fifteen cabinet-makers subscribing to the 1793 edition of Sheraton's Drawing Book, suggesting a flourishing and sophisticated local market. In comparison, with a population of 71,000 Birmingham had just two subscribers, Leeds (population 53,000) had eleven, Manchester (82,000) two, and Liverpool (82,000) had four.¹⁰⁰ This suggests that Sheffield was not just a producer of new goods but supported a keen market for their consumption evidently not hindered by any lack of access. Most announcements followed the style of the day by addressing customers as 'Friends' 'distinguished patrons' or 'Ladies and Gentlemen'. Business accounts do not survive and it is difficult to determine the scope of everyday custom that these and similar firms attracted although sale notices suggest they included manufacturers, gentlemen and those in the middle ranks of society in addition to the neighbouring elite.¹⁰¹ These insights

⁹⁹ *The Sheffield Iris*, 12 April 1804.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Sheraton, *The Cabinet-Maker And Upholsterer's Drawing-Book In Three Parts* (London, 1793), vol. 1, pp. xxi- x22.

¹⁰¹ 'All the genuine HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE of the said Mr Thomas Fox [Gent, of Milk St] *Sheffield Register*, 8 September 1787; Sale by Mr T. N. Bardwell, 'All the neat, modern and genuine Household Furniture of Mr John Gray of Norton Lees, near Sheffield [...] a very

show how sectors of Sheffield society were ready consumer of fashionable goods and that their needs could be supplied by local firms with an evidently high degree of skill. This would further indicate that access to books, newspapers and journals in which new fashions were discussed was more readily available than hitherto assumed.

A very small number of books

A significant and repeated criticism of the region has been its perceived late engagement with literature and a newspaper culture. A local press became established in Sheffield only in the second half of the eighteenth century. This relatively late date has frequently been taken as evidence of the town's enduring roughness and parochialism, a view supported by Roy Porter's argument that provincial newspapers were essential to the flourishing of polite culture.¹⁰² Here too, new evidence can be brought to offer an alternative interpretation of the region and to suggest a broad range of books, journals and pamphlets were widely available, and that a market for newspapers in the first half of the century was well catered for, even if not by local publications.

Hunter claimed that in the early eighteenth century, 'A very small number of books kept in the vestry of the parish church was the only library', and remained so until a new library was built in 1771.¹⁰³ Walton writes that the subscription library formed in 1771 was a poor imitation of the 'large and scholarly institutions' found in many Lancashire towns.

superior Mahogany Secretary Desk and Bookcase by Brailsford..., *Sheffield Mercury*, 23 January 1819.

¹⁰² Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p 157; Walton, *Sheffield*, p. 133; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), pp. 72-82.

¹⁰³ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 122.

'Sheffield was not much given to reading; but among the several booksellers in the town, some of whom ran circulating libraries, there was one established in the Market Hall, which suggests the existence of some sort of book-buying public among the poorer people'.¹⁰⁴

Gatty asserted that prior to the formation of a public library following the depression of 1816, the town 'had been satisfied with the slowly accumulating stores of the old subscription library, which seemed to resist every attempt which was made for its improvement, and with the scanty supply which could be obtained by book-associations'.¹⁰⁵

Others have argued for a more literate society with greater access to books. Sir George Sitwell cites an auction catalogue of Sheffield bookseller Neville Simmons printed in 1692 as evidence of a flourishing local market for books.

A catalogue of Excellent English and Latin Books on most subjects &c., which will be exposed to sale by way of auction on Wednesday, the 19th of October 1692 at the Rose & Crown in Sheffield. Catalogues are distributed gratis by Nevil Simmons, Bookseller in Sheffield. The collection comprised 1,435 lots and was divided into four sections: I Folio, English 150 lots, II Folio, Latin 78 lots, III Quarto, English and Latin 549 lots, IV Octavo, Eng. Latin 658 lots.¹⁰⁶

Simmons was from an established London book-selling and publishing family and around the time of the auction at the Rose and Crown he appears to have settled in Sheffield attracted by the strength of a literate, non-conformist market whose reading-needs his

¹⁰⁴ Walton, *Sheffield*, p. 133.

¹⁰⁵ Gatty, *Hallamshire*, p. 163.

¹⁰⁶ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 261.

family had long serviced.¹⁰⁷ The auction of 1,435 lots was followed some two months later by another, this time in Leeds where Ralph Thoresby bought from Simmons a copy of *Scala Mundi* and accompanied him on the journey back to Sheffield. Details of what was read in the region remains scant as the practice of inventory appraisers generally described books by size as in the auction announcement above. John Bilcliffe, for example, was a clothier, who died in 1694 in the small hamlet of Butterthwaite in the parish of Ecclesfield, leaving total inventoried wealth of £154.14.0. Of this, his appraisers apportioned £7 to the value of his 'library viz: 16 large books in folio, 5 in quarto, 16 in octavio and 7 in duodecimo'.¹⁰⁸

Founded in 1707, the parochial, or vestry library, was established with two hundred volumes given by different benefactors and which Sir George Sitwell believed was substantially larger than claimed by Hunter and Gatty. A reference in the papers of Francis Sitwell, a Sheffield attorney of two years' subscription paid by him to 'Gill, the Treasurer of the Society for reading books', also attests that by 1737 a circulating library was in existence.¹⁰⁹ Cheaper and more ephemeral publications such as chapbooks and pamphlets would have been more readily available than bound books and Margaret Spufford has shown how the former influenced the perceptions and understanding of the wider world of poorer families who read or listened to their contents.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ J. E. Manning, *A history of Upper Chapel, Sheffield*: p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ Borthwick Institute, University of York: inventory of John Bilcliffe, clothier, Butterthwaite, parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, January 1694.

¹⁰⁹ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 261, John Thomas, *The Local register and Chronological Account of Occurrences and facts connected with the Town and Neighbourhood of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1830), p. 32.

¹¹⁰ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (London, 1981), pp.1ff.

It is possible that Hunter's negative perception of the dearth of books in Sheffield were influenced by the antiquarian, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in whose circle he mixed whilst living in Bath. Sir Richard's views of commerce and industry were such that even when facilities for learning and leisure such as Chetham's Library in Manchester were present and open daily to the public he believed, 'in a town where trade engrosses the minds of man, women and child the library cannot be much frequented'.¹¹¹

In adopting Hoare's views, Hunter appears to have eschewed the evidence of his own reading experiences, which showed that whilst living in Sheffield he enjoyed easy access to a variety of literature. Stephen Colclough argues Hunter had 'access to a wide range of texts from the various public and private libraries that he visited. His 'diary emphasizes both the mobility of texts in Hunter's immediate circle--they move between the library and home and are exchanged by friends--and the modernity of his reading':¹¹²

During 1798 Hunter "procured" books, periodicals, newspapers, and pamphlets from the subscription library, a circulating library, and from several shops, as well as from a second subscription library (known as the Chapel or Vestry Book Society), and a stall or chapman not listed in the commercial directories. Each of these various sources of texts were within walking distance of his home in Norfolk Street and he used them in conjunction with the private libraries of family and friends.¹¹³

¹¹¹ *The Journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare through Wales and England, 1793-1810*, ed. M. W. Thompson (Gloucester, 1983), p. 156.

¹¹² Stephen M. Colclough, 'Procuring books and consuming texts: the reading experience of a Sheffield apprentice, 1798', *Book History* 3 (2000), p.38.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Simmons was unusual amongst provincial booksellers as he printed books in addition to the more usual sermons, pamphlets and handbills to which most of his trade was restricted until the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ Leader also notes how the local antiquarian, Mr Sidney O. Addy considered local literacy levels and engagement with new ideas were greater than generally claimed. Addy claimed that proof 'of the culture of the town which was then little more than a large country village', could be found in the fact that, in 1754, four Sheffield booksellers subscribed to the 'costly *Harleian Miscellany*'.¹¹⁵ The *Harleian Miscellany* was a selection of early pamphlets from the library of the Earl of Oxford, catalogued by Samuel Johnson, and first published in 1744. In a review of subscribers, William B. Todd and Peter J. Wallis list seven, not four, Sheffield subscribers to the *Miscellany*, equalling the number for Manchester, greater than the four each attributed to Liverpool and Birmingham, and the five to Nottingham and Liverpool.¹¹⁶

The Sheffield subscribers were a mixture of booksellers, newsagents, and newspaper publishers. Bookseller John Haxby's business operated between 1740 and 1744 and from 1744 to 1750 when Benjamin Haxby took over. Samuel Simmons continued his father, Neville Simmon's book and newsagency business from 1735 and 1790; Richard Smith operated between 1730 and 1757, and newspaper publisher and bookseller, William Ward from 1760 to 1798. Francis Lister operated between 1734 and 1755 and, a year before his death in 1754, published Sheffield's first local newspaper, *Lister's Weekly Sheffield Journal*.

¹¹⁴ John Feather, *The Provincial Book trade in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 109.

¹¹⁵ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p.130

¹¹⁶ William B. Todd & Peter J. Wallis, 'Provincial Booksellers c. 1744: The Harleian Miscellany Subscription List', *The Library* s5-xxix.4 (December, 1974), pp.439 ff.

Following Lister's death, his journal was taken over by the printer Revel Homfray, who incorporated it into his *Sheffield Weekly Register and Doncaster Flying Post*. An elaborately designed trade card in the baroque style advertises, 'Revel Homfray, Printer and Bookseller in Sheffield. Sells Bibles, Testaments, Common Prayer Books & Books in all Languages. Paper & Pocket Books, Maps & Prints [...] Publishes the *Sheffield Weekly Advertiser* every Tuesday' (Fig.1.3).¹¹⁷ On Homfrays' death in 1760, William Ward, another subscriber to the *Harleian Miscellany*, established *The Sheffield Public Advertiser*, which ran until 1793. Ward used his newspaper to advertise many of the books he stocked, several of which belonged to Klein's category of 'very useful manuals', which offered advice to polite or commercially orientated individuals on how to conduct themselves in a variety of situations.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ *John Johnson Trade Card Collection, 2001 Online Exhibition*, No. 29, Revel Homfray Printer & Bookseller, Sheffield, <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/johnson/exhibition/029.htm> [accessed 20 January 2011].

¹¹⁸ Klein, 'Politeness for Plebes: Some Social Identities in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds) *The Consumption of Culture: Word, Image, and Object in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1995), pp. 367-378.



Fig.1.3 Trade card of Revell Homfray, printer and bookseller, Sheffield, c1760.
John Johnson Collection, Sheffield Folder.

Alongside the Bible, *Fisher's New Grammar* and the *Complete English Dictionary*, readers could purchase *The Pleasing Instructor: or, Entertaining Moralist*, written with the 'rising Minds of the Youth of both Sexes' in mind, *The Universal Museum or Polite Magazine of History, Politics and Literature* and *Madam Johnson's Present; Or, every Young Woman's Companion, In Useful and Universal Knowledge*. They could subscribe to magazines including *The Gentleman's*, *The Musical*, *The Imperial*, and *The Royal*. Aspiring home-builders could gain advice from *The Country Gentleman's Architect*, and those concerned with entertaining at home could acquire *The Art of Cookery; Or, The Compleat-Housewife*,

or *The Complete English Cook; Or, Prudent Housewife, Being an intire New Collection of the most genteel, yet least Expensive Receipts in every Branch of Cookery...Together with the Art of Marketing and Directions for placing Dishes on the Tables for Entertainment*. Those who feared small talk could seek advice from *Jemmy Buck's Witty Jester, Or, The Funny Pocket Companion*.¹¹⁹

Suffering from the success of Joseph Gales' *Sheffield Register*, in 1793 Ward's *Public Advertiser* merged with Northall's conservative *Sheffield Courant*. Established in 1787, the *Sheffield Register* was well presented, quicker to report events, used its own reporters, and radical in nature. By 1799, *The Courant* had failed and Gales had fled to America leaving his clerk, James Montgomery to run the *Register* under the new name of *The Sheffield Iris* and with a Liberal, rather than radical tone.

Describing how Joseph Hunter's reading habits were in part influenced by extracts and advertisements he saw in newspapers, Stephen Colclough claims how newspapers could be 'central to the act of consumption'.¹²⁰

The complex relationship between the newspaper as a source of information and the other cultural institutions located within the town that benefited from the spread of news about publications and cultural events. The newspaper encouraged the purchase of this text in the same way that it encouraged Hunter to attend the local lectures also advertised in its pages.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ *The Sheffield Public Register*, No. 25, 7th – 14th Oct 1760, No. 29 4th – 11th Nov 1760, No. 143 11th – 18th Jan 1763, 1st Sept 1787.

¹²⁰ Colclough, 'Procuring books and consuming texts', p. 25.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Newspapers were an important forum for the development of modern advertising, offering a point of contact between distant producers and potential customers and providing merchants with the prices of commodities, crops, stocks, and shipping news. They were considered vital in helping to form and reflect 'public opinion' and a free press was regarded as a key defence against corrupt government.¹²² They contributed an alternative voice to debates based on social networks and offered news of wider events with a variety of opinion and analysis. Newspapers offered readers a sense of belonging to a greater community and sense of engagement with 'public' events so that 'by the early nineteenth century, if not sooner, these processes were beginning to provide the basis for an emerging, modern, democratic, consumer society, albeit one initially restricted socially and geographically'.¹²³ Helen Berry claims how the Newcastle press 'functioned as the organ of a social and political elite who reinforced their dominance through the process of buying into (literally and metaphorically) the creation of a British national culture that looked mainly to London as the sine qua non of taste'.¹²⁴

The Printing Act of 1695 had removed restrictions on the press, and newspaper publications flourished with a readership that spanned the social spectrum. The circulation of newspapers is difficult to assess but James R. Sutherland has estimated a circulation of

¹²² Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855*, (Harlow, 2000) p. 12.

¹²³ Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (eds), *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America 1760-1820* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 4.

¹²⁴ Helen Berry, 'Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: National and local Culture in Eighteenth-Century Newcastle upon Tyne', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (2002), p. 14.

around 2.3 million in 1704.¹²⁵ Although imprecise, and not accounting for publications which avoided paying tax, Treasury records indicate the sale of individual newspaper tax stamps grew from 7.3 million in 1750, to 9.4 million in 1760, 12.6 million in 1775 and 16.4 million by 1801.¹²⁶ In the early eighteenth century, sales in the provinces often amounted to only 100 to 200 per circulation whilst Michael Harris estimates that between the 1720s and 1740s, individual circulations of London papers was between 1,000 and 2,000.¹²⁷ Hannah Barker claims that 'by the second half of the eighteenth century most papers would have struggled financially with sales of only 1,000'.¹²⁸

Throughout the course of the century, the growth rate of newspapers exceeded that of the growth of the adult population and may be seen as part of the overall rise in consumerism and the 'general surge in the production of all kinds of printed matter'.¹²⁹ In both numbers of publications and circulation, the growth rate of newspapers was closely aligned with that of expanding and accessible urban populations with access to shops, coffee houses, and inns in which to meet and disseminate news and opinion. Other contributing factors to the presence of a local newspaper included a town's role as an administrative, legal, social, or economic centre. Good communications with London played an important part in the establishment of a local press, with G. A. Cranfield noting that within a

¹²⁵ James R. Sutherland, *The circulation of newspapers and literary periodicals, 1700-30*, *Library* s4-xv.1 (1934), pp. 110-124.

¹²⁶ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 30.

¹²⁷ M. Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London, 1987), pp. 55-57.

¹²⁸ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), p.114.

¹²⁹ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 35.

year of the establishment of daily posts in 1755 to Middlewich, Warrington and Liverpool, all three towns had started newspapers.¹³⁰

With access to a sizeable urban readership and facilities in which they could meet to discuss the affairs of the day, and with manufacturers who played a key part of the period's 'consumer revolution', the fact that Sheffield did not acquire its own newspaper until 1754 has been used by Hey and others to assert that the town could not 'be regarded as being unduly influenced by an urban renaissance'.¹³¹ However, patterns of development in industrial towns meant newspapers were not always established where circumstances appeared favourable and Sheffield was not the only industrial town to take time to acquire its own press. Birmingham, for example, did not acquire a paper until 1732; Leicester until 1753, and Hull in 1787.¹³² Conversely, smaller towns lacking most or all of these attributes could support a newspaper early in the century. Hence, in 1719 the *Ludlow Post Man or the Weekly Journal* was established, the *Exeter Mercury or Weekly Intelligence* in 1722, and the *Stamford Mercury* in 1728.

Hannah Barker notes 'a vigorous and active political culture whose participants demanded a steady source of news, information and debate' was a further stimulus to the creation of provincial newspapers.¹³³ With no direct parliamentary representation, the lack of party in Sheffield that Goodwin had described may have suppressed a desire for news

¹³⁰ G.A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper* (Oxford, 1962), p. 23.

¹³¹ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p.280; Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p 157; Walton, *Sheffield*, p. 133; Porter, *Enlightenment*, pp. 72-82.

¹³² Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper*, p. 35.

¹³³ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p.36.

beyond the immediate environment until the latter part of the century when growing divisions between masters and men and especially the Company of Cutlers and its Freemen began to foster greater political awareness. Alternatively, the supply of pamphlets, chapbooks and other cheap publications may have been a rich source of news copied from London journals and Barker acknowledges that whilst political activity was responsible for the genesis of some newspapers, especially in the 1770s and 1780s, neither political agitation nor economic expansion appears to have been directly responsible for the expansion of provincial publications.

Another essential ingredient to the establishment of provincial newspapers was the presence in a town of skilled entrepreneurial printers with sufficient backing to launch their publication and an effective means of distribution.¹³⁴ Despite the presence in Sheffield of several book publishers during the early eighteenth century, it was only in 1754 that Francis Lister launched the first local newspaper. A handbill dated around that time indicates Lister intended his paper would be of interest to people across much of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and north Derbyshire. The handbill details how advertisements could be taken for publication at booksellers and other establishments scattered across a region that included Rotherham, Doncaster, Barnsley, Wakefield, Halifax, Bradford, Settle, Huddersfield, Keighley to the north of Sheffield, and Eyam, Tideswell, Worksop, Bakewell and Chesterfield to the south. It also suggests he was familiar with the various roles newspapers could play and assured coverage of a variety of subjects to maximise his potential market. Lister assured his readers that foreign, domestic, commercial, 'useful and

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

entertaining' news would all be covered with 'the utmost impartiality and candour', and that 'As this Paper is published early on TUESDAY Morning, which contains the *Friday's*, *Sunday's* and *Tuesday's* Posts, it may be render'd not only a faithful WEEKLY JOURNAL; but also a Repository or Magazine of *Utility, Pleasure* and *Advantage*.¹³⁵ Such a mixture of offerings was not uncommon amongst the provincial press and enabled readers to move beyond the confines of their immediate social and mental environments. The distribution and timing of Lister's paper, all carefully detailed in his handbill, reflects a calculated bid to attract as many customers as possible in a carefully defined and accessible distribution area.¹³⁶

During this time it was presumed the region relied on weekly publications from Doncaster and Northampton for its news, whilst from the 1740s the accounts of the Town Trustees show how a Mr Giddings of London supplied them with papers including the *London Evening Post*, and *Votes*.¹³⁷ Did the absence of a local press in the first half of the eighteenth century mean Sheffield could not have participated in an 'urban renaissance'? Lack of a local press during this time may have inhibited the development of self-awareness and criticism. Restricted access to new ideas may have impeded the town's awareness of change or desire to engage with it and further denied it a rallying voice for campaigns and interests. Nevertheless, a variety of overlooked sources show sectors of Sheffield society did

¹³⁵ Calderdale MBC Library: Document ID 101470, Library ID P072R332, Francis Lister: Notice advertising a weekly newspaper based in Sheffield, 1755.

¹³⁶ Hannah Barker, 'Catering for Provincial Tastes: Newspapers, Readership and Profit in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Historical Research* 69: 168 (1996), p. 53.

¹³⁷ John Daniel Leader, (ed.) *The Records of the Burgery of Sheffield, Commonly called the Town Trust* (London, 1897), p. 366.

engage with newspapers both to receive news and to advertise goods and services much earlier than has been presumed and that new buildings and activities were supported.

Neville Simmons used the *Daily Courant* in 1713 to advertise a sale of books from the library of the late Revd John Laughton, Library Keeper to the University of Cambridge, with catalogues available from Mr Pateman's in Pater-noster Row, London, Willhard's Coffee house in York, and Simmon's own bookshop in Sheffield. The *Post Man* carried notice of the sermon given in 1715 by Mr de la Rose on the death of the Revd Timothy Jollie. Mr Battie, attorney in Sheffield, advertised the disposal of local estates in the *Weekly Journal* and, following the death of her husband in 1729, Elizabeth Horsfield used the *Daily Post* to inform Gentlemen, Travellers and others that she would ensure they would be kindly entertained as before at the Rose and Crown, Sheffield.¹³⁸

The day books for 1736 of attorney Francis Sitwell (1694-1741) show regular deliveries of newspapers including the *Evening Post* from London to his Sheffield home at Bridgehouses, 'Mr Green the News man of London for news sent Mr Wright and me the last year, as by his Bill, £3 13s. 8d'.¹³⁹ With a highly successful practice, much of Sitwell's time was spent travelling to and from London attending court on behalf of his clients who included the Duke of Leeds, the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Malton, Lady Hewett, Mr Foljambe of Aldwark, Mr Edmunds of Worsbrough, Samuel Shore of Meersbrook, and Strelley Pegge of Beauchief Abbey. In partnership with Thomas Wright of Bridgehouses, Sitwell was in

¹³⁸ *Daily Courant* Monday 30 November 1713, Issue 3785; *Post Man and the Historical Account* Saturday 14 May 1715, Issue 11150; *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* Saturday 30 July 1720 Issue 87; *Daily Post* Saturday 8 November 1729 Issue 3163.

¹³⁹ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 261.

regular contact with fellow attorneys in Sheffield, London, and elsewhere. News and opinions would have quickly sped through their social and professional networks.¹⁴⁰

Leader states that from around 1713, the choice of newspapers offered to customers at John Lee's barbershop in Sheffield caused it to be known as The Whig News Shop.¹⁴¹ From 1687, records of the Town Trustees reveal some of their meetings were held in a local coffee house, 'Spent att a meeting att Coffee house about Stansall land, £0.1s.8d'.¹⁴² The first London coffee house had been established in 1652 and although Helen Berry has recently questioned their role in supporting polite conversation, Stephen Copley argues that coffee houses were places where newspapers were read, business discussed and where the polite conversation of the trading and professional reader distinguished him from 'familiar and trivializing forms of speech such as 'tittle tattle', gossip and 'chat'.¹⁴³

Neville Simmons' own bookshop in Sheffield appears to have been a further vehicle for the local dissemination of news. Probably the grandson of Samuel Simmons, publisher of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Simmons was a bookseller, stationer and publisher whose family

¹⁴⁰ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, pp. 247, 255.

¹⁴¹ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p.131.

¹⁴² John Daniel Leader, *Records of the Burgery of Sheffield*, p. 235.

¹⁴³ Helen Berry, 'Rethinking politeness in eighteenth century England, Moll King's coffee house and the significance of 'flash talk'', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11.6 (2001), pp. 65-81; Stephen Copley, 'Commerce, Conversation and Politeness in the Early Eighteenth-Century Periodical', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18 (1995), p. 64.

were involved in the trade in Kidderminster and London.¹⁴⁴ As well as taking newspapers in for customers including the Town Trustees and to sell from his shop, Simmons specialized in publishing dissenting literature and made use of London newspapers to advertise his publications and auctions.¹⁴⁵ Jackson claims:

Simmons must have had a pleasant literary society in his room behind the shop, and here, in all probability, would be found vicars, Mr Drake, Mr Wilson, his chaplain, the Puritan Mr Jessop, Mr Robinson, Mr Balguy, Richard Frankland, the famous Puritan schoolmaster at Attercliffe, and many others.¹⁴⁶

Messrs Drake and Wilson were both incumbents of the parish church, and Richard Frankland was founder of a dissenting academy for a while based in Attercliffe. John Balguy, son of Thomas Balguy head of the Sheffield Free School, was a Church of England clergyman and theologian with many Presbyterians and Quakers friends. Christopher Robinson M.A., was headmaster of the Sheffield Grammar School, and brother-in-law to the apothecary, Robert Drake, both having married daughters of Christopher Broomhead, a former Master Cutler, Church Burgess, Town Trustee, and Governor of the Grammar

¹⁴⁴ I. Gadd, 'Simmons, Matthew (*b.* in or before 1608, *d.* 1654)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69230> [accessed 6 April 2011].

¹⁴⁵ *Daily Courant* Monday 30 November 1713 Issue 3785; 'paid Mr Simmons for Newspapers 3li. 18s. 5d' (1749) in J. D., Leader, *The Records of the Burgery*, p. 371; Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 261; Giles Hester, *Nevill Simmons Bookseller and Publisher, with Notices of Literature Connected with Old Sheffield* (London & Sheffield, 1893).

¹⁴⁶ Jackson, "Old Sheffield". It is unclear whether these meetings were held during the time of Neville snr who died in 1735 or that of his son, also called Neville. Neville Simmons II died in 1730 and his son, Samuel, continued the business.

School.¹⁴⁷ None of these men achieved the wealth of some of the local iron-masters and manufacturers, but their status as professional men was marked by the learned conviviality they sought at Simmons's shop. Jackson's claim appears to be supported by an inventory taken in 1730, which indicates that Simmon's was able to offer new forms of sociability to customers including punch, brandy, tea and coffee accompanied by appropriate punch bowls, silver wares, and china.

The role of Simmons' bookshop in the dissemination of news and ideas around Sheffield is emphasized by Charles Delafaye's account book of newspapers he delivered to individuals and coffeehouses between 1703 and 1714.¹⁴⁸ Delafaye was an official in the Secretary of State's Office who also continued his father's business as a gazetteer and newspaper distributor.¹⁴⁹ Of eighty-six clients listed in his accounts, thirty-two were based in Ireland where he had connections, and thirty-five were distributed to coffee houses and private individuals in close proximity to his Whitehall office in London.¹⁵⁰ Three of the remaining subscribers scattered across sixteen English counties had their newspapers sent

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, pp. 250, 293, 308-309, Isabel Rivers, 'Balguy, John (1686–1748)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1201> [accessed 16 Aug 2010]; Stuart Handley, 'Frankland, Richard (1630–1698)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10085> [accessed 16 Aug 2010].

¹⁴⁸ My thanks to Professor Brian Cowan of McGill University for his advice and help in this area.

¹⁴⁹ National Archives: State Papers, Williamson Collection MSS, TNA, SP 9/217, f.2r, f.13r. Charles Delafaye, An account book of newspapers delivered to individuals and coffeehouses, 1703–14.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Harris, 'Newspaper distribution during Queen Anne's reign, Charles Delafay and the Secretary of State's Office', in R. W. Hunt, I. G. Philip, R. J. Roberts (eds) *Studies in the Book Trade in honour of Graham Pollard* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 139-151.

for collection via Simmons in Sheffield, and all were associated with some of the region's leading families.

John Fell, ironmaster of Attercliffe Forge, Church Burgess, Governor of the Sheffield Grammar School Member, and member of the Don Navigation Trust, subscribed to the *English Gazette* and *Government Man* newspapers.¹⁵¹ Friends included Francis Barlow, a fellow Burgess, ironmonger and landlord of The Angel Inn; Field Sylvester, a Town Trustee, co-founder of Upper Chapel and steel manufacturer, and Francis Sitwell, whom he often accompanied on his travels around the country. Further business and familial links with iron and steel manufacturing families including the Clays (Dissenters who also supported the Whig cause), Parkins, and Milners (another Dissenting family), placed him at the centre of an extensive and active network where views gained from his newspaper subscriptions could quickly be disseminated across the social and cultural landscape of the town.¹⁵²

The well-travelled Rev. W. Lockier, incumbent of Handsworth church from 1693 – 1725 and a frequenter of Will's Coffee house in London subscribed to *Votes* and the *Government Man*. Described as, 'a man of ingenuity and learning, [who] had seen a great deal of the world, and was a most pleasant and agreeable companion', Lockier was acquainted with Dryden and acted as chaplain to the English factory in Hamburg.¹⁵³ Well-travelled, and familiar with the major continental languages, he was appointed chaplain to

¹⁵¹ MSS TNA SP 9/217, f.2r, f.13r, Delafaye, account book.

¹⁵² Tolley, *We, of our Bounty*, pp. 201, 205-206; Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 186; Manning, *A history of Upper Chapel, Sheffield*, p. 39.

¹⁵³ W. P. Courtney, 'Lockier, Francis (bap. 1669, d. 1740)', rev. Adam Jacob Levin, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 ;online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16911> [accessed 16 Aug 2010]; Hunter, *Hallamshire*, pp. 485-486.

George I and Dean of Peterborough in 1725. He was a member of the Gentlemen's Society at Spalding and remained a dedicated benefactor to Handsworth and Sheffield until his death in 1740. Delafaye's third subscriber, Mr George Monke, was billed in 1710 for the *Tatler*, *Guardian*, *Daily Courant*, *English Gazette* and *Flying Post*.¹⁵⁴ From 1703 to 1713, Monck was the member for Philipstown in the Irish parliament, where he may have come into contact with Delafaye's services as a gazetteer. Hunter notes a Mrs. Monke living in Handsworth between 1707-1710. She was a daughter of Lord Molesworth who posthumously published a collection of his daughter's poems written whilst in "'remote Country Retirement' and with a good library".¹⁵⁵

The impact of informal gatherings such as those at Simmon's bookshop, John Lee's barbershop, and in the homes of private subscribers is difficult to measure, yet the numbers of those in contact with new ideas in Sheffield is likely to have been substantially higher and earlier than has previously been presumed¹⁵⁶. Although the level of circulation newspapers and journals enjoyed has recently been queried, many agree with Joseph Addison's estimation that each copy of the *Tatler* (1709-11), *Spectator* (1711-14) and *Guardian* (1713)

¹⁵⁴ Delafaye, account book, pp. 3, 13,

¹⁵⁵ Margaret J. M. Ezell, 'Monck, Mary (1677?-1715)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18940> [accessed 16 Aug 2010]; Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 489.

¹⁵⁶C. W. Chalkin, 'Capital Expenditure on Buildings for Cultural Purposes in Provincial England, 1730-1830' *Business History* 22 (1980), p. 56.

was read by some twenty people or even more.¹⁵⁷ Hannah Barker notes that 'Reading aloud – either in private homes or at public meetings – was a common activity' so that, few newspapers would have been read only by one person and Naomi Tadmor has shown how, during the eighteenth century, reading was often a sociable rather than solitary activity.¹⁵⁸

Bob Harris notes how the majority of legitimate, stamped newspapers appear to have been written for such as those who met at Simmon's bookshop and 'who followed domestic and international events closely, who could recognize leading political and social personalities through allusions and innuendos, and who boasted at least some familiarity with classical literature and history'.¹⁵⁹ Newspapers provided the middling sort with an introduction to other worlds and the means by which to access and experience them. They provided an opportunity to compare their home-town with those further afield and to explore their different facilities and ways in which large, urban populations were structured and managed. Whilst still not giving direct rise to a national sense of identity, Joyce M. Ellis notes how:

¹⁵⁷ J.A. Downie, 'Periodicals, The Book trade and the "Bourgeois Public Sphere"', *Media History* 14.3 (2008); B. Cowan, 'Mr Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37.3 (2004), p. 346.

¹⁵⁸ Naomi Tadmor, "'In the even my wife read to me": women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century, in James Raven, Helen Small, Naomi Tadmor (eds), *The practice and representation of reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 166-168; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp. 46, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Bob Harris, *Politics and the rise of the press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London, 1996), p. 11.

Many of 'the middling sort' had wide personal and professional contacts in towns all over the country and often abroad; they corresponded, they read newspapers and pamphlets and above all they visited these places for themselves, absorbing the comparative context in which to place their own home town and judge its performance.¹⁶⁰

Newspaper audiences were not limited to those who could read and, as the century progressed, contemporaries raised concerns over the growing numbers of literate and illiterate retailers, artisans, skilled and unskilled labourers further down the social scale met in the more lowly taverns, clubs, and reading rooms to listen to newspapers being read they could otherwise not afford to buy. Hannah Barker points out that the choice of passages read, and the comments and asides of reader and listeners, gave newspapers a very different impact in such environments than when read in private.¹⁶¹ Bob Harris points out that the bulk of contemporary comments focused on the collective readership of newspapers, 'in coffee houses and taverns, the reading out aloud of newspapers, especially by those of comparatively unelevated social status – shopkeepers, artisans and tradesmen [...] and even those a little below artisanal status'.¹⁶² Towards the end of the century, reading newspapers aloud had become common amongst radical groups such as Corresponding Societies and, fearing a potential threat to the political rule of property, the comments they attracted were generally hostile in tone.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Ellis, 'For the honour of the town', p. 331.

¹⁶¹ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp.53-56.

¹⁶² Harris, *Politics and the rise of the press*, p. 12.

¹⁶³ Affiliated to the London Corresponding Society, the Sheffield branch was formed in 1791.

In 1787, the Unitarian Joseph Gales established a highly successful and radical newspaper called the *Sheffield Register*. A member of the Upper Chapel in Sheffield, in 1791 Gales became a founder member of the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information, which campaigned vigorously for political reform and a substantial enlargement to the franchise.

As an editor Gales pursued a reformist agenda for the abolition of slavery, educational improvements, canal building, and, especially, the removal of legal constraints on religious dissenters. Gales was himself a Unitarian and, in line with his religious beliefs, regularly condemned the 'evils' of popular recreations such as bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and boxing. [...] Gales also published the first cheap edition of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (6 d.) and a short-lived fortnightly periodical, *The Patriot* (1792–4), which included political essays, extracts from reformers such as Paine, Joseph Priestley, and James Mackintosh, and correspondence with and the addresses of other reform societies.¹⁶⁴

In 1792, he was elected an associate member of the London Society for Constitutional Information and his links with a wide circle of dissenters and reformers brought him to the attention of the government. His alleged calling to arms of those who supported political reform meant that in 1794 Gales faced arrest and was forced to flee the country, finally settling in North Carolina where he became a successful newspaper publisher and reformer. Later, he was joined by his wife, Winifred, who wrote extensively of their time in Sheffield and who described the *Register* as a paper which:

¹⁶⁴ Fred Donnelly, 'Gales, Joseph (1761–1841)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/63598> [accessed 21 June 2010].

Firmly, but moderately espoused the popular cause, and was open to discussion *for* and *against* the great question, which then prevailed the public mind: it was the only Paper in the West Riding) of York) which openly, and candidly avowed its sentiments on political subjects.¹⁶⁵

The *Register* had been quick to report local as well as national events and carried extracts from the writings of liberal thinkers.¹⁶⁶ Its radical tone has often been cited as evidence of Sheffield's disregard for polite or genteel behaviour and proof of its rebellious and independent, plebeian culture.¹⁶⁷ Winfred's description of the *Register's* readership, suggests a broad range of subscribers and close examination of the paper shows it regularly carried advertisements from manufacturers and others whose vocabulary, goods, and services were aimed at the polite and fashionable reader.

The *Register* was to be found in every house of respectability, in the section where it was published, and one at least was taken in every manufacturing Shop, so that it was read by at least 10,000 persons of that class, as they clubbed to pay the Subscription.¹⁶⁸

Rather than dismissing the population as too radicalised, rough or impoverished to be interested in fashionable consumption, both local and metropolitan advertisers appear to have viewed Sheffield as an expanding and consumerist market and readers of the

¹⁶⁵ The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: MSS #02652-z, p.32, Folder 1: Papers: Scan 63, Southern Historical Collection, *Gales Family Papers (1815-1939)*.

¹⁶⁶ Donnelly, 'Gales, Joseph', *ODNB*.

¹⁶⁷ F.K. Donnelley & John L. Baxter, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820', in Sidney Pollard and Colin Holmes, (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Sheffield, 1976), p. 92; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 291.

¹⁶⁸ *Gales Family Papers (1815-1939)*, p. 32.

Register a ready market for their services and goods. Not only could Sheffield society read and hear of new and exotic goods, they could also acquire them. Publications such as Hepplewhite's, *Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, and the *Artists' Repository and Drawing Magazine, Exhibiting the Principles of the Polite Arts, in their various branches*, were advertised alongside local notices for card assemblies and dancing classes.¹⁶⁹ Typical of the genre from both local and national manufacturers is an advertisement placed in the *Sheffield Register* of 1787 by a Mr Woodmason, of No. 68 Pall Mall in London:

Who wished to acquaint the 'Ladies and Gentlemen of Sheffield and the Neighbourhood... having extended his Manufactory, is now first induced to send an Assortment of his most elegant and fashionable Paper Hangings, the Superiority of which... is universally allowed... to one Agent in a few of the most fashionable and largest Towns in the Kingdom'.¹⁷⁰

That Woodmason chose Joseph Gales to be his agent suggests the latter's radicalism neither perturbed metropolitan suppliers nor inhibited him from dealing with fashionable and potentially polite customers and who, in turn, did not see his radicalism as a deterrent. Gales himself readily employed the language of politeness and praised its influence upon the improving condition of the town.¹⁷¹ Describing the improvements carried out to the markets by the Duke of Norfolk in 1786, Gales noted, 'the markets, which used to be held in a confused, irregular manner, in the streets, and which travellers have frequently

¹⁶⁹ *Sheffield Register*, Saturday 9 June 1787; Friday 2 March 1792.

¹⁷⁰ New Invented Paper Hangings, *Sheffield Register*, Saturday 15 September 1787.

¹⁷¹ Amanda Vickery, "'Neat and Not Too Showey": Words and Wallpaper in Regency England', in John Styles, and Amanda Vickery, (eds) *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, (London & New Haven, 2006).

complained of as a dangerous and disagreeable', were now 'neatly elegant in appearance, and commodious'.¹⁷²

The widespread circulation of the *Register* also suggests high levels of literacy amongst Sheffield's artisans and small manufacturers who evidently found Gales's dislike of cruel sports, radical beliefs, and religious non-conformity appealing. Under Gales, 'the print culture through which polite manners were disseminated and through which a community of polite and cultivated readers was discussed', appears to have run unimpeded alongside his demands for political reform.¹⁷³ How many of the goods and services which could support politeness were actually acquired, how and when they were used, who by and what meanings were given to their display and use remains difficult to assess. By the close of the century, etiquette and more rigid forms of class identity were beginning to replace the currency of politeness, weakening its association with the goods and spaces that had helped give it expression earlier in the century.¹⁷⁴ However, the readiness with which commodities with the potential to be associated with a polite and middling population were marketed in a paper hitherto associated largely with plebeian radicalism is interesting. This more diffuse and complex reading of local society, in which letters, goods and ideas passed between Sheffield, London and the wider world contributed to a growing self-awareness and desire for new activities within the public sphere and the buildings to accommodate them. Here, too, new evidence may be presented to challenge established perceptions of the town.

¹⁷² *Sheffield Register*, Saturday 4 August 1787.

¹⁷³ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 357.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

The outward trappings of civic dignity

Permeated by the noise and smoke of industry and built on steep slopes rising from the confluence of the rivers Sheaf, Loxley and Don, the narrow streets of Sheffield's medieval infrastructure did little to assure visitors of finding signs of an urban renaissance. Residential, retail, leisure and industry jostled for space with little in the way of wide, straight streets, classical forms or a sense of planning to indicate the presence of fashionable locales. The introduction of cementation furnaces to the central areas of Barkers Pool, High St and Fargate during the early eighteenth century added considerably to the smoke already covering the town from numerous small forges.¹⁷⁵ Hunter described the town in the early eighteenth century as being 'less distinguished by the elegancies and refinements of social life than by feelings of independence and rugged honesty, by hospitality, and a rude and boisterous conviviality. There were no assemblies. There was no theatre'.¹⁷⁶ The social reformer, Samuel Roberts (1763–1848), described the town of his youth as:

In a very rude state in every respect, it being only partially flagged, with many of the stones loose; there were very few lamps, and these feeble, and far apart, ... often not lighted, or blown out. There was also projecting spouts from between the gutters of the roofs, from which during rain the water flowed in streams.¹⁷⁷

Repeated use of this description by Gatty, Leader, Lloyd, Walton, and Hey helped

¹⁷⁵ South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, South Yorkshire Historic Environment Characterisation, <http://www.sytimescapes.org.uk/zones/sheffield/S12> [accessed 5 June 2010].

¹⁷⁶ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 122; Gatty, *Hallamshire*, p. 153.

¹⁷⁷ Roberts, *Autobiography*, p. 13.

shape perceptions of eighteenth-century Sheffield and deterred the search for elegant civic spaces that may have indicated the presence of an urbane middling society.¹⁷⁸ Writing in 1959, Sidney Pollard claimed 'the absence of the outward trappings of civic dignity was closely connected with the social structure of the town'.¹⁷⁹ Citing a lack of funding and unified governance amongst other reasons Hey concluded 'Sheffield's response to polite tastes in architecture and town planning' was negligible.¹⁸⁰

The introduction of new behaviour and spaces to accommodate them could be slow and haphazard, particularly when reliant on a small proportion of the population whose cumulative wealth did not match that generated in other industrial towns and who lacked a unitary mechanism to force through compulsory development. Yet, change was taking place and new facilities were being built, even if at first they had to find space amongst the overcrowded mixture of smithies, shops, outbuildings, workshops, middensteads, stables, cow-houses and swine-hulls accessed via numerous 'twychells', or passages, now infilling land formerly used as crofts, orchards and gardens (Fig. 1.4).¹⁸¹

As he passed through the town in 1725, the chaplain to the Earl of Oxford noted:

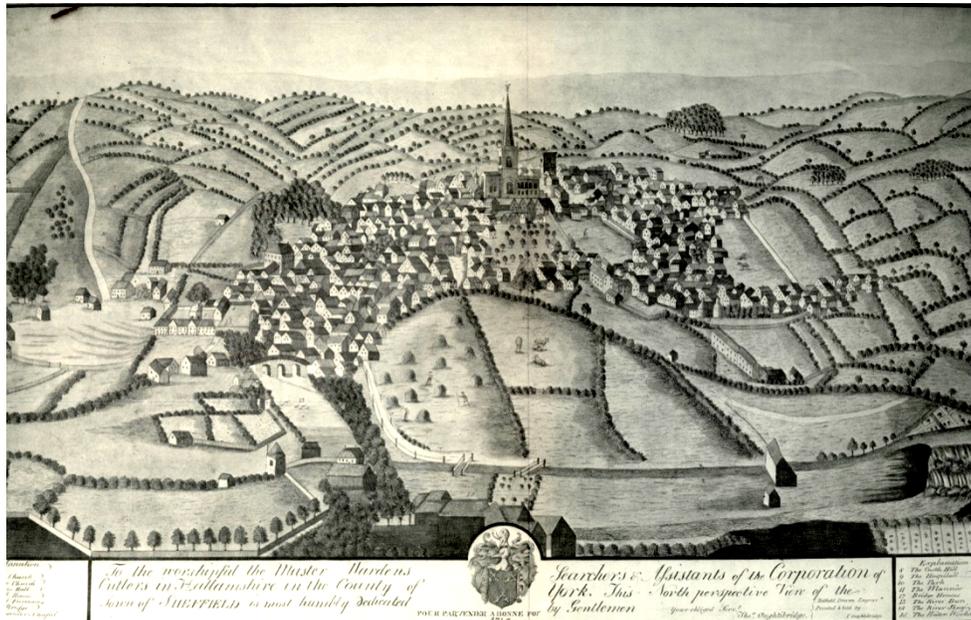
¹⁷⁸ Gatty, *Hallamshire*, p. 168; Gatty, *Past & Present*, p. 117-118; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p.150; Lloyd, *Cutlery Trades*, pp.166-167, Walton, *Sheffield*, p.108, *Sheffield Iris*, 5 July 1830.

¹⁷⁹ Pollard, *History of Labour*, pp. 3, 6.

¹⁸⁰ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 280.

¹⁸¹ D.L. Linton, *Sheffield and its Region*, p 172; Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp 88-89; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. ix.

There has been a great part of the town, which was made up chiefly of wooden houses, rebuilt within these few years, and now makes no mean figure in brick particularly towards the northside of it, where there [are] abundance of new erections upon new foundations by which the town has lately been considerably enlarged.¹⁸²



**Fig.1.4 Thomas Oughtibridge, View of Sheffield from the south c1737,
The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire.**

Drawings and plans of the town made in the 1730s show continued infilling of open spaces and the erection of substantial three and four storey properties around the parish church and High St (Fig. 1.5).¹⁸³

¹⁸² Historical Manuscripts Commission: 29 Portland Manuscripts VI (1901) pp. 143-146 quoted in Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 84-85.

¹⁸³ Thomas Oughtibridge, 'The North Perspective View of the Town of Sheffield' c.1737, in E. M(enston), *Extracts from the Records of the Cutlers' Company* (Sheffield, 1972), unpaginated; Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's *East Prospect of Sheffield* c.1747, The Cutlers' Company; Grady, *Georgian Public Buildings*, p. 173.



Fig. 1.5 Buck's view of Sheffield from the East, 1745 with the Parish Church in the centre, St Paul's is to the left and Bridgehouses to the far right.

Leader romanticised 'the last of the old gabled houses, of timber and plaster, which once gave the streets of Sheffield some appearance of mediaeval picturesqueness'. Criticising their Georgian replacements he continued, 'already in the middle of the eighteenth century, buildings of this character had largely given place to the plain unemotional brick fronts, mere walls with square holes for windows, which were the type of our relentlessly matter-of-fact street architecture until recent years'.¹⁸⁴ Hunter stated that improvements to the town began in the mid-eighteenth century improvements but was equally dismissive of the style of 'plain substantial buildings' with 'not the least attention paid to architectural decoration' (Fig 1.7).¹⁸⁵ Writing in the 1930s when Georgian architecture was back in favour, Sir George Sitwell attributes their descriptions as typical of the fashion for disliking eighteenth-century style.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 161–162.

¹⁸⁵ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁶ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 122; Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 279.

Infilling was followed by expansion, first in the 'Crofts' area to the northwest and then southwest between Burgess Street and Coal Pit Lane (now Cambridge Street). In 1736, Joseph Broadbent began Sheffield's first speculative middle-class housing development north of the parish church on a steep slope. Comprising uniform brick townhouses, three and four storeys high in the classical style, Paradise Square soon became occupied by the town's professional classes (Fig 1.6).¹⁸⁷



Fig. 1.6 Paradise Square 1736 -1771 Joseph & Thomas Broadbent

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A classically inspired gridiron layout was adopted facilitating navigation and offering a more symmetrical townscape. Writing in 1764, the Rev. Edward Goodwin described a well-

¹⁸⁷ John Nelson Tarn, 'Sheffield', in M. A. Simpson and T.H. Lloyd, (eds), *Middle Class Housing in Britain* (1977), pp.170-91; 'The professional men all lived in town streets, hardly a stone's throw from the Market Place or the Church', *Leader, Eighteenth Century*, p. 189.

ordered town with good connections to the metropolis, modern buildings, wide streets and a host of civic facilities for the fashionable socialite (Figs 1.7, 1.8).¹⁸⁸

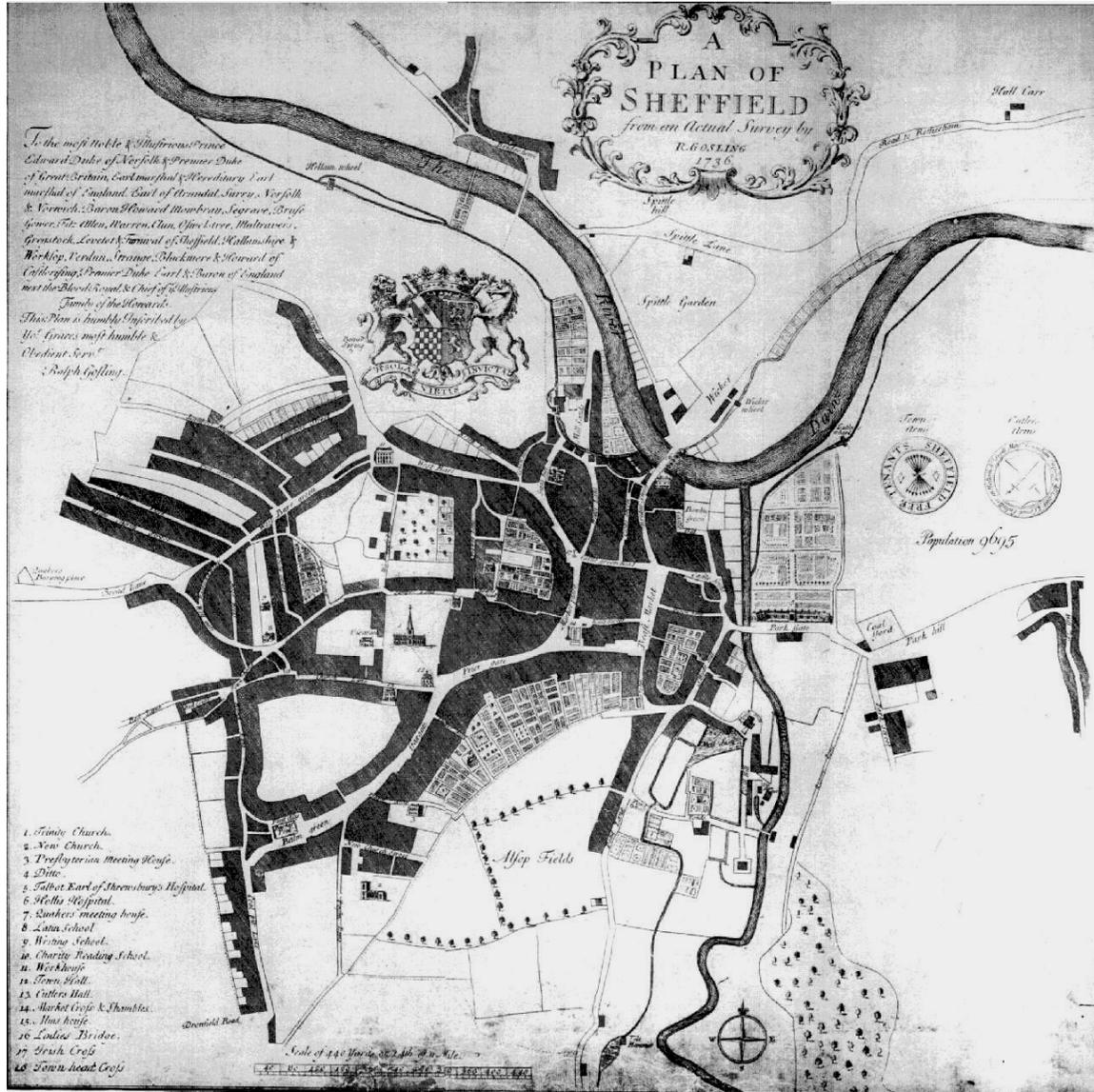


Fig. 1.7 Gosling's Plan of Sheffield in 1736 showing the outline of new gridiron streets to the northeast. The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire.

¹⁸⁸ Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield'.



Fig. 1.8 Engraving of St James' Row, Sheffield c. 1804 showing, right the vicarage of St Peter's, left J & W Brown, Solicitors, a mix of private housing with St James' church in the distance, private collection.

In the 1770s, the Norfolk Estate commissioned James Paine to prepare plans for a large development of grid pattern streets in the area known as Alsop's Fields to the southeast of the town. The Estate assumed leases would be taken up by high-class residential developers, but after receiving little interest they were offered to cutlers for smaller dwellings and restrictions on 'offensive trades' were lifted.¹⁸⁹ Critics have used this to confirm the pervading plebeian and utilitarian character of Sheffield, yet doing so ignores the town's topography and fails to appreciate how forms and ideas were adapted to suit

¹⁸⁹ Ruth Harman and John Minnis, *Pevsner Architectural Guides Sheffield*, (New Haven and London, 2004) pp. 135 -136; South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, South Yorkshire Historic Environment Characterisation, <http://www.sytimescapes.org.uk/zones/sheffield/S12> [accessed 5 June 2010].

local circumstances. As larger factories and foundries began to replace the workshops of 'little mesters', the need for water-power and flat sites began to drive industry east, whilst high-class residential areas were firmly moving westwards away from the smoke and pollution. Located downwind, and close to a noisy and polluted river supporting increasing amounts of heavy industry, the area around Alsop's Fields was more suited to commercial and industrial use than a locale for status dwellings. The speculative Alsop's Fields development miscalculated the changing environment of the town in which a middling society was no longer prepared to live next to its industries (Fig.1.9).

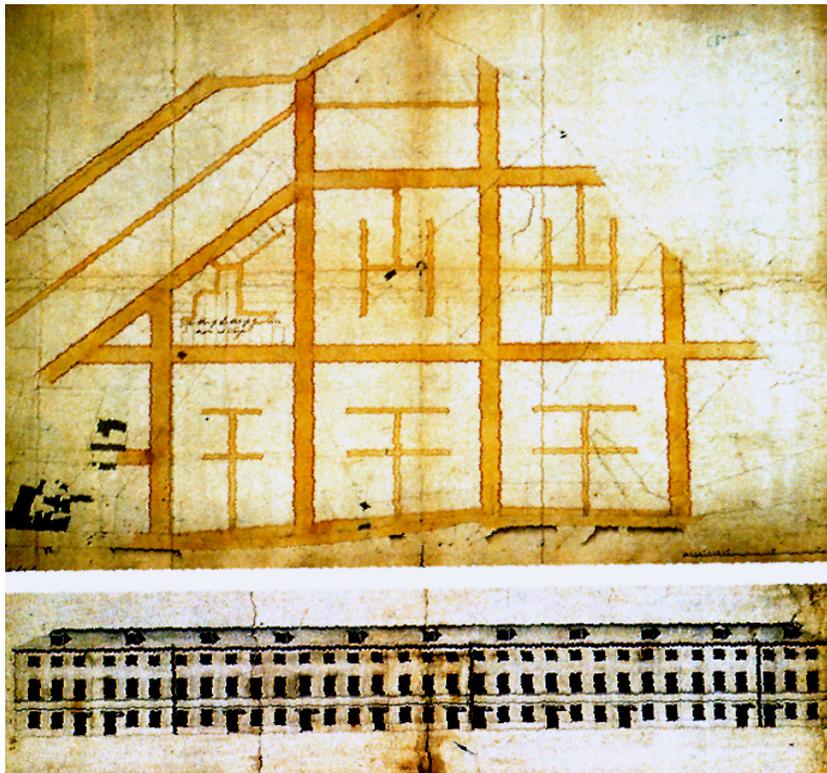


Fig. 1.9 James Paine's plan and elevation c.1770 for the Norfolk estate, Alsop Fields¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Dan Cruickshank, 'Secrets of Georgian city planning', *The Architect's Journal* 208:15 pp. 34-35.

New understandings of how provincial towns sought to meet the demands of increasingly large and complex populations show how the poor reviews of provincial towns expressed by London-orientated travel literature and visitors failed to accommodate the ways in which provincial societies selected only those features they considered useful to their needs, adapting practices, buildings and ideas to best suit their circumstances and understandings. Hannah Barker argues that the middling sorts in northern industrial towns were neither reliant on London, nor wholly parochial in their understanding and accommodation of new behaviour.¹⁹¹ Kevin Grady claims the natural reference points for much of what took place in Sheffield was neither the metropolis, nor the West Riding towns nor even York, but the largest provincial towns in the country, Liverpool and Manchester, a view endorsed by Hunter when he claimed that for Sheffield, 'Liverpool and Manchester have led the way'.¹⁹²

Based on a mixture of admiration, utility and emulation rather than competition, Hannah Barker describes a co-operative process of 'cultural borrowing' between towns. Rather than leading to, 'a certain homogeneity in provincial cultural life; ... as each town borrowed only those elements that suited its individual requirements and specific ambitions, and the variation and modification of schemes was commonplace, this was not the case'.¹⁹³ Furthermore, rather than seeking to emulate metropolitan forms of behaviour, Rosemary Sweet argues how new behaviour that could offer ways of managing urban life were also adapted to fulfil local needs:

¹⁹¹ Barker, 'Smoke Cities', pp.175-190.

¹⁹² Grady, *Georgian Public Buildings*, pp. 99, 103; Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 163.

¹⁹³ Barker, 'Smoke Cities', p. 184.

Politeness was a concept which could be readily exploited in a local context: elite observers might dismiss claims to politeness, but for middling society, politeness was a concept which eased and stabilised the demands of urban living; it could be used to denote a desirable cachet of quality and fashion, and it offered a means by which to achieve social betterment.¹⁹⁴

These understandings offer a much greater awareness of the problems faced by provincial societies and how they sought to take control of their environment. Thus, whilst Sheffield's smoke-filled environment gave the town a distinctive characteristic, changes were taking place that suggest the town was acquiring features attractive to a middling sector of society. Despite local industrialists never achieving the levels of wealth found in other industrial areas, urged on by a mix of philanthropy, civic pride, local competitiveness and profit, substantial donations were raised for the building of public institutions. Following a pattern common to many towns, efforts in the first half of the century were largely directed towards the building of town halls, churches, chapels, schools, almshouses and hospitals, which were then followed by social amenities.

In his lecture on 'Old Sheffield' in 1893, Arthur Jackson listed several individuals who helped fund projects as varied as the rebuilding of The Cutlers' and Town Halls, the refurbishment of the parish church and the establishment of a variety of clubs, including, in 1718, the goldsmith Richard Downes who gave £1000 to help build the stylishly baroque St

¹⁹⁴ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 366.

Paul's church (Fig. 1.7).¹⁹⁵ Alongside assorted chapels and churches, further new buildings in classical forms included a Town Hall (1700), parochial library (1707), a second Cutlers' Hall (1725-26), a shambles and market place (1738-41), a boys' charity school (1708-10) and one for girls (1787-88), a Town Library (1771), and a General Infirmary (1793-97), the latter securing £17,000 from donations given by the town's 'many gentlemen', particularly from the medical and legal world (Fig. 1.9).¹⁹⁶



**Fig. 1.10 St Paul's Church, Sheffield, engraved by Edwin Bloore;
Hunter, Hallamshire, p. 156.**

¹⁹⁵ Jackson, 'Old Sheffield'.

¹⁹⁶ Hunter, *Hallamshire*, p. 323.



Fig 1.11 Perspective Elevation of the General Infirmary at Sheffield, 1804¹⁹⁷

Projects, such as the General Infirmary (Fig 1.11), which cost £17,697, the Assembly Rooms and Theatre of 1762 whose £3,000 cost was paid for by £100 shares, and the new shambles and market place completed in 1786 at a cost of £11,000, were amongst some of the most expensive examples in the West Riding of Yorkshire.¹⁹⁸ Kevin Grady also indicates the importance Sheffield evidently gave to new forms of sociability. Whilst Sheffield's 'market places were less imposing and costly [than Leeds]... its social amenities, such as its assembly rooms and theatre and music hall, were undoubtedly more sumptuous'.¹⁹⁹

As long-standing and close-knit familial, parish, and working relations began to be replaced by associations formed on shared interests and affiliations, new spaces were

¹⁹⁷ British Library Online Gallery: Shelfmark: K.top Vol 44 Item number: 49.D
<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/kinggeorge/p/003ktop00000044u049d0000.html>
[accessed 11 June 2011].

¹⁹⁸ Grady, *Georgian Public Buildings*, pp.38-39.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41; Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield'.

required by those who wished for more select and genteel forms of sociability to which access was restricted and behaviour regulated. Organised as much by market forces and competition, and by cultural aspirations and the pursuit of status, these new relations began to replace traditional vertical ties and dependencies.²⁰⁰ Julie MacDonald claims the fledging entrepreneurs of the Cutlers Company were amongst those who were:

Eager to advertise their wealth and status through their possessions, dress and social circle. They sought to distance themselves from their origins and to adopt the ways of 'polite' society. In order to do so, they often shunned the traditional customs of the local community....More importantly, some also started to shun the traditional Saturday night camaraderie of the tavern when orders were given and payments were made by using managers or agents to act on their behalf.²⁰¹

The absence of trade directories and guidebooks for the region until the last decades of the century make it difficult to know fully how these buildings were used or perceived by contemporaries but evidence from newspapers, public and personal correspondence give some notion of the range of new sociable activities, clubs, societies, plays, recitals, assemblies, and scientific lectures they hosted. Mr. Dawson was amongst several dancing masters who hired the theatre in the yard of the Angel Inn to hold lessons and balls for the young gentlemen and ladies of the town.²⁰² The Angel also hosted concerts: a vocal and

²⁰⁰ Kathleen Wilson, *The sense of the people: politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 11.

²⁰¹ Julie MacDonald, 'The Freedom of Election' p. 42.

²⁰² *Sheffield Public Advertiser* No. 25, 7- 14 October 1760.

instrumental musical concert was performed there on Whit Monday 1761, followed at 6.30 p.m. by a ball, 'tickets pit 2s, gallery 1s'.²⁰³

In 1787, the annual festival of music in Sheffield included a performance of *The Messiah* at St Paul's Church, *L'Allegro e' Il Penseroso* at the Theatre, and concluded with a Grand Miscellaneous Concert with 300 vocal and instrumental performers. Other performances included Mr. Smith 'the celebrated violoncello player', accompanying Mr. Cramer. In the same year, Dr Brown held a private dinner at the Tontine Inn in celebration of the marriage of his friend, Thomas Heathfield Esq. Attended by '30-40 ladies and gentlemen of the most respectable families', the evening concluded with a ball.²⁰⁴ In his autobiography, Samuel Roberts describes how, on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, many of the more orderly public houses appropriated their best room to the accommodation of a youthful party of around 50 children of both sexes between the ages of five and ten, who, upon spending a penny, would be allowed to play games and partake of plum cake and warm sweetened wine.²⁰⁵

Benefit societies flourished in Sheffield from 1720 when the tailors had first established a sick club. They were joined by other primarily trade based organizations such as the Filesmitths and Cutlers (1732), the Carpenters (1740), and Grinders (1748). Others such as, 'The Union', 'Society Depending on Providence', 'The Shepherds', 'Bishop Blaze

²⁰³ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 134.

²⁰⁴ *Sheffield Register*, 7 July 1787.

²⁰⁵ Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains*, p. 21.

Club' and the 'Old Gentleman's Club' were probably more social in their aims.²⁰⁶ In 1761, the Freemasons established the Rose and Crown Lodge in Sheffield at an inn of that name with a membership drawn from attorneys, doctors, master silver-plate and silver manufacturers and the steel makers. Their rules banned 'all Feuds, Controversies, Illegal Arguments or debates 'which might in any sort make void or even disturb this our Unanimous Conjunction'. Members were also required to appear in 'Clean decent Apparel with proper Cloathes and observe a due decorum'.²⁰⁷ By 1787 they had acquired purpose built premise in Paradise Square where, in June of that year to celebrate the feast day of St John the Baptist, about sixty members enjoyed an 'elegant dinner' with the 'day closing in harmony and peace'. Next evening there followed a ball with plenty of the best wines at which the most 'pleasing propriety was observed'.²⁰⁸ Serving the upper end of the social spectrum, the Monthly Club founded in 1783, attracted Thomas, 3rd Earl of Effingham, the bankers William & John Shore, silver plate manufacturer, Henry Tudor, the Rev James Wilkinson, vicar of Sheffield and Dr Browne, founder of the Sheffield Infirmary and a partner in the Sheffield Lead Works, amongst its members²⁰⁹.

Between 1781 and 1782, John Waltaire gave thirteen lectures on natural and experimental philosophy; Mr Long spoke on astronomy in 1795 and John Booth on chemistry in 1789, and again in 1790. In 1791, Booth also established the Society for the

²⁰⁶ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 87.

²⁰⁷ David Flather, '1764 Rules and Orders, Freemasonry in Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 44 (1931), pp. 135-139.

²⁰⁸ *Sheffield Register*, 25 June 1787.

²⁰⁹ Sheffield City Archives: Wheat Collection 1233, 'Members of The Monthly Club at Sheffield, 1783'; see Appendix 3.4 for full list.

promotion of Mechanical Knowledge, which met at the coffee house on Howard St and between 1799- 1801 the Revd. Thomas Olivers Warwick presented a series of scientific lectures at the Tontine Inn.²¹⁰ Francis Sitwell had a portrait of Newton in his study at Bridgehouses and in 1736, when in London he paid 'Mr. Scarlett ffor the Microscope 3 Gs., the Camara Obscura 4 Gs. ½, the Convex glass £1.5s., the Prism 5s., the Perspective 5s.'²¹¹

The coffee-house used by the Town Trustees for some of their meetings as early as 1687 was supplemented in 1792 by a new four-storey coffeehouse on George St. In a sale of the business in 1817, the auction catalogue described the coffeehouse as 'generally considered an Ornament and Advantage to the Town. It is remarkably substantial and beautiful [...] finished with taste and judgement'.²¹² Replacing facilities offered first in 1733 by the Boys' Charity School and later the Angel Inn, purpose-built assembly rooms with areas for dancing, card-playing, concerts, conversation, and dining opened in 1763, together with a new theatre capable of containing eight hundred spectators, 'handsomely decorated, and having some very good scenes belonging to it'.²¹³ At Crookesmoor, between 1711 and 1781, a racecourse with the addition of a later grandstand entertained large numbers of the population, although it was never able to attract the elite crowds attending the larger and more established Doncaster races. In 1781, the nursery grounds of the former Sheffield

²¹⁰ Ian Inkster, 'The development of a scientific community in Sheffield, 1790-1850', *Transactions Hunter Archaeological Society* 10 (1973), pp. 100-103; M. Brook, 'Dr Warwick's chemistry lectures and the scientific audience in Sheffield, (1799-1801)', *Annals of Science* 11:3 (1955), pp. 224-237.

²¹¹ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 262.

²¹² Sheffield City Archives: MD5845/4, 'Rodgers, Solicitor, Particulars and Conditions of Sale, Sheffield, 1817'.

²¹³ Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield'.

Castle were opened as a public recreation ground and in 1783, 33 subscribers raised £4,100.00 to build the Tontine Inn.²¹⁴

Many of these new activities took place in the evenings and rather than criticising the poor quality of street lighting, Hannah Barker claims it was an example of progress and a feature driven by the, 'consumer revolution' in which streets, 'were widened, paving and lighting provided and buildings improved in central shopping areas such as in Sheffield's Norfolk Street, Market Street in Manchester and Briggate in Leeds'.²¹⁵ The Sheffield Town Trustees first provided oil lamps for street lighting in 1734, adding more in 1747 'for the more effectually lighting the town and preventing any disorders being committed in the night'.²¹⁶ They were to burn through most or all of the night, unless a full moon was expected and their purpose was to reduce disorder and effectually light the town for ease of access. Mark Bouman associates this early use of street lighting with a developing middling culture.

Up to about 1800, night lighting did not necessarily come with any urban territory: it developed under particular conditions – cities with night-time economic activity, elites with plenty of leisure time, a social order regulated both by police and by the development of manners, and a greatly changed worldview with respect to human ability to master the rhythms of nature.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 116, 200.

²¹⁵ Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains*, p. 13; Leader, *Reminiscences*, pp. 98-9; Walton, *Sheffield*, p 108; Mark J. Bouman, 'Luxury and Control: The Urbanity of Street Lighting in Nineteenth-Century Cities', *Journal of Urban History* 14.7 (1987), p 11; Barker, 'Smoke cities', p. 180.

²¹⁶ J.D. Leader, (ed.) *The Records of the Burgery*, pp. 363 – 364, 371.

²¹⁷ Bouman, 'Luxury and Control', p. 30.

Hunter, Gatty, and Leader perceived the region as rough and plebeian as their sources and methodologies offered little alternative, yet the developments outlined in this chapter suggest Sheffield did engage with the urban renaissance. When compared with neighbouring towns, Sheffield appears to have placed considerable weight on the importance of providing appropriately designed spaces able to host a variety of new forms of sociability ranging from concerts, assemblies, balls and recitals to lectures, meetings, debates, and dinners.

Employing new understandings and widening the range of sources consulted has shown that eighteenth-century Sheffield was much more complex, diverse, literate, consumerist, urbane, and sophisticated than previously acknowledged. Reconstructing Sheffield's middling society is difficult, not least because contemporaries rarely used the term 'middling', but because the region's histories offer little indication of their impact on the town. Subscription lists, invitations, and newspaper reports enumerate those who attended the balls, races, concerts, assemblies and activities associated with politeness in the public sphere, but evidence is also required of their homes as it was here that the objects and spaces associated with politeness could be employed to enforce status and identity. Polite activities centred on sociable conviviality, leisure, comfort, eating, and drinking, and its use in helping to ease negotiations and facilitate discourse between hitherto disparate groups, meant politeness could play an important role in the lives of the middling sort. Determining patterns of ownership for goods able to support polite forms of sociability can help locate those who saw themselves as middling and one of the best ways of achieving this is through the examination of probate inventories.

Chapter Two: 'A tangible expression of the spread of politeness' in the home¹

Evidence from probate inventories shows that Hallamshire did support a group of mainly urban households whose patterns of consumption reveal the acquisitions of new goods in sufficient quantities to have supported new forms of leisure, comfort and sociability. The evidence also shows how these households were reconfiguring their homes to make new spaces with the potential for private conviviality. Fashionable dining rooms or parlours replaced traditional forms of wealth display such as the placing of the best bed in the parlour, and the preparation and consumption of food were separated. Households in which these features were found belonged to a mixture of professionals, retailers, merchants, gentlemen and those called esquire or mister living in or in close proximity to Sheffield.

Probate Inventories

Probate inventories were public and legally binding documents in which a deceased's estate was recorded in order to ensure the payment of debts, the dispersal of bequests, and the minimisation of disputes and fraud. Anyone leaving goods worth £5 or more was legally required to have their estate recorded by appraisers who would compile

¹ L. E. Klein, 'Historiographical Reviews: Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal* 45.4 (2002), p. 885.

the inventory.² Once completed and on payment of a fee, this was then registered in the appropriate ecclesiastical, manorial or lay court according to local custom. If the deceased had property in more than one diocese, then probate was administered by one of the two Prerogative Courts of York or Canterbury. If property was owned in both provinces, probate was dealt with at Canterbury, as this was the senior of the two courts. Such estates generally belonged to the elite of local society and so are excluded from this present study of the middling sorts. The practice continued until the 1730s after which they were no longer a legal requirement and their numbers dramatically declined.

Inventories recorded all the moveable goods in a home, the working tools and livestock, harvested crops, and those still in the field produced by the industry and manurance of man. Cash in hand, leases, debts owed and owing, were listed and offer useful insight into individual credit and commercial networks.³ Inventories do not record the full estate of an individual so cannot be taken as representing their full worth. They exclude naturally occurring produce such as meadow grass, reeds, fruit and timber, neither do they include the value of land, property, the goodwill of a business or other possessions or items such as pets, toys, newspapers, prepared foods or medicines.⁴ Evidence from wills further shows that bequeathed items were routinely omitted from the inventory record as

² M. Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean, Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households 1600-1750* (London & New York, 2004), p. 22.

³ Peter C. D. Brears, (ed.) *Yorkshire Probate Inventories 1542-1689*, (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1972), p. 93; U. Priestley, and P. Corfield, 'Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1982) pp. 93-123.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

were the possessions of lodgers, apprentices, and servants, so that only a partial image of a household may be recreated.⁵

Inventories were produced by appraisers who had to know the value of goods and were often family members, colleagues, or friends of the family. In Hallamshire, it appears to have been the practice to appoint between two and four usually male appraisers who generally commenced the inventory by recording the name, location and occupation of the testator, together with the year of death and the date the inventory was taken.⁶ Beginning with the purse and apparel of the deceased, appraisers then usually gave a room-by-room snapshot of the house and its contents as appraisers moved through the dwelling itemising goods and listing the rooms in which they were found.

For much of the eighteenth century it was the practice for furniture and furnishings to be stored and brought into a particular space as occasion required. The terminology employed by appraisers to describe the spaces where goods were found may not reflect how they were used or perceived by the household.⁷ Spaces could be perceived in different ways, determined by the time of day, or year, the occasion or those in attendance so inventories may only give transient perceptions of the spaces they describe.⁸ Giorgio Riello

⁵ M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), p. 223.

⁶ Eleanor Love notes that occupations were not usually recorded in her York inventories, Eleanor Love, 'Material Culture in Early Modern England: The Role of Goods in the Creation of Social Identities in Three Yorkshire Communities, 1660-1780', Ph.D. thesis (University of York, 2003), p. 45.

⁷ S. Nenadic, 'Middle-Rank Consumers and Domestic Culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720-1840', *Past and Present* 145 (Nov, 1994), p. 140.

⁸ G. Riello, 'Work on the Core Project Database', *AHRB Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior Newsletter* 4 (Autumn 2003).

has claimed that 'issues such as the connectivity of spaces and the problem of the continuum between public/private and domestic/non-domestic spaces can only be addressed with difficulty by inventories'.⁹ Similarly, inventories rarely offered an indication of the style, quality, age or condition of the objects they listed. They do not convey a sense of the novelty or enjoyment the arrival new goods may have caused, how, or when, they were acquired, the meanings that were vested in them, or the point in the lifecycle of a home at which the inventory was made.¹⁰

Thus, patterns of consumption patterns revealed by probate inventories are now realised to be more complex and nuanced than could be accommodated by understandings that juxtaposed metropolitan ideals against provincial emulation. Following on from the work of Neil McKendrick who argued that emulation was the key to rising consumption, different patterns are now known to have existed in different parts of the country for different sectors of society and Hannah Barker has questioned, 'the utility of national models of consumerism and 'politeness' which ignore the importance of regional variation and provincialism.'¹¹ Lorna Weatherill's analysis of inventories from eight different dioceses across the country showed that consumption of a range of luxury and populuxe goods

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions, 1751-81', in J. Brewer and R. Porter, (eds), *Consumption and the word of goods* (London, 1993), p. 276; T. H. Breen, 'The meaning of things: interpreting the consumer economy in the eighteenth century', in Brewer and Porter, (eds), *Consumption and the word of goods*, p. 251; Riello, 'Work on the Core Project Database'.

¹¹ Neil McKendrick, 'The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England', in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J. H. Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth- Century England* (Bloomington, 1982); H. Barker, "'Smoke Cities": Northern Industrial Towns in Late Georgian England', *Urban History* 31.2 (2004), p. 175.

increased substantially between 1665 and 1725, but that patterns were not uniform. By 1725, consumption of knives and forks had increased from 1% in 1675 to 10% and looking glasses from 22% to 40%, but this was neither uniform across the country or between urban and rural areas.¹² Furthermore, if emulation and wealth were driving factors, this was challenged by Weatherill's findings that leaders of society were not necessarily the first to acquire new goods or owned the greatest number of them.¹³

Links with London and access to its markets, the occupation of the deceased, and whether they lived in an urban or rural setting where all factors that contributed to patterns of consumption that emulation alone could not explain. More recently, smaller-scale regional studies have questioned Lorna Weatherill's mapping of social hierarchies found in London onto provincial societies as they are no longer seen as necessarily reflecting the social or occupational groupings in provincial societies, nor how they perceived and interpreted their material culture.¹⁴ Others have also challenged Weatherill's adoption of Erving Goffman's 'frontstage' and 'backstage' terminologies to explain how new goods were displayed in the main rooms of a house so that they would be on view to visitors.¹⁵ Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann have argued that evidence from Kent and Cornwall inventories does not support this view and terms such as 'frontstage' and 'backstage' are too dichotomous to explain the associations they found between goods and

¹² Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (2nd edn London, 1996), Table 2.1, p. 26, Table 3.3, p. 49, Table 4.3, p. 80.

¹³ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, Table 8.1, p. 168.

¹⁴ Love, 'Material Culture in Early Modern England', p.33; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p 77, 191-193; H. R. French, 'The Search for the "Middle Sort of People" in England, 1600-1800', *The Historical Journal* 43.1 (2000), p. 283.

¹⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Penguin edn, London, 1990).

spaces in the domestic environment.¹⁶ In contrast with Weatherill's findings taken from across eight dioceses, regional studies suggest patterns of consumption were more localised and that the middling sort neither slavishly emulated London fashion nor was oblivious to it but configured their homes in ways that gave them meaning and status according to their needs and understanding. These more nuanced understandings of the range of goods acquired for the home and how they were displayed show that value was placed on their ownership and that they could be used to help construct and enforce local concepts of identity.

New and populuxe Goods

The introduction during the mid-seventeenth century of tea, coffee and hot chocolate into England introduced an array of new goods that supported new forms of sociability that could be performed in the home and could further be used to advertise status, taste, sophistication and wealth. The command the mistress of the house demonstrated over the appropriate rituals for deploying chocolate, coffee, and tea pots, together with kettles, teaspoons, sugar basins, slop bowls, cups, saucers and caddies set upon mahogany tea tables, became a ready means of assessing the modernity and politeness of a household. So closely did the ritual of taking tea become associated with polite behaviour that Lawrence Klein claims how, 'the map of the social and geographical

¹⁶ Overton et al, *Production and Consumption*, p. 135.

spread of tea services in households provides a tangible picture of the spread of politeness'.¹⁷

Other new forms of domestic sociability included changes in the times at which people ate and a shift to more leisurely and private meals served in comfortable surroundings. The growing presence of clocks marked a change from time regulated by festivals, seasons, and the sun to one in which days were divided by hours that demanded a punctuality that had not previously existed. The nomenclature and timing of meals became social markers between the labouring and leisured classes. Breakfast for the labouring poor, tradesmen and artisans usually ranged from 7am-9am with 10am or thereabouts being the time for the gentry and leisured classes. For the leisured classes, dining late became a sign of status and for them it became increasingly delayed, moving from around midday in Pepys' time to five or six in the afternoon by the end of the eighteenth-century. Luncheon and teatime evolved to fill the gap between breakfast and dinner, the timing of which varied considerably depending on social class and regional variations. Writing in *The Tatler* in 1710, Richard Steele complained how the changing mealtimes was an example of the natural rhythms of life being perverted by the demands of modern society.¹⁸ In the working environment, merchants were increasingly wont to complain of a lack of discipline

¹⁷ Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 885.

¹⁸ Gilly Lehmann, *The British Housewife: Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Totnes, 2003), pp. 301 ff.; J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London, 1996), p.25; *The Tatler*, No. 263, 14 December, 1710.

for, as Dr Johnson noted, 'In a commercial country, a busy country, time becomes precious.'¹⁹

As domestic dining and entertaining grew in popularity long tables and benches which enforced traditional forms of hierarchy, were replaced by smaller and more intimate round, or oval dining tables around which each guest was provided with a chair. Tables were covered with damask, diaper, coarse, or fine huggaback napkins and cloths according to the status of the guests. Aided by the increased use of candlesticks and mirrors, David Napier describes how displays of 'shine' from china, delftware, silver, pewter, glassware, and cutlery became important features of status.²⁰

Combining practical and aesthetic considerations of taste, decency, learning, and leisure, clocks, weatherglasses, books, musical and scientific instruments, gaming, sewing and tea tables were assembled in rooms equipped with fashionable upholstery, curtains and paintings to offer warmth, comfort, privacy, and provide the props of a polite and genteel life.²¹ Not all of these objects were new but were increasingly affordable and when assembled together in tasteful and decorous rooms they indicated a shift in the mental world of those who used them. The value of silver, for example, became increasingly

¹⁹ James Boswell, 'At the Pantheon', *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, (London, 1795) vol. I, p. 163. In 1747, a London agent complained of late deliveries because the Sheffield nailors who supplied him were busy with the harvest Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 97.

²⁰ David Mitchell, 'Napery 1600-1800' in P. Glanville and H. Young, (eds), *Elegant Eating Four Hundred Years of Dining in Style* (London, 2002), p. 52.

²¹ Colin Campbell, 'The meaning of objects and the meaning of actions', *Journal of Material Culture* 1 (1996), pp. 93-105: Maxine Berg, 'New commodities, luxuries, and their consumers in eighteenth-century England,' in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds) *Consumers and Luxury, Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 65-70.

associated with its form and style rather than its intrinsic wealth, although it could still be converted to cash if needed. Affordable looking glasses offered, perhaps for the first time, an insight into personal appearance and how that compared with one's peers as well as increasing the amount of light available in the home.

Mark Overton asserts that these new goods first began to appear in the inventories of London gentry during the first half of the seventeenth century. Between c.1660 and 1700, they then began appearing in the inventories of prosperous urban dwellers, especially those in retail and service occupations, before becoming more widely distributed amongst the moderately prosperous in urban and rural areas during the first half of the eighteenth century. Lorna Weatherill argues that a sharp increase in the ownership of eating and drinking goods took place amongst provincial middling sorts between 1685 and 1715, whilst Carole Shammas places the time in the mid-eighteenth century.²²

In a study of inventories largely taken from the City of London's Orphan Court, Eleanor John records that, prior to the 1660s, clocks and looking glasses were relatively rare in the homes of the middling sort, but then rapidly became common in parlours and dining rooms. Beds were often the most expensive item of household furniture and were commonly found downstairs in parlours and occasionally dining rooms. In London they began to be relocated to more private upper chambers in the mid-seventeenth century to

²² C. Shammas, 'The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America', *Journal of Social History* 14.1 (1980), p. 17; Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p.38.

make way for new goods and new expressions of status and sociability.²³ Hangings began to disappear from the dining rooms of London middling sorts around the start of the eighteenth century to be replaced by more hygienic panelled and painted walls. Mark Girouard describes how, in gentry houses, the practice of having more than one dining table in a room, or even separate rooms so that guests could be seated according to their status was becoming increasingly outmoded, although Eleanor John notes its persistence in the homes of London's middling sorts into the early eighteenth century.²⁴ Replacing wooden forms and stools and allowing greater comfort and informality at the table, sets of cane chairs became fashionable in London between 1670 and 1730, followed by upholstery in Turkey work and then leather.²⁵ Enabling greater fineness and attention to detail in furniture design, from around 1660 walnut, and then mahogany from around 1725, began to replace oak and other native timbers in formal items of furniture.²⁶ Jan de Vries describes this process as representing a move from the 'old luxury' of using objects to enforce status and hierarchy to the 'new luxury' of using them to facilitate urban sociability and inclusiveness.²⁷

²³ Eleanor John, 'At home with the London middling sort – the inventory evidence for furnishings and room use, 1570-1720', *Regional Furniture* 22 (2008), p. 44.

²⁴ M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven & London, 1978), p. 184; Eleanor John, 'At home with the London middling sort', p. 40.

²⁵ David Dewing, 'Cane Chairs, Their Manufacture and Use in London, 1670-1730', *Regional Furniture* 22 (2008), pp. 53-86.

²⁶ Victor Chinnery, *Oak Furniture The British Tradition* (Woodbridge, 1979), p. 151.

²⁷ Jan de Vries, 'Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice', in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds) *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 41-56.

Increased production, emulation, affordability, access to new goods, location and the witness of how they could be used to enforce status or identity, have variously been considered as reasons individual households acquired new and luxury goods. John Brewer's assertion that, 'politeness and refinement had little value unless they were shared; they had to be put on display to be shown to others', is emphasized by Helen Clifford when she stresses the link between the ownership of goods, their ability to enhance performance and convey an association with politeness²⁸:

People were increasingly aware of how objects could be used to communicate "politeness" and goods that gave service to a range of new activities encouraging sociability and the display of manners became particularly associated with polite behaviour.²⁹

For politeness to be given its due expression, Michael Snodin and John Styles emphasize how goods had to be both in the appropriate style and deployed in the correct manner.

Upholstered sofas and knives and forks, tea services and snuff boxes were indispensable props in the genteel performances that constituted politeness, whether in the dining room or the assembly room. Your gentility was judged by whether you owned the right items, whether they were sufficiently genteel in their design and whether you were capable of using them in the correct way.³⁰

²⁸ John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), p. 107.

²⁹ Helen Clifford, 'Precious Metalwork in Early Modern England', in Berg and Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury Consumer Culture*, p. 60; see also: Overton *et al*, *Production and Consumption*, pp. 111, 119.

³⁰ M. Snodin, and J. Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts Britain 1500-1900* (London, 2001), p. 184.

Not everyone with the means to acquire new goods and new spaces chose to do so, and some who did, may not have used them in ways that were perceived as polite. Furthermore, the absence of these goods from probate inventories cannot be taken as proof that a household was neither middling nor polite. Hence, evidence from inventories alone cannot show if new goods such as teacups, forks and coffee pots symbolised the genteel and polite behaviour of W. G. Hoskins's culture of 'cushions and conversation'³¹ However, when combined with findings from a wide range of other sources, the faults and limitations of each can be mitigated so that some picture of Sheffield society and its middling sort may be formed. Despite their limitations, no other source can offer the ability to explore domestic patterns of consumption across a broad section of households or indicate how they changed over time.³²

Methodology

The regular recording in probate inventories of a range of goods and spaces that acquired an association with polite and middling behaviour means patterns of consumption can be explored to see how they may have been acquired by some sectors of Hallamshire society to help mark their distinctive status and identity. These goods include a range of populuxe items that Lorna Weatherill found were consistently recorded in inventories when present in the home namely; clocks, mirrors, cutlery, glasswares, china, goods associated with hot drinks and their rituals, silver, books, pictures, cane and upholstered chairs,

³¹ W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant: The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village* (London, 1957), p. 199; R. Glassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35.4 (2005), pp. 602-603.

³² Overton *et al*, *Production and Consumption*, pp. 138-147.

window curtains, punch bowls, round, oval or tea tables³³. In addition, the presence of saucepans is noted as appraisers considered them worthy of itemising and the potential they offered for new styles of cooking further suggests a change in the mentalities of those who owned them. Gilly Lehmann notes how, by the mid-eighteenth century, sauces were the 'most important element in French cookery', and did much to promote the use of forks rather than fingers for eating.³⁴ French cookery was vilified in many circles for its perceived associations with the Whig party and lack of patriotism in contrast with a preference for a plainer and traditional diet found in the recipe books of many female writers of the day. Whilst the meanings attributed to the use of sauces in individual households is difficult to determine, the presence of saucepans can further add to evidence of a growing self awareness and striving to create a new identity.³⁵ Having explored the patterns of consumption for these goods, consideration is then given to the names attributed to spaces within individual households to see if further associations can be found that indicate the ownership of new goods was accompanied by new arenas for their display and use which could enhance middling and polite identities.

In order to identify the main characteristics of the region from probate inventories and other sources, David Hey made extensive use of prosopography. The technique is employed here and is combined with individual accounts of people from sectors of local society that have hitherto been largely overlooked. Probate for the parishes of Sheffield,

³³ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 3.

³⁴ B. Clermont, *The Professed Cook* (1769), pp. 1-2, 6-13 quoted in Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, pp. 173, 242.

³⁵ Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, pp. 173-178, 284.

Ecclesfield, Bradfield and Rotherham fell under the jurisdiction of Doncaster Deanery in the Diocese of York. These inventories are to be largely found in the library of the Borthwick Institute at the University of York and in Sheffield Archives. The north Derbyshire villages fell under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Lichfield and these inventories are held in Lichfield Record Office with many copies held by Sheffield Archives.

Inventories from the reign of Henry VIII exist for some parts of Hallamshire but disappointingly the earliest surviving examples for Sheffield date from c. 1690. The taking of inventories for those whose estate exceeded £5 ceased to be a legal requirement in 1730. Unusually, and probably the result of legal disputes, the practice persisted sufficiently in Hallamshire to include examples as late as the 1780s. Together with a number of inventories whose value was significantly less than £5 (2% of the sample), they are included as they offer a limited but valuable insight into the ownership of goods across a broad range of time and society. Inventories are taken from the period 1680 to 1788 so that comparisons can be made as fully as possible between Sheffield and its surrounding parishes.

To gain as much information as possible and to maintain some degree of consistency, inventories had to give the testator's name, occupation, location, total inventoried wealth and year of death. They had to itemise and value possessions on a room-by-room basis, or at least provide a notional indication of the value of individual goods within named spaces. Although the implementation of such criteria could incline any

selection towards the wealthier members of society, it does enable a comprehensive and comparative picture of middling households to be formed.

Some 750 inventories survive for those living in the parish of Sheffield and its surrounding hinterland whose estate was not proven by the Prerogative Court.³⁶ Of these, around 150 were excluded as their limited descriptions meant they could contribute to a study of patterns of consumption. Amongst the remainder, considerable duplication in patterns of consumption and occupation was found amongst some highly represented groups. For example, in David Hey's study of inventories, 42.8% of all Sheffield testators belonged to the metal trades. Cutlers formed 25% of the sample, a further 10% were widows and just over 6% had no occupation listed. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, which added nothing to the findings, the number of Sheffield inventories was reduced to 120, or 20% of the available sample whilst still maintaining similar representations of occupational and wealth groups. Thus, Hey's 42.8% of metal workers is matched by a similar proportion in this study of 38.3%. A similar process was undertaken for the surrounding parishes of Ecclesfield, Bradfield, Rotherham and the Norton villages, where 209, or 38%, of approximately 550 inventories that fulfilled the above criteria were randomly selected. In all, 329 or some 25% of local inventories which fitted the criteria outlined above and avoided unnecessary repetition were selected to represent as fully and proportionally as possible the range of occupations, levels of wealth, and habitats of Hallamshire for the period 1680 to 1788 (Table 2.0, Appendices 1.1 – 1.5, Figure 2.2.0).

³⁶ David Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood 1660-1740* (Leicester, London & New York, 1991), pp. xvii, 102.

Parish/Year	Bradfield	Ecclesfield	Norton	Rotherham	Sheffield	Hallamshire All	
						No	%
1680s	2	0	6	0	0	8	2.4
1690s	3	10	6	5	21	45	13.7
1700s	8	7	7	5	16	43	13.1
1710s	5	5	7	4	19	40	12.2
1720s	7	13	5	8	24	57	17.3
1730s	6	16	3	5	24	54	16.4
1740s	3	12	1	4	7	27	8.2
1750s	1	9	0	2	7	19	5.7
1760s	0	12	0	0	1	13	4
1770s	2	7	0	0	0	9	2.7
1780s	3	10	0	0	1	14	4.3
Proportion of full sample	40	101	35	33	120	329	
As % of full sample	12.2	30.7	10.6	10	36.5	100	100

As noted by Lorna Weatherill, testators with large amounts of inventoried wealth were more likely to own a greater number of household goods than poorer counterparts and this was the case in the Hallamshire sample.³⁷ However, as Weatherill, Mark Overton and others also found, this correlation was not consistent and factors such as occupation, location, transport, distance from London, and parish identity could influence the amount of money a household attributed to household goods and how they chose to spend it. In his analysis of local occupations listed in Sheffield parish registers and local inventories, David Hey grouped similar occupations together and this pattern is followed here as it offers the opportunity to see how occupation and locale as well as wealth may have influenced domestic consumption. Hey classified occupations under the headings of agriculture (yeomen, husbandmen, and farmers); the metal trades, gentlemen, professionals (doctors,

³⁷ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour* Table 5.1, p. 107.

apothecaries, surveyors, clerks, clerics, surgeons, and schoolmasters); retailers and tradesmen, and widows. In his exploration of English occupations, Peter Lindert found that women were generally described in accordance with their relationship to a spouse, either as spinsters, married or widowed. They were rarely defined in terms of an occupation although other sources clearly reveal the many economic roles they performed.³⁸ In the Hallamshire sample, 66% of all widows owned cattle, 27% had both cattle and crops, and 27% had been engaged in money-lending.

Ranging from cutlers, file-grinders, scissor-smiths, anvil makers, nailors, scythesmiths and others who worked independently or in small workshops to hardwaremen, mercers, manufacturers, merchants and gentlemen, both occupational and social descriptors were found amongst the vast array of distinctions within the metal trades of Hallamshire. The terms hardwareman, mercer, merchant, and ironmonger appear to have been readily interchangeable but generally refer to men who traded in raw and finished goods but who were not directly employed in their manufacture.

Peter Lindert notes that, 'the task of grouping the enormous variety of occupational labels into meaningful categories is a daunting one' and some caution is required in the attribution of occupational labels.³⁹ Occupational labels taken from wills, and inventories were attributed to the dying, not the living, and could vary according to the time of year. Several of those described as belonging to the metal trades had greater sums of inventoried

³⁸ Peter Lindert, 'English Occupations, 1670-1811', *The Journal of Economic History* 40.4 (Dec. 1980), p. 691.

³⁹ Lindert, 'English Occupations', p. 692.

wealth invested in husbandry than in tools, raw materials or goods related to their named trade. Jonathan Trickett, a cutler from Bellhouse in Sheffield died in 1733 leaving total inventoried wealth of £164.7s.6d., of which his smithy gear, 1 cwt and a half of iron and 200 horns were appraised at £10.4s., and his cattle and crops £72.4s.6d.⁴⁰ This could be due to the time of year at which the inventory was taken, or that, in later life, husbandry took over from metal-working or that appraisers tended to use engagement with the metal trades as the principal descriptor, regardless of the amount of wealth it generated in relation to other sources of household income. Highlighting the duality and variety that single occupational descriptors could mask, Lindert notes how:

Weavers farmed and farmers wove, in unknown proportions. Some weavers were self-employed, others worked on the putting-out system, and still others trudged to the mill each morning. Some gentlemen were truly productive, while others followed the hounds and had their bailiffs skim rents.⁴¹

Citing the example of 'capitalists', Lindert points to a further problem in that, as in the case of the metal trades of Hallamshire, occupational descriptors could be social or economic so, whilst 'parish records identify merchants and some manufacturers and factory owners. [...] doubtless many of them [capitalists] are hidden under other labels, either as "gentlemen" or other titled persons or under trade names they shared with employees such as "brassfounder" or "buttonmaker"'.⁴² Lindert found however, that probate returns were consistent in their ranking of wealth within major occupational groups so that in

⁴⁰ Borthwick Library, University of York: Inventory of Jonathan Trickett, cutler, Bellhouse in the parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, April 1733.

⁴¹ Lindert, 'English Occupations', p. 693.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Cambridgeshire, for example, those at the head of the agricultural wealth hierarchy were described from highest average estate to lowest as: 'titled (gents and up) – farmers-yeomen- husbandmen- labourers'.⁴³ Even so, levels of wealth amongst those who shared the same occupational descriptor could vary widely. In 1700, the estates of merchants administered by the London Court of Orphans were over ten times greater at the time of death as similarly described counterparts in Yorkshire.⁴⁴ Despite these problems, exploring patterns of consumption found within various trade groups offers comparisons with work carried out by Weatherill that indicated factors other than wealth contributed to the way in which households employed their possessions to help display their identities.

The under and over-representation of particular groups in probate inventory samples is a further feature to note and means they only permit an impression of local societies to be formed. Rosemary Sweet assessed 'the genteel population of Hanoverian London at around 3% and similar in provincial towns where they often formed exclusive groups of sociable activities.'⁴⁵ Lorna Weatherill found 5% of her inventories belonged to the lesser gentry, when 3% of society was probably a more accurate proportion of middling society, and amongst their Cornish sample, Mark Overton *et al* found an over-representation of those classed as gentry with some 7% of inventories belonging to this group when in reality 1.5% was a more accurate figure.⁴⁶ Using evidence from baptism and burial registers for the periods 1698 to 1703, and 1728 to 1733 Hey puts the proportion of

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 694.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 695.

⁴⁵ R. H. Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (New York, 1999), p.259.

⁴⁶ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 169.

gentry in Sheffield at round 2%. Covering a wider area, the 4.3% found in this sample suggests some element of over-representation but is within the parameters encountered in other samples and highlights the practice in Hallamshire of those called 'gentleman' moving a short distance from the town of Sheffield into the surrounding countryside.⁴⁷

Probably as a result of having wealth valued at more than £5 in more than one diocese, probate for many of the region's elite families appears to have been tried in the Prerogative Courts. From 1710, Prerogative Courts did not require inventories to be produced at court except in cases of dispute so few inventories survive for this sector of society. Consequently, inventories do not survive for many of Sheffield's leading iron founders and silver manufactures such as the Fells, Clays, Wilds, Milners, Roebucks and Tudors who were involved in a range of partnerships and commercial activities that spanned the country. Neither do they survive for the Westby, Stringer, Laughton, Goodwin, Hall, Fenton, Sorsbie and Mandeville families that Sitwell noted lived around Rotherham and 'from the inter-marriages which took place among them, [they] seem to have formed a somewhat dignified and agreeable state of society'.⁴⁸

Few clergy are found in the sample because, as Overton notes, the Consistory or Bishop's Courts usually administered their probate. Overton also noted a lack of inventories belonging to members of the legal profession and probably due to the reasons already outlined, frustratingly this also is the case in Sheffield. A fragment of the inventory for

⁴⁷ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 99-101.

⁴⁸ Sir George Reresby Sitwell, *The Hurts of Haldworth and their Descendants at Savile Hall, The Ickles and Hesley Hall* (Oxford, 1930), p. 218; Samuel Buck, *Yorkshire Sketchbook*, Reproduced from British Library: Lansdowne MS.914, (Wakefield, 1979), pp. 114, 117.

William Sitwell, a Sheffield attorney who died in 1703, indicates a well-appointed, affluent home with extensive gardens, equipped with fashionable goods from Sheffield, York and London, and Leader claims attorneys were amongst the wealthiest and most influential members of local society and who enjoyed extensive social and professional contacts beyond the confines of Hallamshire.⁴⁹

Despite these caveats, the Hallamshire inventories provide the opportunity to explore a broad sector of society to see if patterns of consumption reflect understandings of the region as homogeneous and plebeian, or whether they indicate the developments discussed in Chapter One were helping to shape new mentalities and behaviour in the domestic environment.

The Findings

The inventories describe a variety of domestic premises ranging in size from single-rooms dwellings with little more than a table, chairs and bed, to large, classically inspired and fashionable properties with numerous, well-equipped and specialised spaces. In between, a mix of old and new townhouses, cottages, farmsteads, and manor houses, often with commercial or workshop areas attached were located in a mixture of urban, village and rural environments.

Levels of total inventoried wealth range from just over £2 to just under £2000 and whilst these figures are unlikely to show the total wealth of individuals, they indicate the

⁴⁹ Lichfield Record Office: B/C/11, Inventory of William Sitwell, attorney, Sheffield, 1703. R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edn, Sheffield, 1905), pp. 190-196.

population of Hallamshire was substantially less wealthy than that represented by the London Orphan Court inventories. A snapshot of the sample shows median total inventoried wealth of £61 14s of which £20 6s, or 33.7%, was attributed to household goods. The median dwelling had six rooms, compared with seven found by Peter Earle in his exploration of inventories in the London Court of Orphans.⁵⁰ The most commonly listed rooms in the Hallamshire inventories were a 'house', parlour and kitchen on the ground floor with chambers above. When applied to an internal domestic space, the term 'house' described an openly accessible, everyday area in which a variety of activities including cooking, eating, resting, washing, and working could take place. In comparison, following laws which set out the type of houses to be built after the Fire of London, Earle's London properties were probably more uniform in style than those in Hallamshire and most commonly comprised a shop or workshop on the ground floor with cellar beneath and yard to the rear, a kitchen and dining-room on the first floor, the best and a further bedroom on the second floor with either a third floor with two more bedrooms and garrets above, or just garrets.⁵¹

Regardless of wealth, occupation, or location, throughout the period the majority of households contained a basic range of household goods which broadly correlated with those items identified by Weatherill and Overton as being common to most inventoried households. Across Hallamshire, a range, beds, chairs, tables, pewter, and iron pots, were

⁵⁰ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class, Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1989), p. 211.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

found in 96% of the sample, whilst buffits, stools, forms, cushions, cupboards and frying pans were listed in 55% (Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1 PERCENTAGE OF INVENTORIES WITH BASIC GOODS BY PARISH						
SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 – 1.5						
	Bradfield	Ecclesfield	Norton	Rotherham	Sheffield	Hallamshire All
Beds	100	99	94.3	100	100	99.4
Buffits/Stools	56.4	52	51.4	57.6	57.5	66
Chairs	100	100	100	100	100	99.7
Cupboards	79.5	71.6	68.6	57.6	60.8	66.9
Forms	59	44.1	54.3	51.5	28.3	56.2
Frying Pan	48.7	41.2	31.4	36.4	53.3	46.5
Iron pot	79.5	78.4	91.4	87.9	87.5	84.2
Pewter	97.4	94.1	97.1	96.7	94.2	97
Range/Hearth	94.9	95.1	91.5	94	95	96
Tables	97.4	99	100	100	99.2	100
Total no of inventories	40	101	35	33	120	329

First appearance of new goods

The evidence suggests Hallamshire was not governed by a single approach towards the furnishing of the home but was subject to a complex and varying amalgam of factors ranging from accessibility, location, wealth, occupation, the outlook of chief inhabitants and the localist nature of some parish identities. When compared with patterns of consumption found in the London Orphans' Court inventories, those from Hallamshire exhibit the delays in the acquisition of new goods common to many provincial regions. Cane chairs, for example, were at their most fashionable in London between 1670 and 1730, yet did not appear in the Hallamshire inventories until 1693. Unusually, the inventory evidence suggests many new goods made their first appearance not in the urban areas of Hallamshire, but in the gentry households of rural Norton. Although evidence is compromised by the lack of pre-1680 inventories for Sheffield and possible variations in

how appraisers listed household goods, during the 1680s and 1690s a variety of new goods were listed in Norton several years before they appeared in Sheffield, and considerably earlier than in the region's second urban centre of Rotherham. Norton was serviced by good transport links and David Hey notes how, in this southern-most tip of Hallamshire, a concentration of well-connected gentry 'deeply involved in industry and commerce' produced considerable wealth which they invested in their 'superior accommodation'.⁵² By the early eighteenth century, Sheffield's wealth and influence had eclipsed that of Norton, and a variety of new goods had begun to appear there (Table. 2.2).

	BRADFIELD	ECCLESFIELD	NORTON	ROTHERHAM	SHEFFIELD
Books	1685	1691	1682	1721	1690
Cane Chairs	1714	1725	1693	0	1703
Chest of Drawers	1715	1694	1696	1702	1690
China	1733	1691	1716	1705	1691
Clocks	1693	1694	1684	1691	1690
Dining Room	1708	1691	1693	1726	1698
Forks	1741	1725	1696	1749	1703
Jacks	1704	1691	1690	1717	1694
Looking glass	1701	1694	1680	1702	1690
Napkins	1685	1691	1680	1691	1690
Oval/round tables	1703	1714	1696	1697	1694
Tea/coffee goods	1727	1725	1714	1726	1711
Upholstered chairs	1715	1725	1685	1749	1690
Window curtains	1685	1691	1685	1702	1690

Inventories from the period 1750-1788 show that the ownership of new goods by that time had become more widespread but were still much more prevalent in urban rather than rural areas (Table 2.3). This may have simply been due to the lack of interest in the

⁵² Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 224.

behaviour new goods could facilitate as noted by Overton *et al* in their Cornish inventories. Alternatively, as noted by Weatherill, access to markets may still have been an important factor especially during the winter months for some of the more remote upland areas of Hallamshire. Hey has shown however that packmen did traverse the more remote areas of the region with a wide range of goods.⁵³ The *Diurnal* of the Puritan captain, Adam Eyre records how living in the northernmost part of Hallamshire at Hazelhead did not prevent him from frequent travel to Sheffield, Wakefield, Barnsley, Glossop and even London, a return journey to the latter in 1653 being completed in fifteen days.⁵⁴ Furthermore, some households such as that of glassmaker Robert Blackburne of Bade Green in the parish of Bradfield and Dr Joseph Carr of Birley Edge in Ecclesfield did own new goods in quantities that could facilitate new behaviour even though they lived in remote rural areas.⁵⁵ Whilst important, location does not fully explain the variety of consumption patterns found across the region, so other factors need to be considered, in particular how wealth and occupation may have contributed to the ownership of new goods.

⁵³ David Hey, *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads* (Leicester, 1980), pp. 141-156.

⁵⁴ Karl E Westhauser, 'Friendship and Family in Early Modern England, The Sociability of Adam Eyre and Samuel Pepys', *Journal of Social History* 27.3 (1994).

⁵⁵ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Robert Blackburne, glassmaker, Bade Green, Parish of Bradfield, Deanery of Doncaster, Diocese of York, February 1727/8.

TABLE 2.3 PERCENTAGE OCCURRENCE OF NEW GOODS IN PRE- AND POST- 1750 INVENTORIES						
SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 – 1.5						
	Pre 1750			Post 1750		
	All	Urban	Rural	All	Urban	Rural
Books	22.6	35.9	8.4	18.2	54.5	8.9
China	13.1	19	6.9	40	63.6	33.3
Clocks	39	48.6	27.5	80	72.3	84.4
Curtains	20	28.2	11.5	12.7	27.2	8.9
Forks	4.7	6.3	2.3	14.5	27.2	13.3
Looking glass	44.1	62.7	24.4	56.4	72.3	51
Oval/round table	44.5	52.1	21.4	47.3	36.3	48.9
Pictures	25.5	41.5	8.4	29	45.5	24.4
Tea/coffee goods	14.9	21.1	8.4	41.8	82	31.1
No of inventories (Total = 329)	273	142	131	56	11	45
Urban = Parishes of Sheffield and Rotherham Rural = Parishes of Bradfield, Ecclesfield, Norton						

When inventories are explored on a parish-by-parish basis, they indicate the presence of highly localised patterns of consumption determined, in part, by the chief inhabitants of each parish, and the social and commercial networks in which they operated. In some parishes, new goods may have been used to convey notions of status, wealth, gentility, learning, novelty, modernity or politeness with multiple interpretations available to the same household. Rural chief inhabitants had less need to impress or acquire goods that could facilitate new behaviour as their social world consisted of an established and familiar circle of associates and kin and which required less interaction or the finding of common ground with those from further afield. Chief inhabitants in urban areas had to acquire a greater number and variety of goods to gain distinction than those in rural areas and their greater engagement with new goods could also indicate the wider social circles in which they moved.

Regardless of location, a further pattern of consumption was identified in households whose activities promoted engagement with those from beyond their immediate social or parish boundaries and it was in these inventories that significant quantities of new goods were listed.

Parish Occupations

The range of occupations each parish supported and the wealth they could generate appears to have contributed to parish understandings of the role of the home as a centre of consumption or production and how it should be equipped. Sheffield supported the greatest concentration of metal workers, professionals, retailers, and craftsmen as well as many of the region's wealthiest hardwaremen, mercers, ironmongers and merchants. In the western parts of Sheffield parish, there lived in small villages and hamlets a mixture of hill-farmers, semi-skilled metal workers, trades- and craftsmen. A mix of farmlands, villages, forges and ironworks were to be found in the east of the parish around Attercliffe. In and around the north Derbyshire villages south of the parish of Sheffield, lived a diverse mix of subsistence husbandmen and craftsmen alongside wealthy scythemakers and several gentry families. Home to Sitwell's long established, agrarian, close-knit, Tory, yeomen-gentry, the northwest upland Chapelry of Bradfield was the most remote and agrarian area of Hallamshire. Moving north and east, in large villages and hamlets, the parish of Ecclesfield supported farmsteads, smallholdings, metalworkers, trades and craftsmen, together with a small number of mercantile, gentry, and professional households in easy access of Sheffield. Supporting a range of trades, crafts and services that would commonly be found in many small market towns, Rotherham appears to have had less engagement with the metal

trades and at least, within the sample, it appears to have been the most homogeneous and impoverished parish in the sample, with no record of professional or gentry (Table 2.4).

Parish	Bradfield	Ecclesfield	Norton	Rotherham	Sheffield	All Hallamshire
Agriculture	51.3	26.7	24.2	15.2	4.9	20.3
Gentry & Merchants	7.7	3.0	12.2	0	4.9	4.8
Professional	0	3.0	3	0	7.3	3.9
Metal trades	5.1	32.7	15.2	6.1	38.2	26.8
Trades/Services	30.8	26.7	39.4	78.7	39.8	38.7
Widow	5.1	7.9	6	0	4.9	5.5
Total no. of inventories per parish	40	101	35	33	120	329

When discussing the difficulties of attributing occupational labels, Peter Lindert notes the widespread practice of households enhancing their wealth by combining a variety of occupations. Overton describes how, for example, pasture farming and rural industries were routinely combined, not so much in an attempt to avert economic crisis if one source of income failed, but more as a means of maximising household economies and opportunities.⁵⁶ The practice was a widely recognised eighteenth-century phenomenon and one that was practiced throughout Hallamshire where it helped to enhance median levels of total inventoried wealth. Those engaged solely in the metal trades left total median inventoried wealth of £32 18s whilst those engaged only in agriculture left a median £73 17s. In households where both activities were combined median total inventoried wealth rose to £103 19s.

⁵⁶ H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 80; Overton *et al*, *Production and Consumption*, pp. 65-86.

Giving some indication of the widespread nature of dual occupations, of the 79.6% whose occupations were not directly associated with agriculture, 3.4% had crops, 22.9% kept livestock and 32% had both livestock and crops. An inventory dated 1711 for Joseph Smith, of Crookesmoor in Sheffield, described him as a cutler but shows he also kept an inn and farmed. Almost 40% of his total inventoried wealth of £227 10s 6 ½d was invested in goods equipping his tavern and a further £79 3s was attributed to his hive of bees, manure, oats, barleycorn, oxen, beasts, cows, sheep, two asses, and five horses.⁵⁷ Building on the success of his father Samuel in the same trade, nail chapman Matthew Booth of White Lane Head in the parish Ecclesfield, left 'nails and iron in the warehouse' appraised at £154 6s 3d with a further £115 5s 6d in farming stock and £647.9s.8d in bills, bonds and book debts.⁵⁸

That a significant proportion of the population of Sheffield was engaged in various aspects of the metal trades is indisputable, yet the singular use of the term belies the widespread range of interests and associations many in those trades enjoyed. Diversity of income not only helped maximise household revenues but offered opportunities to inhabit different mentalities and engage with understandings beyond the immediate world of the metal worker. Amongst wealthier members of society, occupational combinations could be more complex and often consisted of some element of money lending. Thomas Rawson was a timber merchant, tanner, brewer and white lead manufacturer; the Shores and Roebucks were ironmasters, hardwaremen, commodity merchants and later bankers, and

⁵⁷ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Joseph Smith, cutler, Crookesmoor, parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, June 1711.

⁵⁸ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Matthew Booth, nail chapman, White Lane Head, parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, January 1764.

Walter Osborne was associated either as a friend, relative, partner or money-lender, with most of the leading entrepreneurs of the town.⁵⁹

Parish levels of wealth

Across the sample, total median inventoried wealth appears to have remained almost constant at £61.14s between 1680 and 1749, and £61 3s between 1750 and 1788. However, when examined at parish level, substantial variations were found with inventoried wealth in rural areas declining as the century progressed and that in urban areas increasing. Occupational variations contributed to each parish supporting different overall levels of wealth. As the region's administrative, social and cultural centre, the parish of Sheffield was the wealthiest area with total median inventoried wealth per household of £96 6s. Aided by the number of gentry and wealthy scythe manufacturers, this was followed by Norton with £78 4s, then Bradfield with £68 8s, and Ecclesfield with £45 4s. Although considered the region's second urban centre, the sample for Rotherham showed total median inventoried wealth of just £27 2s.

Between 1680 and 1749 and 1750 and 1788, total median inventoried wealth in the rural and semi-rural parishes of Bradfield, Ecclesfield and Norton fell from £59 2s to £39 17s, whilst in urban Sheffield and Rotherham it grew from £68 15s to £100 4s. Similarly, at first sight, the proportions of total median wealth attributed to household goods across the sample appears relatively constant with £19 19s or 33.5% invested between 1680 and 1749 and £19 6s or 37.5% between 1750 and 1788. However, closer examination again shows

⁵⁹ B. A. Holderness, 'A Sheffield Commercial House in the mid-eighteenth century: Messrs Osborne and Gunning around 1760', *Business History* 15.1 (Jan 1973), pp. 33-34.

that whilst urban investment rose from 38.4% (£21 15s) to 44.7% (£33 5s) over the two periods, rural expenditure remained lower falling slightly from 29.6% or £19 11s between 1680 and 1749 to 33.7% or £18 7s between 1750 and 1788.

The region's rural parishes of Bradfield, Ecclesfield and Norton appear at first to have shared a similar outlook towards the proportion of inventoried wealth applied to furnishing the home. Remaining below median levels for the whole region, total median inventoried wealth attributed to household goods in these parishes rose from £18 between 1680 and 1749, to £20 8s between 1750 and 1788. However, the proportion of total median inventoried wealth this required grew from 27.6% to 33% over the two periods and suggests a decline in rural living standards with little opportunity to invest in new or populuxe goods.

Whilst an impression of uniformity was found in the rural parishes this was not the case between Hallamshire's two urban settlements of Sheffield and Rotherham. Between 1680 and 1749 and 1750 and 1788, expenditure on household goods in Sheffield rose from £28 or 37.6% of total median inventoried wealth to £49 or 43.2%. In Rotherham, a median of £14 12s in household goods equated to 40.9% of total median inventoried wealth with the proportion required to maintain a constant level of expenditure increasing to 68% in the second half of the century. Poorer households had to expend a greater proportion of their total wealth in order to secure essential goods and households in Rotherham appear to have had much less disposable income to acquire non-essential or populuxe commodities.

Amongst individual households, the highest levels of wealth were found in inventories belonging to the gentry, followed by those in professional occupations. However, levels of wealth and patterns of consumption could vary significantly between similar groups living in different parts of Hallamshire. Median total inventoried wealth for gentry throughout Hallamshire was £252 5s but in Norton this rose to £390 5s, over double the £155 13s left by the gentry families of Bradfield. As the locale of a long established and highly capitalised scythemaking tradition supplying a national market, Norton was also home to the wealthiest metalworkers in Hallamshire with median total inventoried wealth of £119 16s. Sheffield's wide range of inter-dependent, highly skilled 'little mesters' left total median inventoried wealth of £61 3s whilst, requiring little skill or investment, the dominant metal trade in the parish of Ecclesfield was nail-making in which total median inventoried wealth was £34 (Table 2.5). Conversely, the wealthiest agricultural workers lived in the parish of Ecclesfield whose total median inventoried wealth of £91 17s was almost four times more than that left by their Sheffield counterparts where holdings were generally smaller and on less fertile ground.

TABLE 2.5 MEDIAN LEVELS OF EXPENDITURE AND INVENTORIED WEALTH ON HOUSEHOLD GOODS BY OCCUPATION AND PARISH 1680-1788								
SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 – 1.5								
Parish		Agriculture	Gentry	Professionals	Metal trades	Trades/Services	Widows	Median Parish Total
(No per parish sample)								
Bradfield	Median total wealth £	87.10s	155.13s	0	42.13s	41.2s	138.3s	68.8s
	Median House contents £	22.7s	49	0	14.7s	34	34	18.17s
	% household goods	23	19.5	0	46.35	26.4	26.4	22.3
(40)	No per occupation	20	3	0	2	13	2	n/a
Ecclesfield	Median total wealth £	91.17s	293.14s	94.5s	34	29.2s	51.18s	45.4s
	Median House contents £	21.11s	114.12s	25.3s	14.10s	15.15s	14.2s	18.10s
	% household goods	25.3	40	47.8	25	54.1	44.9	32.9
(101)	No per occupation	27	3	3	34	26	8	n/a
Norton	Median total wealth £	24.11s	390.5s	367.10s	119.16s	45.5s	47.17s	78.4s
	Median House contents £	7.7s 6d	172	n/a	24.7s	10.16s	12.13s	20.16s
	% household goods	53.3	62.3	n/a	17.9	23	26.5	33.4
(35)	No per occupation	9	4	1	5	14	2	n/a
Rotherham	Median total wealth £	59.16s	0	0	156.15s	24.4s	0	27.2s
	Median House contents £	8.7s	0	0	24.17s	14.18s	0	14.12s
	% household goods	24.2	0	0	36.8	65.6	0	44.7
(33)	No per occupation	5	0	0	2	26	0	n/a
Sheffield	Median total wealth £	26.7s	230.12s	126.14s	61.3s	106.17s	131.16s	96.6s
	Median House contents £	3.10s	73.19s	48.1s	18.10s	36.1s	24.6s	28.13s
	% household goods	13.7	24.2	63.9	38.5	39.8	16.1	38.25
(120)	No per occupation	6	4	9	49	46	6	n/a
Hallamshire	Median total wealth £	73.817s	252.5s	126.14s	47.16s	45.12s	64.10s	61.14s
	Median House contents £	20.3s	103.11s	41.1s	18.3s	19.10s	24	20.6s
	% household goods	24.24	29	63.9	32.9	39.5	40.4	33.7
(329)	No per occupation	67	14	13	92	125	18	n/a

Surplus wealth played an important role in the ability to acquire an extended range of goods that included non-essential and populuxe items. In the 22% of households where new or populuxe goods were not listed, total median inventoried wealth was £19 13s, of which a median £7 or 35.6% was attributed to household effects. Of the 60% of testators whose inventories included one or more of clocks, china, table forks, glassware, hot drinks equipage, saucepans, oval or round tables, pictures or looking glasses, total median inventoried wealth was £85 2s with a median £23 10s, or 27.6%, attributed to household goods. However, wealth alone does not appear to have determined the type and variety of goods a household owned as when the inventories of those from similar wealth and occupational backgrounds, but different parishes, are compared they indicate adherence to localised understandings of the home rather than a shared material culture.

Some households may have deliberately chosen not to acquire new goods and Overton notes how many preferred to invest spare capital in securing further means of production rather than consumption. The widow Elizabeth Knightingale died in 1727 leaving total inventoried wealth of £397 3s of which £357 was out on loan generating income. Her five-room house in Wadsley was sparsely equipped with long and little tables, cooking equipment in pewter, iron and wood, ceiled chairs and beds, longsettles and stools. Other than those on her bed and her apparel, there was no reference in the inventory to textiles in the home and the value of her household contents amounted to £17 4s 2d or just 4.3% of her total inventoried wealth.⁶⁰ John Carr, a farmer in the parish of Ecclesfield died in 1728

⁶⁰ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Elizabeth Knightingale, widow, Wadsley, parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1727.

leaving total inventoried wealth of £358 7s 11d. Of this, £50 9s 6d or 14.1% was attributed to furnishing his seven-room house with traditional goods with the rest invested in his farm or on loan in a variety of mortgages, bonds and notes.⁶¹

Evidence from inventories adds to the perception that the region was far more socially and culturally diverse than hitherto presumed. Within Hallamshire, there appears to have been a variety of parish-orientated patterns of consumption with new goods appearing in greater quantity in those areas that enjoyed greater social and economic diversity and contact with the wider world. Parishes in which the range of occupations required less engagement with those from further afield, in particular, those whose primary source of income was agrarian, showed less engagement with new goods. As the regional social, administrative and economic capital, Sheffield was the locale of greatest consumption of both everyday and new goods. In contrast, despite being an urban centre, the substantially lower levels of inventoried wealth recorded in Rotherham results in much less engagement with new goods than the rest of Hallamshire (Table 2.6).

⁶¹ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of John Carr, farmer, parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, December 1728.

TABLE 2.6 PERCENTAGE OF INVENTORIES WITH NEW GOODS BY PARISH

SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 – 1.5

Item	Bradfield	Ecclesfield	Norton	Rotherham	Sheffield	Hallamshire ALL
Books	17.9	16.7	29.4	6.1	30	21.9
Cane chairs	2.6	2	11.8	0	11.7	6.4
Chairs, leather upholstered	2.6	4.9	23.5	0	34.2	14.3
Chest of Drawers	10.3	20.6	14.7	39.4	55	33.1
China	5.1	19.6	5.9	18.2	23.3	17.6
Clock	23	53.9	11	30.3	55.8	46.2
Curtains	2.6	10.8	20.6	15.1	31.7	18.8
Glass	7.7	17.6	17.6	33.3	37.5	25.5
Jack	15.4	11.8	17.6	21.2	32.5	21.3
Looking glass	20.5	36.3	29.4	18	65.8	46.2
Oval/round table	28.2	34.3	11.8	16	51.7	38.9
Pictures	5.1	13.7	17.6	27.3	45.8	26.1
Punch bowl	0	0	0	0	5.8	2.1
Saucepans	20.5	22.5	23.5	30.3	49.2	32.8
Silver	15.4	22.5	23.5	24.2	48.3	31.3
Spoons	23	19.6	23.8	21.2	30	24.3
Table Forks	5.1	5.9	2.9	3	9.2	6.4
Table linen	30.8	17.6	44.1	33.3	55.8	38.6
Table, mirror, stand	2.6	0	2.9	0	11.7	4.7
Tea/coffee goods	5.1	12.7	8.8	12.1	32.5	19.5
Total inventories per parish	40	101	35	33	120	329
Window curtains	2.6	10.8	20.6	15.1	31.7	18.8
Median inventoried wealth: household goods	22.40%	32.70%	33.40%	44.70%	38.30%	33.60%
Median household contents £	£19 11s	£18 7s	£20 16s	£14 12s	£28 4s	£20 19s
Median total inventoried wealth £	£75 10s	£45 4s	£78 4s	£27 2s	£96 3s	£67 14s

French argues that the investment of surplus wealth by a minority of a parish's chief inhabitants in the acquisition of, 'new goods, china, chests of drawers, clocks, pictures, and new styles of furniture ... reflect[ed] a desire to display objects and perform social rituals that denoted leisure, learning, and "polite" sociability and which signalled that they shared the personal, social, and moral gravitas associated with the concept of gentility'.⁶² Rather

⁶² French, *Middle Sort of People in Provincial England*, p. 28.

than wishing to subscribe to any concept of a national middling stereotype by appropriating (and redefining) the material signifiers of gentility for their own use, some of French's chief inhabitants at the head of parish levels of 'material prosperity, moral superiority, and parochial authority', selectively acquired new goods to draw away from the constrictions of parish life and 'to escape "localist" systems of estimation.'⁶³

Hence, gentry households in some parishes acquired new goods whilst others did not, and this pattern is repeated in other occupational groups with similar levels of wealth. Henry French argues that the leaders or chief inhabitants of parish society employed goods to advertise their status and to distinguish themselves from their neighbours. In rural areas, chief inhabitants were often from long-standing yeoman or gentry families, such as Sitwell's Bradfield families, whose wealth came from the land and whose public service was expressed through parish positions of churchwarden or feoffee, and who still maintained traditional forms of hierarchical sociability and duty. In urban areas, wealth could be secured from a variety of sources such as, industry, trade, or the professions and public service was fulfilled through membership of a wide range of social, religious and philanthropic organisations. Status-bearing assemblages thus varied from parish to parish according to the needs and perceptions of chief inhabitants and the possessions of those from whom they sought distinction. Hence, in rural areas, less effort may have been required to acquire new goods, as few in the parish would have owned them and distinction might equally have been established through traditional status signifiers such as silver, land or property (Table 2.7). When patterns of consumption between chief inhabitants are

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 200, 27.

compared, they show the variety and quantity of goods owned varied according to the social, cultural and economic character of the parish in which they lived.

TABLE 2.7 COMPARISON OF CONSUMPTION PATTERNS BETWEEN CHIEF INHABITANTS AND NON-OFFICE HOLDERS BY PARISH						
SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 – 1.5						
Parish (No of inventories)	Bradfield (40)		Ecclesfield (101)		Sheffield (120)	
Item	Office Holders	Non-Office Holders	Office Holders	Non-Office Holders	Office Holders	Non-Office Holders
Books	57.1	10.7	22.7	15.9	46.2	26.6
Cane chairs	14.3	0	4.5	1.5	46.2	7.3
Chest of drawers	28.6	3.6	40.9	11.6	76.9	51.4
Chimneypiece	0	0	4.5	0	7.69	5.5
China	0	3.6	18.2	18.8	53.8	20.2
Clock	42.8	14.3	63.6	44.9	53.8	56.8
Corner cupboard	14.3	3.6	27.2	10.1	15.4	9.2
Dining Room	57.1	0	4.5	5.8	53.8	5.5
Forks	0	3.6	9.1	4.3	38.5	5.5
Glassware	14.3	3.6	18.2	17.4	61.5	35.8
Jacks	28.6	10.7	22.7	7.2	46.2	31.2
Leather chairs	0	0	0	0	30.8	10.1
Looking glass	28.6	14.3	63.6	24.6	76.9	63.3
Oval/round table	57.1	17.9	50	28.9	69.2	51.4
Pictures	0	3.6	22.7	7.2	76.9	41.3
Punch bowl	0	0	0	0	15.4	5.5
Saucepans	28.6	14.3	31.8	21.7	53.8	46.8
Spoons	14.3	25	27.2	14.5	38.5	10.3
Table & chairs in chamber	14.3	0	50	11.6	69.2	41.3
Table linen	57.1	25	36.4	13	61.5	54.1
Table, mirror, stand	0	3.6	0	0	23.1	9.2
Tea/coffee goods	14.3	7.1	18.2	10.1	53.8	29.4
Upholstered chairs	14.3	0	4.5	2.9	53.8	17.4
Window curtains	0	3.6	27.2	4.3	53.8	28.4
Median Household Goods £	33.9	14.15	41.75	15.7	91.35	25.2
Median % Wealth on Goods	24.1	23.6	27.4	46.2	48.6	30.6
Median Total Valuation £	140.5	59.85	152.4	34	188	82.4
No of Inventories	7	33	23	78	25	95

Amongst Hallamshire's chief inhabitants, those in Sheffield owned the greatest number and variety of new goods in order to gain distinction from their neighbours, whilst those in Bradfield owned the least. Sir George Sitwell described the landowner Samuel Morewood, of the Oaks in the parish of Bradfield, as belonging to one of the 'ancient free-holding families' of the parish.⁶⁴ A gentleman and feoffee, Morewood was a cousin of the Jacobite supporter Phillis Balguy of Hope in Derbyshire, and who sometimes spent Christmas at the Oaks.⁶⁵ Morewood died in 1715, leaving total inventoried wealth of £155 13s 6d, of which £49 0s 4d or 31.4% was attributed to household goods. His silver was collectively appraised at £8 3s 6d, and his inventory listed pewter, earthenware, oval and round tables, a looking glass, clock, long table chairs and buffits, but no cane chairs, china, cutlery, tea or coffee goods, saucepans, glassware or pictures.⁶⁶

In contrast, the inventory of Sheffield chief inhabitant William Taylor of Norwood, who died in 1719, reveals substantial engagement with new goods and a classically inspired home. Taylor left inventoried wealth of £888 of which £201 10s or 22.7% was attributed to household goods. A Town Trustee, mercer, and one of the eight local factors who, in 1713, challenged the London agents' monopoly, Taylor enjoyed a wide social circle and interests that took him beyond the confines of the region.⁶⁷ In his will he described his executors as,

⁶⁴ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. xiv.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233-234

⁶⁶ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Samuel Morewood, Gentleman, of The Oaks, parish of Bradfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, June 1715.

⁶⁷ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 161-162.

'my neighbours Mr Thomas Wright & my brother in law Tobyas Ellis'.⁶⁸ Thomas Wright of Bridgehouses was one of the town's leading attorneys in partnership with Francis Sitwell and Tobias Ellis had been Master Cutler in 1718. Debts due to Taylor at the time of his death included £568 6s 3d from his brother, Joseph Taylor and £120 from a Captain Morgan currently in Carolina. His inventory was appraised by some of the region's leading figures: Christopher Broomhead, was a Church Burgess, Town Trustee, Master Cutler, Governor of the Grammar School and Churchwarden; Ezra Cawton, held the positions of Town Trustee, Master Cutler and Churchwarden, and Joseph Nutt, was another former Master Cutler.

Taylor's dining room was equipped with 'French fashion' chairs, a 'dutch table', pictures, window curtains and valances, a 'pair of fine bath metal candlestirks', punch bowls, knives and forks. To these, tea china, saucepans, leather, cane and upholstered chairs, birdcages, books, tea tables, figurines, sconces, clocks, looking glasses, and a weather glass could be added from other rooms as and when required. Elsewhere, a 'Scrutore [escritoire] fine and large', and fashionable combinations of table, mirror and stand, together with figurines and a model of Bleinheim House could be found in his fifteen-roomed house.⁶⁹ In competition with other merchants and office holders, Taylor would have had to employ a wider range of goods than his rural counterparts to ensure his home was a tangible expression of his status and wealth. In order to achieve this, chief

⁶⁸ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Mr William Taylor, mercer, of Norwood, parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, March 1719. Will dated 24 May 1719; J.D. Leader (ed.), *The Records of the Burgery of Sheffield, Commonly called the Town Trust* (London, 1897); R. E. Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York* (Sheffield, 1906) vol. I; G. Tolley, *We, of our Bounty A history of the Sheffield Church Burgesses* (Durham, 1999), p. 198.

⁶⁹ Inventory of Mr William Taylor.

inhabitants in Sheffield had to invest a median £91 7s on domestic furnishings compared with £33 18s by their Bradfield counterparts.

Not everyone subscribed to parish understandings of the home, and in rural areas, individuals whose activities took them beyond the confines of their parish boundaries were more likely to own new and populuxe goods than their chief inhabitants. At Bade Green, Bolsterstone in the northernmost part of the Chapelry of Bradfield, the glassworks of Robert Blackburne attracted clients and agents to purchase the fashionable goods that were made there. Blackburne died in 1727 leaving total inventoried wealth of £992 15s 8d. Much of this was attributed to raw materials and book debts, leaving £39 3s 4d or 3.9% attributed to household goods. Whilst the sums invested in his home were modest, they suggest Blackburne's business affairs did not enclose him in the close-knit circle of Bradfield's agrarian gentry, for alongside traditional forms and long tables, his inventory included a mix of new goods such as tea tables, looking glasses, a table, mirror and stand,, oval tables and chairs.⁷⁰

As Amanda Vickery observes by, 'fostering a graceful interaction of unequals, politeness introduced a little flexibility to patriarchal frameworks and a patina of modern glamour that assisted their survival in a changing commercial world'.⁷¹ The association between politeness and commerce identified by historians appears to be one that a range

⁷⁰ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Robert Blackburne, glass manufacturer, Bade Green, Bolsterstone, parish of Bradfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1727/28.

⁷¹ Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven & London, 2009) pp. 53, 258-260; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century' p. 870.

of Hallamshire households found beneficial. New goods, in particular those such as hot drinks equipage, cutlery, china and tablewares that could support new forms of domestic sociability and politeness were found in the homes of merchants, professionals and retailers, largely, but not exclusively in and around the town of Sheffield. A further examination of evidence from inventories and other sources can help show whether households which acquired new goods also sought to provide new spaces in which to display them that could add to their potency as markers of polite and middling identity. Separate locales for the preparation and consumption of food, the creation of new spaces for conviviality, the removal of best beds from parlours to upper chambers, separate areas for servants; parlours and dining rooms for family members all indicate how homes were becoming more specialised and private centres of consumption. From a variety of occupational backgrounds many who subscribed to this spatial and material culture were described in their wills, inventories and other contemporary records as 'Mister' or 'Gentleman'.

New domestic spaces

As with the introduction of new goods, new spaces appeared later in Hallamshire than in London and often coexisted with traditional spaces in the same household, or were furnished inchoately so that meanings can be difficult to discern. The desire to create more private and specialised spaces in the home prompted the removal of beds from the parlour to an upper chamber; the creation of kitchens to allow food preparation to be separated from consumption; the reconfiguration of the ground floor area called the 'house' into a more specialised dining room or additional parlour, and the creation of chambers on upper

floors equipped with tables and chairs for entertaining. These changes had largely taken place in London by 1680, but generally appeared later in Hallamshire, where traditional forms of spatial organisation persisted alongside a mixture of adapted and newly built dwellings displaying accommodation of new arrangements and form in varying ways.⁷² How these changes affected the feel or flow of movement between spaces is difficult to discern. In many cases, alterations were made to existing spaces but features important to polite sensibilities can be identified in new buildings whose classical forms ensured ease of movement and access to well-lit spaces.

Not all households with the apparent resources to create new spaces or embellish their homes with classical motifs did so and care is required not to presume that their absence in some way constituted a failing or falling behind, or that there existed a natural progression towards politeness. The desire tangibly to express identity by subscribing to a material and spatial culture that could support politeness was not necessarily the default ambition for everyone who might be described as middling. Some may have had no need to express their identity in this way whilst others may simply have not been interested. As with the arrival of new goods, new spaces appear to have made their first appearance in the parish of Norton, although the evidence is compromised by the lack of pre-1690 inventories for Sheffield. However, whether due to the way in which the appraisers reported their valuations or because of the way in which they found the rooms they described, the Norton inventories show little correlation between assemblages of goods that could facilitate new forms of sociability and the rooms in which they were recorded. Whilst the practice of the

⁷² Eleanor John, 'At Home with the London Middling Sort', p. 44.

time to move furnishings from room to room is acknowledged, this could suggest that new goods and spaces were being acquired as part of the mechanism described by French to simply enforce the status of chief inhabitants rather than being displayed in ways that could facilitate polite behaviour (Table 2.8).

	Bradfield	Ecclesfield	Norton	Rotherham	Sheffield
No bed in parlour	1708	1692	1690	1697	1690
Dining Room	1708	1691	1693	1726	1698
Kitchen	1714	1691	1680	1702	1690
Sociable chambers	1727	1691	1680	1697	1690

Practical considerations may also have restricted the creation of new spaces in some households. The greater listing of garrets and cellars in Sheffield indicates the practices noted by Ursula Priestley and Penelope Corfield in Norwich of how existing spaces were altered and maximised to create new and more specialised areas.⁷³ A bill issued by Francis Fenton for decorating a property rented in 1757 by 'Parson Chandley' in Norfolk Street, gives some idea of the layout of local town houses and how colour was employed to mark out status areas. On the ground floor, were a parlour and kitchen, above which were two chambers with two garrets above and to the rear a 'coal fold' and 'little house'.⁷⁴ Shutters covered large sash windows and fixtures included window seats, panelling, a 'Beaufat', or niche with shelves, pewter case and clothes' press. A palisade separated the house from the street. The garrets, kitchen, staircase and back doors were all whitewashed with woodwork

⁷³ Ursula Priestley and Penelope Corfield, 'Rooms and Room Use in Norwich Housing, 1580-1730', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 16 (1982), pp. 93-123.

⁷⁴ Fairbanks' Field-Book xxiii, in Thomas Walter Hall, *The Fairbanks of Sheffield 1688-1848*, (Sheffield, 1932) p. 36; Vickery, *Behind Close Doors*, pp. 172-5.

stained oak. The more public ground floor front room and reception chambers were painted in a more costly and fashionable blue with mahogany woodwork.

The most commonly recorded ground floor spaces in the sample were 'house', parlour, kitchen, buttery, dining room, and hall. Some of these names may have been attributed to spaces on upper floors, especially in urban areas where ground floor space was limited, but the relationship between nomenclature and contents remained consistent. In contrast, used to describe upper floor spaces found in 90% of the sample, the term 'chamber' was much more inchoate. Chambers could be described by size, 'great' or 'little'; in relation to the rooms below, 'chamber over the kitchen', 'chamber over the parlour' and occasionally as 'best'. Contents ranging from tables and chairs, looking-glasses, tea-goods, books, pictures, beds, tools, grain, side-saddles and parcels of linen, suggest a wide range of uses that singularly and collectively included sleeping, storage, warehousing, entertaining, and working (Table 2.9).

Parish/ (total recordings in Hallamshire sample)	Median no of rooms	House (292)	Parlour (254)	Kitchen (184)	Buttery (102)	Cellar (108)	Dining Room (26)	Hall (26)	Closet (29)	Workspace (102)	Garrett (32)
Bradfield (40)	5	94.9	92.3	41	30.8	15.4	10.3	2.6	2.6	17.9	5.1
Ecclesfield (101)	5	93.1	84.3	50.9	26.4	26.5	4.9	4.9	4.8	18.6	2.9
Norton (35)	6	88.5	88.6	51.4	48.6	14.3	5.7	11.4	8.6	20	5.7
Rotherham (33)	5	87.8	78.8	24.2	24.2	33.3	3	0	3	21.2	6
Sheffield (120)	7	83.3	62.5	31.6	31.6	49.2	11.7	13.3	15	45.8	19.1
Hallamshire total (329)	6	88.7	77.2	55.9	31	32.8	7.9	7.9	8.8	31	9.7

Whilst the accuracy with which appraisers affixed names to spaces that equated to the meanings associated with them by occupants remains problematic, the consistency of terms used to describe ground floor spaces suggests some shared understanding of the activities they supported. The size of rooms and the space a household had is also difficult to assess from probate inventories. In his study of East London domestic properties in the late seventeenth-century, M. J. Power shows how a 'small two-storied dwelling with an area of about 200 square feet on the ground floor [...] might have as many as eight rooms as [...] people routinely divided up the limited space on a floor into smaller areas'.⁷⁵ Shamas points out that especially in urban areas many of these spaces would have been little more than cubicles but the presence of variously named spaces within the majority of Hallamshire

⁷⁵ M. J. Power, 'East London Housing in the Seventeenth Century', in Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 237-62.

dwelling reflects alterations that were making homes generally lighter, warmer and more private.⁷⁶

The term 'house' was used to describe that area of a dwelling which was generally seen as the nexus between it and the outside world. It was here where daily routines were performed and where guests were commonly received. In urban premises where a ground floor shop, workshop or other work-related area replaced the 'house', its role was often assumed either by a back parlour or kitchen on the ground floor or a chamber above. The term 'house' was rarely applied to rooms in properties which had above the median number of six rooms and where its various functions were subsumed into more specialised areas usually a hall, dining room, parlour or kitchen. Spaces described as a house were recorded in 88.7% of all dwellings in the sample, of which 94.9% contained a range or fireside, and 62.3% had items for preparing and cooking food. The house was where 60% of pewter and 66% of all clocks in the sample was displayed and almost half the households with china kept it there, often displayed in a 'case'. It was in these spaces that Leader observed the diligence of Sheffield dames who displayed brightly polished pewter, copper and brass whose shine conveyed household order, pride and decorum to the visitor.⁷⁷

Recorded in 77.2% of all dwellings, parlours were the second most widely recorded space and supported a range of activities including eating, sleeping, resting and the

⁷⁶ Shamma, 'Domestic Environment', p. 7.

⁷⁷ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p.26.

receiving of guests.⁷⁸ In 16.4% of the sample, the parlour was listed as the most expensively furnished room in a house. Only two inventories (0.6%) described the parlour as the site of food preparation, although they were frequently used for storing an array of barrels, kimlins, arks, baskets, looms, cereals, churns and hand tools. Regardless of whether separate chambers were available, 68% of all parlours listed in the sample contained a bed. Beds and their hangings were often the most expensive item of household furniture and the practice of displaying them in semi-public areas was a means of conveying status and wealth. The practice was more widespread in rural areas where 82.5% of all Bradfield households had a bed in the parlour compared with 50.8% in Sheffield. Encouraging the notion of the space as one of invitation and display, 43.2% of all parlours containing a bed also contained tables and chairs in sufficient quantity to be conceived as a sociable area with more privacy than could be offered in the house.⁷⁹ Transitions from old to new practices could take time so that old and new spaces could co-exist in the same dwelling. Of the 32% of dwellings where beds had been removed from parlours, 15% continued to have a house in which food was prepared.

Kitchens were listed in 55.9% of the sample and were generally found in properties with a median number of seven rooms. In 37% of these properties, kitchens replaced the house as the principle site of food preparation and often contained items for a range of supplementary activities including ironing, brewing, bread making, cheese-making, salting,

⁷⁸ Frank E. Brown, 'Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space Organisation in Seventeenth-Century London', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28.3 (1986), p. 558.

⁷⁹ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 230.

and roasting of meat. Pewter was listed in 31% of all kitchens and tea kettles and coffee pots were often recorded, but items such as books, china, delftware, curtains, clocks, cushions, oval or round tables were present in less than 5% of such areas in the sample. Just over 50% of kitchens contained some form of seating and at least one table. Often, these were described as 'old', suggesting use for eating or drinking either by servants, or as an additional informal sociable space for members of the family. Such spaces were often perceived in different ways at different times of the day. Once food preparation was completed, they could be used by female members of the household as a warm environment in which to raise children or as a sociable arena by men in the evening. In addition to his 'house' equipped with bass chairs, an oval table, pictures and a looking glass, the kitchen belonging to tallow-chandler John Cutfonthay of Rotherham contained his cooking equipment and goods for sociability.

KITCHEN: range, froggs, tongs 11/6, a little brass pot, a little iron pot 4/6, a little brass skillet without a start 4d, warming pan, 2 brass candlesticks 3/-, an iron dripping pan, iron briggs 1/-, 2 toasting irons and a beef fork 8d, a smoothing iron and a stand for it 1/-, a hanging spitt, long spitt and tongs 1/9, 7 bass chairs, a wood chair, 2 square tables, a buffet, a pewter case 15/-, 5 pewter dishes, 6 porringers, 2 tankards, 1 pewter mug 18/4, small mustard pot, a salver, and tinplate 6d, jackboots, a pair of pistols and holsters £1, 2 iron candlesticks 6d⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of John Cutfonthay, tallow-chandler, parish of Rotherham, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, January 1702.

The removal of beds from parlours to chambers and the relocation of food preparation from the house to a kitchen allowed the remaining spaces to potentially acquire new roles and this is supported by the higher proportion of new goods owned by households with these arrangements. Ownership of new goods increased even more when dining rooms or halls were recorded and when at least one chamber was adapted for sociability. Carole Shammas notes the suggestion that by the mid-eighteenth century, improving levels of comfort in the home probably resulted in dinner becoming the most popular form of entertainment. Goods that facilitated its performance; cutlery, china, tea goods, glass-wares and the like, were often but not necessarily associated with wealth and the presence of such goods became associated with a change in lifestyle that allowed leisure and sociability.⁸¹

Dining rooms and halls were recorded in 40 dwellings (12.2%) in the sample, 55% of which were in Sheffield. Households with dining rooms had a median 11.5 rooms and median total inventoried wealth of £174 5s, of which £72 8s (35%) was attributed to household goods. Ownership of dining rooms and halls was most widespread amongst the region's leading members of society a quarter of whom, including several widows, were connected to the region's metal trades. 85.7% of gentlemen, 53.8% of professionals and 34.5% of those who, as churchwardens, feoffees, grammar school governors, Town Trustees, or Church Burgesses, could be described as chief inhabitants owned either a dining room or hall. In the Hallamshire inventories, the term 'hall' continued to be used as an alternative to 'dining room' until the late 1730s whereas in London the practice had died

⁸¹ Shammas 'Domestic Environment', pp. 14-15.

out by the 1650s.⁸² From the 1730s, the term hall was used increasingly to describe a reception area where guests could be interviewed or assessed prior to gaining access to more private areas of the house. Their presence in households with total median inventoried wealth of £214 2s and a median of 13.5 rooms indicates that in either guise status was attributed to these areas.

The dining room of the Rev Silvanus Wadsworth, assistant vicar of Sheffield's Upper Chapel from 1740 until his death in 1759, was the most expensively furnished of his 17 rooms. Field Sylvester (Silvanus) Wadsworth was grandson of Field Sylvester who came from Mansfield to Sheffield where he became a successful merchant, Town Trustee, and one of the founders of Upper Chapel in 1700. Prior to his return to Sheffield in 1740, Silvanus had been educated at Dr Doddridge's Academy in Northampton and the Hoxton Academy in London before becoming minister at Kibworth in Leicestershire. Theologically an Arian, Wadsworth's election by the Upper Chapel congregation to serve as their Assistant Minister was not without controversy. On his return to Sheffield, he married the widow, Elizabeth Horsfield, who had urged her customers to continue their patronage of the Rose and Crown after her husband's death in 1729.⁸³ Their two surviving sons entered medicine and the law.⁸⁴ It is possible that some of Wadsworth's furnishings may have come from the Rose and Crown, nevertheless, his position as a dissenter who had spent time in

⁸² Dewing, 'Cane Chairs', pp. 53-86; Eleanor John, 'At home with the London middling sort – the inventory evidence for furnishings and room use, 1570-1720', *Regional Furniture* 22 (2008), p. 74.

⁸³ *Daily Post* Issue 3163, Saturday, 8 November 1729.

⁸⁴ J. E. Manning, *A history of Upper Chapel, Sheffield: founded 1662, built 1700, for the worship and service of almighty God: a bicentennial volume with an appendix containing Timothy Jollie's Register of baptisms* (Sheffield, 1900), pp. 66-67.

other parts of the country is also of note as he may have seen polite sociability a valuable means of maintaining his professional and social networks.

DINING ROOM 2 watches £3, 1 stove, grate, fender, fire shovel, tongs & poker £1.15.0, 1 pier glass, 1 mahogany dining table £4.9.0, 1 settee chair and a walnut tree candlabra £2.2.0, 1 mahogany spring table, 1 dutch table, £1.9.0, 6 walnut tree chairs, 6 china pictures £3.13.0, 1 window cushion and hangings, a floor cloth £1.16.6, chinaware, 6 dishes, 6 large plates, 3 sets of cups and saucers, 18 plates, 6 basons and other china £4.4.0⁸⁵

Conversation with guests and congregants could be eased by the warmth, light, comfort, interest and sociability of his fashionable and well-appointed dining room. Wadsworth also had a hall in which guests could be received or minor business conducted. In comparison with his more private rooms, it was simply equipped with a range and chimney board, oak bookcase, lap-table, four old chairs, screen, and two mirrors. However, chimney boards could be highly decorative focal points able to advertise the status, decorum and sophistication of their owners. Interiors of this period are exceptionally rare in Sheffield but No 3, Hartshead, built by the scissor-smith Nicholas Broadbent in 1728, survives and gives some indication of the style of Sheffield townhouses and their fittings that inventories omit. A substantial five bay, three-storey brick house, No 3 has a central bay and pedimented doorway flanked by rusticated giant pilasters in a symmetrical classical design. Inside, a series of delicately carved pine and plaster chimney pieces set in panelled and plasterwork rooms exhibit reference to contemporary designs in the manner of Isaac

⁸⁵ Sheffield Archives: Tibbits Collections TC 1052, Inventory of Rev Silvanus Wadsworth Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, 1759.

Ware, who blended classical and Palladian ideas from William Kent and Inigo Jones with the emerging rococo style (Figs 2.1, 2.2).⁸⁶



Fig. 2.1 Old Bank House, Hartshead, 1728
Nicholas Broadbent, Quaker and scissormith
Sheffield City Libraries s05660



Fig 2.2 Interior Old Bank House, Hartshead
Nicholas Broadbent, 1728
Sheffield City Libraries s07829

The most expensively equipped rooms in the survey were generally those to which guests had some form of access and which had a source of heating amongst their contents together with at least one table, and chairs or forms. In 40% of dwellings with a median number of six rooms or less, the house was the most expensively equipped space. Similarly, it was the most expensively furnished room in 36% of households which left less than the median total inventoried wealth of £61 14s. In larger and wealthier households, the

⁸⁶ Elizabeth White, *Pictorial Dictionary of British 18th Century Furniture Design, The Printed Sources* (Suffolk, 1990), pp. 22-34, 358-361; Sheffield City Library: Local Studies Photograph Collection, B 24.1 9,10.11.

costliest room was more likely to be a chamber (45.8% in households with seven or more rooms and 42.6% in households with above median wealth). Median total inventoried wealth of those who owned chambers equipped with tables and chairs that indicated some sociable use was £113 15s, almost double the median for the full sample.

Chambers were upper rooms recorded in 90.5% (298) of the sample and could be used for a variety of purposes. Their contents often appear to reflect an inchoate stage in their organisation, with 87.8% containing at least one bed and 47.7% containing sufficient tables, chairs and other items to be construed as a space in which hospitality could be offered.⁸⁷ In addition, they were often used for storage, especially of dry goods such as stock in trade, household linens, harvested crops and wool. In the early eighteenth century, even in the larger dwellings of the region's wealthiest merchants, it was not uncommon to find stock goods listed alongside fashionable furnishings⁸⁸

Probably because of the restricted ability to extend ground floor spaces and the need for easily accessible work areas, the use of a chamber for sociability was more widespread in urban areas, with 59.2% of sociable chambers located in Sheffield. The Best Chamber was the most costly room in the eleven-roomed house of hardwareman Mr Ezra Simon at Bridgehouses. With total inventoried wealth of £80 12s, Simon had £62 5s (77.2%)

⁸⁷ Eleanor John, 'At Home with the London Middling Sort' pp. 42, 53-86; Dewing, 'Cane Chairs'.

⁸⁸ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of John Towle, cutler, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, June 1705; Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers*, vol. 2, p. 373.

attributed to household goods of which £12 (19%) was attributed to goods in his Best Chamber.

BEST CHAMBER: grate, fireshovel, tongs 8/-, feather bed, bedding & window curtains £6.15.3, walnut tree chest of drawers £1.10.0, 1 dozen cane chairs £2.2.0, a table, stand, a wall glass 15/6, a set of boxes, a brush, corner shelf 2/6, 8 pictures, a paper screen 7/4⁸⁹

The removal of the bed from the parlour and cooking from the house to a kitchen enabled some households to add halls or dining rooms to their homes, whilst others adapted chambers into sociable spaces. Households which made these changes were more likely to own quantities of goods associated with new behaviour such as hot drinks equipage, cutlery, china, pictures, clocks, fashionable arrangements of table, mirror, stand and window curtains than those who maintained older spatial arrangements (Table 2.10).

⁸⁹ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Mr Ezra Simon, hardwareman, Bridgehouses in the parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, July 1728.

Item	1 Bed in Parlour	2 No Bed in Parlour	3 Cooking in House	4 Cooking in Kitchen	Dining Room	Cols 1 + 3	Cols 2 + 4	Hallamshire totals	
								All=329	%
Books	15.6	35.2	15.1	34.4	61.5	12.2	48	72	21.9
Cane Chairs	3.6	12.4	1	14.8	34.6	0.6	23	21	6.4
Chest of drawers	26.3	47.6	23.4	55.7	53.8	18.6	65.3	109	33.1
Chimneypiece	0.9	6.7	0	7.4	11.5	0.6	13.5	9	2.7
China (13.4	26.7	13.7	27	26.9	11.5	32.7	58	17.6
Clock (43.8	51.4	38.5	63.1	73	38.5	69.2	152	46.2
Glassware	19.2	39	16.6	39.3	50	13.5	50	65	25.2
Looking glass	40.2	59	38.5	65.6	80.8	34.6	73	152	46.2
Oval/round table	36.2	44.8	32.7	55.7	61.5	32	65.4	128	38.9
Pewter	96.9	91.4	93.2	95	100	97.4	96.2	306	93.3
Pictures	18.8	41.9	16.1	45.9	46.2	13.5	61.5	86	26.1
Punch bowls	1.8	2.8	1	4.1	3.8	0.6	3.8	7	2.1
Silver	25.5	43.8	18.5	51.6	80.8	15.4	55.8	103	29.8
Spoons	22.8	27.6	22.9	29.5	38.5	20.5	25	80	24.3
Table forks	4.9	9.5	3.4	11.5	15.4	3.2	13.5	21	6.4
Table linen	33.5	49.5	29.3	55.7	69.2	27.6	61.5	123	37.4
Table, mirror, stand	1.8	11.4	1.5	12.3	15.4	1.3	23	16	4.86
Tea/coffee goods	14.7	29.5	9.8	32	50	9	40.4	60	17.9
Window Curtains	15.2	26.7	8.3	36.8	53.8	8.3	44.2	62	18.8
Median total inventoried wealth (MTIW) £	£57 18s	£80 12s	£45 15s	£125 8s	£158 2s	£45 5s	£125 4s	£61 14s	
Median total value house contents £	£19.00	£23 10s	£15 15s	£39 16s	£69 16s	£15 2s	£42 8s	£20.9s	
Median household goods as % of MTIW	33.70%	34%	33.50%	33.80%	31.60%	33.7%	36.50%	33.70%	
Median no of rooms	6	7	5	9	11	5	9	6	
% known as Chief Inhabitant	11.60%	27.60%	10.20%	30.30%	53.8%	7%	40.4%	55	16.7%
% known as Mr	1.30%	11.40%	0.97%	10.70%	23%	0	21.2%	15	4.6%
Totals	68%	31.9%	63.3%	37%	7.9%	47.4%	15.8%	329	100%

Wealth, urban living and size of dwelling were contributing factors to these changes although not all with the means to undertake such changes did so and others, such as yeoman, Jonathan Wilson, may have invested heavily in new goods to gain entry into new

social circles. Wilson, from Attercliffe, died in 1754 leaving total inventoried wealth of £18 17s of which £17 7s or 92% was attributed to household goods.⁹⁰ Wilson is interesting as his will states his cousins were Cassandra Wadsworth and Field Sylvester Wadsworth, Assistant Minister of Upper Chapel. Visiting the latter's home may have encouraged Wilson to invest in goods able to facilitate polite behaviour. Wilson's four-room dwelling consisted of a house, kitchen, kitchen chamber and house chamber. Neither the kitchen contents nor any farm stock was listed in the inventory suggesting bequests may have reduced the number of goods left to be inventoried. His most costly room was his House Chamber, which contained 58% of the full value of his household goods. Equipped with a writing desk, chest of drawers, looking glass, dressing table, tea goods, silver teaspoons, a set of china, chairs and books, the contents suggest the importance to him of a sociable space able to support behaviour that could help him access to associations beyond his immediate environment.

The presence of dining rooms or halls and chambers equipped for sociability had a considerable bearing upon the number and variety of new and fashionable goods present in a household. Significantly, the association suggests some of these households may have consciously arranged their homes to indicate their middling identity through their ability to perform polite behaviour. Ownership of new goods was demonstrably significantly higher in households which had a dining room, hall, or sociable chamber than those with none of these (Table 2.11).

⁹⁰ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Jonathan Wilson, yeoman, Attercliffe in the parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, August 1754.

TABLE 2.11 PERCENTAGE OF INVENTORIES CONTAINING GOODS ASSOCIATED WITH OWNERSHIP OF DINING ROOMS, HALLS AND SOCIAL SPACE IN CHAMBERS				
SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 – 1.5				
	Dining room or hall	Tables & Chairs in Chamber	No dining room, hall or social chamber	All Hallamshire
Books	55	29.6	14.5	21.9
Cane Chairs	30	12.7	1.1	6.4
Chest of drawers	57.5	59.2	13.4	33.1
China	27.5	26.7	11.7	17.6
Clock	80	64.8	30.7	46.2
Glassware	52.5	38.7	15.6	25.2
Jack	70	38	6.7	21.3
Looking glass	80	71.1	26.3	46.2
Oval/round table	60	58.5	22.3	38.9
Pewter	100	97.2	92.2	93.3
Pictures	50	46.5	10.6	26.1
Saucepan	62.5	50	19.6	32.5
Silver	75	52.8	13.4	29.8
Spitts	80	69.7	41.3	55
Spoons	40	33.8	17.3	24.3
Table forks	15	9.9	3.9	6.4
Table linen	67.5	56.3	24	37.4
Tea/coffee goods	42.5	31	8.9	17.9
Window Curtains	50	35.2	5.6	18.8
Total median inventoried wealth £	£198 5s	£113 15s	£35 12s	£61 14s
Total median value house contents £	£69 16s	£35 12s	£12 4s	£20 9s
Median household goods as % of total	37.30%	37.40%	32.30%	33.70%
Median no of rooms	11	8	5	6
No in sample	40	142	179	329
As % of full sample	12.2	43.2	54.4	100

For those on the first rungs of the social ladder, the furnishing and equipping of the home in ways that reflected affiliations with politeness, refinement and Enlightenment

thinking could offer vital and tangible reassurance of their good intent and credit-worthiness. Securing positions of authority may also have been an important part of establishing one's status and value to society for those seeking progression. In Hallamshire, evidence for the formation of a middling sector of society is evident amongst those who most keenly sought to equip themselves with the material and spatial trappings of polite behaviour. Belonging to a variety of professional and mercantile occupations, they were united in the public acknowledgement of their success by the titles of Mister or Gentleman.

Mister, Gentleman and the construction of new identities

The attribution of genteel titles acknowledged identities that French claims, 'embodied social distinction, political autonomy, intellectual authority and material independence' and which the more prosperous chief inhabitants of a parish could further mark through their household possessions.⁹¹ Evidence from inventories suggests that the titles 'Mister' and 'Gentleman' were employed in a carefully nuanced hierarchy to acknowledge those whose status and wealth, whether from land, industry or the professions, distinguished them from their peers and whose distinction was tangibly expressed through the size and furnishing of their homes.

Throughout the sample, the term 'Gentlemen' was used to acknowledge men whose wealth, possessions, and status gave them the standing of chief inhabitant in their parish. Although Gentlemen and Misters were generally more affluent than their neighbours,

⁹¹ French, *Middle Sort of People in Provincial England*, pp. 201-203.

Gentlemen could generally be distinguished from Misters by holding more traditional titles of authority, possessing greater wealth and new goods, and occupying larger homes.

Amongst fourteen testators described as Gentleman (4.2% of the sample) 64% held positions of authority such as churchwarden, Master Cutler, Church Burgess, Town Trustee, Overseer of the Poor or Feoffee, compared with 43% of those called Mister. Of this latter group, the majority of those holding positions of authority were associated in some way with the metal trades.

Those from professional or retail backgrounds who were called Mister appear to have been less likely to have held positions of civic or parish responsibility. A large number of these families were new to the area and often dissenters, which placed them outside traditional parish structures and prevented them from taking up parish positions such as churchwardens. In addition, it is perhaps less likely that those gaining entry into society for the first time would be involved with parish affairs, whose responsibilities and status often passed between established members of the parish hierarchy. A further route into civic responsibility denied to them appears to have been an association with the metal trades, which may have provided a ready means for newcomers to the region, such as Thomas Diston, to have acquired several positions of authority by the time of his death in 1703.

Significantly, evidence from the inventories suggests those called Mister and Gentleman had different approaches to the proportion of their wealth invested in the home. Further patterns of consumption may be found within each group. The median sum of £103.78 that Gentlemen invested in the home was the highest amount of all groups in

the Hallamshire sample, and represented 29% of their total median inventoried wealth compared with the median of 33.7% for the region (Tables 2.11).

TABLE 2.12 MEDIAN INVENTORIED WEALTH, EXPENDITURE ON HOUSEHOLD GOODS, AND HOUSE SIZE OF GENTLEMEN, MISTERS AND PROFESSIONALS						
SOURCE: HALLAMSHIRE INVENTORIES, SEE APPENDICES 1.1 - 1.5						
	All Gents (14)	All Misters (15)	All Professionals (13)	Urban Professionals (9)	Non urban Professionals (4)	Hallamshire Median (Total 329)
Total Median Inventoried Wealth	£263	£224	£126.70	£126.70	£60	£61.70
Median inventoried value of household goods £	£103.78	£69.35	£41.05	£48.05	£22.45	£20.30
Median proportion total inventoried wealth to household goods %	29%	41%	64%	63.90%	64%	33.70%
Median number of rooms per dwelling	13	11	8	8	7.5	6

Exploration at parish level reveals differences in their approach to the proportions of inventoried wealth devoted to the home and the range of goods acquired. As already noted, stimulated by their extensive trading networks, the gentry of Norton appear to have readily acquired new goods and Hey notes how their wealth and the quality of their houses set them apart from the rest of Hallamshire.⁹²

The north Derbyshire villages appear to have been particularly attractive to the region's gentry and whilst they formed 11.4% of the Norton sample this is probably an exaggeration. This pattern is not unusual as Overton noted a probable over-representation

⁹² Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 224.

of gentry in his Kent and Cornish samples. Nevertheless, associations between gentry and the region were longstanding; extending from the Bullocks, Gills, Clarkes, Pegges, Morewoods and Bagshawes in the seventeenth century, to the Sitwell ironmasters of Renishaw, the Morewoods and Stones of Hemsworth, the Storeys of Hazelbarrow and Bradway, and Barkers of Norton Lees in the eighteenth century, and the Reads, Shores and Pipers in the early nineteenth century.⁹³ The importance they appear to have attributed to their homes is borne out by their inventories, which show a total median inventoried wealth of £390 5s, of which a median £172, or 62.3%, was attributed to household goods. Aided by good communications and a variety of commercial and agrarian interests, families in the southernmost region of Hallamshire could take advantage of social and commercial networks provided by proximity to Chesterfield, Mansfield and Worksop. In 1757, Caroline Girle, later Mrs Lybbe Powys, described her families' pleasure at the quality of the company at Chesterfield Race Assemblies where the Duke of Devonshire always presided as Master of Ceremonies and was known for his 'politeness and affability'.⁹⁴ However, whereas inventories in Sheffield and Ecclesfield reveal an association between the creation of new spaces and their locale for goods that could support new behaviour, this is not so obvious in those for Norton. Possibly due to the *modus operandi* of local appraisers, whilst new goods and spaces appeared earlier in Norton than the rest of Hallamshire, their potential to be used to support polite behaviour is less clear. Whilst it is acknowledged that meanings cannot be inferred through the simple listing of goods and spaces that inventories offer, the

⁹³ A. B. Bell and R.E. Leader, (eds) *Peeps in to the Past: Being Passages from the Diary of Thomas Asline Ward* (London & Sheffield, 1909), pp. 211-212.

⁹⁴ *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Lybbe Powys of Hardwick House, Oxon*, ed. E. J. Climensson, (London, 1899), pp. 24-25, 50.

lack of association between new goods and spaces in the Norton inventories contrasts sharply with evidence from Sheffield examples which shows a close correlation between new goods and their location in spaces that could enhance their use in supporting polite behaviour. This could suggest that new goods were not needed to facilitate new forms of sociability in Norton but were acquired to advertise the status of their owners and to maintain their distinction as chief inhabitants within the parish hierarchy.

Patterns of consumption amongst Bradfield's gentry were more reserved and conservative than their Norton counterparts as lower overall levels of parish wealth meant fewer new goods were required to distinguish chief inhabitants from their neighbours. Total median inventoried wealth in Bradfield amounted to £155 13s, with a median £49.00 or 19.5% attributed to household goods. Forming Sir George Sitwell's, 'ancient free-holding families', the Wilsons, Birleys, Creswicks, Mortons, Revells, Steades, Greaves, Morewoods, and Hawksworths, 'intermarried among themselves and with others of like status in neighbouring manors.'⁹⁵ The basis of wealth for much of Bradfield's gentry was farming rather than any substantial engagement with the metal industries and this, together with their close and long-standing inter-relationships, may have shaped their use and understanding of the home for sociability. Sir George Sitwell further noted these families were, 'useful to their generation, public-spirited and intellectual, courteous in their dealings with each other and compassionate towards the poor'.⁹⁶ For the duration of the inventory evidence, sociability in Bradfield appears to have maintained the traditional forms of

⁹⁵ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. xiv.

⁹⁶ Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells*, pp. xliii, xxx, xi.

hospitality between landlord, tenants and neighbours that was rapidly dying out elsewhere.⁹⁷ Felicity Heal demonstrates the importance of hospitality amongst the gentry in which each was at the 'centre of his microcosmic agrarian universe'.⁹⁸ Operating within relatively stable and fixed communities where the status of long-established families went unchallenged, the Bradfield hierarchy appears to have preferred traditional indicators of status and exhibited less engagement with goods that supported sociabilities it did not require, or to enhance status that was not under threat.

Thus, whilst some accommodation was made for new spatial configurations, such as the creation of dining rooms and the removal of beds from parlours to upper chambers, new goods for the table were less evident amongst the Bradfield gentry than amongst those of similar standing in other parishes. Suggesting new goods may not have had the same association with status as more familiar indicators such as land, silver or property, Eleanor Love notes in her study of three Yorkshire communities that some groups showed little inclination to acquire new or populuxe goods even though they had the means to do so.⁹⁹

Whilst all those called Gentlemen distinguished themselves from the rest of their parish society by displaying greater inventoried wealth, size of dwelling, and sums invested in the home, those from older families and more rural backgrounds exhibited less engagement with new goods and, perhaps, greater sensitivity to tradition than newer gentry families. Overton, notes how the gentry had a culture of hospitality and were

⁹⁷ Girouard, *English Country House*, p. 184.

⁹⁸ Felicity Heal, 'The Idea of Hospitality in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 102 (1984), p. 71.

⁹⁹ Love, 'Material Culture in Early Modern England', p. 284.

frequently in each other's houses. They or their relatives also had houses in London and had opportunity 'to see novel goods, to buy them, and to show them off to their peers', yet were still less likely to 'embrace new social rituals such as tea drinking, the new cookery, and more intimate dining, ...than the professional groups, perhaps indicating a reluctance among some gentry, at least to change certain aspects of their behaviour'. In particular, he claims, 'the gentry were not necessarily pioneers of new forms of social behaviour associated with new ways of cooking and eating, and with the presence of tea and coffee'.¹⁰⁰

The chief inhabitants of Ecclesfield and Sheffield came from a mix of old and new families whose wealth from farming, industrial and professional activities was equally diverse. At £263.25, the Ecclesfield gentry appear to have had slightly higher levels of mean total inventoried wealth than those in Sheffield with £230.60. Median sums invested in the home showed similar distinctions with those in Ecclesfield investing £138.90 or 36.9% in furnishings compared with £73.95 or 24.2% in Sheffield. Inventories of those who were new to the status of Gentlemen indicate how they were using the spatial and material culture of the home to express their status but also to reconfigure their cultural and mental world.

Inventories belonging to four members of the Carr family of Ecclesfield made between 1725 and 1731 show how social and professional mobility contributed to a substantial change to the way in which the home was ordered and the forms of sociability it

¹⁰⁰ Overton *et al*, *Production and Consumption*, pp. 151, 167.

could offer. Descended from a yeomen family who had occupied lands at Birley Edge in the parish of Ecclesfield since c1500, Dr Joseph Carr, Gentleman and Feoffee of Ecclesfield died in 1725 (Fig. 2.3). Samuel, John, and Robert Carr died between 1727 and 1731; all had remained in agriculture and all had been churchwardens in the parish church of Ecclesfield. Joseph Hunter states that Joseph Carr (1665-1725) 'was brought up to the medical profession' and inherited Birley Edge from his father which he rebuilt c1705.¹⁰¹ Joseph's son, Richard, joined the legal profession in Sheffield, where the death of 'Georgius Carr de Coffee House de Sheffield', a possible relative, was recorded in the Sheffield Parish Register of 1701.¹⁰²

Samuel, John and Robert each left total inventoried wealth between £199 6s and £277 16s, of which a median £47 or 16.9% was attributed to household goods.¹⁰³ Samuel (d. 1727) and John (d.1728) both left well-furnished homes traditionally equipped with longsettle, forms, buffits and stools. Both served meals using trenchers, earthenware, and pewter and neither owned chinawares, cutlery, hot drinks equipage, looking glasses, window curtains, pictures or books. Robert (d. 1731) owned a few new goods including a tea bottle and coffee can, window curtains, clock and looking glass and may have begun to incorporate into his home some of the practices found at Birley Edge.

¹⁰¹ Gatty, *Hallamshire*, p. 503.

¹⁰² J.D. Leader, (ed.), *Records of the Burgery*, p. 235.

¹⁰³ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Samuel Carr, yeoman, Hatfield House in the parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1726/27; Inventory of John Carr, farmer, Ecclesfield, in the parish of Ecclesfield, Deanery of Doncaster, Diocese of York, December 1728.

At the time of Dr Joseph Carr's death, Birley Edge comprised a Hall, Nether Parlour, Best Chamber, Blew Chamber, Closet, Kitchen Chamber, Little Chamber, Chamber over Parlour, Garrett, Man's Garratt, Stairhead, Kitchen, Brewhouse, and Little Parlour. He left inventoried wealth of £241 5s of which £148 8s or 61.5% was attributed to his household goods.¹⁰⁴ Appraised at £28 17s 6d, the costliest room was his Best Chamber where a bed and furniture offered traditional markers of wealth alongside fashionable goods that could support polite sociability to a number of guests.

BEST CHAMBER: bed & furniture & window curtains £20, 10 cane chairs, a looking glass, chest of drawers, a table £6.12.6, chimney piece, fire piece, tea table & furniture £1.12.0, 12 delft plates, 2 delft plates & glasses 13/-.¹⁰⁵

Possibly providing greater warmth than ground floor areas, seating in chambers for large numbers was a common practice in Hallamshire and suggests that in many households sociability was an important part of domestic life. In addition to his bed, clothespress and chest of drawers, the chamber over the house of Jackson the joiner contained a fire, window curtains, a map, table and six chairs.¹⁰⁶ The chamber over the shop belonging to Thomas Sparald, a pewterer from Rotherham as well equipped for sociability with:

A bed with furniture £5, chest of drawers 12/-, 1 oval table, 10 chairs, 1 square table, 2 buffits £1, livery cupboard, 1 large trunk, a

¹⁰⁴ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Dr Josiah Carr, Gent, Birley in the parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1726.

¹⁰⁵ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Dr Josiah Carr, Gent, Birley in the parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1726.

¹⁰⁶ Sheffield City Archives: Tibbets Collection, TC1054, Inventory of --- Jackson, joiner, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1726.

parcel of linen £2.10.0, silver tankard, 2 tumblers, 6 spoons
£7.10.0¹⁰⁷

Guests at Dr Carr's could also be received in the Hall, which was equipped with a clock, wooden chairs, tables, cushions, a range and a weather glass, or more comfortably in the Nether Parlour furnished with a range, easy chairs, teatable, twenty gilded pictures, looking glass, cushions, glasses and silver teaspoons. Elsewhere in the house was listed an extensive collection of pewter, delft plates and pots, a silver flagon, silver spoons and a dozen knives and forks.¹⁰⁸



Figure 2.3 Old Birley Hall, Birley Edge, c1950. Sheffield City Libraries t01604

¹⁰⁷ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Thomas Sparald, pewterer, Rotherham, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, December 1717.

¹⁰⁸ Inventory of Dr Josiah Carr.

The proportion of wealth Carr had invested in his home was similar to that invested by another professional who had come from farming stock, Dr John Waterhouse of Sheffield (d. 1714). Waterhouse's home had sixteen rooms enabling him to have a dining room, study, parlour, hall and assorted chambers. He left total inventoried wealth of £160.55 of which £101.55, or 63.3%, was attributed to household goods.¹⁰⁹ Facilitating leisure, literature, music and learning with tea and coffee goods, cutlery, fashionable seating and dining spaces, Dr Waterhouse's home offered a variety of spaces and assemblages with the potential to sustain polite sociabilities. Dr Carr's adoption of a similar approach at Birley suggests those in the professions were at the fore of acquiring new goods in Sheffield and part of the region's middling population.

In terms of wealth and status, men such as Drs Waterhouse and Carr belonged to a group immediately below Gentlemen who were generally accorded the title of mister. Borsay notes the term 'mister' was popularised amongst those on the first rungs of gentility, especially in urban areas and amongst the professions.¹¹⁰ From the 1670s onwards, the title routinely began to appear in the accounts of the Town Trustees, often in reference to attorneys or those performing civic duties on behalf of the Trust or the Cutlers' Company. During the campaign for the River Dun (Don) to be made navigable, the accounts of the Town Trustees show the payment of expenses made in 1724 to a mix of merchants,

¹⁰⁹ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Dr John Waterhouse, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, March 1715.

¹¹⁰ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 99-101, Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance, Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), p. 228.

attorneys and members of the Cutlers' Company, all of whom were addressed as Mr, and all with possessing status within the town.

Payments made to Mr Heaton at Liverpoole and Stockport... Mr Waterhouse, Mr Nodder and Mr Hawksworth expences at Derbyshire 1li.18s.6d.... Mr Hurts expences at Doncaster 3.s. 9d....Paid at Mr Watsons 18s. Spent at Mrs Woods at a Townes meeting about navigation 10s. 6d. Paid 4 li. 16s. for interest of 100 li. borrowed severall times of Mr Christopher Broomhead to carry on the Navigation affairs 4 li.16s. Paid Mr Sitwell his expences out of pocket about the Navigation.¹¹¹

Indicating the society from which those called 'Mister' in Hallamshire were drawn, Mr Heaton was Thomas Heaton, a mercer, Town Trustee, Town Collector, Governor of the Grammar School, and Church Burgess, whose home next to the parish church in Sheffield was close to that of his friend, Christopher Broomhead was a Master Cutler, Church Burgess and Governor of the Grammar School. Messrs. Waterhouse and Sitwell were attorneys, the latter also acted as clerk to the Cutler's Company. Mr John Nodder was a lead merchant and Town Trustee; Mr Hurt was also a lead merchant and brother-in-law to the attorney, Francis Sitwell; Mr Watson and Mrs Wood were local innkeepers.

Possibly over-representing the group, the sample contains fifteen testators, (4.5%) with the title of mister. Use of the title occurs only in the Sheffield inventories amongst a small number of retailers, professionals, and wealthier merchants, hardwaremen and mercers who were associated with the metal trades. Inventories indicate those who held similar occupations, but lived outside the town and parish of Sheffield, were not accorded

¹¹¹ J.D. Leader, (ed.), *Records of the Burgery*, p. 351.

the title of mister. This could be attributable to parish custom, the practice of their particular appraisers, or a reflection of Borsay's description of the title being an urban phenomenon. Leader implies as much when he notes that the town's professional class, 'all lived in town streets hardly more than a stones' throw from the Market Place or the Church', and whose shared physical proximity and over-lapping connections may have helped give shape to a distinct and shared material culture.¹¹²

The wealth of this group was slightly less than that found amongst gentlemen. Median total inventoried wealth of all those called mister amounted to £224, of which a median £69.35 was attributed to household goods. However, this indicates 41% of their total inventoried wealth was invested in the home, over 30% more than their gentlemen counterparts. Amongst the merchants, hardwaremen, and mercers in the sample who were described as mister, almost all (83%) held positions of parish or civic responsibility such as Town Trustee, Trustee of the Charity School, Church Burgess, or Overseer of the Poor. Their inventories also reveal a high proportion of new goods that could facilitate new forms of sociability, endorsing arguments by French that for members of this 'pseudo-gentry', 'material possessions became tokens of the manner of life through which their gentility was conferred'.¹¹³

Goods which offered the opportunity to change behaviour and inhabit new mentalities, such as punch bowls, china, cutlery, tea and coffee goods, were more

¹¹² Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 189.

¹¹³ H.R. French, "'Ingenious and learned gentlemen"- social perceptions and self-fashioning among parish elites in Essex, 1680-1740', *Social History* 25 (2000), p. 46.

noticeable in the inventories of these new members of local society than in the households of established members addressed as Gentlemen. As in the case of the Dr Carr, the appearance of new goods could reflect sudden and marked changes in the potential forms of hospitality that a family could offer and further suggests those acquiring them may have done so, in part, to help form new networks and identities amongst those with whom they did not share familial or personal association (Table 2.13).

Item	Gent	Mr	Urban Professionals called Mr	Rural Professionals no title	Hallamshire (All)
Books	64.3	58.3	50	57.1	21.9
Cane chairs	50	50	33.3	0	6.4
Chest of drawers	64.3	87.5	83.3	14.3	33.1
Chimneypiece	14.3	20.8	16.6	0	2.7
China	28.6	58.3	83.3	0	17.6
Clock	78.6	66.6	66.6	42.8	46.2
Corner cupboard	14.3	8.3	16.6	14.3	9.7
Glassware	57.1	66.6	100	0	25.2
Jacks	78.6	70.8	66.6	42.8	21.3
Leather chairs	28.6	37.5	33.3	14.3	19
Looking glass	86.7	91.6	100	57.1	46.2
Oval/round table	71.4	62.5	50	42.8	38.9
Pictures	57.1	91.6	100	28.6	26.1
Punch bowl	0	20.8	16.6	0	2.1
Saucepans	64.3	87.5	83.3	14.3	32.8
Silver	78.6	79.2	83.3	28.6	31.3
Spoons	42.9	62.5	50	14.3	24.3
Table Forks	21.4	41.6	16.6	0	6.4
Table linen	64.3	75	66.6	28.6	37.7
Table, mirror, stand	7.1	41.6	33.3	0	4.7
Tea/coffee goods	35.7	75	100	14.3	20.4
Upholstered chairs	21.4	79.2	83.3	14.3	10.9
Window curtains	57.1	62.5	83.3	14.3	18.8
Median Household Goods £	103.58	69.35	50	31.75	20.3
Median Total Valuation £	252.25	177.4	143.38	126.7	61.7
% House contents	29	36	63.5	66.2	33.7
No in sample	14	24	6	7	329
% of sample	4.2%	7.3%	1.8%	2.1%	100%

William Taylor, a tallow chandler of Darnall in the parish of Sheffield, died in 1690 leaving inventoried wealth of £306 6s of which £76 8s or, 24.9%, was attributed to household goods. His large, twenty-two roomed home included a 'house', 'Narre' and 'Farre' parlours, red, and green chambers, 'Ye Good Womans Closet'. Meals could be taken

in the Hall or the parlours all of which were equipped with long or short tables, longsettles, forms, chairs and cushions. Tablewares were made from pewter, brass, and wood and other than, 'a silver taster, a little silver spoon', the absence of cutlery was compensated for by '3 dozen napkins, 2 huggaback tablecloths, and 6 towels'.¹¹⁴ Textiles added a degree of comfort to the Farre Parlour, which contained a bed and a few newer articles, such as a looking glass, pictures and curtains. Whilst comfortable, there was little to indicate new forms of sociability were being accommodated in the household of this successful tradesman.

William's son, William jnr., built on his father's success but did not pursue his father's 'dirty' trade as a tallow chandler. Instead, he became a mercer and was one of the eight Sheffield mercers who helped break the monopoly of London factors in the cutlery trades, and regularly traded with the Attercliffe group of Forges owned by the Fells and Milners. His success in this, and his industry, earned him election in 1713 as a Town Trustee.¹¹⁵ He entered into partnership with Mr Tompson and around 1705 built Norwood, a new home on the boundary between the parishes of Sheffield and Ecclesfield. Some indication of William jnr's extensive wealth, interests and standing in local society may be seen in details from his inventory and will. On his death in 1719, he left £50 to his apprentice Charles Green, with the opportunity to purchase his share in the business. He also left £150 each in trust to William, Thomas and Robert Dewsbury, sons of his sister Catherine. Debts due to him included £568 from his brother Joseph Taylor and a further

¹¹⁴ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Mr William Taylor, Tallow Chandler, Darnall Parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, March 1690/1.

¹¹⁵ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp.158-162; J.D. Leader, (ed.), *Records of the Burgery*, pp.326, 484.

£120 from a Captain Morgan in Carolina. His executors were his brother-in-law Tobias Ellis, a Sheffield cutler, and 'my neighbour' Mr Thomas Wright, the attorney. Christopher Broomhead, a fellow mercer, Town Trustee and Church Burgess, Ezra Cawton also a Town Trustee and Joseph Nutt were appointed appraisers.¹¹⁶

Norwood was a tall, fashionable brick built dwelling reflecting Matthew H. Johnson's mix of classical motifs and traditional styles (Fig 2.4). A double-hipped roof surmounted three storeys of regularly spaced windows. Each storey was marked by a stone stringing, which terminated in classical columns running the height of the building. This formal device was designed to offer the visitor an awareness of the expectation of new behaviour. A centrally-placed doorway under a portico was echoed on the third floor by a roundel window providing additional light to the centrally placed staircase decorated with a 'large landskip, a map of the world and 40 small pictures'. Outside, an adjoining building contained the domestic offices and stabling and to the front, a formal walled garden incorporated a path leading to the door and a garden house.

¹¹⁶ Inventory of Mr. William Taylor.



**Figure 2.4 Norwood, built c 1705-10 William Taylor, mercer;
unknown artist c.1750. Sheffield City Libraries s05691**

Some traditions were maintained, such as the keeping of a bed in the parlour and offering dining in a hall, but even here, spaces and goods were arranged in fashionable surroundings to support new sociabilities, comfort, leisure, and learning. At Norwood, the trestles and forms of the hall at Darnall were replaced by French fashioned, cane and leather chairs around Dutch and 'fine, large oval tables'.

Pictures, window curtains and valences added colour and interest, clocks, books, sconces, 'fine bath metal candlestirks', snuffboxes, punch bowls and ladles, cases of bath metal knives and forks, tea tables, china, coffee pots, and silver plate could be summonsed when required.¹¹⁷ In the chamber over the parlour, 'Five figures & Bleinheim House' added décor and, perhaps together with his adoption of French style, may have indicated Taylor's

¹¹⁷ Cane chairs were at their most fashionable between 1670 and 1730 and it is assumed most were made in London, Dewing, 'Cane Chairs', p. 67.

Whig sympathies. Bernard Mandeville would have recognised the construction of a merchant's comfortable country home whose furnishings helped support and convey understandings associated with politeness, credit-worthiness, taste, refinement, leisure and learning in a way that the trestles and forms of his father could not.

Others with the title of mister belonged to the regions' professional classes and although members of this group were found across the region, only those living in Sheffield acquired the title. Total median inventoried wealth for the group amounted to £126 14s of which a median £41 1s was attributed to household goods. However, this equated to an investment in the home of 64% of total median inventoried wealth and was 56% higher than that for all those called mister, and 120% higher than gentlemen. In Sheffield, the high proportion of inventoried wealth that professionals expended on the home was used to acquire new and fashionable goods including chinawares, tea equipage, cutlery, glassware, table linen, cane and upholstered chairs, chests of drawers, window curtains, looking glasses and silver. When the inventories of rural professionals are explored, they too spent a similar proportion of inventoried wealth on the home but very few of these goods were present. Overall levels of wealth appear to have been a consideration: the 64% invested in the home by those professionals living in rural areas equated to £22 9s, almost half that of their urban counterparts, and a sum close to the Hallamshire median of £20 6s. Only one urban professional kept any livestock whereas 75% of those living in rural areas maintained some livestock and crops.

This could simply indicate that rural professionals did not consider new goods to be affordable or necessary, but it could also suggest urban professionals felt a greater need to distinguish themselves from their neighbours by their material possessions and to reflect their shared identity. In 1733, Mr John Batty, a schoolmaster in Sheffield whose occupation placed him at the boundary of contemporary professional status, left total inventoried wealth of £29.50, and bequests amounting to £35. Of his inventoried wealth, 95% was attributed to household goods and the contents of his four-roomed house, like that of the farmer Jonathan Wilson included many goods suitable for new forms of sociability.¹¹⁸ The inventoried sums left by Mr Batty were similar to those of rural professionals yet like Wilson again, Batty may have sought association with the town's professional and middling sorts and deployed the material culture of polite sociabilities as a potential means of access.

Similar patterns of consumption between those in related trades, crafts and retail sectors can be seen where those in urban areas acquired more new goods than their rural counterparts. Urban retailers were also able to secure the title of mister but their motive for acquiring new goods may not necessarily have been the same as those attempting to gain a foothold on the social ladder. Lorna Weatherill records urban tradesmen and shopkeepers were often amongst the earliest owners of new goods. Helen Berry also cites Fanny Burney's play, *The Witlings*, of 1778 to show how retailers found the offering of 'polite' refreshments could aid business:

¹¹⁸ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of John Batty, schoolmaster, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, October 1734.

'When well-off customers of the middling sort like Mrs Voluble entered a shop, they would have been invited to take a seat at the counter, and perhaps to take refreshment. Many illustrated trade cards and shop floor plans indicate the presence of ante-rooms, in which polite customers were invited to take tea before making their purchases.'¹¹⁹

The inventories of two Sheffield booksellers, Joseph Turner (d. 1728) and Neville Simmons (d. 1730) suggest the practice of offering 'polite' refreshments in sympathetically furnished spaces was well established amongst some local retailers. Little is known of Turner other than, like Simmons, he supplied the Town Trust with newspapers and stationery and in 1715 he had published 'A Collection of Choir Psalm tunes'.¹²⁰ Christopher Broomhead and Joseph Hoyland appraised the contents of his eight-room house at £90.00, of which £44 2s or 49% was attributed to household goods and 'books and goods by way of trade £35.10.01'.¹²¹ Turner's possessions included a well-equipped kitchen including '1 dozen good plates, 13 plates 18/-, a salver & rum 2/-, 40lbs pewter @ 8d per lbs £1.12.0, a pewter flagon, salt, mustard pot, 2 porringers 3/-, a coffee pot and kettle 6/-'. Delftware, china and glasses could be brought either to his Best Chamber, where customers could take tea seated upon ten cane chairs, or to the Hall equipped with little tables and six high back chairs and decorated with pictures, a birdcage, weatherglass, clock and case.

¹¹⁹ Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*, p. 187; Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), p. 386.

¹²⁰ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p.312.

¹²¹ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Joseph Turner, bookseller, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, June 1728.

The Sheffield bookseller, Mr. Neville Simmons specialised in the publication of Non-Conformist works for which he appears to have found a solid demand amongst Sheffield's large Dissenting community. His father, Neville senior arrived in Sheffield sometime during the latter part of the seventeenth century and acquired premises in High Street and married Jane, the daughter of his neighbour, grocer Thomas Bretland. Simmon's came from a family involved in the book trade in Kidderminster and London, and in a brief biography, Giles Hester aligns him with Samuel Simmons who published Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Simmons was also known to have travelled to Wakefield and Leeds where he held occasional book auctions as he did at the Rose and Crown in Sheffield.¹²² Simmons was also a member of the Upper Chapel. One of his daughters married Timothy Jollie, Assistant Minister at Upper Chapel between 1714 and 1720 and one of his sons, Thomas, became a Presbyterian Minister in London. On Neville senior's retirement, Neville jnr. took over his father's business but died in 1730 at the age of 38.

The inventory of Neville jnr., describes an eight-room dwelling consisting of a house, great parlour, little parlour, kitchen chamber, house chamber, kitchen, brewhouse, and cellar. With total inventoried wealth of £96 5s, 62%, or £59 13s was attributed to household goods. Bass chairs, tables, punch bowls, glasses, brandy measures, silver mugs, teapots, and china were accompanied at the time of his death by 'licquor of all kinds and fruit', and suggests Simmons' Little Parlour was well attended by those calling in for news and

¹²² Giles Hester, *Nevill Simmons, Bookseller and Publisher*, (Sheffield, 1893); I. Gadd, 'Simmons, Matthew (b. in or before 1608, d. 1654)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69230> [accessed 6 April 2011]; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 309-311.

purchases. Motoko Hori notes how punch bowls and glasses facilitated the fashionable consumption of brandy and wine, and describes their growing domestic consumption amongst the middling sort as a means by which they could enjoy a 'lavish lifestyle that could turn them into the partners of the genteel'.¹²³ Maxine Berg claims politeness evolved with particular value in commercial environments such as Simmon's bookshop where 'Shopkeepers sold to customers who expected interiors and displays to accord with the goods to be bought; customers expected conversation along with advice and not merely a sales pitch'.¹²⁴

Simmons's membership of the Upper Chapel, the largest dissenting community in the region, and his familial connections with Kiddeminster and London reflect the extensive networks upon which non-conformists relied upon for news, support and custom. Estabrook's observation of how the bridging of urban-rural divides facilitated by the extraparochialism of religious non-conformity was among the most conspicuous harbingers of a new era could also be held true for the bridging of understandings between like-minded groups across much wider areas.¹²⁵ Although Hey asserts the region's Puritan outlook hindered its engagement with Borsay's urban renaissance, he nevertheless acknowledges that 'Sheffield's leading Dissenting families often had links with the surrounding rural gentry and with well-to-do London Dissenters'.¹²⁶ Possibly to help sustain

¹²³ Motoko Hori, 'The Price and Quality of Wine and Conspicuous Consumption in England 1646-1759', *English Historical Review* C221.505 (December, 2008), p. 1468.

¹²⁴ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233.

¹²⁵ C. B. Estabrook, *Urbane & Rustic England, Cultural Ties & Social Spheres in the Provinces 1660- 1780* (Manchester, 1998), p. 12.

¹²⁶ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 249, 308.

their various commercial and religious networks which extended beyond the confines of the town, known members of the Upper Chapel such as Zachariah Arther, Neveille Simmons, Field Sylvester and the Revd Wadsworth appear to have taken pains to ensure their homes were equipped with goods that could offer support to polite behaviour.

Patterns of consumption across a wide range of new goods amongst Rotherham's retailers and tradesmen were significantly lower than those amongst their counterparts in Sheffield and appeared much later in the inventory evidence than elsewhere. With arguably better transport links and a growing interest in the iron and steel industries from the mid-eighteenth century, Rotherham was a much smaller urban centre than Sheffield and appears to have maintained the character of a small market town. Total median inventoried wealth of £24 4s amongst Rotherham's retailers and tradesmen was substantially lower than that amongst similar occupation in Sheffield, who had a median £107 5s. In order to secure a range of basic furnishings Rotherham's retailers and tradesmen spent a median £14 18s or 65.6% of their inventoried wealth compared with £36 14s or 37.9% in Sheffield. The high proportion of inventoried wealth required for a range of basic goods would have reduced their ability to acquire additional items. Engagement with new goods appears to have been generally tentative and rarely offered an assemblage that could be readily associated with polite behaviour. Compared with 8.7% of retailers and tradesmen known as mister in Sheffield, none of the Rotherham sample were attributed the title.

Like William Taylor at Norwood and Thomas Broadbent at Hartshead many rising families in Sheffield were concerned that the outward appearance of their homes should

reflect their status and associations with gentility, refinement, education and wealth. This could most readily be achieved by incorporating into the design of their homes classical forms which could signal to the approaching visitor the configuration of internal arrangements that were associated with polite behaviour.¹²⁷ Thomas Broadbent's completion of Page Hall by John Platt in 1773 has often been cited as the first substantial dwelling built by a commercial man in the suburbs, but as evinced by Norwood, the claim ignores a substantial amount of earlier domestic building activity that employed fashionable and classical designs.¹²⁸ Hey claims, 'only when local factors broke free from London control [in 1713] were the successful ones able to follow the example of the attorneys by building Georgian town houses and eventually setting themselves up as country gentlemen', but even this date, as shown by the building of Norwood, does not fully reflect the region's engagement with classical principles.¹²⁹ Leader claims successful families often chose to live in the countryside where they began to transform existing houses or build substantial new properties in easy access of the town.¹³⁰ In some cases, such as the remodelling in 1729 of Norton House (built in 1623 by the scythesmith Leonard Gill), the results were a pastiche of old and new styles (Fig.2.5).

¹²⁷ Girouard, *English Country House*, p. 210.

¹²⁸ Revd A. Gatty, *Past and Present Being a Biography of the Town During Eight Hundred Years* (Sheffield & London, 1873), p. 136; J.E. Vickers, *The Old and Historical Buildings of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1968), p. 17; Caroline Reid, 'Middle Class Values and Working Class Culture in Nineteenth Century Sheffield', Ph.D. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1973) p. 17.

¹²⁹ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p.159-161.

¹³⁰ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 196-198.

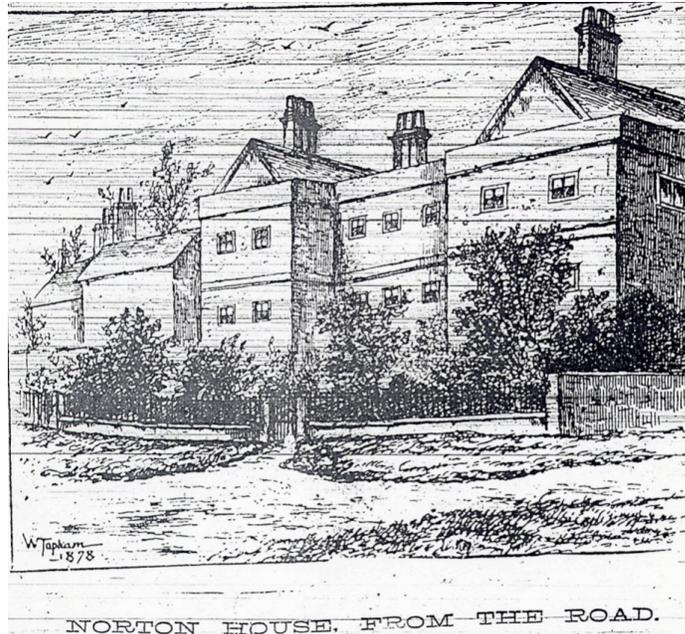


Figure 2.5 Norton House with the seventeenth century twin-gabled building refronted to present a regular classical façade. Built 1623 Leonard Gill demolished 1878. NCRS 50

Elsewhere, the appearance of fully modelled classical dwellings in a variety of styles indicated a new approach to the configuration and form of domestic dwellings. One of the earliest known examples of classical architecture in Sheffield was the townhouse of the Duke of Norfolk built in Fargate in 1707. Known as The Lord's House, its baroque outline may have influenced Thomas Steade and his rebuilding of Burrowlee House in 1711, and Thomas Heaton's house next to the church gates (Figs 2.6 – 2.8).

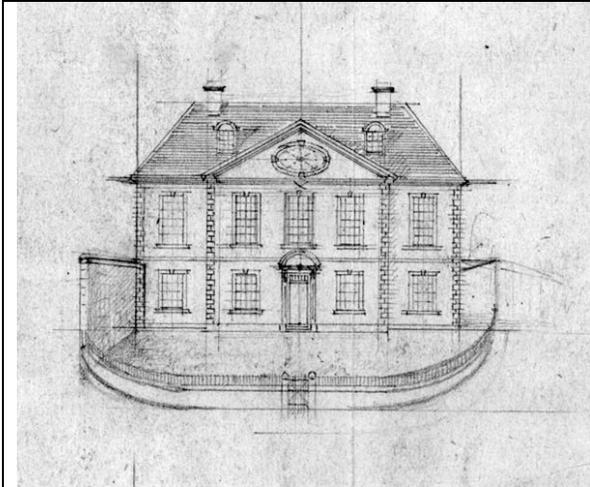


Fig 2.6 The Lord's House, Fargate, Sheffield, c.1707
Sheffield residence of the Duke of Norfolk. Sheffield
City Libraries s22382.



Fig. 2.7 Burrowlee House, Owlerton, c.1711
Thomas Steade, Gent, (1672-1739)
Author's collection.



Fig. 2.8 Former home of Thomas Heaton, merchant corner of High St and East Parade opposite the Church Gates. Sheffield City Libraries s00287

The artist Samuel Buck recorded similar adaptations and new building as he toured Yorkshire between 1719 and 1723 sketching houses his patron, John Warburton, hoped to include in a history of the county. He implies Buck found little of sufficient quality to draw

in Hallamshire, but Buck's patron needed financial support for his project and tended to approach acquaintances he felt most likely to offer support.¹³¹ Buck nevertheless, sketched several properties in and around Sheffield belonging to the region's gentry, manufacturing and professional families, several of which were undergoing modernisation around the time of Buck's visit.

Examples included High House at Owlerton, family home of the shearsmith Bamforth family. Following the death of his father in 1701, George Bamforth III rebuilt High House as a three-storey classical dwelling with gardens surrounded by decorative wrought iron fencing. The newly built house of lead merchant Mr Clay at Bridge House was featured, and that of his neighbour the attorney Thomas Wright, Gentleman, with whom Francis Sitwell lodged (Fig. 2.9). Broom Hall, the recently modernised home of William Jessop, Esquire, and Thundercliffe Grange, between Ecclesfield and Rotherham, seat of the ironfounder, William Green.¹³² On a later visit in 1745, Buck produced a prospect of Sheffield from the east, which featured the parish church in the centre, with the newly built baroque style St Paul's church to the left and Bridgehouses to the far right (Fig 1.5).

Shortly after Buck's tour, successful mercers, merchants and forgemasters such as the Fells, Milners and Taylors began to build large and fashionable homes in close proximity to their works or on the rural edges of Sheffield. Around 1730, John Fell built a 'handsome

¹³¹ Buck, *Yorkshire Sketchbook*, pp. 227, 334.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp.92-108; Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 181.

house, with spacious gardens to which he gave the name New-Hall'.¹³³ Shortly after, his brother-in-law, Gamaliel Milner built Attercliffe House a substantial and classically inspired residence complete with liveried staff (Fig. 2.10). Both families were dissenters with extensive social and commercial networks. Hey notes John Fell I entertaining London agents and travelling the country to meet his customers whilst the Milners had business interests in Wales and London.

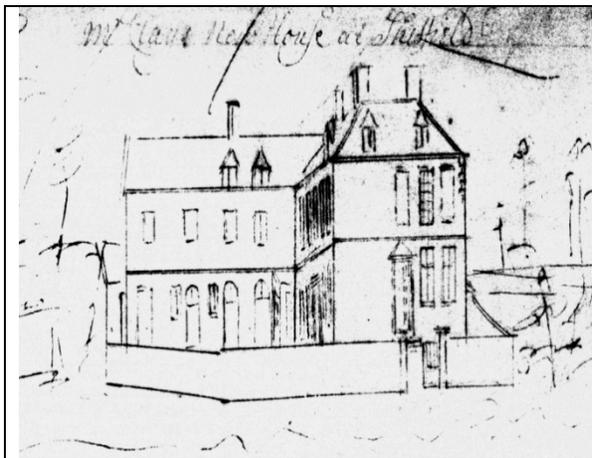


Fig 2.9 New House Bridge Houses
Mr Clay, iron founder c.1719-23
Samuel Buck's Yorkshire Sketchbook (1979) p. 102



Fig. 2.10 Attercliffe House
Gamaliel Milner, iron founder, c1730.
Milner, J., *Life at Attercliffe House, 1747-1872*,
(Private publication, n.d.)

In 1777, Francis Hurt commissioned the architect John Platt to build Mount Pleasant, his new home to the south of Sheffield and which was joined in 1788 by Brightfield House, another substantial classical brick dwelling for the scissor-smith, John Henfry (Figs. 2.11, 2.12).

¹³³ Jim Milner, *Life at Attercliffe House, 1747-1872*, (Private publication, n.d. Sheffield City Libraries) p. 1; Hey, *Fiery Blades*, pp. 172-173.



As with Broadbent's Page Hall (Fig.2.13) which was also designed by Platt, both buildings reflect developments first introduced at Harleyford Manor in Buckinghamshire by Sir Robert Taylor in 1755 which used a compact design around a central staircase so that rooms could easily be accessed without passing through long corridors and in which entertaining rooms were on the ground floor and bedrooms upstairs.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Girouard, *English Country House*, pp.198-199.



Fig 2.13 Page Hall, Thomas Broadbent, Banker, 1772 in the style of Harleyford, Buckinghamshire, 1755 (Girouard *Life in the English Country House A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven & London, 1978 Fig 118, p. 200), Sheffield City Libraries s05776.

Representing a mix of wealth, status, fashion and competition, it cannot be assumed the presence of classically inspired forms was directly associated with polite behaviour. Nevertheless, these and similar buildings form part of an overlooked pattern of change that was taking place across Hallamshire and which indicate a much closer engagement with the forms, ideas and behaviour associated with politeness that the middle sorts could employ in order to express their identity.

Conclusion

Rather than being perceived as a uniform, homogenous and labouring society, the distinctive location, levels of wealth, occupational structure, networks and hierarchies present in each of Hallamshire's five parishes produced patterns of consumption which suggest the region was much more socially, culturally and economically diverse than has generally been recognised. The diverse range of urban and rural communities found in

Hallamshire offer patterns of consumption that both correspond and conflict with those explored by Weatherill, Overton and French. The findings suggest urban societies cannot be treated in the same way as those whose lives were rooted in their parish but that each parish appears to have been able to create its own understandings of the role and function of domestic sociability.

Throughout the inventoried sample, traditional forms of display persisted across all five Hallamshire parishes, across all spectrums of wealth and occupations. Old and new goods could be displayed and used in a variety of forms and spaces. Even the furnishing of wealthy households could appear seemingly inchoate as households strove to gain command over new goods or simply manage the disorder of everyday life. Sara Pennell suggests a possible reluctance to overtly promote their identity amongst some middling families due to concerns over the strength of existing customs, the fear of base consumerism and indulgence, of failing to exercise good taste, propriety and decorum, or making the wrong choices for one's station in life.¹³⁵

Long-established rural gentry may have held positions of parish authority such as churchwarden or feoffee, and have wealth and homes similar to those of their newly created urban counterparts, but they did not engage with new goods to the same degree. As intimated by French, patterns of consumption amongst rural chief inhabitants may have been formed as a response to their parish environment. Often from long-established families whose status was assured and with wealth vested in property and land, rural

¹³⁵ S. Pennell, 'Consumption and Consumerism in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 42.2 (1999), p. 559.

Gentlemen generally selected traditional and familiar status signifiers such as silver, land or property, and showed little interest either in acquiring new objects or creating new spaces that could support the enactment of new behaviour. Hence, in some inventories the appearance of new goods alongside traditional forms of wealth may represent the bolstering of existing displays of status rather than indicating engagement with new forms of sociability.

Although the lack of seventeenth-century inventories for Sheffield remains problematic, the evident first appearance of new goods in the semi-rural parish of Norton rather than an urban centre is interesting and suggests a potentially different social and commercial structure for a region that may have joined Hallamshire only to campaign against the Hearth Tax. Compared with the diffuse spread of wealth amongst a large number of semi-independent 'little mesters' in Sheffield, the structure of Norton's scythemaking industry in the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries concentrated wealth in a few hands. Much of its social life was focused on Chesterfield rather than Sheffield and so it is possible the social and commercial networks of the scythemakers, lesser gentry and wealthy farmers who owned above median levels of new goods in that area may have encouraged earlier use of these goods and the behaviour they could support than occurred in Sheffield.

Throughout the period, patterns of consumption for Rotherham, Hallamshire's second town, appear to have remained subdued. Lacking the wealth and economic diversity of its larger neighbour, Rotherham appears to have maintained the structure and facilities

of a small market town. Large-scale engagement with the metal trades did not become established until much later than in Sheffield and it is interesting to note that their absence may have contributed to its much slower accommodation of new goods and spaces.

New goods were found in the homes of those who may have acquired them in order to advertise their place within parish hierarchies and also amongst urban professional, commercial and dissenting families who appear to have acquired goods with the potential to support new behaviour in order to form social and commercial networks unfettered by parish deference and obligation. Whilst not necessarily subscribing to a national form of middling identity, new behaviour may have enabled those with new found wealth, or no strong parish affiliation, to form associations that offered them greater support, benefit, and recognition. Assemblages of new goods were more likely to be found in households where space had been potentially created to enhance their display and performance. Changes that were most likely to result in inventories listing above median quantities of new goods included the presence of a kitchen, the removal of beds from parlours or the creation of additional parlours, the creation of potential social space in a chamber or upper room, and the presence of a dining room or hall. These features were more commonly found in urban homes belonging to professionals and those called gentlemen or mister. The high correlation recorded in the Hallamshire sample between the ownership of new goods and their display in news spaces by some sectors of society is interesting. It suggests the accepted notion of the flexible and fluid configuration of eighteenth-century rooms may have been less widespread in some households than has generally been believed. The ability to recognise set combinations of spaces and goods as locales that had the potential

to support polite behaviour may have encouraged their permanent integration into the homes of those for whom, wealth and property permitting, were striving to associate themselves with such behaviour as a means of social distinction.

The greatest concentrations of new goods were found in the households of those who were called mister and this group invested a greater proportion of their inventoried wealth in the furnishing of their homes than any other. Those who used the title all lived in Sheffield but came from a variety of backgrounds. Retailers, attorneys and other professionals, joined forgemasters, merchants, mercers, and hardwaremen engaged in the metal trades whose commercial, civic or social networks extended beyond their immediate environment. The success of these men relied not just upon their wares, but also upon their skills of fluency, ease, learning, and agreeableness. Some with the title of gentleman acquired positions of trust and authority similar to their more rural counterparts but, unlike them, their positions were secured through commercial endeavour. Lacking traditional status signifiers such as land or property, urban misters and gentlemen may have chosen new goods to help convey messages of wealth and authority. Equally, as Maxine Berg notes they may have deployed new goods and spaces to help create environments that facilitated the performance of polite behaviour in support of their commercial activities.¹³⁶

Dissenting families in the region appear to have readily engaged with new goods and, in accordance with Kilbourne's observation that wealth could be enjoyed if excess was avoided, they were amongst those who strove to acquire homes that reflected their wealth,

¹³⁶ Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233.

learning, taste and politeness.¹³⁷ This contradicts earlier opinion, which claimed their Puritanical outlook tempered the region's potential to engage with the urban renaissance. In helping them expand their social and commercial horizons in Sheffield and further afield, the loyalties and allegiances formed amongst entrepreneurial, independent and ambitious dissenters who were excluded from parish hierarchies, universities and political office, may well have benefited from the forms of sociability that politeness could support.¹³⁸

Although found predominantly in Sheffield, patterns of consumption which indicated a high degree of correlation between the ownership of new goods and new spaces could span parish boundaries, offering participants access to associations beyond their immediate environment. Thus, the patterns of consumption beginning to emerge from the Hallamshire sample do not fit with a single analysis. Rather, they indicate different groups may have engaged with new goods in different ways and for different reasons.

This chapter began with John Brewer's declaration that 'politeness and refinement had little value unless they were shared; they had to be put on display to be shown to others'.¹³⁹ It has been shown that the material and spatial culture associated with polite behaviour was present in a small sector of Hallamshire households but further evidence is required to try and determine if they extended its performance into the public domain. Did, for example, those who owned significantly above the median range of new goods and

¹³⁷ William E. Kilbourne, *Rational Consumption, A Brief Historical Analysis* (2003), p. 94, www.sbaer.uca.edu/research/acme/2003/papers/new/14.pdf [accessed 14 November 2007].

¹³⁸ Sweet, *English Town*, p. 195.

¹³⁹ Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*; p. 107.

spaces also participate in assemblies or the theatre? The next chapter explores three locales in Sheffield to see how they might have accommodated the public performance of polite behaviour and if those attending them formed a society that could be recognized as middling.

Chapter Three: Potential Politeness in the Public Sphere

Defining public politeness

The potential impact of politeness on the physical, social and cultural development of Sheffield has been widely overlooked as commentators have considered those who may have contributed to the creation of appropriate public spaces were too few, too poor, and too remote from aristocratic direction to have made an impression on the town.¹ As already noted, the shaping of urban spaces by politeness and its association with new forms of behaviour and classical forms has been widely noted as a key motif of eighteenth-century urban life. New forms of sociability were facilitated by clubs, societies, inns, and coffee houses, in which the deployment of politeness in convivial surroundings aided the expansion of commercial enterprises and social networks. Large, classically inspired assemblies, libraries, theatres, and parks were amongst the new facilities that gave the families of professionals, merchants, retailers, industrialists and those on the lower rungs of social mobility the opportunity to meet in polite, controlled and urbane surroundings.²

¹R. E. Leader, *Newspaper Cuttings Relating to Sheffield* vol. 15, p. 135; Comments from Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains of the late Samuel Roberts*, (London, 1849) quoted in David Flather, 'Freemasonry in Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 44 (1931), p. 133.

² Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance, Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 150ff; Paul Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Journal* 12 (2002); R.H. Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002) p. 356; L. E. Klein, 'Historiographical Reviews: Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal* 45.4 (2002), p. 869.

The presence of these more select venues marked a shift in the scope of entertainment and sociability available to the middling sorts. For Peter Borsay, the urban renaissance provided the middling sorts with access to 'the cultural artefacts and channels through which status could be acquired and the new and traditional social elements fused together'.³ Assemblies, clubs and societies employed rules, nomination rights, subscriptions and fees to control access to their facilities⁴. Richard Bushman notes how, in America, traditional forms of entertainment 'included people from all levels of society and tolerated coarse behaviour by rude peasants along with the refined conduct of gentle ladies should they choose to attend'. Unlike the masters of ceremonies and directors of assemblies, the organisers of traditional events, 'showed no concern that the presence of the wrong people would mar the occasion. The opposite was true for polite entertainments'.⁵

Clearly identifiable facilities that could accommodate polite sociabilities added to the reputation of a town. Guidebooks highlighted their attractiveness to the genteel visitor seeking refined and agreeable company away from the unregulated coarseness of the street. As in the domestic environment, the presence of goods and spaces associated with politeness must not be taken as proof of performance. Public expressions of politeness did not necessarily adopt idealised and metropolitan forms, and must not be seen as an isolated monoculture unchallenged by, or insensitive to, localised expressions of identity. Politeness performed in the public sphere may have been a very different experience from

³ Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 317.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵ R.L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1993), pp. 49-50.

that performed in the controlled environment of the home and with different sets of visual signifiers. Care is also needed to avoid reliance on a limited range of sources as perceptions of public politeness could be written both by those who mourned the passing of a golden age of polite comportments and those who believed they were witnessing ever more refined behaviour.⁶

In the absence of purpose-built spaces, the practice of hiring temporary rooms in taverns and inns, schoolrooms and town halls, meant polite spaces had constantly to be defined and defended. Dichotomies cannot describe the multiple identities with which space and person could be associated, so that establishing what formed a public expression of polite behaviour, or a polite space is difficult. Compromised by circumstance, association, status, religious and political affiliations, Philip Carter's description of masculine politeness as possessing the ability to appear comfortable in all types of company, to be considered sincere, to display wealth, and therefore power, without derision or accusations of foppery, reveals the care with which it had to be deployed in public.⁷ Raising further uncertainty about subscribing politeness to people and spaces, in her exploration of 'flash talk' in eighteenth-century coffee houses, Helen Berry questions politeness as a paradigm for gentlemanly behaviors, with some choosing to use 'polite' locales as an opportunity to

⁶ P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow, 2000), p. 40; G.R. Porter, *The Progress of the Nation, in its various social and economic relations, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present time* (London, 1836), p. 240.

⁷ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*.

engage in rough or profane language.⁸ E.P. Thompson claimed an, 'immense distance between polite and plebeian cultures', and asserted that the 'approved self-image of the gentry' could both be contested and did not stop the poor from 'defending their own modes of work and leisure, and forming their own rituals, their own satisfactions and view of life'.⁹

Paul Langford has argued that politeness could be perceived as a rigidly deployed instrument of 'social warfare' as elitist and exclusive groups sought to reject undesirables from spaces they perceived as polite.¹⁰ At the same time, James A. Epstein argues plebeian society sought entry into the public-private sphere of polite dining in order to gain political power. At risk of 'radical dining' were the lodges, literary and philosophical societies, dining clubs, charitable and patriotic organisations formed by middling society in which conviviality, mutuality and the creation of civic tradition helped them to express their collective identity and assert control over their environment.¹¹

Klein's description of politeness as a distinctive characterization of eighteenth-century British culture, and Langford's claims that it became, 'synonymous with basic standards of civil behaviour', may need qualification as it is possible it was neither as

⁸ H. Berry, 'Rethinking politeness in eighteenth century England, Moll King's coffee house and the significance of "flash talk"', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11.6 (2001), pp. 65-81.

⁹ E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: class struggle without class?' *Social History* 3.2 (1978), p. 163.

¹⁰ P. Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Journal* 12 (2002), pp. 314-315.

¹¹ J.A. Epstein, *Radical Expression Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (New York & London, 1994).

consistent nor as dominant a behaviour as perhaps has been assumed.¹² In her exploration of the effects of industrialisation and commercialisation on individual societies, Emma Griffin claims such generalisations are fraught with difficulties. Individual communities responded in different ways, uniting, combining and reforming practices which historians have hitherto juxtaposed as elite or plebeian. Many factors, such as age, gender, religion and locality contributed to fracturing the notion of plebeian and elite culture as distinct entities. 'Actions, objects and beliefs are forever moving beyond the confines of the social groups to which they are supposed to belong', so that polite performances in the public sphere may have been fluid, mutable and inconsistent.¹³ Philip Carter adds that, 'polite society, its purpose and locations varied from person to person at any given moment and, across time'.¹⁴ Benjamin Heller remarks that, 'historians have not worked out the ways in which politeness facilitated sociability in everyday contexts, nor have they thought about how it could function in the poorly regulated space of the street'.¹⁵

Difficulties remain with any attempt to identify the public performance of polite behaviour. Time and circumstance will have caused the portrayal and value of politeness to fluctuate so that it may not have always been the aim or mechanism of middling sociability, nor consistent in its expression. To help offset the problems of relying on limited sources and perceptions, three areas of Sheffield's eighteenth-century public life are explored to see

¹² Langford, 'Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness'; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century'.

¹³ E. Griffin, 'Popular Culture in Industrializing England', *The Historical Journal* 45.3 (2002), pp. 619-635.

¹⁴ Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Benjamin Heller, 'The "Mene People" and the Polite Spectator: The Individual in the Crowd at Eighteenth-Century London Fairs', *Past & Present* 208.1 (2010), p. 132.

how politeness may have been employed in the formation of middling identity.

Commercially, politically and socially at the fore of much that took place in the region, the first study explores how politeness may have been used by the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire as a mechanism to help further its aims and secure patronage. In *The Rituals of Dinner*, Margaret Visser explored why, across time and cultures, the everyday activities of serving and consuming food and drink were translated into displays of complex rituals and subtle behaviours capable of representing and enforcing identities.¹⁶ Attention is directed towards the presentation of the region's foremost social event, the Cutlers' Feasts, and the halls in which they were held to see if evidence may be found for the potential deployment of politeness as a means of fostering relations or displaying status. The second study uses the close association between assemblies and politeness to explore the largely overlooked Sheffield Assemblies to consider how politeness may have helped in the construction of an appropriate space and a select body of participants. The third arena explores some of the town's foremost inns and taverns as locales for a wide range of sociable activities, clubs and associations. Consideration is given to see if they deployed the material and spatial culture of politeness to help attract a middling clientele.

The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire

The absence of any properly constituted local governance prior to the incorporation of the town in 1843 resulted in the Company of Cutlers being the most influential body in

¹⁶ Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner, The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners* (New York & London, 1991).

the region and its annually elected Master its principal citizen. Often at the fore of campaigns to improve communications and the wider interests of the town, the Company was consistently more prominent in the public arena than the Town Trustees or Church Burgesses. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Company saw both civic duty and vested interest combine in its campaigns for improvements to the navigation of the River Don, or Dun, the setting up of warehouses, quarries and cementation steelworks on behalf of its members, securing exemptions from the hearth tax levies and the defeat of restrictions being placed on iron imports from Spain and America.

In 1624, the *Master, Wardens, Searchers, Assistants and Commonality of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York*, replaced the manorial Cutlers' Jury following the death of Gilbert, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury in 1616. The authority of The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire was, and still is, vested in the Master, two Wardens, six Searchers, and 24 Assistants. Elections to the Company were held annually on St Bartholomew's Day (August 24) with those elected as Master having first served as assistant and warden. These 33 men were collectively known as the Company and ran affairs 'for the good order and government of the cutlers of Hallamshire', on behalf of the Freemen or Commonality.¹⁷ Freemen were time served and indentured apprentices, of at least 21 years of age who had been granted a mark to manufacture any object with a cutting blade. The duties of the Company included the binding of apprentices, and the granting of marks to Freemen whose homes the Assistants and Searchers had the right to enter if they suspected illegally marked goods. The Company oversaw all activities relating to cutlers who were

¹⁷ E. Mensforth, *Extracts from the Records of the Cutlers' Company* (Sheffield, 1972) p. xii.

defined as, 'all persons using to make knives, blades scissors, shears, sickles, cutlery wares and manufactures made or wrought of iron and steel, dwelling or inhabiting within the said lordship and liberty of Hallamshire or within six miles compass of the same'.¹⁸ Rules governing the number of apprentices a master could have and the issuing of trademarks only to those who had completed a recognised apprenticeship were strictly enforced. No-one was allowed to operate as a cutler who had not fulfilled these obligations.

Possibly linked to the increasing election of inexperienced Masters from rural areas, and an inclination towards paternalism, tradition and Toryism inherited from manorial and guild practices, the relationship between the Company and its Freemen often appears to have been one of inflexibility and slowness to adapt to changing circumstances.¹⁹ The Company lacked mechanisms through which members could influence how they were governed, whilst amendments to its constitution required lengthy and costly Acts of Parliament.

However, for much of the eighteenth century Freemen could afford to ignore these weaknesses and restrictive practices as continued demand ensured high wages, a short working week, and ultimately a relaxation of the rules. The situation changed when falling wages and loss of work caused by the French Revolution and American War of Independence caused the Freemen to petition the Company to restore lapsed rules governing the number of apprentices in the trade. The Company at first refused, and by the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ J. MacDonald, "'The Freedom of Election' The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire and the growth of radicalism in Sheffield 1784-1792', Ph.D. thesis (University of Sheffield, 2005).

time a compromise was reached in 1789, it was estimated that only one out of ten to twelve men completing their Indentures were prepared to join the Company and accept its rules. Further tension over restrictive practices resulted in the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1791 to allow the sale of freedoms to outsiders for £20. This resulted in a massive influx with 1,346 freemen admitted between 1791 and 1792 and the fortunes of the Company grew considerably. In 1814, continuing unrest culminated in a further Act allowing anyone to enter the trade with the result that no freedoms at all were granted between 1814 and 1822. Despite now sitting on substantial reserves, with its original functions now obsolete, the Company abandoned its regular meetings and considered the sale of its hall. However, with the town still lacking a mayor or corporation until 1843, the Company discovered a new role in promoting local industry, prompting the decision to build a new hall in 1832.²⁰

As Sheffield lacked direct parliamentary representation, changes to its constitution or actions on behalf of the town such as making navigable the River Don between Bawtry and the town required the Company gain the support of those who might campaign on its behalf. The tools at its disposal were limited but, possibly imitating the practice of London guilds, the Company decided to develop its Annual Cutlers' Feast into a prestigious event to reflect its own status and attract first Tory then Whig allies.²¹

²⁰ David Hey and Joan Unwin, 'The Company, 1624-1860', in Clyde Binfield and David Hey (eds), *Mesters to Masters A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 37-38.

²¹ Archives of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire: D1/1 Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Jonathan Webster, M.C. 1681.

The implementation of polite discourse facilitated within the Cutler's Hall by a classically informed material and spatial culture, with new goods and manners forming part of the ceremonies, could be valuable tools for the Company in helping to broker relationships between different social and cultural groups. However, the question remains whether an organisation with Tory inclinations rooted in the manorial system, lacking wealth and with a close-knit membership consisting largely of labouring and middling workers whose sociability largely evolved around the seasons and the street, was willing or able to construct halls and feasts in ways that facilitated polite sociability to help secure its aims. In his study of the middle classes, Peter Earle notes the conservative and corporate nature of London livery companies, which by the early eighteenth century had begun to transform themselves into charitable dining clubs as their powers to search and control various trades declined.²² An exploration of the construction and ceremony of the annual Cutlers' Feast suggests that for most of the eighteenth century the Company relied upon traditional displays of status, ceremony and hierarchy as the means of enforcing its prestige. Arguably, changes to the spatial and material form of its feasts came about only towards the end of the century when the Company faced considerable challenge to its restrictive practices and the loss of authority over its members.

The Halls

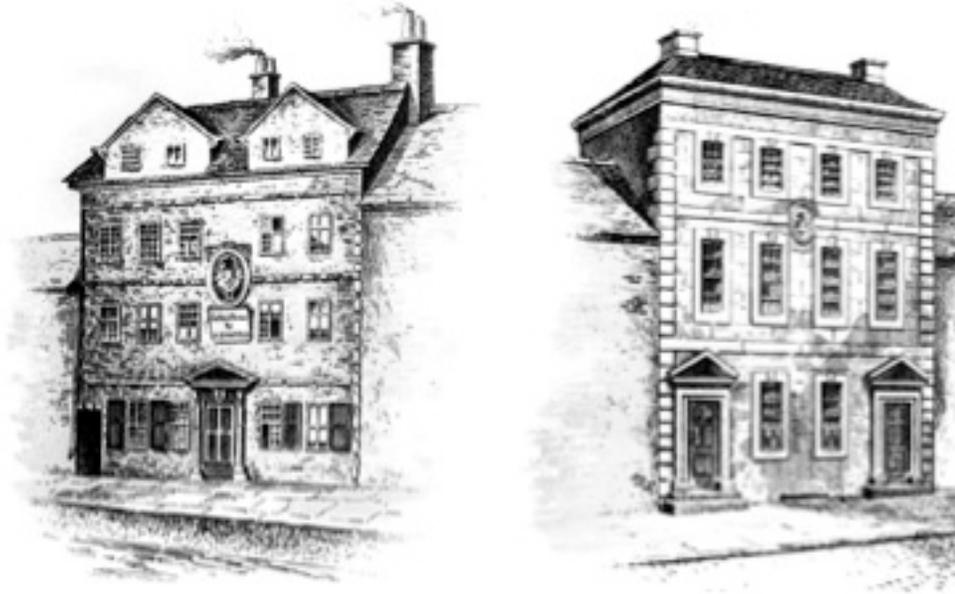
The form and presentation of the first two Halls suggests it was not until the nineteenth century that the Company seriously considered how architecture and form

²² P. Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1989), p. 250.

could be used to associate it in the public mind with notions of status and prestige. Even less evidence can be readily found that establishes the Halls as potential locales for polite sociability. Between its formation in 1624 and 1638, the Company paid an annual rent of £1.2.0 to meet in a chamber which they fitted out with 'a table frame, chist with locks and gimmers'.²³ In 1638, they purchased for £68 10.0 a house on a narrow site facing the south entrance of the parish church upon which three successive halls were built, the first in 1638, the second in 1725 and the third in 1832. A further £82.5.11 was spent either rebuilding or altering the existing premises.²⁴ A lithograph of a three storey stone building with stringcourses, pedimented doorway, and classical detail to the quoins is claimed to be an image of the first hall. Carrying the Cutlers coat of arms, in comparison with surrounding premises, it was substantial for the time and the first Hall appears to have been an attempt within limited means to convey some notion of presence within the town with some acknowledgement to classical form and symmetry.

²³ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Robert Sorsby, M.C. 1625.

²⁴ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: James Creswicke, M.C. 1638.



**Fig.3.1 Former Cutlers' Halls, 1638-1724 and 1725-1830, Mesters to Masters:
A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire.**

The Masters' Accounts reveal a slow and utilitarian approach to furnishing the areas of the Hall reserved for the Company, and the overall style probably reflected the homes of many of its members. Furnishings from the rented chamber were moved to the first hall to which a basket, fire shovel, forme, and table, were added and a carpet cloth three years later. Two new 'langsettles' costing £1.5s 0d, and thirteen cushions purchased in 1660 for £1.9s 4d and frequently repaired, provided rare comfort.²⁵ The new century heralded the acquisition of pasty pans, trenchers and large quantities of pewter, knives, forks and spoons for use in the Hall at the time of the Cutlers' Feast.²⁶ Appropriately enough, the Company

²⁵ A 'langsettle' was generally considered to have a solid seat and could either be fixed or movable. It was slowly replaced during the eighteenth century by a 'squab', a couch with an upholstered seat. Christopher Gilbert, *English Vernacular Furniture 1750-1900*, (New Haven and London, 1991), p. 38.

²⁶ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: John Downes, M.C. 1709.

appears to have begun using large amounts of cutlery at a time when it was still rare in the domestic environments, but the lack of supporting equipment suggests it was used as a means of advertising the wares of the town rather than a distinct move towards polite forms of commensality.

The first Hall was poorly built and the constant cost of repairs may have contributed to its apparently spartan interior. Little is known of the layout and purpose of this first hall but the Masters' Accounts show that between 1680 and 1724 much of the building was let to a tenant, possibly as a tavern, at an annual rent of £3.13.4. Only the Cutlers' and Christmas Feasts were held in the Hall for which much of the furnishings and tableware appear to have been hired. Other than for the issuing of marks and freedoms, the majority of Company meetings appear to have been held in a variety of inns. A favourite meeting place during the early eighteenth century was Mr Pegg(e)'s then Mrs Pegg(e), who probably held one of the several inns known as the Rose and Crown around the High St and Market Place. Occasions for visiting were both numerous and varied: 'Expended at Mrs Pegges, at a Consultation with several Gentlemen about horn buttons, several of ye Company being present, 15s'.²⁷ 'Expended on ye King's Coronation day at ye Hall and Mrs Peggs, £1.11s 2d'.²⁸ Occasionally other venues were used, 'Expd with ye Factors at ye Coffy house 3s', or, 'at Nevile Simmons with the Boatmen, 3s 6d'.²⁹ Perhaps due to the poor condition of the first hall, it appears that by the start of the eighteenth century the practice of offering

²⁷ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: John Pearson, M.C. 1704.

²⁸ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: John Pearson, M.C. 1704; Thomas Broadbent M.C. 1717.

²⁹ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Samuel Twibble, M.C., 1713; Thomas Cotton, M.C., 1730.

guests hospitality away from the Hall for had become an established practice.

Consequently, in 1724, the decision was made to demolish the Hall and build a new one on the same site at a cost of £622.14s 8 ½d.³⁰ The building was financed by loans from various members of the Company including £100 from Christopher Broomhead, Master Cutler in 1696, Thomas Redforth and John Tooker, who, as Masters in 1726 and 1727, were the first to hold office in the new Hall.

The new Hall was larger and more formal than its predecessor although its style still resembled a substantial town house more than a corporate hall. Leader described it as 'relentlessly stiff and formal, devoid of imagination and expression'.³¹ However, the Hall achieved distinction from its neighbours by being built in stone, with two substantial pedimented door cases, ashlar string courses and quoins, stone window surrounds and central keystones, fronted by the Company's coat of arms fixed centrally between the second and third storeys. In her exploration of York Guilds, Kate Giles argues how in the eighteenth century, earlier political and ideological movements which had constructed particular discourses about individual responsibility in which emphasis was placed on the external presentation of the inward self, became manifest in the facades of guildhalls.³²

The opening of the new Hall in 1725 appears to have encouraged the purchase of more furnishings. Three large looking glasses and three dozen chairs purchased in 1726

³⁰ A third hall was built in 1832 at a cost of £8,846 12s 1d with a further £1,092 3s 2d on furnishings.

³¹ R.E. Leader, 'Cutlers' Halls and Feasts', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 25 September 1900.

³² Kate Giles, 'The "Familiar" Fraternity', in Sarah Tarlow and Susie West (eds), *The Familiar Past?* (London and New York, 1999), p. 97.

were followed by a large oval table, six dozen case knives, a further three dozen knives, a quantity of glasses, and diaper and huggaback tablecloths and napkins. Elsewhere in the hall forms, benches, langsettles and deal tables continued to offer traditional seating arrangements, but the new goods suggests some spaces in the Hall could now offer limited support to new forms of sociability.³³ Between 1739 and 1761 the practice continued of renting much of the hall to a publican and further income was generated by hiring rooms for a variety of activities including auction sales, dancing lessons, and cookery classes.³⁴

An indication of the overall form of the second hall is provided by two inventories taken in 1820 and 1826. Although room names vary and neither may be complete, they provide some indication of the accommodation the Hall could provide. The 1820 inventory lists a Top Storeroom, Court Room, a passage linking it to the Blue Room, Lobby Room, Red Room, Thomas Johnson's house [adjoining home of the beadle], Dining Room, Dining Room passage, Wine Storeroom, Ladies Storeroom, Jelly Room, Low Room, Clerk's Room, Best and Second Kitchens, and Larder. The 1826 inventory added a Tea Room, Ladies Retiring Room, Committee Room, Servant's Hall and Master Cutler's Room.³⁵ Notes left by Joseph Ward show 60 guests were to be accommodated in each of the Court Room and Dining Room, an increase from the 50 seated on previous occasions. The Low St Room could accommodate

³³ R. E. Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York* (Sheffield, 1906), vol. 1, p. 221; Company of Cutlers Archive: D1/1 Schedule of Cutlers' Hall acquisitions 1626-1740.

³⁴ L. du Garde Peach, *The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York* (Sheffield, 1960), pp. 11-12.

³⁵ Company of Cutlers Archive: F1/2, Stock Book.

50 guests whilst the Red Room and Blue Room could each hold 45, giving a total dining accommodation of some 265 guests.³⁶

The growing diversity of uses for the hall follows the practice of other guilds at the time where the addition of parlours, sitting rooms, storage facilities, and meeting rooms provided more flexible spaces in which individuals could meet and develop commercial and social relationships. Kate Giles explains how in York ‘private rooms such as those in the north-east range of the merchants’ hall and the taylor’s “counsel house” could be used by the guild elite for their own private affairs, or for the conducting of meetings to which physical – and therefore political – access could be regulated. Rather than the bodily expression of social hierarchy, emphasis was being shifted to the articulation of more complex interpersonal relationships by the use of moveable fittings and fixtures’.³⁷

Proposals to build a combined Town and Cutlers’ Hall with the Town Trustees in 1753 and for the Company to build another larger hall of their own in 1776 came to nothing but suggest that the capacity and form of the second hall was already becoming insufficient for the events it staged. In his diary for 1812, Thomas Asline Ward noted that the ladies at their Feast were accustomed, like the gentlemen to, ‘be ready seated at the table an hour or two before dinner was served up, for fear they should not get a good seat in the principal room, or at the first table’.³⁸ Again, however, even for polite gatherings this practice was not uncommon, and the Company appears to have simply followed the custom of the

³⁶ Company of Cutlers Archive: P/8/1/1, Notebook of Joseph Ward Master Cutler 1790.

³⁷ Giles, ‘The “Familiar” Fraternity’, p. 98.

³⁸ A. B. Bell and R.E. Leader (eds), *Peeps in to the Past: Being Passages from the Diary of Thomas Asline Ward* (London & Sheffield, 1909), p. 190.

time.³⁹ Nevertheless, seating large numbers of guests remained a problem. Again, referring to the 1812 Feast, when the parlous state of the Company's finances severely curtailed the numbers invited to, 'only a few noblemen or gentlemen who are accustomed to present us with venison', Asline Ward observed the lack of numbers was in part compensated by better accommodation:

Instead of the squeezing which in older times incommoded the company, we had on this occasion plenty of elbow room, and every one might have a prime cut of the haunch, whereas before he was rejoiced if he could obtain an inferior part of the buck.⁴⁰

By the 1820s, complaints about poor and inadequate furnishings, and narrow and confined spaces were being increasingly voiced by the Town, which viewed the Hall as an inadequate vehicle for the status of the Company.⁴¹ A letter written to the *Sheffield Independent* in 1827 summarised the mounting displeasure at the accommodation provided by the Company and how it reflected poorly the status of the Company and the town.

Its exterior appearance is unworthy of the Company to whom it belongs, and its interior accommodations are not only bad, but disgraceful to a body of so much importance. Many distinguished guests attend the annual feast, and they are huddled together in one promiscuous heap of confusion, in a little room, where, like hungry expectants, they wait for dinner, without a seat to sit down on.⁴²

³⁹ Arnold Palmer, *Movable Feasts Changes in English Eating-Habits* (Oxford, 1984), p. 14.

⁴⁰ Bell and Leader, *Peeps in to the Past*, p. 190.

⁴¹ Roger Harper, 'An Architectural History of the Cutlers' Hall', in Clyde Binfield and David Hey, (eds) *Mesters to Masters A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire*, (Oxford, 1997), p. 117.

⁴² *Sheffield Independent*, 1 September 1827.

Such criticisms came at a time when more structured forms of etiquette were replacing politeness in the public sphere, and so the perceptions that shaped them may have differed from those for which the second hall was originally built to serve. Nevertheless, they are noteworthy as they reveal the physical form of one of the principal buildings of the region and how a long-established institution sought to publicly convey its authority and status. As the locale of the region's foremost social gathering, the presentation of the annual Cutlers' Feast attracted similar attention as it too was judged as a vehicle of the Company's power and status. Changing dining habits were accommodated by the blending of tradition and modernity against a background of how the Company saw itself and those from whom it sought patronage.

The Cutlers' Feast

Leader claims that the origins of the feast evolved from the time prior to the 1624 Act of Incorporation when the Cutlers' Jury concluded their sittings with a dinner. In accordance with subsequent Company byelaws, the outgoing Master had to render a 'true, just and plain account', which was followed by a 'dynner for those that were present att taking ye accomptt'.⁴³ The Revd Gatty favoured a more primitive origin, claiming the Feast evolved from the custom of the Earls of Shrewsbury, as Lords of the Manor, allowing 'apron

⁴³ Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers* vol. 1, pp. 196, 228; for a history of the feasts see: Julie MacDonald, 'The Cutlers' Feast', in C. Binfield and D. Hey, (eds) *Mesters to Masters A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire*, (Oxford, 1997).

men' to take for their feast as many venison bucks that had been turned into a meadow at Sheffield Park which they could catch and kill bare-handed.⁴⁴

The first reference to a meal in the Masters' Accounts appears in the year immediately after incorporation, in 1625 when 6s was charged, 'for the Companies dinners'.⁴⁵ By the early eighteenth century, the dinners were being described as feasts. Today, they are held in May, but entries in the diary of Sir John Resesby who attended the Feasts in 1677, 1679 and 1680 as thanks for his part in delaying the imposition of hearth taxes, show they were then held in late August. Possibly with a view to maximising the potential number of dignitaries attending the feasts, by the mid- eighteenth century the date had become fixed on the first Thursday of September to coincide with the start of the Sheffield assembly season, which was launched by the Mistress Cutlers' Assembly and, from 1776, the St Leger Race in nearby Doncaster.⁴⁶

As the Company sought increasingly to establish its prestige and status both locally and nationally, the format and rituals surrounding the feasts appear to have begun blending a mixture of old and new practices. In part, this may reflect the lateness at which the Company had been formed and, lacking the pomp and tradition of earlier guilds, it sought to construct its feasts from inherited, borrowed and created practices in an attempt to convey its status and affiliations to those it sought as patrons. Underpinning this notion perhaps, is an entry which appeared in the Masters' Account Book for 1681:

⁴⁴ Revd A. Gatty, *Past and Present Being a Biography of the Town During Eight Hundred Years* (Sheffield & London, 1873), p. 77.

⁴⁵ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Robert Sorsby, M.C. 1625.

⁴⁶ R. E. Leader, 'Old Sheffield Assemblies', *Sheffield Independent* 27 September 1902.

Charges of the Accompt & severall others goeing to Mr ? [sic] Brown to Hansworth to instruct him to inquire about the Custom of the Companies in London & attending him at his returne. 16s. 2d.⁴⁷

Having remained at a constant £2.10s.0d for the ten years prior to Brown's trip to London, the year following his return saw the charge for the feast rise dramatically to £6.10s 0d with the Town Trustees giving the same amount, the only time they contributed to a feast. The additional costs appears to have been accrued by the Master, Mr John Winter, as he personally travelled to invite the Duke of Norfolk to his feast along with Lords Clifford, Conyers of Aston, Castleton (of Sandbeck, responsible for local recruiting and allegedly the first to send venison to the Company) and Hexington, the Hon. Sydney Wortley-Montagu, Sir Henry Marwood (High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1675), Sir William Wyvill and Sir Ralph Knight. All were later to play a part in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and it is interesting to note that Sir John Reresby, a staunch Tory, was not invited.⁴⁸ Writing in his diary, Reresby makes it evident that perhaps with prompting from Mr Brown's visit to London, the Company had realised its future lay with the Whig cause. It also implies guests of standing were beginning to see the feast as a vehicle to help promote their own campaigns and causes.

⁴⁷ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Jonathan Webster, M.C. 1681.

⁴⁸ Julie MacDonald, 'The Cutlers' Feast', p. 228.

Sept 7th 1682 The Cutlers held their annual feast at Sheffield, to which (by the industry of Mr Gysop) I was not invited. This he did not only out of private revenge, but for a publique end, that he might have a better opportunity to persuade them that they had the obligation rather to my Lord Clifford for their late deliverance from paying hearth-money for their forges then to me, my Lord Clifford being ther present, and being brother to my Lord Hide, the chiefe Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. By this art he hoped to engage them to voat for my Lord Clifford and my Lord Fairfax should a Parlament be called, in opposition to sir John Kay, who was my friend.⁴⁹

Frank O’Gorman claims the increasing wealth and political power of the aristocratic

Whig oligarchy was partly due to the:

Harmony and collaboration that existed between it and the commercial middling orders that were not bearers of a new social ethic and [...] were not the agencies of a new vision of how society should be organized. On the contrary, the middling orders remained willing to accept "the continuing supremacy of a social and political system dominated by the aristocracy and gentry," mainly because this regime exercised its power through compromise and negotiation with the middling orders and was well disposed toward the finance, commerce, and industry in which their wealth and power were grounded.⁵⁰

Whilst the diffuse nature of both politeness and politics during the early part of the century allows Markku Peltonen to claim it is not possible to distinguish between Whig and Tory forms of politeness, Pocock and Klein emphasise the role of politeness in helping both Whigs and dissenters to advance their cause in urban environments.⁵¹ As Whigs became the

⁴⁹ *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, ed. Andrew Browning (2nd edn, London, 1991); Samuel Buck, *Yorkshire Sketchbook Reproduced from Lansdowne MS.914, British Library* (Wakefield, 1979), p. 276.

⁵⁰ F. O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832* (London, 1997), pp. xiii, 106, 108-109.

⁵¹ M. Peltonen, ‘Politeness and Whiggism, 1688-1732’, *The Historical Journal* 48.2 (2005), pp. 391-414; L. E. Klein, ‘Property and Politeness in the Early Eighteenth-Century Whig

focus of Company attention and many of the town's commercial activities were run by dissenters, it could be assumed that the careful ordering of the spatial and material culture of the Cutlers' Halls would have offered convivial, elegant and comfortable spaces associated with sustaining polite sociability. Notwithstanding, the Tory inclinations of the Company may have meant many of its members may have preferred to maintain traditional forms of association rather than modify the feasts as part of a drive to court favour with the Whigs.

At end of the seventeenth century invitations were extended to the local nobility and county members of parliament. The *Masters' Accounts* show members of the Company spent substantial time and money in inns and taverns deciding whom to invite, and who should accompany the Master when issuing invitations. Susan Whyman notes the right to visit the wealthy and powerful, and the duration and form taken by the visit were very public demonstrations of status which would have been widely commented upon.⁵² In 1726, 'expenses inviting nobility and gentry' amounted to £4.8s 0d but by 1742 it was decided a more economical and, perhaps more seemly approach, was to hire a horse for the beadle to deliver the invitations.⁵³

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Feast had become the region's foremost annual social event. Rivalry between Masters was intense as their status and munificence were

Moralists: The Case of the *Spectator*,' in John Brewer and Susan Staves, (eds), *Early Modern Conceptions of Property* (London, 1995), pp. 221–33; J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 235–9.

⁵² Susan E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England, The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 91-99.

⁵³ MacDonald, 'The Cutlers' Feast', p. 229.

measured by the quality of their guests and table. Notes left by Joseph Ward when Master Cutler in 1790 reveal the importance given to the prestige and size of the Feasts and the evident competition between Masters to have the most guests. 'Invited to Mr Nowill's Feast [MC 1788], Ladies 268, Gents 381. Invited to Mr Tillotson's Feast [MC 1789], Ladies 255, Gents 340. Invited to Joseph Ward's Feast [MC 1790], Ladies 340, Gents 390'.⁵⁴ Ward's guests included the Dukes of Devonshire, Norfolk and Leeds, Lord George Cavendish, his brothers and steward, Earls Strafford, Fitzwilliam, Effingham, and Bute, members of the local gentry: the Eyres of Hassop, Bagshawes of The Oakes, Shores of Meersbrook and Dronfield, Sitwells of Renishaw, Rhodes of Barlborough, Parkers of Woodthorpe, the Tookers of Rotherham, the Steads and Roebucks. Representing the town were the Church Burgesses, the Town Trustees, an array of local tradesmen and clergy together with Officers, select Freemen, Past Masters of the Company.⁵⁵

Perhaps to ensure their invitation, others soon adopted Lord Castleton's practice of donating venison to the feast, although purchases for venison by the Company appear regularly throughout the Masters' Accounts as preparations were made for the feasts. As thanks, the Company often sent a gift to the household steward for delivering the buck, 'pd Thomas Rigby 2s. 6d. for a Shoulder Knife for ye Keeper of Hardwick Park'.⁵⁶ Joseph Ward's notes suggest a standard tariff with every buck or doe meriting half a guinea, a knife and razor whilst 'all other smaller presents as Game, Fruit &c. according to value or as you

⁵⁴ Cutlers' Company Archive: Notebook of Joseph Ward Master Cutler 1790.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Joseph Nutt, M.C. 1706.

please'.⁵⁷ Susan Whyman describes how the giving of venison was an important symbol of landed hierarchy, power and patronage. It was also a form of economy and the dividing and giving of smaller portions by recipients enabled them, in turn, to act as patrons and participate in a complex web of mutuality and hierarchical paternalism.⁵⁸

As the status and number of guests grew, so did the quality of the table and the venison was supplemented with an increasing array of exotic foodstuffs and table decorations. The Accounts show cases of knives and forks were regularly dispatched as gifts to those whose favour the Company sought and, from 1709 regular purchases of cutlery begin to appear for use in the hall.⁵⁹ Held for the first time in the new hall, the Duke of Devonshire's Christmas feast of 1726 occasioned the purchase of three dozen chairs, a similar number of knives, new pewter and a quantity of glasses.⁶⁰ In the following year additional sets of knives, glasses, table linen and a large oval table alongside deals for a quantity of long tables were purchased. The use of cutlery around oval tables and chairs suggests the potential accommodation of new dining arrangements in the hall. Jelly and 'sillabub' glasses, 'delph plates and 'toast mugs' made their first appearance in 1732-33,

⁵⁷ Cutlers' Company Archive: Notebook of Joseph Ward Master Cutler 1790.

⁵⁸ Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England*, pp. 14-33. Evidence also indicates Masters re-sold gifts of venison. Sir George Sitwell records when clerk to the Company, the attorney, Francis Sitwell purchased venison at 5s, from the Master Cutler for use at his home at Bridgehouses in Sheffield, Sir George Reresby, Sitwell, *The Hurts of Haldworth and their Descendants at Savile Hall, The Ickles and Hesley Hall* (Oxford, 1930), p. 257.

⁵⁹ 'Ffor a dozen of large case knives and fforks and a box to present to my Lord Castleton, 19/-', Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Robert Nicholls, M.C. 1682; 'pd Jo: Oats for 4 doz knives and 4 doz Forks at 9/- per dozen also to Henry Middleton for ye same Quantity at 3/6 ye dozen', Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: John Downes, M.C. 1709 (D1/1).

⁶⁰ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Thomas Radforth, M.C. 1726.

although quantities again indicate they were not intended for use at the feasts.⁶¹ In 1737, Master Cutler Joseph Cawton acquired eleven paintings for the hall and the following year 'red skins for the forms and seats' were purchased together with Oughtibridge's 'prospect of Sheffield'.⁶² In 1747, the M. C., Edward Windle caused excitement by introducing table decorations made from artificial flowers at a cost of 5s. 11d.⁶³

In 1749, the *Sheffield Local Register* noted that the venison was accompanied by rump of beef, fowls, ham, pies and puddings, hare loin veal, bread, butter, roots, ale, punch and dressing for the Feast.⁶⁴ Lehmann notes that by the second half of the eighteenth century, pies and puddings were increasingly seen by the urban middle sorts as outdated forms of cuisine inherited from the seventeenth century, although they remained popular as tavern and country food.⁶⁵ However, in 1774, John Kaye, a Liverpool merchant, presented a live turtle to the Company invoking a new status laden tradition of turtle soup.⁶⁶ The popularity of turtle soup may have been enhanced by the appearance from 1755 of recipes on how to prepare it in the works of Hannah Glasse amongst others.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Thomas Wilson, M.C. 1732; John Ward, M.C. 1733.

⁶² Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: Joshua Cawton, M.C. 1737; Joseph Shepherd, M.C. 1738.

⁶³ Sheffield Archives: Jackson Collection JC 1168 SCA, E. Windle, Booke.

⁶⁴ John Thomas, *The Local Register and Chronological Account of Occurrences and Facts connected with the Town and Neighbourhood of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1830), p. 44.

⁶⁵ Gilly Lehmann, *The British Housewife, Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Totnes, 2003), p. 245.

⁶⁶ Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Massachusetts, 1997), p. 121.

⁶⁷ Troy Bickham, 'Eating the Empire: Intersections of food, cookery and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Past and Present*, 198 (Feb, 2008). Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: George Brittain, M.C. 1774.

Perhaps more importantly was the difference in understandings between venison, which owed its status to the fact it was only legally accessible to the gentry and turtle, which could be acquired by anyone who could afford it. Gilly Lehmann notes how 'venison could be seen as representing tradition, the old order of rural society, whereas the turtle was an exotic import, a product of the commercial empire'.⁶⁸ As such, turtle would appropriately reflect the Company's growing international trade and perhaps a growing confidence and symbiotic relationship with its patrons.

Bills produced for Joseph Ward's Feast in 1790 reveal the consumption of large quantities of raspberries, cherries, hartycchoakes, tatoes, horseradish, currant cakes, mushroom ketchup, rose water, beef suet, calfs' heads, eggs, turkeys, fowls, sides of lamb, udders, rump beef, sheep tongues, loin veal, and mutton. Now a feature of the Feast, turtle soup was augmented with calf's head cooked 'turtle fashion' as a way of reducing the cost of this high status dish.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the cost of Feasts rose markedly. From the 6s required to feed all those present at the accompt in 1625, the bill had grown to £7 10s 0d by 1723, then to £50 by 1771 and £200 by 1800. L. du Garde Peach calculated that by 1805, more than 30% of the Company's income was being spent on the Feasts. In 1808, the Minutes noted the abrupt termination as 'from the present state of funds the Company recommends to discontinue the Feasts for the year 1809', and for the following three years a greatly reduced dinner was publicly advertised with tickets sold to all at 15/- per head.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, p. 259.

⁶⁹ 'Notebook of Joseph Ward'; Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, p.258.

⁷⁰ L. du Garde Peach, *Company of Cutlers*, p. 13.

An article in the *Sheffield Iris* of 1821 wrote of the decline of ‘this hospitable feast [...] that fifteen or twenty years ago [...] was the greatest venison feast in the country’.⁷¹

During the course of the eighteenth century, the time at which it became fashionable for polite and genteel societies to dine began to move from around noon to between 3pm and 5pm and then still later into the evening. When Sir John Reresby attended the Feast in 1680, there was sufficient time left in the day so that, ‘in the afternoon the burgesses of the town invited me and all my company to a treat of wine at a tavern’.⁷² Feasts at this time appear to have started sometime around late morning or noon. By 1780, 4pm had become the most common time for genteel society to sit for dinner and it had also become commonplace to spend seven or eight hours seated at the table with numerous toasts and speeches following the meal.⁷³ Despite increasing unpopularity amongst some of their guests, many London liveried companies persisted with the habit of sitting down early to dinner. Inviting Boswell to join him at a dinner at the Painter Stainers in 1786, Sir Joshua Reynolds warned, ‘if you have a mind to go I will call on you about two o’clock, the black-guards dine at half an hour after’.⁷⁴ Although little evidence has survived to indicate the time at which feasts commenced, following the example perhaps of London livery companies, the Company appears to have maintained the practice of an early start.⁷⁵

The first available indication of timing is for the Feast of 1808 when, invitations sent on

⁷¹ *The Sheffield Iris*, 11 September 1821.

⁷² Browning, *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, p. 200. The Burgery Accounts record, ‘For wyne, bear, and tobacco for Sir John Rearsby and other justices and servants, and hay and corn for their horses, £4.2.6’, John Daniel Leader, (ed.), *Records of the Burgery*, p. 21.

⁷³ Palmer, *Movable Feasts*, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 223.

behalf of the Master, Ebenezer Rhodes stated, 'Dinner on Table at half past two', the same hour as that favoured by the Painter Stainers some twenty years earlier. When, in 1787, it was observed that 'many [guests at the feast] did not leave the rooms till near midnight', it is probable that the growing number of toasts and speeches had kept them seated at the table for many hours, rather than dinner having commenced much later in the day.⁷⁶

Leader notes with thirty-one toasts to get through at Thomas Champion's Feast of 1822, 'it was necessary to begin early and to end late'.⁷⁷ For the middling sort, the times at which meals were taken could be of great concern as lateness, together with the haute cuisine of the elite, were associated by some with notions of Mandevillian indulgence and luxury. *Hell upon Earth*, a satire published in 1729 juxtaposed 'innocent people of more Merit than Fortune' who ate 'homely, wholesome food' at noon, with the metropolitan 'Fortunate and Great' who sat at three to consume 'Meals of Pomp and ceremony, attended by sumptuous side-Boards, Sycophants and little Sincerity'.⁷⁸

Whether to broaden and strengthen its role in the town, or convey notions of gentility and paternalism, the Company increased the size and scope of the Feast from one day to three at some point during the mid-eighteenth century. Traditionally, the role of the Mistress Cutler (the wife of the Master) had been to oversee the purchase, preparation and serving of the Feast, a role for which for which she had traditionally received payment.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Sheffield Register*, 8 September 1787.

⁷⁷ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 231.

⁷⁸ Anon, *Hell upon earth* (1729) pp. 6-7, 28-31 in Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, pp. 356-357.

⁷⁹ 'June 28, 1747, Pd. Madam Cutler her four quarters annuity as by rect N32, £6.15.0', *Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790*: Edward Windle, M.C. 1747.

Increasingly, the task of feeding and entertaining close to one thousand people was assigned to a number of local caterers, partly as the Hall had limited catering facilities and partly due to the increasing status of the Mistress Cutlers and their reluctance to combine the roles of cooks and servants with that of hostess. On the day following the main Feast, a new event was instituted for the Mistress Cutler and her guests, after which they opened the Assembly season by attending the Mistress Cutlers Ball.

In 1760, the local press noted that following William Webster's Feast, 'A splendid Dinner was provided for the Ladies, which was honoured by them in a Manner Superior to any thing of the same kind before, not only in the number of them, but in the Dress and Ornaments, in which they shone'.⁸⁰ In her commentary on the Whig Kit-Kat Club, Ophelia Field describes how fruit, vegetables, silverware and drinking glasses, 'symbolically, a balancing of the Club's masculinity with more "polite" feminine tastes', occurred after the Whig ladies had been invited to Barn Elms, Jacob Tonson's summer home and venue of Kit-Kat dinners.⁸¹ As with medieval guilds, women could not hold office or be a full member of the Company, but they were often allowed to attend feasts in acknowledgement of the considerable economic support they gave to family enterprises.⁸² Although the sexes attended separate events, the introduction of a feast specifically for women in the mid-eighteenth century reflects changes that were taking place in other all-male societies as

⁸⁰ *The Public Advertiser (Sheffield)* No 21 9th- 16th September 1760.

⁸¹ Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Kat Club, Friends Who Imagined a Nation* (London, 2008), pp. 126-127.

⁸² Kay E. Lacy, 'Women and Work in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century London' in *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England*, Lindsay Charles and Lorna Duffin (eds), (Beckenham, 1985), p. 57.

they sought to harmonise the cultural values of Enlightenment thinking with their traditions. From around 1760, for example, English freemasons began to invite women 'to participate in a number of Masonic ceremonies including Grand Lodge feasts, [and] balls'.⁸³ By widening the scope of its Feasts, the Company was acknowledging a change in the social order that relied less on hierarchy and more on fostering interpersonal relationships based on mutual collaboration.

Perhaps as a further move towards the fostering of personal relations between those with shared commercial interests a third feast was introduced on the Saturday for the journeymen and employees of the Sheffield Master. With entertainment provided and the poor allowed to take away any surpluses, the third feast could often be a mixture of decorum and rough behaviour.

On the Saturday the Workmen employed by the Master Cutler as well as those employed in any other branch of business besides Cutling went to the Hall and partook of what was remanying after two days Feast- they then put on there best Clothes as well as their best Manners for the Occasion – at night the remainder of the Victuals was given to the poor and such Crowding, pushing and thrusting to gain admission you seldom see not to be expected even at the Gallery door of the Theater at the Door Keepers [sic] Benefit Token night.⁸⁴

⁸³ Robert Peter, "The Fair Sex" in a "Male Sect", in Maire Fedelma Cross (ed.) *Gender and fraternal Orders in Europe, 1300-2000* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 149. 'A ball and cold collation followed by country dancing until 5am, with plenty of the best wines and choicest fruits was given by the Sheffield freemasons in June 1787', *Sheffield Register* 25 June 1787.

⁸⁴ Sheffield Archives: MD 3624 C. Dixon, 'Recollections and Reminiscences of the Dixon family and other Familys in Connection with them with a brief sketch of some of the Nobility, Gentry, Merchants & Tradesmen, Sculptors, Poets, Historians and Mechanics, Philanthropists, Eccentrics and Characters with an Account of the Rise and progress of some of the Principle Trades in the Town of Sheffield and the Neighbourhood with a Glossary of words and some old Sayings & maxims a list of Country Feasts Wakes and Statutes with an Account of the Customs prevalent at Holidays and Public Occasions', (2 vols, 1847), p.299.

The workmen evidently valued the invitation, providing sufficient provisions were offered in recognition of their work. The diary and journal of Charles Dixon, a candlestick-maker, record the offence caused by the meagre offerings given by Samuel Wilson in his year as Master in 1786.

Mr Wilson was of a very penurious turn and the Mens' Feast was scantily provided which caused great complaint. The year after by way of burlesque the Workmen ordered a Dinner (Ashforth & Co (?)) [sic] to make amends for there should have been Feast the year before they got Joe Mather to write a song on the occasion of which the following is a part:

The Feast concluded mighty flat
No scrap was left for Dog or Cat
In tears stood every Mouse & Rat
So pinching was this beggars Brat
Old Harry take her hence...⁸⁵

The Annual Feasts were a high point in the social calendar of the town, providing a time of holiday, fairs and additional income for shopkeepers.⁸⁶ They were of importance not just to the Company, but also to the wider town and neighbourhood as a demonstration of the Company's prestige and the importance of the metal trades to the region. Hence, a mix of orchestrated activities and impromptu public celebrations within the town accompanied the private ceremonies that took place within the halls. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries it was the tradition for the principal guests from outside the town to be escorted to the Hall. Recording his attendance at the Feast on August 25 1677 as

⁸⁵ Dixon, 'Recollections and Reminiscences' p. 299. Samuel Wilson was a partner in Messrs Ashforths.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 294-297.

thanks for his delaying the imposition of Hearth Taxes, Sir John Reresby (1634–1689), of Thrybergh Hall, recorded:

I went to dine at Sheffield at the Cutlers' Feast, being invited by the corporation, where I was received by the Master and his assistants in the street with loud musick, the shouts of the rabble, and with ringing of bells; and being after conducted into the Town [Cutlers?] Hall, was entertained with a very good dinner and great plenty of wine.⁸⁷

And again in 1680, being prevailed upon to attend despite the Company having reneged on its promise to 'give their votes for the knights of the shire as I should direct them',

I went with my wife and family to the Cutlers feast at Sheffield with some neighbours I took with me to the number of near thirty hors. The Master and wardens attended by an infinite croud, mett me at the entrace into the town with musique and hoboys. I light from my coach, and went afoot with the Master to the hall, wher we had an extraordinary dinner.⁸⁸

The Feast day was taken as a public holiday and, as it grew from one to three days, so did celebrations within the town. The accounts of Charles Dixon are valuable as his descriptions of the feast days offer a workman's view of events to be set alongside side those who attended and reported upon the Feasts. Jugglers, bear dancing, musicians, and men selling cakes, gingerbread, and tofts (marbles) from net baskets filled the burial ground and narrow lane between the Hall and the Church.

⁸⁷ Browning, *Memoirs of Sir John Reresby*, p. 127.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 186, 200.

The Cutlers' Feast was observed as a great holiday, the bells were kept constantly ringing during the three days it lasted, booths were erected in the church-yard, High-street, and Church-street, for the sale of fruit, spices, &c., and all business was generally suspended.⁸⁹

From around 1709, the Installation of the new Master was followed by a sermon in the parish Church. As well as publicly aligning the Company with the Church and Tory party, this generated a new spectacle for the town as the Company processed from the Hall through the stalls to the church and back before starting their Feast. Dixon gives a vivid account of the procession, noting that interest in the new Master was considerable as, on their return to the Hall, 'some Thousands had assembled to look at Him and the Visitors that came to Dine'.⁹⁰

Guests could access the Hall only by making their way through the crowds, which had to be held in check by the town constables. The majority of guests arrived on foot and only the gentry and nobility arrived in coaches, though Dixon notes Sedan chairs were popular especially on Ladies' Night. Those known to the crowd faced instant appraisals.

see there is that is not her of Wor---- shes really coming up in World.....
well Oil be hanged if that is not her at livd at -----Servant...see thee, see
thee, isn't that a pratty Cap that cost sum brass, - or say see thee that's arr
...Mesters Wife Shees rare an Fineaye then getten it ole out of poor
Mens boanes⁹¹ –

⁸⁹ 'Anniversary of the Cutlers' Feast', *Sheffield Courant*, 3 October 1771.

⁹⁰ Dixon, 'Recollections and Reminiscences', p. 299.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

Increasingly, the practice evolved of outside caterers providing the food which became as widely commented upon as were the guests as each arrived at the Hall.

The Dinner was generally cooked at the Bakers Shops in the neighbourhood – at James Walkers, High Street, Geo Pearce Far Gate and Geo Woollens Church Lane and when the dinners was carrying in to the Cutlers Hall the Children had fine sport, Hurra a Pig etc another cheer Hares, Hurra a Goose, see the Whats that (Venison) and What a Great Pye – Venison Pasty etc.⁹²

On the evening of the main feast day, workmen and masters often held their own candlelight feasts in inns and taverns. The feasts heralded the start of working by candlelight and Dixon notes masters would either pay for their workers' supper or contribute towards them. Continuing well into the nineteenth century, this event was that described by Samuel Roberts as a 'kind of saturnalia...where the workmen, the workwomen, the masters and the masters of other trades connected with them, were all Hail fellows, well met!' and which, claiming drunkenness and profanity, he sought to abolish.⁹³

A steady flow of bills charged to the Company by its suppliers indicates behaviour inside the Hall could be as rough and bawdy as those outside. Bills for breakages and repairs to tableware and furnishings regularly appeared in the Masters' Accounts alongside claims for the loss of spoons, knives, forks, salts, glasses and even candlesticks, evidently stolen by

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁹³ Samuel Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains of the late Samuel Roberts* (London, 1849), p. 13; Samuel Smith, 'Roberts, Samuel (1763–1848)', rev. C. A. Creffield, first published 2004; online edn, Jan 2007 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23772> [accessed 14 April 2011].

guests.⁹⁴ An incident described by Thomas Asline Ward suggests the Cutler's Feasts were criticised for their unruliness, but that elsewhere, inappropriate behaviour was not uncommon. Amongst fears of a French invasion in 1805, Asline Ward records how, as a volunteer officer in the local militia, he and fellow officers were invited to dine with the Lord Mayor and Corporation, and some 150 guests at the Mansion House in Doncaster.

We were invited for four, but it was nearly 5 before we sat down to dine. A most sumptuous and elegant table was set out, with all you could wish for, sweets, fruit, etc: and notwithstanding the boasted politeness of Doncaster, there seemed to be as much manoeuvring for delicacies as at the Cutlers' Feast, which is so branded for its rudeness.⁹⁵

Ward's experience highlights how the expectations determined by spatial and material culture did not always ensure the appropriate outcome. Whether in meetings of the Kit-Kat club or dinner at Doncaster's Mansion House, the boisterous behaviour common to masculine conviviality could not always be constrained by polite environs and, as Helen Berry notes, in some case politeness may have been seen 'as a potentially repressive social force that eighteenth-century men and women, given the opportunity, took peculiar pleasure in transgressing'.⁹⁶

Appointed on an annual basis, there was little opportunity for individual Masters substantially to change the presentation of the feasts, even if they had wished to do so. The

⁹⁴ Accounts of the Masters Cutler 1625-1790: John Tooker, M.C. 1727; Samuel Wainwright, M.C. 1731; Joseph Cawton, M.C. 1737; Joseph Shepherd, M.C. 1738.

⁹⁵ Bell and Leader, *Peeps in to the Past*, p. 3.

⁹⁶ Helen Berry, 'Rethinking politeness in eighteenth century England, Moll King's coffee house and the significance of 'flash talk'', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11.6 (2001), p. 81.

annual display of largesse, status, and tradition put on by the Company formed an important role in sustaining a complex array of economic networks and inter-dependencies that shaped the metal trades whilst the rivalry between successive Masters meant each used his feast as a vehicle to enhance his own status and business interests. Personal guests were invited as a means of returning hospitality, striking deals, establishing new contacts and endorsing old ones. A focus on trying to outdo their predecessors in the lavishness of their entertainment meant few were willing to introduce practices that could not be assessed against familiar benchmarks, and few appear to have seen the need to do so.

Against this background it could be claimed that the Company failed to fully move from a world based upon deference and hierarchy to one of mutual respect and collaboration. The revolt by Freeman against the authority of the Company in the latter part of the eighteenth century was the culmination of its failure to remove restrictive practices and embrace new ideas and working relationships with its members. Lack of endowments, limited income and remoteness from other practicing guilds meant the Company lacked the stimulation or means to fully transform itself and engage the spatial and material culture of politeness to promote its aims. Yet, the Company undertook twice to update and improve its halls employing simple classical forms to lend status to its facades and creating a series of spaces to accommodate various forms of sociability. Through their timing, content, form, presentation and location, the communal taking of food and drink in eighteenth-century England had the ability to express the identity of participants and foster mutual relationships.

Whilst funds did not allow the lavish displays of furniture found in some of the York or London livery companies, the Masters Accounts show the constant purchase, or hiring, of fashionable table goods and new foods for Feasts. Like many other institutions of its time, the Cutlers' Company blended old and new practices in ways it best thought supported its aims and identity. In developing its Feasts, the Company focused on its traditions, its networks, and its associations with Sheffield and the wider realm of Hallamshire, but it also showed an awareness of how fashions were changing which could enable more sociable forms of commensality and how this could help foster relations with of its Whig patrons. Care was needed to avoid the artifice and insincerity in personal relationships that excessive politeness could engender. The Company had to balance expressions of status, authority and power with maintaining harmonious relationships in the pursuit of its commercial aims. A polite urban code that acknowledged competition, mobility and conspicuous display did not always lend itself to those who were more familiar with the traditional forms of boisterous conviviality practiced amongst kith, kin and colleagues. Yet, efforts were made and although the procession of annual masters meant expressions of politeness were rarely consistent, its influence played an important role in the spatial and material culture of the Cutlers' Halls and the ways in which its Feasts were conducted. Adapting new practices, even if heavily modified to accommodate local understandings, meant the Company maintained its position status. Incorporating politeness into its culture may have given the Company the stability and strength to manage the political, religious and social complexities of commercial and civic life as it pursued its aims.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England*, pp. 106-109.

The Sheffield Assemblies

As Rosemary Sweet observes, by the end of the eighteenth century, the spread of assemblies, theatres, and libraries had brought about considerable change to the built environment and services offered by most towns, but did not always bring them recognition as centres of politeness. As much as the style of building and the quality of the town in which they were held, perceptions of politeness were determined by the quality of attendance at assemblies. Thus, Mrs Lybbe Powys was surprised at the quality of the assemblies held at Chesterfield whilst those in Newcastle were described as too narrow for polite company.⁹⁸

In contrast with the public pageantry and tradition displayed in the Cutlers' Feasts, assemblies were new forms of association to which access was strictly controlled and the intrusions of street life and plebeian culture held at bay.⁹⁹ Whilst care was taken to acknowledge and respect existing hierarchies, assemblies provided a means for subscribers to break free from their defined personas and parish obligations to form new associations supported and sustained by new behaviour. Held weekly or monthly, assemblies were locales where rising professionals, merchants and local gentry could regularly meet, where reputations were established, alliances cemented, and distinctions between participants and non-participants enforced. Peter Borsay describes them as key locales for hosting polite entertainments and for overt personal display, and Lawrence Klein claims they 'provided

⁹⁸ Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 361.

⁹⁹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 159, 161, 242.

new sites for polite and heterogeneous interaction'.¹⁰⁰ Rules of conduct, dress codes, and the pricing and availability of tickets strictly regulated access. Acceptance into such circles often depended on a mixture of correct performance, family connection, social standing and wealth. Of assemblies held in eighteenth-century Delaware, Richard Bushman remarks that:

Though the membership encompassed a larger group than any one individual's circle of friends, the assemblies were self-consciously and resolutely exclusive. ...The assemblies enabled the chosen group to recognize one another and to come together to enjoy pleasures attainable only in a select and genteel company. Exclusivity implied a desire to create an artificial social environment, one that could not exist without consciously denying admission to coarse and vulgar people.¹⁰¹

Yet, not all assemblies were witness to polite behaviour. When describing how John Macky viewed Shrewsbury's coffeehouses as no more than alehouses with airs and graces, Rosemary Sweet points out that simply commandeering titles associated with politeness did not ensure its performance, neither did it guarantee that locally contrived definitions corresponded to metropolitan understandings.¹⁰²

During his tour of the country between 1724 and 1726, Daniel Defoe described assemblies as a, 'new mode [] so fatally now in vogue'.¹⁰³ Early assemblies were often accommodated in a variety of makeshift premises including barns, inns, and private houses

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 150-151; Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 879.

¹⁰¹ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁰² Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', p. 357.

¹⁰³ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro' the whole Island of Great Britain 1724-26* (London, 1962), vol. 1, p. 115.

until funds could be raised and space found for designated rooms. Often attached to town halls, theatres or even cockpits, custom-built assemblies began to appear in spa towns, resorts and the larger regional centres during the first half of the eighteenth century. The first recorded assemblies in Sheffield were held in 1733 in two rooms hired from the Boys' Charity School. Here, according to Hunter, 'the company enjoyed conversation or the mazy dance by light, not of wax, which beamed from sconces of tin'.¹⁰⁴ Leader believes the arrival of assemblies, shortly followed by many of the subscribers supporting a racecourse, was greeted with a mix of pleasure and a Puritanical horror of dancing and gambling.

The Puritan sentiment of the town, already scandalized by indulgence, under such conditions, in worldly gaieties, experienced an added shock of horror when the Assembly subscribers established a racecourse on Crook's Moor. [...] They seemed to the disciples of Wesley, to be a direct challenge by the world, the flesh and the Devil. Much therefore, that was best in local life not only held severely aloof, but strenuously denounced.¹⁰⁵

Samuel Roberts made much of the alleged practice of forcing boys from their beds to make way for dancers and, implying the practice continued for thirty years until dedicated premises were built, Leader and Walton endorsed his criticisms. However, a sale plan for the Angel Inn (q.v.) shows it provided space for assemblies and it is likely the facilities it could offer would have made use of the Boys' School short-lived.¹⁰⁶ In 1762, the sale of shares at £100 raised £3,000 for a 'handsome suite of rooms', in Norfolk St with

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York* (London, 1819), p. 125.

¹⁰⁵ R.E. Leader, 'Old Sheffield Assemblies', *Sheffield Independent*, 27 September 1902.

¹⁰⁶ Roberts, *Autobiography and Select Remains*, p. 18; Mary Walton, *Sheffield: Its Story and Its Achievements* (Sheffield, 1948), p. 104; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 113; T.W. Hall, *The Fairbanks of Sheffield 1688-1848* (Sheffield, 1932), pp. 118-119.

space for dancing, card playing, suppers, balls, and concerts.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, an adjoining theatre capable of holding 800 people was built. In 1764, the newly opened rooms were described by the Revd Goodwin as, '20 yards long and 9 wide, has three elegant lustres of cut glass, besides side-branches, and there are a card-room, and other convenient offices belonging to it'.¹⁰⁸ Classical stone columns decorated with Ionic capitals were added to the front of the building in 1773. In 1835, Samuel Lewis noted 'the theatre and assembly-rooms...form an extensive building of brick, handsomely ornamented with stone and having a central portico supporting a pediment... the assembly-rooms are elegantly fitted up'.¹⁰⁹



Figure 3.2 Sheffield Assembly Rooms c1890, Sheffield City Libraries s01621

¹⁰⁷ Leader, 'Old Sheffield Assemblies'.

¹⁰⁸ E. Goodwin, 'Natural History of Sheffield' in *Gentleman's Magazine* xxxiv (London, April 1764).

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Lewis, 'Sheffield' in *A Topographical dictionary of England* (London, 1835) vol. 4.

Considerable attention was given to the care of chandeliers and the creation of a pleasing and well-lit ambience to show both furnishings and dancers at their best. Payments were made to carpenters, grocers, confectioners, druggists, and victuallers such as James Watson of the Tontine, whose red and white port, from which negus was made, cost 6s 8d a gallon. After covering these bills and paying the fees, ale and porter of the musicians, the caretakers for collecting subscriptions, cleaning the building, maintain the chandeliers, lighting the candles, and advertisements in the *Sheffield Register*, the assemblies generally operated with a comfortable balance which was sometimes used for a supper at the end of the season.¹¹⁰

Assemblies in the region varied in size and importance according to the range of activities they offered and attendance they could attract. Aiming to attract the regular influx of gentry attending the races, the Doncaster Assemblies were held in the Mansion House, erected between 1745 and 1748 at a cost of £8000, and which also doubled as the mayor's residence. In Leeds, the pre-1726 assembly rooms were abandoned in 1756 and activities moved to the White Cloth Hall. From 1785, in Pontefract space was found in the Town Hall, and in the Free School in Barnsley. In Rotherham, from 1743 the Grammar School was used, whilst Wakefield enjoyed facilities adjoining the White Hart Hotel, and Chesterfield had its own assembly room.¹¹¹ The Sheffield Assemblies were one of the few outside York to be provided with designated and purpose built rooms.

¹¹⁰ R. E. Leader, 'Old Sheffield Assemblies'.

¹¹¹ K. Grady, *The Georgian Public Buildings of Leeds and the West Riding* (Leeds, 1989); Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 336-339.

The size of the Sheffield Assemblies is difficult to gauge as strangers could buy tickets on the night without subscribing and subscription did not always guarantee attendance. The number of subscribers in 1747-48 was 55, a further 48 joined in the 1748-49 season and another 74 in 1749-50. Of fifty-two named subscribers in 1747-48, twenty were men who each could bring three ladies, so that it is likely most assemblies had between the minimum of fifty and two hundred in attendance, with special events such as the Cutlers Feast Assembly attracting considerably more. Strangers were turned away from the seventh subscription concert in October 1787 and only subscribers could attend events at the time of the Feast and the races. Attracting subscribers from Worskop, Wakefield, Chesterfield, Leeds, and Derbyshire, the Sheffield Assemblies enabled subscribers to socialise with those from beyond their immediate circle. In turn, local subscribers attended assemblies at York, Doncaster, London and Bath.¹¹²

In Sheffield, the season opened with the Cutler's Feast Assembly in September and ran throughout the winter, with special assemblies held during the race season. Held monthly on the Thursday nearest the full moon, fifty subscribers were required before an assembly could commence. A conductor was annually elected by the subscribers to keep order and enforce the rules These stated the room should be lit at half-past six and the minuet should commence at seven. One hour was allowed for tea and negus at nine-o'clock, and no country-dances were to be called after twelve-o'clock, 'after which time

¹¹² Sheffield Archives: MD5651/1, Miscellaneous records relating to a Sheffield solicitor's office, Sheffield assembly and dancing assembly, accounts and lists of subscribers 1784-1789, Dancing assembly Nov 5th 1789; E.A.S., 'Old Sheffield Assemblies', *Newspaper Cuttings Relating to Sheffield*, vol. 15, pp. 160 -166.

minuets may be danced promiscuously until one, when the music will be withdrawn'. The conductor could decide that gentlemen who were strangers should be given precedence over regular subscribers when dancing minuets. Ladies were to arrange themselves for country dances according to the number on their ticket and those who chose to stand up and dance were to take their places as soon as the music starts and are not to sit down until the couple who stood last had passed them. The rules relating to dancing were not to apply to persons of title or brides.¹¹³

The enforcement of rules and the cost of the subscriptions helped regulate access to the assemblies. Following the example of other provincial assemblies which many local families attended, Sheffield subscribers paid an annual fee of a guinea which gave them four tickets for the admission of one gentleman and three ladies to all assemblies in the year, excepting those during the races and the Cutlers' Feast. Each subscriber had to pay a further 2s 6d per night for admittance rising to 5s during the races and Cutlers' Feast. Additional events such as the weekly card assemblies were advertised at 1s 6d for men and 1s for ladies.¹¹⁴ Non-subscribers were charged 5s per head entry, whilst tea cost a further 6d. Additional events such as the Card Assembly and Ball held in August 1787 were charged to subscribers at a further 2s 6d.¹¹⁵ In Derby, the rules forbade the presence of shopkeepers, attorneys or clerks, whilst Bath and Lincoln refused to permit tradesmen. In

¹¹³ E. A. S., 'History of the Sheffield Assemblies', *Sheffield Independent*, Saturday, 28 November 1846.

¹¹⁴ At Tunbridge Wells, gentlemen were charged 2/6 and ladies 1/- to enter assemblies. At Bath, 2gns bought a ticket to a single assembly, which admitted three people, Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance*, p. 154.

¹¹⁵ *Sheffield Register*, Saturday, 4 August 1787.

Sheffield, the rules forbade entrance to apprentices and ‘clerks to attorneys, excepting those who shall be in the last year of their clerkships’.¹¹⁶

In the early days of the 1730s, Leader believed the assemblies:

Undoubtedly exercised an influence for good. If the imitation of more distinguished places and people was poor and shoddy, it at least had the effect of setting an example of more polished manners, of infusing some sense of courtesy and of suggesting that the be-all and end-all of existence was not represented by days spent at the factory or the counter, with evenings passed in the bar-parlour of an inn.¹¹⁷

In contrast, contemporary reports suggest behaviour at the Sheffield Assemblies may have been more polished than the rustic provincialism implied by Leader. To celebrate the opening of the new theatre and assembly rooms in 1763, the Duchess of Norfolk attended a performance at the theatre where she, ‘was pleased to express great satisfaction, at seeing so polite an audience of Ladies and Gentlemen’. The following evening, she ‘attended a grand ball at the New Assembly Room: the company at which was very numerous, and made a very fine and brilliant appearance’.¹¹⁸ Opinions gleaned from contemporary newspapers require some caution, as the practice of eulogising events upon which they reported was a means of instilling local pride and increasing circulation. However, they provide insight into contemporary perceptions of the events they describe and offer a balance to later more critical observations that viewed activities in the light of metropolitan ideals.

¹¹⁶ E. A. S., ‘History of the Sheffield Assemblies’.

¹¹⁷ R.E. Leader, ‘Sheffield Past & Present’, *Newspaper Cuttings relating to Sheffield*, vol. 15 (1902), p. 135.

¹¹⁸ *The Sheffield Public Advertiser*, 4 January 1763.

Many of those attending these events frequented assemblies across the country and their experiences would have helped shape behaviour in Sheffield. Opened during the 1732 race week, the premier assemblies in the north of England were held at York. Writing to his cousin, Jane Sacheverell in London in 1735, the attorney and clerk to the Cutlers' Company Francis Sitwell, lamented his lack of companionship as local families attracted by the new facilities had dispersed to York for the season, 'Where abundance of our neighbouring gentry have took into their heads to rendezvous this winter, where they find good and cheap provisions, operas, plays, musick meetings, and I know not what.'¹¹⁹ Writing to her sister Mrs Elliott, of Norfolk St in Sheffield after attending the wedding of a favourite nephew in Hackney in November 1777, Mrs David Cooper, wife of a Sheffield ironmonger described how, following the wedding dinner for twenty-one at the Mare Maid, they 'had a dance in ye New Assembly Room and drank tea at 7 o' clock'.¹²⁰ Susannah Milner, daughter of John Walton of Thurlstone, and wife of ironmaster Gamaliel Milner of Attercliffe, ensured her familiarity with procedure by owning the fifth edition of the popular *New Bath Guide*. Published by Dodsley of Pall-Mall in 1767, it contained, 'A series of epistles, elegant, satiric and occasionally scurrilous, relating the adventures of a provincial family exposed to the various seductions and follies of Bath'.¹²¹

Leader claims the leader of the assemblies was Mrs Elizabeth, or Madam Parkin who inherited a substantial inheritance from commerce and used some of it to move from the

¹¹⁹ Sitwell, *Hurts of Haldworth*, p. 253.

¹²⁰ Sheffield Archives: Stephenson Collection Step C 1-67 LD 1577, Elliott and Hare Correspondence 1743-49.

¹²¹ Robert Hugh Milner, *Notes on the Ancestors of John Crosland Milner*, (private mss) p. 73.

High St in Sheffield to purchase Ravenfield Hall. She introduced her relative Walter Osborne, and the two Misses Laughton from Lincolnshire.¹²² Leader describes the arrival of the latter in Sheffield as having, ‘probably no small influence in producing the refinement of manners which was perceptible in several ladies of the better condition at Sheffield of the generation that succeeded them’.¹²³ Walter Osborne later married Mary Laughton and moved into Ravenfield Hall on the death of Madam Parkin, whilst Elizabeth Laughton married the younger John Fell in 1740 and moved to New Hall alongside Attercliffe Forge. Each year, a queen was elected to rule over the assemblies. Madam Parkin was one of the first in 1735, followed by others from the region’s leading families. Miss Shore, Miss Lodge, granddaughter of Christopher Pegge, landlord of the Angel Inn and later wife of the Revd Mr Hedges of Thrybergh, Miss Eyre, sister of Vincent Eyre, the Duke of Norfolk’s agent, Miss Steer, later Mrs Shiercliffe, Miss Elmsall, later Mrs Clay of Bridgehouses and Miss Battie, daughter of the attorney Mr Battie.¹²⁴

The Sheffield Assemblies offered a private and controllable space for the creation of a new, close-knit sector of local society, many of whose commercial interests may still have been closely intertwined with the metal trades, but whose identity and status demanded fresh and select forms of sociability. Surviving lists of subscribers for the seasons between 1747 and 1750, and 1784 to 1789 offer valuable insights into the construction of this sector

¹²² Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 114.

¹²³ Leader, ‘Old Sheffield Assemblies’.

¹²⁴ MD 2714-3166, 3200-3204, 3551-3581, 5026-5662, Sheffield assembly and Dancing assembly accounts and lists of subscribers 1784-1789.

of society and suggest assemblies were select opportunities for a cross –section of the middling and elite to meet and socialise (Appendices 3.1, 3.2).

Some insight into the nature of this close-knit society can be gained by exploring the associations between Francis Hurt and other assembly subscribers. Between the ages of 20 and 21, Francis Hurt (1728-1793) subscribed to the 1747-8 and 1749-50 Sheffield seasons. His father, Jonathan, lived in the High St and was a mercer, trustee of the Boys' Charity School and helped to secure the building of St Paul's church. Hurt was the nephew of Francis Sitwell, the attorney and clerk to the Cutlers Company from 1718 to 1736. On becoming heir to the Renishaw estates in 1777, he added Sitwell to his name and built Mount Pleasant in Sheffield in 1778.¹²⁵ Sir George Sitwell describes Francis a keen musician and patron of the arts known at assemblies to join in with the minuet and country-dances or games of ombre and piquet. He met his wife, Mary, daughter of Canon Warneford of York, whilst on one of his regular visits to the assemblies at Bath. The artist Copley was a personal friend who painted Hurt's children, and with whom he attended exhibitions in London and York.¹²⁶ In 1771, he was one of the chief guests at the Cutlers Feast.

The Sheffield Assemblies would find Hurt in the company of his aunt, Mrs Statham (nee Shiercliffe of Whitley Hall, wife of William Statham of The Stand in Sheffield Park), his cousins, Miss Shirecliffe of Whitley Hall, Miss Eccles (daughter of Mr Eccles of Tideswell and

¹²⁵ R. E., Leader, *History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York* (Sheffield, 1906), vol. 2, p.53

¹²⁶ Sir George Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells* (Scarborough, 1900), vol. 2, p. 221.

Elizabeth Statham), and Mr Phipps of Wortley Hall and High Green. Mr and Miss Wright (attorney and partner of Francis Sitwell, Hurt's uncle), the three Miss Heatons (whose father Thomas was a mercer, and close friend of Christopher Broomhead), Mr & Mrs Battie, (attorney) Miss Drake, (daughter of Robert Drake, apothecary who married one of Christopher Broomhead's three daughters and who frequented Neville Simmon's bookshop). Friends included the sons of Mr Strelley Pegge of Beauchief Hall, High Sherriff of Derbyshire in 1739, and Samuel Shore of Sheffield (founder of one of the first banks in Sheffield), both of whom had also been friends of Francis Sitwell and accompanied him on visits to Scarborough and Buxton. Dr Shaw, and Dr Short, the latter being author of *The Natural, Experimental and Medicinal History of Mineral Waters* (1734) and *A Comparative history of the increase and decrease of Mankind in England* (1767) (Appendices 3.1, 3.2). Subscribers to Short's works included many subscribers to the Sheffield Assemblies: Francis Hurt, William Sitwell of London, Joseph Clay, lead merchants of Bridgehouses, Mr John Mander, attorney of Bakewell, Walter Osborne, Mr Henry Phipps, Gent., of Wortley Hall, Mr Andrew Raynes, apothecary of Sheffield and attendee at Neville Simmons, John Shirtcliffe (Shiercliffe) of Whitley Hall, Samuel Shore of Norton, and the Revd Robert Waterhouse.¹²⁷

Unlike the factors, merchants and mercers who bought their finished goods, the names of cutlers, scissor-smiths, or filesmiths were not found in the subscription lists. From the mid-eighteenth century, the names of silver-plate manufacturers such as the Leaders, Tudors, Fentons and Kenyons whose flourishing companies were not regulated by the

¹²⁷ Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells*, vol. 2, pp.217-218; E. A. S., 'History of the Sheffield Assemblies', *Sheffield Independent*, Saturday, 28 November 1846.

Cutlers' Company began to appear on the lists. As the century progressed some master manufacturers gained entry but, whether by discrimination, choice, or preference for other forms of sociability, the proportion of cutlers, even in 1789, remained negligible. Leader, claimed that admittance to the assemblies marked:

The dividing line between the commonalty and such Society (with a capital S) as a grimy manufacturing town could boast. Membership conferred, in a very small way, the sort of distinction that accrues from presentation at Court. It was a symbol of superiority, entitling its possessors (in their own opinion) to an indulgence in those airs of shallow pretentiousness or petty exclusiveness which are fit food for satire.¹²⁸

Eleven of the sixteen families Leader described as of superior station subscribed to the assemblies. The Sitwells, whose wealth had first come from mining and iron-smelting; the Clays of Bridgehouses (Derbyshire lead mines) and the Parkins (iron smelting and forging) the Rawsons, tanners of Wardsend; were joined by the landed families including the Bamforths of High House, the Burtons of Royd Mill, the Jessops of Broomhall, the Staniforths of Darnall, the Bagshawes of the Oaks at Norton, the Parkers of Woodthorpe, Wilsons of Broomhead and the Shirecliffes of Whitley. There, they were joined by 'the small gentry of land-holders of the neighbourhood and persons of private means' together with apothecaries, surgeons, grocers, mercers, merchants, attorneys, clergy, and bankers.¹²⁹ Male subscribers were generally addressed as esquire, mister, or gentleman and the names

¹²⁸ Leader, 'Old Sheffield Assemblies'.

¹²⁹ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 6.

of those whose inventories indicated the ownership of large quantities of polite goods, the Simmons, Waterhouses, Batties and Hurts, frequently occur amongst the subscribers.

Further subscription lists show those who attended the assemblies also raised money for the building of the new theatre and the Tontine Inn. Their names appear as members of a monthly dining club, established in 1783 as guest to a Hunt Ball in 1786 (See Appendices 3.1 – 3.6). Other names show how the Shores, Fells, Waterhouses, Roebucks, and Leaders were amongst many dissenting families who contributed to these projects and who were at the fore of the region's civic, social and commercial life. In addition, members of the Town Trust and Church Burgesses Trust subscribed to the assemblies and were amongst those funding projects that gave tangible expression to Sheffield's urban renaissance.

By employing politeness, the Sheffield assemblies could offer exclusive and classically inspired space free from the constraints of parish tradition and the bustle and distraction of plebeian life. They allowed families from different backgrounds and beliefs to meet on equal terms whilst still enabling the maintenance of deference and hierarchy. Consisting of professionals, small gentry families, merchants, mercers, silver-plate manufacturers, shopkeepers, booksellers, tanners, and agents; Sheffield's urban middling sort met in the private and convivial surroundings of the assembly rooms where they gossiped, drank tea, played cards, attended lectures, concerts and balls. They were joined by Church Burgesses and Town Trustees, Anglicans and dissenters, old and new families to socialise, negotiate, and marry amongst those who shared their values and who arguably

gave shape to Sheffield's middling sort.¹³⁰ Politeness eased social interactions and its malleability helped in the construction of Sheffield's civic landscape and the forging of a sector of society whose activities, spatial and material culture increasingly marked them out as middling.

Hunter, Gatty, and Leader focused on the demise of the region's ancient families and were unable or unwilling to consider positively the actions, attitudes and outlook of those who replaced them and how their world had changed. Yet, similar to the work carried out on eighteenth-century Colchester by Shani D'Cruze, they provide a glimpse into the complex social, cultural, commercial, political and religious affiliations and inter-dependencies that wove together old and new families.¹³¹ They offer insights into the support given by a newly-emerging middling sector for local causes, their patronage of the arts, their involvement with local governance and how successful tradesmen ensured their sons entered the professions and equipped themselves with the trappings of polite gentility.

An array of debating societies, scientific, literary, and political associations, Masonic lodges, concerts, travelling theatres, fund-raising balls and feasts offered a new middling population further opportunity to socialise in select environments amongst those who shared their values. Too small or transient to acquire their own premises, these new forms of sociability required locales that could accommodate their needs and acknowledge their

¹³⁰ Sitwell, *Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells*, vol. 2, p. 221.

¹³¹ Shani D'Cruze, *A Pleasing Prospect: Social Change and Urban Culture in Eighteenth-Century Colchester* (Studies in Regional and Local History 5, Hertfordshire, 2008).

status. A variety of social and philanthropic clubs such as the Bishop Blaize, Old Gentleman's, the Rodney, Dinner, Pitt, Rockingham, Odd fellows, Monthly, Norfolk and Guinea, sought space in inns and taverns, which were at the fore of urban life and were the social, commercial and political nexus between the town and wider world.¹³² It was in these spaces that the quality of the town would be assessed and where visitors would meet local society. Inns and taverns had to adapt their spatial and material environments and the range of services they offered in response to this new clientele or lose a valuable market. Some would have been content to do so, some would not have had the means to adapt their arrangements and some may have seen offering spaces and services associated with politeness as a valuable addition to their business. Attention is given to this latter group to try and gain some understanding of the extent to which inns and taverns in Sheffield may have serviced a middling clientele through the promotion of polite facilities.

Inns and Taverns

After the parish church, inns were often amongst a town's largest buildings, and landlords of the town's foremost establishments were often leading members of local society. Offering accommodation and hospitality to individuals, travellers and associations too small to have their own premises, Leader notes how taverns played 'an intimate part' in the life of Sheffield, 'where all public, and a large measure of private business was transacted'.¹³³ They were the locales for dining clubs, hunt clubs, freemasons, scientific,

¹³² J. Thomas, *The Local register and Chronological Account of Occurrences and facts connected with the Town and Neighbourhood of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1830), pp. 45, 57, 82; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 46-47, 117.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

literary and political associations, public readings, concerts, travelling theatres, children's parties, subscription balls and feasts.

The origins of some of the town's larger inns, such as the Cock in the High St and the King's Head can be traced to the sixteenth century, but the majority only begin to regularly appear in legal documents from the late seventeenth century when government concerns began to shift from seeing such establishments less as centres of revolution and more as sources of revenue through licensing controls and taxation.¹³⁴ The War Office enquiries of 1686 recorded that the township of Sheffield had 119 guest beds and 270 stables. Very little was available in the surrounding parishes and, reflecting its relative remoteness from major thoroughfares at that time, Sheffield's capacity was more akin to facilities found in Chesterfield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Halifax than York, Derby, Doncaster and Wakefield.¹³⁵ Consequently, Sheffield inns were generally smaller and more versed to serving a local clientele at this time than those in major transport centres or market towns. The Hearth Tax returns of 1672 show Francis Barlow's Cock Inn was the largest inn with twelve hearths, followed by George Tompson at the King's Head with eleven.¹³⁶ Of eleven Sheffield innkeepers who left inventories between 1694 and 1740, median total inventoried wealth amounted to £129.8s. Whilst such amounts were not large, they were significantly

¹³⁴ P. Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London & New York, 1983), p. 187.

¹³⁵ David Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire Sheffield and its Neighbourhood 1660-1740* (Leicester, London & New York, 1991), p. 151.

¹³⁶ David Hey, (ed.) *The Hearth Tax Returns for South Yorkshire Lady Day 1672* (Sheffield, 1991).

higher than for innkeepers in Rotherham where it was only £23.16s, despite both groups running premises with a median number of ten rooms.

Most of Sheffield's principal inns were centrally located in and around the High St and Market Place and Leader notes the prominent position their landlords took in the affairs of the town, and the frequency with which their descendents entered the professions.¹³⁷ Their associations within the town as Town Trustees, dissenters, Church Burgesses, Master Cutlers and Town Collectors could influence the quality of clientele they were able to attract¹³⁸. The King's Head for example, 'could not vie with Pegges, or the Cock, or the Rose and Crown; not until a Master Cutler landlord [Leonard Webster, in 1748] came in was it honoured by the patronage of the public bodies'.¹³⁹ Others enhanced their wealth and position in local society by concurrently pursuing additional activities, including farming, property investment, money lending, transportation and the manufacture of cutlery.

Early eighteenth-century activity

Citing evidence from inventories taken in 1716 and 1719 for The King's Head and The Rose and Crown, Hey claims Sheffield inns were largely workaday establishments with few pretensions. Located on the corner of High St and what later became known as Change Alley, a schedule of the premises dated 1706 described the King's Head as an inn with

¹³⁷ Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 272.

¹³⁸ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 154; G. Tolley, *We, of our Bounty A history of the Sheffield Church Burgesses* (Durham, 1999), p. 193.

¹³⁹ R. E. Leader, 'Talks of the Town: Places, Parsons, Publicans and People', *Transactions Hunter Archaeological Society* (1914-1918), vol. 1, pp. 365 ff. p. 373.

stables, malt-rooms, swine hulls, kiln house, barns, a little dwelling house, an out-house, a lathe, orchard, smithy, two wells, gardens and a bowling green. A timber framed and gabled building with over-hanging jetties, it is possible part of the premises were already over two hundred years old by the start of the eighteenth century and was probably mentioned in the Burgery accounts of 1572 (Fig. 3 3).



Figure 3.3 Timber frame townhouse, part of the King's Head with later extension to the right, corner of High St and Change Alley c1890. Sheffield City Libraries s13695

Inside, the schedule described the building as having cellars, a hall-house, parlour, two kitchens, a shop and entry, the Bailiffe's chamber and closets, the great chamber, a gallery, eleven further chambers, and two further closets. An inventory taken on the death of Samuel Tompson in 1716 valued the contents at £90 4s 10d. Long tables, forms, chairs, long settles, chairs and buffets, some with cushions and some covered in leather, provided

most of the seating and most rooms in which tables and chairs were listed also contained a bed. A few rooms had a scattering of new goods and, despite the presence of a large bed, the most expensively furnished Best Chamber contained a small collection of goods that could indicate the provision of some notion of private sociability. Valued at £15.1s.6, the contents included two oval tables, 13 cane chairs, a looking glass, pictures upon the chimney, and window curtains. Large amounts of pewter, saucepans, jacks, tubs, spitts, racks, toasting irons and frying pans show a busy kitchen but no evidence was recorded of china, cutlery or glassware.¹⁴⁰

Prior to Webster's involvement, the King's Head custom relied on chapmen and carriers from the market and locals attracted to the bowling-green to which was attached a small bowling house with forms, stools tables, bowls and a roller. In 1732, the premises were conveyed to the cutler, Leonard Webster, whose family appear to have had links with the inn in the seventeenth century.¹⁴¹ From around 1745 to 1768, he appears to have taken over the running of the establishment as well as owning it. As well as a former cutler and landlord, Webster was a Town Trustee from 1744 to 1773 and Master Cutler in 1748. Around the time he took over running the inn, Webster appears to have decided to reinvent the King's Head as a coaching station with potential to attract a new clientele. The oldest part of the building fronting High St was left unchanged and let out as retail premises but in sharp contrast, the inn was refronted and possibly enlarged in a regular, classical style

¹⁴⁰ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Samuel Tomson, innkeeper, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, December 1716.

¹⁴¹ Anon, 'The King's Head,' *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* (1914-1918), vol. 1, pp. 371-374, 387-391.

(Figs. 3.4 a-b). A new, wider entrance for carriages, called Change Alley was created on the site of the former bowling-green. Whilst it is not known how the internal layout changed, Webster's decision to remove the bowling green suggests outdoor forms of sociability that traditionally had attracted a broad sector of local society were in decline. His involvement with some of the town's foremost institutions and his own commercial experience may have encouraged him to believe there was scope to attract a new clientele whose sociability was more selective, private, and comfortable. Using a distinct style of classical architecture, it is possible Webster was advertising his intent to attract a polite and genteel market.¹⁴²



Figure 3.4.a The King's Head Hotel c1900.
Sheffield City Libraries s14246.



Figure 3.4.b Staircase interior
Kings' Head Hotel, 1902.
Reproduced by permission of English Heritage
NMR Reference Number: BL17102

¹⁴² Sheffield City Libraries: s14246, The King's Head Hotel c1900; English Heritage NMR Reference Number: BL17102, Staircase interior Kings' Head Hotel, 1902.

Three inns appear to have shared the name of the Rose and Crown at around the same time and accurately distinguishing between them is difficult. That in Waingate was some little distance from the town centre on the main thoroughfare to the north and east of the town and it is from here that the freemason's Rose and Crown lodge took its name. A second Rose and Crown was located at the junction of Market Place and the south side of High St, and a third, alongside The Cock, 'in a place called the Prior's Row [High St], being on the north side of a certain street there leading from the Market Place towards the Parish Church'.¹⁴³ The Pegges appear to have been linked with the latter from 1681- 1723, so an inventory in the name of Zachariah Arther dated 1719, who Hey claims was innkeeper of the Rose and Crown, is likely to have been that near the Market Place or the premises in Waingate.¹⁴⁴ Like the Barlows at The Cock, Arther was a Nonconformist and it is likely it was his Rose and Crown that Neville Simmons used in 1691 and 1692 for his book auctions of Nonconformist works.¹⁴⁵

Other than the inventory, little is known of Arther's Rose and Crown but its contents indicate an establishment well fitted for the accommodation of new behaviour with a range of new goods that were still only just beginning to appear in domestic surroundings. On the ground floor above three cellars, were a house, parlour, kitchen, brewhouse, and buttery. Above them were a series of seven or eight lodging rooms described in the inventory as the

¹⁴³ Hey, *Fiery Blades*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁴ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Zachariah Arther, innholder, Sheffield, Deanery of Doncaster, Diocese of York, June 1719.

¹⁴⁵ J.E. Manning, *A history of Upper Chapel, Sheffield: founded 1662, built 1700, for the worship and service of almighty God: a bicentennial volume with an appendix containing Timothy Jollie's Register of baptisms* (Sheffield, 1900), pp. 67 -68. Manning claims the Waingate premises to have been the most probable *Rose and Crown*.

Anchor, Angel, Lyon, Unicorn, Cock and Boare with a Maid's Room and two further large rooms up another flights of stairs. Outside were stables, a corn chamber, cow house, and shop. Tools and equipment were kept at Sheffield Moor and in the Close where there was also farmed land sown with oats and wheat.¹⁴⁶

The rooms varied in the quality and quantity of furnishings they contained. With just two beds and bedding, the Boare was the most basically equipped room although its appraisal at £5.10s.0d meant it was more expensively furnished than many domestic residences. The two Large Rooms each had beds valued at £8, plus window curtains, looking glasses, sconces, oval tables, cast iron ranges, chests of drawers, nineteen chairs and the 'Twelve Apostles', possibly, a picture or a book.¹⁴⁷ The Anchor was equipped with a feather bed, range, close stool, chairs, tables and chest, together with extensive goods for the ceremonial making of tea. Two sets of cups, plates, sugar cups, teapot plates, teapots, and salvers, one in china the other Delft, were accompanied by five canisters and the Presenter, three Bath metal spoons and two tea tables. Other rooms had earthenware and white earthenware tea goods, whilst copper coffee pots, buckhorn knives and forks, glassware, punch bowls, twenty stones of pewter, table linen, 118 oz of silver plate, green tea, punch, wines, brandy, ale, cider, and tobacco were also available. Most of the tables were described as 'oval', 'little', 'tea', or 'large oval', only the house had a long table around which were ten chairs and six buffits or stools. In the remaining rooms, chairs and cushions, or cane chairs were the main form of seating. With the exception of the Boare and Unicorn,

¹⁴⁶ Inventory of Zachariah Arther.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

all the rooms could offer self-contained sociability in comfortable, private and warm surroundings with pictures, window curtains, and cushions. Meals were prepared in a well-equipped kitchen with smoke jacks, spitts and racks, brass and copper pans, tea kettles, coffee pots, stew pans, cheese toasters, plate warmers, delft plates, and pudding pans.¹⁴⁸

China, delftware, glassware, cutlery, brass, copper, silver and Bath metal would have helped present the potential for a very different experience from that found amongst the utilitarian furnishings of the King's Head and its carriers, packmen and market traders. The commercial and religious affiliations that Carl Estabrook noted amongst dissenting communities may have caused Arther's Rose and Crown to become a popular venue when visiting the region.¹⁴⁹ Both the King's Head and Rose and Crown offered services for eating, drinking, conversation, card playing and accommodation, but in the same way that 'dirty hands, slovenly clothes, ungainly speech marked off the coarse and rude from the refined and polite', the fittings of the Rose and Crown marked it out from its rivals as a locale with the trappings of polite sociability.¹⁵⁰

The late eighteenth century: the Angel and the Tontine

Aided by expansion of the silver plate industry into fashionable tablewares and improved technologies in the manufacturing of iron and steel, by the mid eighteenth century Sheffield's continued growth and expansion began to attract national attention and an increasing number of visitors. Communications with other parts of the country improved

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Carl B. Estabrook, *Urbane & Rustic England: Cultural Ties & Social Spheres in the Provinces, 1660- 1780* (Manchester, 1998), p. 228.

¹⁵⁰ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*., p. xv.

and local inns were increasingly required to accommodate the needs of both a diverse range of travellers and an increasingly affluent and sophisticated home market. The Angel and Tontine inns emerged as the leaders in this field, the first occupying a series of buildings dating from at least 1680, the latter newly commissioned in 1785 by some of the town's foremost businessmen and gentry. Both sought to secure the middle market by the range of services and quality of accommodation they offered. Both played host to the same families and individuals who attended the assemblies, offered space to clubs and societies, provided rooms for agents and manufacturers, and accommodated the Town Trustees and other civic bodies. At the fore of urban life, each sought to capitalise and maximise their share of the middle market by addressing demands for private, elegant, fashionable and comfortable facilities that polite behaviour required. Exploration of institutions at the core of urban life may help reveal whether they offered similar experiences or if factors such as the personality of the landlord, and the form of buildings and objects employed had the potential for polite performances to acquire different nuances and understandings.

During the second half of the century, first under the ownership of Samuel Glanville and then Samuel Peech, the long-established Angel rose to become the town's foremost inn and, 'one of the best known coaching inns in the country, rivalling the Tontine and Kings' Head in importance'.¹⁵¹ Operations at the Angel centred upon the personality and energy of its owners, both of whom were heavily involved in its day-to-day running and in a variety of other commercial interests. Born in Exeter, Samuel Glanville (c1720 – 1803) came to Sheffield in 1741 on a recruiting party for the army and settled after marrying Mrs Smith, his

¹⁵¹ *The Angel Inn*, Newspaper Cuttings Relating to Sheffield, vol. 9, p. 68.

landlady who ran a tavern in Church St. A portrait survives of Glanville drawn by Raphael Smith (Fig 3.5). Joseph Montgomery, editor of the *Sheffield Iris*, described him as:

Steady, active [the writer of this memoir had seen him carry out three dishes at once upon his right arm from a public entertainment], attentive and obliging to his customers; cheerful rational, and intelligent in private conversation; was looked up to with great respect by all his acquaintance, and closed his days with a constant serious attention to the duties of religion.¹⁵²



Figure 3.5 Portrait of Samuel Glanville, owner of the Angel, Sheffield City Libraries s08662.

Following a succession of several short-lived tenancies, Glanville took over the Angel in 1753. Destroyed in the Second World War, little is known of its earlier form other than a

¹⁵² James Montgomery, 'Samuel Glanville', *Sheffield Iris*, 21 July 1803.

sketch made in preparation for a sale of the inn in 1815.¹⁵³ The sketch reveals a large yard, accessed through an archway in Angel St, in which stables, a coach office, coach house, and blacksmith's shop were housed in a mixture of irregular two and three storey buildings (Fig. 3.6).

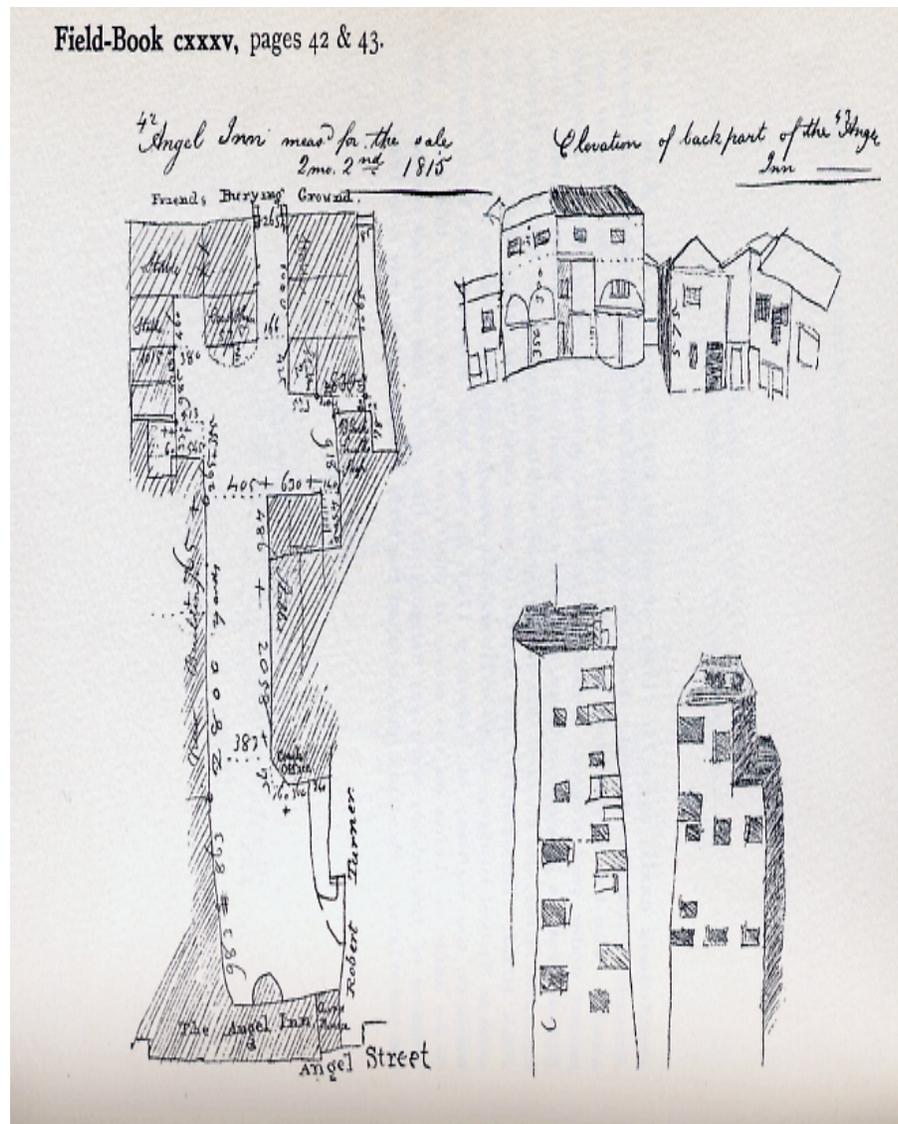


Figure. 3.6 Sketch of the Angel Inn, 1815, Field Book cxxxv, pp 42-43 in T. W. Hall, *The Fairbanks of Sheffield 1688-1848* (Sheffield, 1932), pp. 118-119.

¹⁵³ Sheffield Archives: Fairbanks Collection, FC FB 135 p. 26,

On the left, a long 'new building' with a small gallery for musicians was used for theatre productions and assemblies and balls which appear to have moved to the Angel from their hired rooms at the Boys Charity School.¹⁵⁴

In 1760, Glanville went into partnership running the first stagecoach between Leeds and London. An advertisement in the *Sheffield Public Advertiser* of 4th November 1760, details the stopping places of the 'machines on steel springs', as they travelled on their three-day journey. Business increased and in addition to daily journeys to London, carriages to Buxton, Manchester, Doncaster, Nottingham, Wakefield, Leeds Durham, Newcastle, and Edinburgh were added with those going to Birmingham connecting with the coach to Bath.¹⁵⁵

From 1755, the Angel became a regular meeting place for the Town Trustees and a variety of clubs and associations. For a time, Glanville retired to his farm before taking premises in London and Stamford and then returning to Sheffield. During this time he appears to have placed the Angel in the hands of a landlord whose subsequent bankruptcy caused Granville to return and assume the running of the inn. In 1768 he announced the refurbishment of the premises.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Hall, *The Fairbanks of Sheffield*, pp. 118-119; Frederick T. Wood, 'Sheffield Theatres in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions Hunter Archaeological Society* 6, (1944-50), pp. 98-116; *Sheffield Public Advertiser*, 16-23 September 1760.

¹⁵⁵ *Sheffield Register*, 9 June 1787.

¹⁵⁶ *Sheffield Public Advertiser*, 10-17th September 1768.

Samuel Glanville, being obliged (thro' the bankruptcy of Mr Holland the late occupier) to resume the possession of the Angel Inn in Sheffield; Begg leave to Acquaint his Friends and the Public, that he has thoroughly Repair'd the said Inn, and fitted it up with new Beds, and very elegant Furniture of every kind from LONDON, in a manner superior to its former Condition; and has laid in a large Stock of the best Wines, and other Licquors, where he hopes for the favours of the Nobility, Gentry, Tradesmen, Travellers and Others, as heretofore, and where they also may be furnished with neat Post Chaises and able Horses and will meet with the best Accommodation and Kind Treatment.¹⁵⁷

Influenced perhaps, by his experiences in Stamford and London and seeing how Sheffield was elsewhere acquiring facilities attractive to a middling and polite clientele, Glanville appears to have invested heavily in the Angel upgrading its rooms with the latest fashions from London. Employing the vocabulary of politeness, his advertisement describes the accommodation, goods and services in terms attractive to elite and middling sectors of society and suggests a shift in the custom he hoped to attract. Appealing to the 'Nobility, Gentry, Tradesmen, Travellers and Others' as well as 'his Friends and the Public', it could be claimed Glanville was simply trying to maximise his potential audience. However, it could also suggest he saw little distinction between the expectations and behaviour of Sheffield's middling population and those he sought to attract from further afield and that both could be harmoniously combined at the Angel.

On his death in 1803, James Montgomery, editor of the *Sheffield Iris* described Glanville as 'attentive, obliging, cheerful, rational, and intelligent in private conversation', reflects many of the qualities sought by polite and middling company.¹⁵⁸ Glanville appears

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ James Montgomery, 'Samuel Glanville', *Sheffield Iris*, 21 July 1803.

to have had considerable success in moulding both personality and premises to accommodate the demands of this expanding market so that when he again retired in 1776, Samuel Peech, a well-known townsman and considerable entrepreneur, relinquished control of the Rose and Crown to take over the Angel where he continued to expand the inn's coaching connections and reputation.¹⁵⁹

Peech guarded his reputation for honesty and reliability so much so that Charles Dixon recalls him taking a horse to pursue 'Mr Lett, later Lord Elden' in order to return a £5 note he had been given in error for a £1 note in payment.¹⁶⁰ In partnership with the silver-plater John Hoyland, Peech undertook to safely deliver money, gold and silver between Birmingham and Sheffield, protecting it with an armed escort. Alongside those of industrialists, metal workers and professionals, Peech's name appears on a numerous leases, mortgages and transactions relating to inns and properties in and around Sheffield and several deeds also associate him with involvement in several inns whilst still running the Angel and the purchase of land to extend his premises there.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ 'Our Old Taverns', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 April 1901.

¹⁶⁰ Dixon, 'Recollections and Reminiscences' pp. 160 – 162.

¹⁶¹ Sheffield Archives: Broomhead Hall Deeds, BHD/222, Articles of agreement, Solomon Holmes of Doncaster, leatherdresser, Andrew Raynes of Sheffield, apothecary, Thomas Brown of Selby, apothecary, and Eleanor Smith of Selby, widow, with John Rimington of Sheffield, attorney, John Froggatt of the same, builder, and Samuel Peech of the same, innholder 14 Aug 1790. East Riding of Yorkshire Archives: Sotherton-Estcourt Family Estates, DDSE (2)/13/23, Lease for 21 years relating to property in Carbrook: Parties: 1) Thomas Byron, Portugal Street, parish of St George, Hanover Square, esquire, wife Lucy (nee Whetham) 2) Samuel Peech, Sheffield, innholder Property: Carbrook Hall and closes as described in DDSE (2)/13/4 Consideration: £160 rent, 1 May 1784. Wakefield Archives: Articles of Agreement, vol. FC No 563,p. 416, Agreement between Timothy Topham of Wakefield, Gent and Samuel Peech, Sheffield, innkeeper, concerning

Whether motivated or not by news of a proposal to build a new inn, in 1782 Peech commissioned the surveyor William Fairbanks to oversee extensive alterations and the redecoration of much of the Angel. Offering a brief insight into the spatial arrangements of the inn and some of its facilities, work was carried out on new offices, chimneypieces in the servant's lodgings, a new coach office, best shop, barber's shop, and stables. 'Plaistering' was carried out in the West Room, Middle Room, East Room, passage, stairs and Chamber Passage and work was also carried out in the dining room and drawing room with 'additional piers added to the two fronts'.¹⁶²

The Sheffield Monthly Club was established in the following year, meeting 'at the Angel in Sheffield on the Tuesday nearest the full moon – dinner to be upon the table at precisely two o'clock – the bill to be called for at five'. Members included the Earls of Surrey and Effingham and, 'some of the leading gentlemen, professional men and merchants of the town and neighbourhood'.¹⁶³ The member's list reveals an interesting mix of some sixty names from both middling and elite sectors of local society.¹⁶⁴ Silver plate manufacturers were well represented, as were doctors, the clergy, attorneys, iron and lead founders, brewers, merchants, bankers and a collection of old and new gentry. Fines were imposed for non-attendance and how often all attended is open to question. Nevertheless, whilst the variety of new sociable institutions developing in Sheffield and their ability to draw together

the Star, Haymarket, alias Bullstake, Sheffield, 12 August 1807; vol. FC, No 334 p 229, Indenture Concerning the Bell, Balm Green Sheffield, 12 August 1807.

¹⁶² Sheffield Archives: Fairbanks Collection, (Building Books), FC/BB 66, lxvi, pp. 28-29.

¹⁶³ 'An Old Sheffield Club', *Sheffield Independent*, 6 January 1894.

¹⁶⁴ Sheffield Archives: Wheat Collection 1233, Subscribers to the Sheffield Monthly Club (see: Appendix 3.4).

a mix of society may not yet have created a distinctive middle class, they represent a growing body of like minded families who took increasing control of the public sphere and were characterised by a distinct set of values, and practices.

The Monthly Dining Club arguably marked the apogee of the Angel for in 1785 the Tontine opened with the claim of being the chief posting house in the town with twenty-five horses harnessed and five post boys constantly on hand. Peech responded by reducing his prices and waiving his fee should his horses fail. Following his death in 1808, Peech was succeeded by his son whereupon Leader noted how 'the Tontine blossomed into unrivalled celebrity'.¹⁶⁵

The continuing growth of an increasingly affluent and diverse society in Sheffield had, by the early 1780s persuaded some of the town's leading members to finance a new inn confident there was a market for its services. On the 1st November, 1782 a meeting attended by representatives of the Earl of Surrey and Duke and Duchess of Norfolk together with some of the town's leading entrepreneurs and professionals declared their 'Proposed Proposals for building a large and commodious Inn and tavern in the Town of Sheffield'.¹⁶⁶ Work would begin when the sum of £4,000 had been achieved through a minimum subscription of £100 in the way of a tontine. The first meeting of subscribers was held at the Rein Deer Inn in January 1783 where 21 of 33 subscribers, many of whom belonged to the Monthly Dining Club, attended and pledged a total of £4,100. A committee consisting of

¹⁶⁵ Leader, *Reminiscences*, p. 103.

¹⁶⁶ Sheffield Archives: MD 1101-1, SC 17780: Henry Richardson, Tontine Inn, Sheffield, Minute Book, 1783-1846, see Appendix 5.1 for a list of subscribers.

Vincent Eyre, agent to the Duke of Norfolk, John Parker, Esq, the vicar of Sheffield Revd Wilkinson, the attorney Mr James Wheat and Messrs Joseph Clay, J Matthewman, Ben Roebuck and George Greaves was set up to secure estimates for the cost of building an inn and out-buildings, and to obtain a 99 year lease from the Right Hon the Earl of Surrey for land on which to build.¹⁶⁷

It was determined the inn should have a central archway for horses and carriages, 14 feet wide and that up one pair of stairs over the gateway there should be a large Dining Room 58 feet x 20 feet x 18 feet high and that on the ground floor besides a Coffee Room of about 28 feet x 21 feet, there should be about 7 or 8 different rooms of entertainment, the largest not to exceed 28 feet x 21 feet, that the ground floor should not exceed 12 foot in height, the Chambers 10 feet 6 in and the Attics 9 foot'. There should also be a 'market room, suitable rooms for servants and such other proper rooms offices and conveniences as are usual in large inns'. Stabling was to be provided for sixty horses and 'if a Dining Room (not less than 50 foot by 20 foot) can be on the Ground Floor the same be as useful as that above proposed'.¹⁶⁸ Plans of the building show provision for a billiard room, hairdressers, bars, parlours, shop, brewhouse, servant's quarters, kitchens, a laundry room, factor's room and warehouse (Fig. 3.7).¹⁶⁹

The building was to be of brick with a flat lead roof, and stone corners to the wings. A note in the minutes for 4 July 1783 adds, 'Resolved That stone corners should be added to

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-7.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Sheffield Archives: Arundel Castle Manuscripts, EBU 263 -3 /4, Plans for the building of the Tontine Inn, (nd).

the Centre of the Inn at the sole express of Lord Surrey'. Papering and painting the interior, putting up grates, hanging bells, making and fixing Cupboards and Shelves and other Fixtures' cost a further £462 7s 2d. Distinguished by its size and classical style, the Tontine stood above the surrounding buildings. The overall style was neoclassical with windows to the front central bay of the first storey in a modified form of Palladianism. The removal of architectural rustication from the ground floor indicated its use for sociable entertaining in addition to the rooms located immediately above.¹⁷⁰ Whilst Palladianism had largely been usurped by neo-classicism at this time, both Klein and Borsay note how its use remained a key indicator of politeness.¹⁷¹

The politeness of the Palladian vogue was more than a matter of its classicism since Palladian design was associated simultaneously with the universal rules of taste and with naturalness of design. It was identified also as the embodiment of simplicity, restraint, and good breeding, which brought it further into the plane of politeness.¹⁷²

The use of Palladian motifs within a neo-classical setting was, perhaps, a clear attempt to distinguish the Tontine from the older mix of buildings that formed the Angel and to create a building whose classical form and presence gave clear indication of its affinity with politeness. Rules for running the inn stipulated that 'the committee should

¹⁷⁰ M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven & London, 1978) p. 220.

¹⁷¹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 235–306.

¹⁷² Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', p. 886.

have power to let the said house belonging to the proprietors for any term of years at their discretion, not exceeding twenty-one years'.¹⁷³

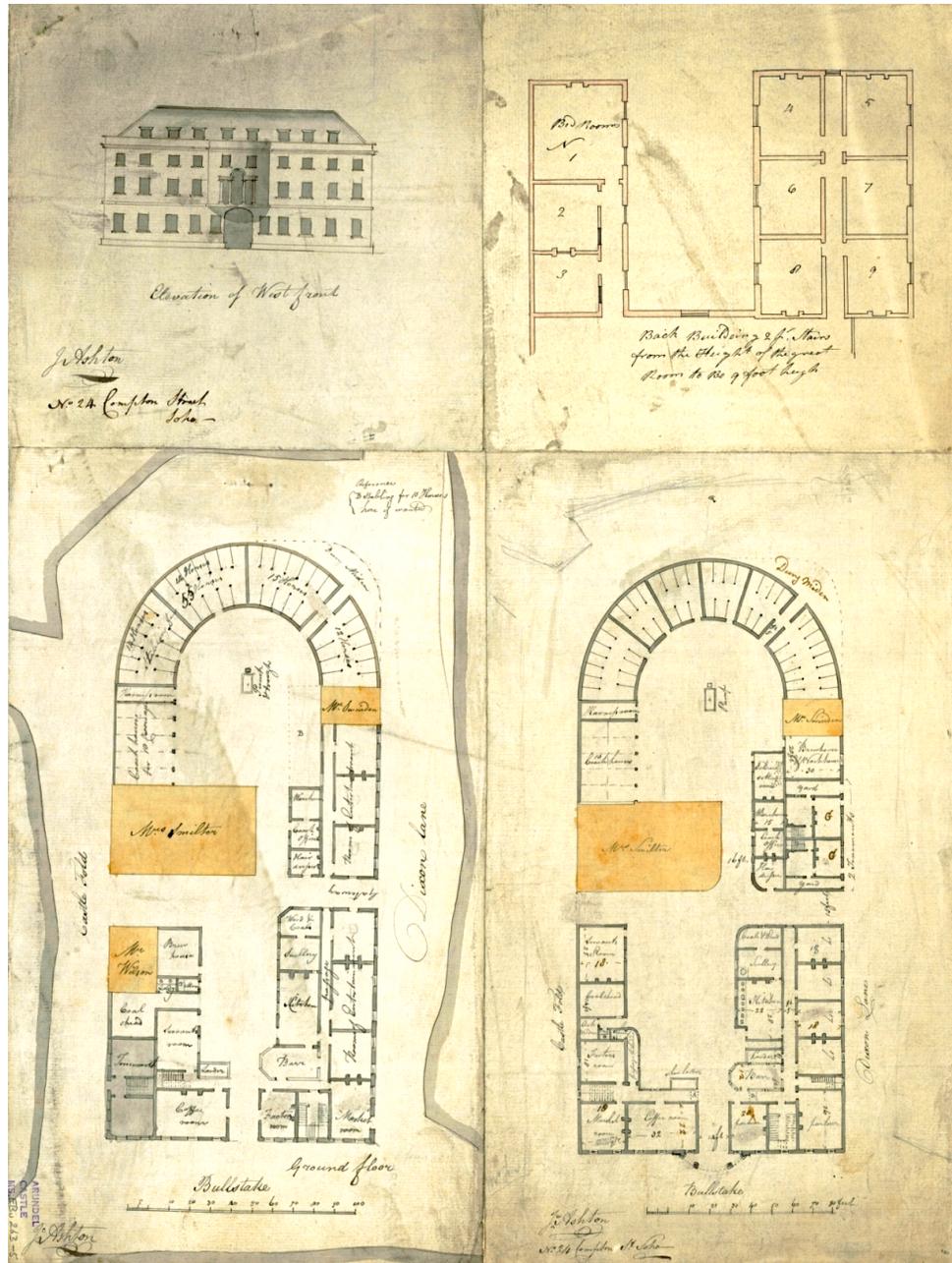


Figure 3.7 Plans adopted for the building of the Tontine Inn Sheffield, Sheffield Archive: Arundel Castle MS EBU 253-5,s.

¹⁷³ Richardson, Tontine Inn Minute Book, pp. 18-19.

The committee appear to have had no intention of allowing the Tontine to be dominated by the personality of the landlord as at the Angel, and ensured an image of the inn appeared on all advertising material contained including trade cards, billheads and even a souvenir enamel patch box (Fig. 3.8).¹⁷⁴



**Figure 3.8 Patch box featuring the Tontine Inn Sheffield, glass, enamel, copper.
Museum Sheffield, accession number K1901.14**

In 1785, advertisements for the first tenant appeared in the *General Evening Post*, *Lloyd's Evening Post*, and publications in Manchester, York, Nottingham, Leeds and Sheffield.¹⁷⁵ A handbill of the time describes the Tontine as 'large and commodious', 'newly erected by a Subscription of the Gentlemen of the Town and Neighbourhood of Sheffield'.¹⁷⁶ The town itself was described as a 'very large trading & improving Town, and a great thoroughfare for

¹⁷⁴ Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust: K1901.14, Patch Box.

¹⁷⁵ Richardson, *Tontine Inn Minute Book*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁶ University of Delaware Library: Special Collections Unit, Advertisement for the first landlord of the Tontine Inn, Sheffield, England c1783, see Figure 3.9.

Travellers, especially during the Summer season' (Fig.3.9).¹⁷⁷ The provision of upwards of thirty separate lodging rooms and eight more for entertaining company were described as 'convenient', 'roomy', 'suitable' and 'central'.¹⁷⁸

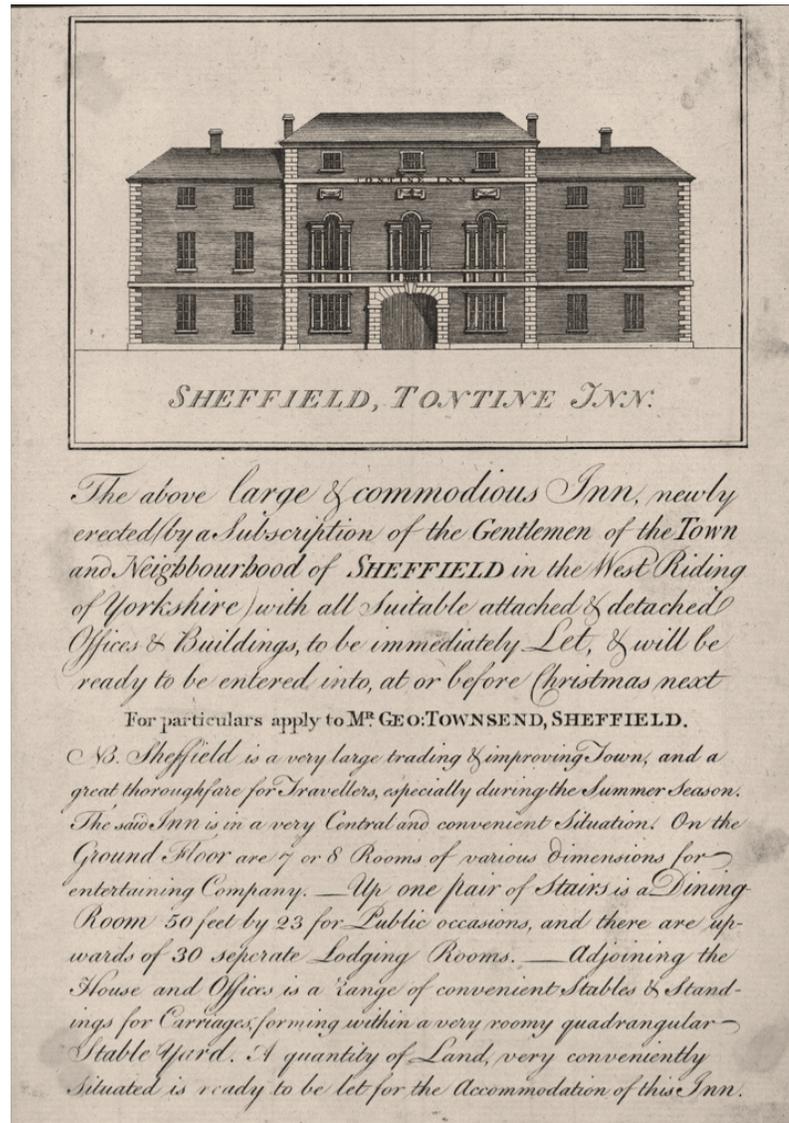


Figure 3.9 Advertisement for the first landlord of the Tontine Inn Sheffield, c1783
Special Collections Unit University of Delaware Library.

¹⁷⁷ Anna R. Bryan, Bibliographical Note: Provenance, 'The Case of the Yorkshire, England Collection', *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship*, 13.2, pp. 129-132.

¹⁷⁸ Advertisement for the first landlord of the Tontine Inn, Sheffield England, c.1783.

Following Peech's retirement, the Monthly Club and Pitt Club both moved from the Angel to the Tontine where they joined a range of concerts, lectures, recitals, meetings and debates.¹⁷⁹ The Town Trustees and Cutlers' Company supplemented trips to the Angel and other inns with visits to the Tontine which 1786, hosted an Undress Ball for some hundred guests of the Gentlemen of the Hunt¹⁸⁰. Many of their guests came from the same pool of families that Leader described as belonging to the superior station and whose names regularly appeared in lists of subscribers to assemblies, concerts, and the Tontine itself (Appendix 3.5). Thomas Asline Ward, whose father Joseph had been Master Cutler in 1790, regularly dined at the Tontine with friends, business associates and fellow officers of the Hallamshire Volunteer Corps.¹⁸¹ Visiting agents, and manufacturers had a designated room in which they could conduct business and George Wolstenholme one of the town's leading cutlers and razor manufacturers, even added a map to his letter-heads showing the route from the Tontine Inn to his Washington Works.¹⁸² As Earl of Surrey, the 11th Duke of Norfolk occasionally stayed at the inn and in 1786 took two rooms for an annual rent of £84. The cost of furnishing the room came to £57.4s 6d and included a fluted four post bed, a small dining table and six mahogany dining chairs, a rosewood table, oval glass, two

¹⁷⁹ *The New Monthly Magazine & Universal Register*, 5, January to June 1816, p. 438.

¹⁸⁰ See: Table 3.6, Appendix 3 for a list of the invitees.

¹⁸¹ A. B. Bell and R.E. Leader, (eds), *Peeps in to the Past: Being Passages from the Diary of Thomas Asline Ward* (London & Sheffield, 1909), pp. 81, 85, 160.

¹⁸² Sheffield Archives: y00362, Letter-head, Geo Wolstenholme showing a plan of the route from the Tontine Inn to George Wostenholm & Son Ltd., Washington Works, Sheffield, (n.d.).

square glasses, an Indian folding screen, a painted cotton sofa, festoon window curtains, and three Wilton bedside carpets.¹⁸³

Even John Byng was forced to admit 'The Tontine Inn at Sheffield makes a magnificent appearance'.¹⁸⁴ During his tour through England in 1796, Charles Hatchett declared 'the Tontine Inn at Sheffield is one of the largest and best in England'.¹⁸⁵ From the prices charged for its services, the Tontine's coaching business appears to have targeted the more affluent visitor to the region. Amongst miscellaneous letters in the Bolingbroke Collection an anonymous account of a journey taken in 1799 from Norwich to Scotland, describes how the writer stayed at a variety of inns, including the Tontine. After dining there one evening, the writer 'met his old friends at Bardwells and 'went to the play it is a very good house'. In comparison with bills from The Saracen's Head, Lincoln, (8s 4d), the Rose Inn at Hewlett (14s. 9d) and the White Horse near High Wycombe (8s 2d) that from the Tontine amounted to a substantial 15s 3d, with an additional 2s for the maid and 1s 6d for boot cleaning.¹⁸⁶

Direct comparisons between the two establishments are rare but an entry in the diary of an anonymous Mr M written as he, his wife, and daughter travelled from London to

¹⁸³ Sheffield Archives: Arundel Castle Manuscripts, ACM/S/476/4, Bill for furnishing Lord Surrey's room at the Tontine Inn, 1786.

¹⁸⁴ The Honourable John Byng, *The Torrington Diaries, containing the tours through England and Wales... between the years 1781 and 1794: A Tour in the Midlands, 1789*, (London, 1935), vol. II, pp. 23-25.

¹⁸⁵ Charles Hatchett, *The Hatchett Diary: a tour through the counties of England and Scotland in 1796 visiting their mines and manufactories*, in Sylvia Pybus, (ed.), *Damned Bad Place, Sheffield, An Anthology of Writing about Sheffield through the Ages*, (Sheffield, 1994), p. 72.

¹⁸⁶ Norfolk Record Office: Bolingbroke Collection BOL 4/12, 741 x 5, Diary, 1799.

Yorkshire in September 1798 gives an indication of how perceptions of politeness may have been shaped by the spaces and actions in which it was offered. Mr M is known to have been around fifty years of age, with a home in Portman Square, London and an honorary member of the Manchester Literary Society. Having met in Harrogate Dr Younge, founder of the Sheffield Infirmary and a director of Sheffield Lead Works, they travelled to Sheffield where they visited various industries. Immediate reactions to Sheffield were not favourable. The town at first was dirty, the streets strewn with nutshells, the shops closed, the church hot and crowded, and not a person worth meeting until they were reunited that evening with Dr Younge. Their mood was not improved by facilities at the Angel:

Which was recommended to us as the best Inn in the Town, on our alighting we were shewn into a small, close, dark and disagreeable room on the ground floor, which looked into a narrow dirty street but we refused to order anything except they would accommodate us with a better room upstairs, they then conducted us into a good room on the first floor which they promised we should occupy during our stay.

Nevertheless, the following day, Mr M recorded with some approval the handsome assembly room and commodious theatre, the numerous meetinghouses for Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers and Methodists, the pretty chapel attached to the Duke of Norfolk's Hospital and the excellent market. After visiting a 'Shew Warehouse for plated Goods', they further inspected an elaborate design for tea equipage. However, on returning to their rooms, they discovered:

That Cloth was laid for dinner in our up stairs room, and we were again thrust into a confined place below stairs with the Sun shining directly upon it, for the Navigation Meeting was to be held in the Room we occupied and this was known when they promised it to us and therefore considering it as an imposition we.[...] went over to the Tontine Inn, a spacious good House, rooms large and lofty and in a wide street.¹⁸⁷

They departed the town on the morning of September 4th only to be halted at the market by a lame horse. During their wait for a replacement they were, 'politely invited into the House of a Gentleman, who sent his servant to watch our baggage and Chaise, and with his Lady entertained us with their polite conversation'.¹⁸⁸ Mr M's varied experience of the town, from dissatisfaction with dark and cramped accommodation, a lack of privacy and good company amongst litter-strewn streets was juxtaposed with his admiration of handsome architecture, wide streets, elegant goods and polite behaviour. Simplistic assumptions of the ability, or otherwise, of the Angel or Tontine inns to facilitate politeness, risk polarising a behaviour whose expression was highly malleable. For some, politeness required tangible support from a range of recognisable visual signifiers whilst others may have sought emphasis in personal interaction. Politeness may have been common to both institutions but expressions may have varied according to circumstance and, not least, the understandings of participants.

Attracted by the town's substantial dissenting population, in January 1796, another visitor to the Tontine was the poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge as he sought subscriptions from Unitarians to his weekly miscellany, *The Watchman*. He approached the Congregationalist

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 192-193.

¹⁸⁸ Frederick Bradbury, 'Extracts from a Diary of a Tour from London to Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, August 3rd-September 22nd 1798', *Transactions Hunter Archaeological Society* 5 (1938-43), pp.191-96.

bookseller John Shaw who declined to interest himself, but only because he was already involved in editing Montgomery's *Iris*, whose views were similar to those intended for *The Watchman*.¹⁸⁹ Shaw did lend support to other dissenting activities and between 1799 and 1801 he sold tickets on behalf of Revd Thomas Olivers Warwick M.D.'s Chemistry Lectures given at the Tontine and Assembly Rooms. Michael Brook points to the important role played by dissenters in the dissemination of scientific education and their role in promoting Literary and Scientific Societies in Birmingham, Newcastle and Manchester.¹⁹⁰ Similar societies were slower to establish in Sheffield but Brook points to Warwick's lectures as part of this tradition.

Barred from attending English universities, Warwick had trained at the Dissenting Academy at Daventry and Northampton, and then taken his MD at Glasgow University, which has been cited as playing a considerable role at that time in the 'Chemical revolution'. A minister at Rotherham, Warwick followed in the tradition of 'Dissenting scientific educators', and advertised to men and women at the cost of two guineas or single lectures half a crown, a series of lectures 'with particular reference to the Arts and Manufactures of the Town and Neighbourhood of Sheffield'. It is evident Warwick was appealing to the wealthier members of the town and his audience was confined 'largely to the professional middle-class, with some representatives of the commercial middle-class and a very strong

¹⁸⁹ C.G. Martin, 'Coleridge, Edward Rushton, and the Cancelled Note to the "Monody on the Death of Chatterton"', *The Review of English Studies* 17.68 (1996), p. 395.

¹⁹⁰ Michael Brook, 'Dr Warwick's chemistry lectures and the scientific audience in Sheffield (1799-1801)', *Annals of Science* 11.3 (1955), pp. 224.

representation of Dissenters,' one of whom was Joseph Hunter.¹⁹¹ Peter Earle notes how in London, dissenters 'could be found in the very wealthiest mercantile and financial circles', with a core of support coming from 'tradesmen, small shopkeepers and artisans', a profile replicated in the congregation of Sheffield's Upper Chapel.¹⁹²

As with the material and spatial arrangements of their homes which often featured goods able to support new sociabilities, the use of public locales and activities associated with politeness and middling identity may be a further example of dissenters employing new behaviour to further the establishment of their networks, interests and associations. Their place in Sheffield society was perhaps unusual, as they were able to secure some positions of authority and influence. Prior to the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689 enabling dissenters to acquire their own places of worship, it was notable that some had stood as Church Burgesses.¹⁹³ They continued to be appointed as Town Trustees and their names regularly appeared as subscribers to assemblies and as members of the Monthly Club. Writing in the *Sheffield Independent* in 1846, the author known as F.A.S. shows how those who attended the assemblies and subscribed to the building of a racecourse in 1750 formed a distinct society united through marriage and a complex web of filial, social and business relationships.¹⁹⁴

Locales such as the Angel and Tontine, and before them Zachariah Arther's Rose and Crown may have created environments which could support polite behaviour in response to

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 226, 232.

¹⁹² Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁹³ Tolley, *We, of our Bounty*, pp.149-150.

¹⁹⁴ E.A.S. 'History of the Sheffield Assemblies', *Sheffield Independent*, 23 October 1846.

how they saw dissenters, amongst others, as leaders of a newly emerging middle sort which used politeness as a broker between those of different backgrounds seeking to establish common ground in the furtherance of their ventures. How such behaviour was facilitated varied according to the means and understandings at their disposal so it is possible that politeness was subject to a variety of interpretations, aided in part by the spatial and material arrangements of each inn. Whilst the Angel offered a politeness based upon bonhomie in spaces adapted to its use, the classical and imposing form the Tontine was readily recognisable to visitors and from the start had determined its market to be the middling and elite sectors of society. As the century drew to a close the Tontine became a locale of electioneers and debates concerning unrest in the town generated by a combination of food shortages, the French Revolution and the restrictive practices of the Company of Cutlers.¹⁹⁵ On several occasions it became the locale of public remonstrations suggesting perhaps that by the late eighteenth century the Tontine's form of politeness was perceived by some as that which Paul Langford describes had become an 'instrument of social warfare rather than a tool of benevolent intercourse'¹⁹⁶ Ironically, many of the debates held at the Tontine were attempts to ameliorate the suffering of those who protested outside yet the exclusion of those they sought to help may have been discerned as the hardening of class distinctions in a society which hitherto had been used to direct access to authority.

¹⁹⁵ *Sheffield Iris*, 7, 14 and 21st August 1795; Leader, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 243-244; Sheffield Archives: Jackson Collection, JC 1560, Meeting at the Tontine; Hey, *A History of Sheffield* (Lancaster, 1998), p. 139.

¹⁹⁶ Langford, 'Uses of Politeness', pp. 314-315.

Conclusion

Beneath the smoke that deterred so many from exploring the town it is possible to locate public spaces which were influenced by the classical forms, and the desire for learning, order, manners and sociability associated with politeness. Many of these spaces helped fulfil the desire of an evolving middling society for recognisable and controlled spaces away from the day-to-day commotion and din of the street where they could pursue their interests and form new associations in private and decorous surroundings. Just as the size, form and configuration of classicism found at the assembly rooms, inns, Cutlers' Halls, and other buildings varied according to the pragmatic and aesthetic perceptions of those who used them, the fluidity of form that politeness could express suggests that the behaviour they supported could vary according to circumstance, participants and occasion. The sociability offered by the Cutler's Company encompassed a variety of sociabilities as it strove to achieve different aims with different groups. In contrast, the select environment of assemblies offered private and select space to those with a potentially more holistic understanding of their identity and who shared similar aims and ambitions. The Angel and Tontine saw the valuable market to be secured by creating sociable and polite environments but whether due to its sponsors, its clientele, its size and form, or simply its prices, over time the Tontine appears to have become a locale which deployed politeness as a means of exclusion.

Individuals as well as institutions could use politeness could employ it in different ways at different times to best suit their circumstances and understandings, and equally may have chosen not to employ it. How politeness may have been performed in the public

sphere was subject to an array of considerations but it is evident that spatial and material provision was made in a variety of environments, which could support its performance.

Klein comments how 'in a world that was both vertically organized and also prosperous and commercializing, politeness proved a highly useful tool for understanding and organizing cultural practices.¹⁹⁷ Progress could be slow, cautious and subject to local interpretations, but drawn from across the region a distinct group of families with close social, familial, and commercial affiliations can be identified who subscribed to events and spaces able to offer the potential for polite behaviour. Spanning these networks, one of the largest dissenting populations in the country appears to have been at the fore of promoting public spaces that could facilitate new forms of behaviour. Earle notes how their associations could cut across local and national divisions of wealth, status and politics and how, in London, they were found at all levels of society.¹⁹⁸ In public and private, Sheffield dissenters appear to have been at the fore of those who embraced the material and spatial culture of politeness encouraging their town to embark upon its own urban renaissance.

¹⁹⁷ Klein, *Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century*, p. 898.

¹⁹⁸ Earle, *Middle Class*, p. 267.

Conclusion

Sheffield and its hinterland of Hallamshire were perceived by eighteenth-century commentators as forming a distinct 'country' shaped by its landscape, people, and the prevalence of its metal working activities. As elite visitors prepared their descent to the town from the surrounding hills, the vista of smoke and fire issuing from furnace and forge confirmed their fears of uncontrolled urban expansion, industry, and wealth in the wrong hands. In his *History of Hallamshire*, published in 1819, Joseph Hunter combined these anxieties with concerns over the region's lack of a resident aristocracy to set the social tone and offer leadership. In 1867, the Revd Gatty added concerns over the need to reform the moral and physical condition of the labouring population to a revised edition of *Hallamshire*.¹ Neither perceived trade as coterminous with politeness or refinement. Mourning the loss of gentry families first Hunter, then Gatty, Leader and Walton neglected the social and cultural changes brought about in the eighteenth century by a successful, independent, and educated middling sector of the population. Through the works of subsequent historians, their collective understandings have shaped histories of the region for almost two hundred years. Furthermore, their challenge to the authority of the few works which pointed to the presence of an important and vibrant sector of local society who were neither gentry nor amongst the closely examined labouring sorts deterred any

¹ Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire: The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*, (London, 1819); Revd. A. Gatty, (ed.) *Hallamshire: The History & Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York*, (2nd edn, London, 1869).

reappraisal of the period. Post-World War II research added valuable new insights into the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions of the region's labouring classes and the development of its industries but the actions, identity, and lives of the middling sort and the contribution they may have made to the social and cultural fabric of the town continued to be overlooked.

Recent work by historians into the growth and development of eighteenth-century provincial towns has provided the tools and understandings used in this study to explore Hallamshire and determine how a middling population may have employed politeness as a means of establishing their identity and controlling their environment. These new understandings have allowed dichotomous comparisons in which provincial towns were contrasted with metropolitan ideals to be replaced with a variety of interpretations that acknowledge the numerous ways in which urban societies sought to establish their own constructions and understandings of what it meant to be middling. Blending traditional allegiances and practices with ideas gained from neighbouring towns, increasingly confident, independent and influential middling populations sought ways to construct their identities that best addressed their particular needs and circumstances. Although some historians claim such fluidity means it is not possible to establish a coherent definition of middling sort identity and practices, Lawrence Klein has summarised the significance that politeness had in helping to shape their lives. Having largely replaced the more rigid practices of gentility and civility by the early eighteenth century, the 'scope of politeness could encompass material and visual cultures, organisation of space, the construction of

social and political identities, the character of intellectual and artistic life, and even institutional structures'.² Locating patterns of consumption associated with the material accoutrements of politeness and examining the spatial provision for its associated sociabilities can thus offer some insight into the construction and behaviour employed by this fluid and emerging sector of society as they sought to establish their distinctiveness and status.

Combining these insights with an extensive use of new sources has shown how repeated claims of Sheffield's poor communications, parochialism, lack of social diversity, low levels of literacy, broken, ill-lit streets, and ability to manufacture only staple goods can be challenged. Whilst these conditions were undoubtedly present for a large sector of Hallamshire society, it is now possible to reveal an urbane, educated, sociable, consumerist, and well-travelled middle sector of society whose outlook, disposition, and sociability were essential factors in shaping the cultural, physical and economic growth of Sheffield.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, politeness became an essential tool for the newly prosperous middling sort whose dealings took them increasingly beyond the familiar boundaries of kinship and parish and who lacked the traditional genteel signifiers of land, lineage or wealth. Politeness could help them secure a respectable place in the social hierarchy and further their social and commercial ambitions.³ Henry French explores how

² L.E. Klein, 'Historiographical Reviews: Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal* 45.4 (2002), p. 870.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 872.

inventories provide evidence for a genteel 'self-image which can be detected among the household possessions of the more prosperous office-holding chief inhabitants, particularly in goods denoting fashion, leisure, learning and sociability. This social identity cut across chief inhabitants, inserting a potential social threshold between those who manifested these aspirations and those who did not'.⁴ In addition to the range of everyday goods, the inventories of such households recorded the presence of hot drinks equipage, china, books, mirrors, pictures, cutlery, glassware, upholstered chairs, oval or round tables, window curtains and clocks. Evidence from probate inventories shows ownership of new goods that could facilitate new social rituals and behaviour were found to have originated in Hallamshire amongst its urban professionals who were joined by the more successful merchants, tradesmen, factors, and retailers.

Richard Bushman claims the presence of these objects were essential to the middling sorts in the establishment of their identity. They helped transform the everyday activities of eating, drinking, card playing, and dancing from vulgar activities into polite entertainments performed with the 'utmost decency and decorum'. Such props allowed the middle sort to believe 'cards played on a mahogany table by the light of candles in silver

⁴ H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 201.

holders, to be very different from cards in the greasy hands of a day laborer in a dark tavern with a mug of beer at his elbow'.⁵

As with Ursula Priestley and Penelope Corfield's inventory evidence from Norwich indicating a greater accommodation of new spaces in urban areas, the Hallamshire sample also shows that it was in the urban homes of this sector of society that spatial re-organisations were most likely to be found which could accommodate new, fashionable and specialised arenas in which leisure, learning, and polite sociability could be conducted in privacy and comfort. New spaces were created by the removal of food preparation from the 'house' to the kitchen, the creation of dining rooms or halls, the presence of chambers equipped with tables and chairs as additional spaces for sociability and the removal of beds from parlours to upper chambers. Acquiring a new character, domestic environments became cleaner, lighter, brighter and more comfortable spaces in which families and friends could be 'sociable, pleasurable, decorous, edifying, in a word, polite'.⁶ Those who could afford to do so incorporated into their homes the classical facades and symmetrical forms that alerted the visitor to a home organised on polite principles and which gave them a 'social acceptability and cultural authority'.⁷ Collectively, these features were most readily

⁵ R. L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1993), pp. 51-52.

⁶ Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century' p. 887.

⁷ R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edn, Sheffield, 1905), pp. 161-162; Elizabeth McKellar, *The birth of modern London: the development and design of the city 1660-1720* (Manchester, 1999), p. 221.

found in the homes of men at the fore of Hallamshire's civic and commercial life who were locally acknowledged as Mister or Gentleman.

Generally wealthier than their neighbours, many of these men held positions of authority as chief inhabitants of their parish or as officers of governing bodies such as the Company of Cutlers, the Town Trustees, or Church Burgesses. A variety of evidence suggests the importance they attributed to owning new goods that could facilitate new forms of sociability in greater quantities than other sectors of society was due as much to the meanings and behaviour they could support as to their ability to convey notions of wealth. Lacking traditional expressions of status from land, property, or title, these financially successful men sought to mark their achievements and position in society in ways that resonated with those described by Bernard Mandeville in his *Fable of the Bees*.⁸ Rather than simply acquiring more traditional goods to convey their wealth and status, these men chose goods that could facilitate new forms of behaviour and association.

Probate and other evidence indicates that despite external perceptions of the region as a distinct 'country', Hallamshire was much more socially, culturally and economically diverse than hitherto understood. Complex and varied patterns of consumption indicate different groups may have engaged with new goods in different ways, at different times and for different reasons. In many cases, these reasons may have had little, if anything, to do with a desire to perform new behaviour. Peter Earle's identification amongst the London

⁸ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees or private vices, publick benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye (Indianapolis, 1988).

middle sorts of different patterns of consumption between those with similar levels of wealth but different status and occupation is one repeated in Hallamshire.⁹ Evidence shows many who possessed the resources, wealth, or status to acquire new goods and adapt their homes to accommodate new sociabilities chose not to do so. For many, politeness was neither an ambition nor a benefit so that it must not be assumed that the absence of its material signifiers indicates a failing rather than a choice, or that such households should be considered impolite. Many households appear to have been content to remain within the parish hierarchy and equip their homes with traditional goods in accordance with their status in a highly localised society. Henry French's observation about how some chief inhabitants in a variety of predominantly small, rural towns appropriated a range of old and new goods for themselves can be seen especially in the more remote areas of Hallamshire, where a limited number of new goods signified status and not necessarily accommodation of the new behaviour they could support. Sir George Sitwell's long-established Tory and agrarian gentry of Bradfield may, in Helen Berry's phrase, have remained in 'blissfull unawareness' of politeness but equally may have found little use for a behaviour that eased relationships in a society where their position was accepted and secure.¹⁰

In contrast, patterns of consumption in other parts of the region accord more with those of Mark Overton et al who claimed that the pioneers of new goods in Kent were more

⁹ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class, Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1989).

¹⁰ H. Berry, 'Rethinking politeness in eighteenth century England, Moll King's coffee house and the significance of 'flash talk'', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11.6 (2001), p. 81.

likely to be the gentry, followed by households engaged in service, retail or maritime activities.¹¹ Replacing maritime activities with scythemaking produces a pattern found in the southernmost region of Hallamshire amongst the Norton villages. Here, facilitated by good communications and a long-established industry with national impact and which consolidated wealth in a few hands, a group of affluent gentry and scythemaking families appear to have acquired assemblages of new goods much earlier than urban parts of the region. It is possible these findings may be attributed to the lack of early inventories for Sheffield but they challenge arguments put forward by Lorna Weatherill who claims the gentry were less likely to be the first to acquire new goods and that such objects made their first appearance in an urban setting. The early acquisition of new goods amongst the Norton gentry could be attributed to the different social spheres in which they mixed, but Overton cautions that despite owning new goods earlier than other groups, 'the gentry were not necessarily pioneers of new forms of social behavior associated with new ways of cooking and eating, and with the presence of tea or coffee'.¹²

During the first decades of the eighteenth century, patterns of consumption for Hallamshire show that the ownership of new goods became concentrated in Sheffield, but not in Rotherham, the region's second urban settlement. Although new goods were readily available, there was much less engagement with them and the inventory evidence suggests overall levels of inventoried wealth in Rotherham meant households were rarely able to

¹¹ Mark Overton, *et al*, *Production and Consumption in English Households 1600-1750*, (London & New York, 2004).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

invest in more than a basic range of goods. These findings at first appear to support Shammass's view that wealth was the main criteria in determining the value and variety of household consumption but as already noted, the variety of patterns found in Hallamshire suggests that whilst wealth was a necessary factor in the acquisition of goods that could support new behaviour, it did not always ensure their ownership.

Similarly, French's emphasis on gentility, moral superiority, and parochial authority is undermined by the presence of new goods recorded in the homes of those with no inherent claim to such attributes. The possession of new goods by non-elite households suggests their value may not necessarily have been to enhance status or gentility but may have been sought for their ability to convey equally important and desirable understandings, such as politeness or openness in ways that traditional objects could not.¹³ French, for example, suggests the ownership of quantities of new goods by those in ungentle, or dirty trades could simply reflect their desire to advertise their success and wealth rather than the expression of a more distinct middling identity.¹⁴ Whilst Peter Earle considered the concentration of new goods in urban areas as evidence of a consciously middle class identity, these findings, together with understandings of the contextual nature

¹³ Sheffield City Archives: Tibbitts Collection TC1055, Inventory of 'Widow' Mitchell, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, 1739: Borthwick Institute, University of York: John Wallace, cutler, Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, March 1728; Jonathan Sybrey, blacksmith, Attercliffe, parish of Sheffield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, November 1753.

¹⁴ H. R. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 147.

of politeness and the fluidity of concepts such as 'middling' means fixed definitions require care as different motives may have been at work for different sectors of society.

Roy Porter's assertion that provincial newspapers were essential to the flourishing of polite culture and the relatively late establishment of a local press have often been cited as evidence of Sheffield's reluctance to engage with polite culture or extend interest to affairs beyond its immediate reach. However, new evidence from subscription lists, household accounts, and gazetteers' records show Sheffield engaged with a newspaper culture earlier and often to a greater degree than many other towns. Access to books, subscriptions to a wide range of London publications, engagement with modish and refined furniture designs, and advertisements offering fashionable wallpapers, silverwares, and other domestic goods, scientific lectures, concerts, and debates, all point to an educated, informed and style-conscious consumerist society.

The value of politeness in facilitating common ground between different groups such as merchants, professionals, gentry and even aristocracy may have encouraged some who lived in more rural areas to embrace the spatial and material cultures that could facilitate access to new associations. The forms of sociability that new goods could offer enabled the deployment of a shared set of manners for some to break free from their parish identity and embrace mentalities that offered greater access to learning, worldliness,

gentility and improvement.¹⁵ Hence, in the remoter areas of Bradfield Chapelry, new goods for sociability were found in the inventories of glassmaker Robert Blackburne and victualler Anthony Worrall both of who relied on custom from a broad sector of society from beyond their parish boundaries.¹⁶ Similarly, rather than maintaining the traditional and parish orientated forms of association indicated in the inventories of his agrarian siblings in the parish of Ecclesfield, Dr Joseph Carr chose to acquire a wide selection of new goods that could support the polite sociabilities he may have encountered amongst his fellow urban professionals. Peter Borsay stated that “however fine a man’s mind and clothes, they are of little use in the pursuit of status unless displayed amongst those people willing and able to compete with him. The village could hardly provide this competition’.¹⁷ Evidence from probate inventories suggests that the spatial and material culture of the home could also be used to facilitate new forms of sociability and polite behaviour that enabled their owners to engage more easily with mentalities and associations that spanned parish boundaries and hierarchies.

A key finding in Hallamshire is the role politeness appears to have played in facilitating those whose networks and negotiations spanned social and cultural boundaries.

¹⁵ Klein, *Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century* pp. 876,879,881.

¹⁶ Borthwick Institute, University of York: Inventory of Robert Blackburne, glassmaker, Bade Green, parish of Bradfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1727/28; Inventory of Anthony Worrall, gentleman victualler, Strines parish of Bradfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, May 1776; Inventory of Dr Joseph Carr, gent, Birley Edge in the parish of Ecclesfield, Doncaster Deanery, Diocese of York, February 1726/7.

¹⁷ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance, Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 176-177.

As the scope of Sheffield's industries increased, negotiations between local landowners, aristocracy, members of parliament, attorneys, investors and suppliers were facilitated by the ease and agreeableness politeness could offer groups of different status and outlook whilst still allowing deference to be maintained. In exploring these networks, it appears that elite groups were far more active in the region than previous works have acknowledged. A pageantry of dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts and knights met with the Cutlers' Company, and sought goods from local manufacturers and services from local attorneys. Towards the end of the century, the Monthly Dining Club brought the Earl of Surrey, Verelsts from Aston, Tookers from Rotherham, Foljambes from Aldwark, and Rhodes from Barlborough to dine with Sheffield plate manufacturers, merchants, attorneys and professionals. The focus of this study has been on the middling sorts but the realisation that engagement between the middling sorts, gentry and aristocracy appears to have been much greater than generally understood, suggests further study may throw new light onto this hitherto overlooked aspect of eighteenth-century Hallamshire.

A further challenge to current perceptions of the area is the role dissenters appear to have played in pioneering the ownership of new goods and promoting the provision of new spaces for polite sociability. David Hey intimated one of the main reasons he believed Sheffield had failed to engage in Peter Borsay's urban renaissance was due to the puritan nature of its governing bodies.¹⁸ Rosemary Sweet notes how for William Hutton, the

¹⁸ D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire Sheffield and its Neighbourhood 1660-1740* (Leicester, London & New York, 1991), p. 249.

politeness of Derby and Birmingham 'lay as much in religious toleration, morality, education and good order as in the trappings of leisure and consumption'.¹⁹ Weaving a thread through the many affiliations and identities found within Hallamshire, the presence of a large, wealthy, independent, and influential body of dissenters offers further evidence of the uses of politeness in the construction of identity. In Sheffield, the Upper Chapel brought together as its first trustees a socially and culturally diverse mix of London drapers and Sheffield gentlemen, mercers, cutlers, tallow chandlers, and tanners. Barred from many of the traditional forms of authority and hierarchy, Sweet claims that loyalties such as those amongst dissenters could create local allegiances and identities.²⁰ Throughout the century, the deployment of politeness enabled leading families such as the Sylvesters, Fells, Roebucks, Shores, Waterhouses, Simmons, and Milners the opportunity to meet and discuss their beliefs and ideas with fellow congregants and preachers from across the country, whose social and economic circumstances were often very different from their own. It was amongst this congregation that newspaper editor, Joseph Gales, developed his radical ideas, and published them alongside advertisements for dancing classes and fashionable wallpaper. Further work is required to explore this and other dissenting communities in more detail but it is possible new behaviour, such as politeness, were employed by groups excluded from traditional mechanisms of public authority, from the church and from

¹⁹ R. H. Sweet, 'Topographies of Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), pp. 368-369; William Hutton, *A History of Birmingham* (2nd edn, Birmingham, 1783), p. 260; *The History of Derby* (1791) p. 186.

²⁰ R. H. Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (New York, 1999), p. 195.

universities, to create for themselves new identities that did not rely on traditional networks. Like Epstein's 'radical dining', the notion of 'radical politeness' is one that could describe its use by those excluded from traditional forms of association who appropriated the spatial and material culture of politeness in order to give shape and form to new identities. In doing so, dissenters also found a device that enabled them to bridge differences between those of different religious and political views and a mechanism to help foster new social, cultural and economic networks.

Dissenters in Sheffield were also at the fore of many projects to create new and sociable spaces within the town. Sheffield's middling sorts were less wealthy than similar groups in other large towns and they lacked the vehicle of a unified local government through which to direct and manage change. The historic practice of allowing furnaces, grinding wheels, workshops and forges to be scattered across the townscape persisted for much of the century as only the Duke of Norfolk had sufficient land, wealth and influence to drive through large-scale redevelopment. Nevertheless, as the century progressed, the growing numbers, influence, confidence, and wealth of middling dissenters and others encouraged them to apply to Sheffield the facilities and solutions they had encountered elsewhere which offered select and private arenas for easy and agreeable sociability.

Following a pattern common to other towns of the period, the provision of churches, chapels, town halls, almshouses, hospitals, and schools was followed by the creation of new spaces able to support new forms of sociability. Kevin Grady has shown

how, in Sheffield, expenditure on new sociable spaces in fashionable and 'polite' classical styles compared favourably with neighbouring towns. Theatres, inns, coffeehouses, assembly and card rooms offered private accommodation to a wide range of hunt balls, recitals, clubs, concerts, assemblies and plays that invigorated and articulated middling life. Invitations, subscriptions and membership lists show how attendance at these events was populated by a core of families linked through marriage, commerce, kinship and outlook, and who arguably perceived themselves as middling whilst evidence from inventories shows how many were also the owners of new goods and new homes. As shown by the social and familial network that Francis Hurt could encounter at assemblies, and the complex network of inter-marriages and commercial interests explored by Leader, a sector of local society may be identified which took pains to avail themselves in public and private with the accoutrements that could support polite behaviour.

Politeness was a tool that could be selected as required by individuals who sought to secure their aims in accordance with the circumstances in which they found themselves. Individuals had neither to be consistently polite nor consistent in the forms of politeness they employed. As Paul Langford observes, 'what was polite in Berkeley Square was not necessarily what was polite in Finsbury or Hammersmith, let alone Shadwell or Wapping'.²¹ Equally, the spatial and material configuration of assemblies, or the theatre, the coffeehouse, the Tontine and the Angel, may have facilitated behaviour that participants

²¹ P. Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Journal* 12 (2002), p. 314.

considered polite but which were supported and enacted in different ways and which could further be modified according to the nature of the occasion and even, as Benjamin Heller has recently written, by the time of day at which events were held.²²

Rather than being a fixed entity belonging to a specific social group, Klein has defined politeness as more as a 'cultural trait' or 'competency'.²³ It cannot be tied to a set code of conduct, or place or time. Rather, individuals may or may not have mastered all its compartments, or may or may not avail themselves of them and if they did, they used them according to the needs and circumstances in which they found themselves. Does this mean that the understandings and performance of politeness in Sheffield was so fragmented that it could not be claimed to have contributed to the making of a recognisable, albeit fluid, middling culture?

Politeness followed a tradition that some would claim began in the Middle Ages where attempts were made to modify, facilitate or control the behaviour of society. Lawrence Klein argues that 'what made eighteenth-century Britain a polite society was not its horizontal division between polite and non-polite persons but rather the wide access of a range of persons to activities and competencies that contemporaries considered "polite"'.²⁴ Unlike earlier traditions of courtesy, civility or gentility, politeness was a fluid yet

²² Benjamin Heller, 'Leisure and the use of domestic space in Georgian London', *The Historical Journal* 53.3 (2010), pp. 623–645.

²³ Klein, 'Politeness and the British eighteenth century', p. 873.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 869.

recognizable comportment essential to the rise of commerce and middling people.²⁵ Its ability to address the needs of different sectors of society and also to bring them together allowed bridges to be built between groups. It offered a sociability and ease that transcended the narrowness of provincialism and parish identity, enabling those lacking the birthright of lineage, wealth and land to claim through their behaviour and interactions an acceptable place in society. Whilst still maintaining deference, politeness allowed a greater freedom and ease of discourse across boundaries of wealth, status, politics, and religion so that in the pursuit of common interests difference could be set aside. Enabling them to secure a respectable place in the social order, the Shaftesbury mode of politeness, argues Klein, placed commerce on a high cultural plane and gave it virtue.²⁶ It enabled manufacturers, merchants and professionals, whether Anglican or dissenter, to frame the trapping of their wealth in terms of ease and sociability rather than ostentation. In turn, they sought to extend these tools of their trade into the public sphere by supporting the creation of new public arenas for polite sociability.

Eighteenth-century definitions of class were loosely defined with groups and individuals often perceived according to the circumstance or environment in which they found themselves. The wide-ranging associations found in Sheffield which evidently spanned what might usually be seen as middling and gentry groups is noteworthy as it

²⁵ M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), p. 233; P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1989); Klein, 'Politeness and the British eighteenth century', p. 869.

²⁶ Klein, 'The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18.2 (Winter, 1984-1985), p.214.

suggests politeness was employed as a bridge between different social groups in the pursuit of common aims.

In Sheffield, politeness was a tool that helped shape and sustain a complex set of social, commercial and religious networks in a way that earlier practices could not. It gave tangible expression to an emerging middling sort enabling them to fuse together local and wider experiences in ways that gave them meaning and identity. Alongside a well-established plebeian and labouring population, it is now possible to claim that Sheffield was home to a polite and middling population whose social and cultural contributions to the town can no longer be overlooked.

For almost two hundred years, the authority accredited to Joseph Hunter's county history of *Hallamshire* has left unchallenged perceptions of the region as labouring, plebeian, and parochial. Lacking aristocratic engagement, social diversity, refinement or leisure, eighteenth and early nineteenth-century commentators believed industrial towns lacked social tone not just because there was no one to either offer or receive direction, but also because that was their nature. As early as 1893, the local historian Arthur Jackson claimed Hunter had perhaps had his day and that new ideas meant urban societies should be re-examined. Having written extensively on eighteenth-century Sheffield, R.E. Leader nevertheless felt it necessary to refute Jackson in print and Hunter's views held sway. The kudos attributed to owning a copy of Hunter's *Hallamshire* kept his ideas in the public mind and his views continued to be disseminated through popular histories of the region. Yet, the

temptation to lean on past authorities must be resisted. As Robert Poole has shown in *Time's Alteration*, myths once established gain their own momentum and become difficult to dislodge.²⁷ Sheffield is unlikely to be the only industrial centre whose reputation is still framed by outdated ideas and limited sources so that important areas of their history remain neglected. History is not static and new methodologies means historians must always consult for themselves as wide a range of original sources as possible. In showing that Sheffield was polite, Hallamshire may no longer be Hunter's alone.

²⁷ Robert Poole, *Time's Alteration: Calendar Reform in Early Modern England* (London, 1998).

Appendix One

The Inventory Sample

1.1 Chapelry of Bradfield

YEAR	SURNAME	FORENAME	LOCATION	OCCUPATION	INV CAT REF	SOURCE
1685	Rollinson	Robert	Lee House, Dungworth	Yeoman	April 1698	Borthwick
1689	Greaves	Richard	Stannington	Yeoman	Dec 1689	Borthwick
1693	Wainwright	John	Stannington	Yeoman	Sept 1694	Borthwick
1696	Fox	Thomas	Swingleyford	Yeoman	nm 1696	Borthwick
1698	Downing	Nicholas	Brightholmlee	Yeoman	March 1699	Borthwick
1700	Garlick	Thomas	Ewden	Husbandman	May 1700	Borthwick
1700	Brammall	Reginald	Haychatter	Yeoman	nm 1700	Borthwick
1700	Rowley	Edmund	Woodhouse	Yeoman	June 1700	Borthwick
1701	Whitley	John	Stannington	Cooper	Dec 1701	Borthwick
1703	Morton	Richard	Upper Canyards	Yeoman	March 1704	Borthwick
1704	Crawshaw	Thomas	Fairest, Ewden	Yeoman	March 1703/04	Borthwick
1705	Parkin	John	Bradfield	Joiner	July 1705	Borthwick
1708	Revell	Thomas	Swinden House	Yeoman	June 1708	Borthwick
1712	Trickett	Henry	Stannington	Mason	May 1712	Borthwick
1714	Revell	Richard	Morewood	Gentleman	March 1713/14	Borthwick
1714	Crowder	Joseph	Stocksbridge	Husbandman	Nov 1714	Borthwick
1715	Morewood	Samuel	Oaks,	Gent	June 1715	Borthwick
1718	Bacon	Richard	Netherhouse	Roper	Dec 1719	Borthwick
1720	Bramall	Edward	Townfield Head	Husbandman	Feb 1720/21	Borthwick
1721	Bramall	Edward	Storrs	Yeoman	Feb 1720	Borthwick
1721	Matthew- man	George	Bradfield	Yeoman	Oct 1721	Borthwick
1725	Morton	Francis	Shayhouse, Bolsterstone	Yeoman	SCA/414D/N247	SCA
1727	Bramall	Thomas	Stannington	Blacksmith	June 1727	Borthwick
1727	Blackburne	Robert	Bade Green	Glass manufacturer	Feb 1727/28	Borthwick
1728	Rodger	John	Hilltop	Victualler	May 1728	Borthwick
1730	Walker	Joseph	Stubbin House	Nailor	Jan 1729/30	Borthwick
1732	Cliffe	Adam	Brightholmlee	Yeoman/wood- monger	Oct 1732	Borthwick
1733	Ewden	Thomas	Ewden	Weaver	nm 1733	Borthwick

Appendices

1736	Hoyle	Joseph	Ughill	Tailor	April 1736	Borthwick
1739	Haigh	Thomas	Poggs	Husbandman/ Woodcollier	Oct 1739	Borthwick
1740	Fox	George	Bradfield	Cordwainer	April/May 1743	Borthwick
1740	Halliwell	Edward	Homerhouse	Yeoman	April 1740	Borthwick
1741	Walker	Ann	Stubbin House	Widow	July 1741	Borthwick
1759	Hills	Benjamin	Oughtibridge	Dish Turner	April 1759	Borthwick
1776	Worrall	Anthony	Strines	Gent & Victualler	May 1776	Borthwick
1779	Trickett	Joseph	Mousehole Forge	Cutler	Oct 1779	Borthwick
1780	Kirk	Mary	Woodend, nr Mousehole	Widow	Dec 1780	Borthwick
1785	Crawshaw	George	Moorhall	Yeoman	Nov 1719	Borthwick
1788	Hague	Benjamin	Low Bradfield	Miller	Jan 1790	Borthwick

1.2 Parish of Ecclesfield

YEAR	SURNAME	FORENAME	LOCATION	OCCUPATION	INV CAT REF	SOURCE
1691	Greene	Alice	Ecclesfield Hall	Widow	Dec 1691	Borthwick
1692	Creswick	Edward	Grenoside	Yeoman/Cooper	June 1692	Borthwick
1692	Milner	Richard	Wincobank	Cutler	Dec 1692	Borthwick
1694	Bilcliffe	John	Butterthwaite	Clothier	Jan 1694/5	Borthwick
1694	Coumbe	Leonard	Shiregreen	Cutler	Oct 1694	Borthwick
1694	Watts	Benjamin	Barnes Hall	Gent/Farmer	Feb 1694	Borthwick
1695	Beet	Edward	Woodseats	Nailor	June 1695	Borthwick
1696	Sampson	Anne	Foxhill	Widow	Aug 1696	Borthwick
1698	Machon	Edward	Butterthwaite	Miller	Sept 1698	Borthwick
1699	Priest	Mary	Shiregreen	Widow	n.m. 1699	Borthwick
1700	Burnett	John	Ecclesfield	Nailor	n.m 1700	Borthwick
1700	Dalton	John	Shiregreen	Currier	Sept 1700	Borthwick
1700	Rivington	Issobel	Upper Shire	Widow	April 1700	Borthwick
1702	Gelly	Mary	Wadsley	Widow	Jan 1701/2	Borthwick
1703	Hobson	Joseph	Wadsley	Cutler	Sept 1703	Borthwick
1703	Shaw	Jonathan	Wadsley Bridge	Cutler	Sept 1703	Borthwick
1704	Revell	Gregory	Wadsley Hall	Surveyor	- 1704	Borthwick
1713	Linfit	Thomas	Ecclesfield	Freemason	Mar 1712	Borthwick
1714	Shaw	Henry	Wadsley	Cutler/Grinder	Jan 1713	Borthwick
1715	Lockwood	Joseph	Butterthwaite	Housewright	Aug 1715	Borthwick
1717	Mitchell	Thomas	Brushes	Schoolmaster	June 1717	Borthwick
1720	Smith	Thomas	Wadsley Bridge	Mason	Aug 1720	Borthwick
1721	Fawley	John	Ecclesfield	Nailor	Nov 1721	Borthwick
1722	Lockwood	Jonathan jnr	Ecclesfield	Carpenter	SCA/4140/N180	SCA
1725	Ainsworth	Henry	Ecclesfield	Mason	Aug 1725	Borthwick

Appendices

1725	Allen	John	Windmill Hill	Founder	Aug 1725	Borthwick
1725	Carr	Joseph	Birley Edge	Gent	Feb 1726/7	Borthwick
1726	Gelly	John	Wadsley Hall	Gent/Surveyor	SCA/4/4D/N258	SCA
1727	Carr	Samuel	Hatfield House	Yeoman	Feb 1726/27	Borthwick
1727	Eyre	Thomas	Grenoside	Cutler	Jan 1726/27	Borthwick
1727	Knightingale	Elizabeth	Wadsley	Widow	Feb 1726/27	Borthwick
1728	Carr	John	Ecclesfield	Farmer	Dec 1728	Borthwick
1728	Fletcher	Jonathan	Ecclesfield	Joiner	Dec 1728	Borthwick
1728	Smith	William	Chapelton	Husbandman	July 1728	Borthwick
1730	Holmes	James	Ecclesfield	Cutler	Sept 1730	Borthwick
1730	Wilkinson)	Nathanial	Crowder Hall	Yeoman	Sept 1730	Borthwick
1731	Carr	Robert	Shiregreen	Yeoman	July 1731	Borthwick
1733	Nicholson	Samuel	Ecclesfield	Lime Dresser	Feb 1732/33	Borthwick
1733	Wood	J	Butterfitt	Husbandman	Jan 1733/34	Borthwick
1734	Lister	Joseph	Creswick Greave	Wheelwright	March 1734/35	Borthwick
1735	Dixon	William	Shiregreen	Gardener	Jan 1734/35	Borthwick
1735	Matthewman	Robert	Wadsley	Cutler	Feb 1734/35	Borthwick
1736	Gills	Nicholas	Chapelton	Nailor	April 1736	Borthwick
1737	Bayley	John	Ecclesfield	Mason	Nov 1737	Borthwick
1737	Booth	Samuel	White Lane Head	Nail Chapman	March 1737	Borthwick
1737	Lee	John	High Green	Scissorsmith	April 1737	Borthwick
1737	Longley	Michael	Ecclesfield	Tailor	July 1737	Borthwick
1738	Parkin	George	Middleton Green	Nailor	Feb 1737/38	Borthwick
1738	Smith	Joseph	Potter Hill	Nailor	Feb 1737/38	Borthwick
1739	Walker	William	Hallwood Head	Nailor	Sept 1739	Borthwick
1740	Ashforth	Thomas	Wadsley	Farmer	Nov 1740	Borthwick
1740	Millington	Joseph	Wadsley	Cutler	June 1740	Borthwick
1740	Taylor	Edward	Dovroyd	Cutler	May 1740	Borthwick
1742	Eyre	Elizabeth	Grenoside	Widow	May 1742	Borthwick
1742	Mason	John	Wincobank	Cordwainer	Nov 1742	Borthwick
1743	Parkin	Thomas	Mortomley	Nailor	Sept 1743	Borthwick
1744	Cawood	Robert	Ecclesfield	Nailor	SC 432	SCA
1744	Cutbart	Thomas	Wadsley	Yeoman	Feb 1743/44	Borthwick
1744	Hoyel	Joshua	Wadsley	Cutler	Feb 1743/44	Borthwick
1744	Spencer	Jonathan	Ecclesfield	Cutler	May 1744	Borthwick
1748	Bennitt	William	Wadsley	Cutler	Jan 1747/8	Borthwick
1749	Fenton	Jonathan	Wadsley	Cooper	Oct 1749	Borthwick
1750	Hobson	John	Wadsley	Cutler	Aug 1750	Borthwick
1750	Senior	John	Chapelton	Nailor	Nov 1750	Borthwick
1750	Swift	Thomas	Ecclesfield	Blacksmith	April 1750	Borthwick
1750	Walker	Thomas	Hallfield Head, Greno	Nailor	Jan 1750	Borthwick

Appendices

1751	Hives	John	Foxhill	Husbandman	Oct 1751	Borthwick
1751	Revill	Andrew	Wadsley	Cutler	Aug 1751	Borthwick
1754	Parkin	John	Sowther	Yeoman	Aug 1754	Borthwick
1754	Staneforth	Samuel	Whitley	Woodcolier	Jan 1754	Borthwick
1755	Jackson	John	Butterthwaite	Yeoman	April 1755	Borthwick
1758	Wilkinson	William	Crowder House	Yeoman	July 1758	Borthwick
1760	Law	Richard	Ecclesfield	Farmer	Feb 1760	Borthwick
1762	Fowler	Samuel	Wincobank	Cutler	Feb 1762	Borthwick
1762	Hobson	Joseph	Wadsley	Cutler	July 1762	Borthwick
1763	Barnes	Edward	Wadsley	Scythe grinder	July 1763	Borthwick
1763	Booth	Matthew	White Lane Head	Nail Chapman	Jan 1764	Borthwick
1763	Wood	Bartholomew	High Green	Tailor	Oct 1763	Borthwick
1764	Moore	Enoch	Ecclesfield	Yeoman	May 1764	Borthwick
1765	Machen	Joseph	Hunter House	Farmer	Feb 1765	Borthwick
1766	Cocking	Thomas	Wadsley Bridge	Farmer	April 1766	Borthwick
1766	Damms	William	Underhill	Farmer	Feb 1766	Borthwick
1769	Cutbart	John	Wadsley	Husbandman	Nov 1769	Borthwick
1769	Dearden	Joseph	Ecclesfield	Yeoman	Feb 1769	Borthwick
1770	Booth	John	Grenawood	Nailor	May 1770	Borthwick
1770	Green	Samuel	Potter Hill	Shoemaker	May 1770	Borthwick
1774	Oxspring	George	Shiregreen	Victualler	Nov 1774	Borthwick
1775	Shepperd	Richard	Colley Elm	Husbandman	Nov 1775	Borthwick
1776	Foster	James	Ecclesfield	Farmer	MD566	SCA
1776	Loxley	Thomas	Potter Hill	Carpenter	July 1776	Borthwick
1777	Pinder	Thomas	Grennow Woodside	Husbandman	Aug 1777	Borthwick
1780	Almond	Philemon	Holehouse	Maltster/farmer	March 1783	Borthwick
1780	Machen	John	Wadsley	Butcher	March 1780	Borthwick
1781	Holmes	Francis	Ecclesfield	Surgeon & Apothecary	May 1781	Borthwick
1782	Royston	Barnard	Wadsley Bridge	Yeoman	March 1782	Borthwick
1782	Wing	Martha	Dore Royd	Widow	Jan 1782	Borthwick
1783	Carr	Joseph	Southy Green	Husbandman	March 1783	Borthwick
1784	Cook	Matthew	Chapelton	Miner	Jan 1784	Borthwick
1785	Fallding	Charles	Chapelton	Blacksmith	Aug 1785	Borthwick
1785	Wingfield	John	Butterthwaite	Yeoman	May 1785	Borthwick
1787	Downing	Jeremiah	Wadsley	Husbandman	Jan 1787	Borthwick

1.3 Parish of Norton

YEAR	SURNAME	FORENAME	LOCATION	OCCUPATION	INV CAT REF	SOURCE
1680	Waynwright	Thomas	Cliffiedyate	Scythesmith	nm 1680	SCA
1682	Nall	William	Little Norton	Linen Weaver	nm 1682	SCA
1684	Marriott	John	Woodseats	Wheelwright	nm 1684	SCA
1685	Brownell	Edward	Cliffe Field	Scythesmith	nm 1685	SCA
1685	Rotherham	Eneas	Totley	Chandler	SCL/D&T/115	Borthwick
1688	Atkin	Robert	Norton	Yeoman	nm 1688	SCA
1690	Wood	John	Norton	Clerk	MD 566	SCA
1691	North	John	Bradway	Husbandman	SA/DT/120	SCA
1693	Atkin	Samuel	Sickhouse	Yeoman	SCA/4140/N180	SCA
1693	Burley	William	Greenhill	Gentleman	SCA/414D/N260	SCA
1696	Clarke	Cornelius	Norton Hall	Esquire	SCA/4140/N180	SCA
1697	Brearley	Charles	Cliffe Gate	Maltster	SA/N/59	Borthwick
1701	Burley	Christopher	Dore	Cordwainer	SA/DT/120	SCA
1701	Greenwood	Joshua	Dore	Carpenter	SCL/D&T/133	SCA
1701	Howit	John	Beighton	Husbandman	SCL/ D&T/135	SCA
1702	Linley	Nicholas	Sheephill	Wheelwright	SA/DT/189	SCA
1702	Worthington	Robert	Hallfield	Husbandman	SCL/D&T/137	SCA
1703	Jackson	Edward	Greenhill	Husbandman	SCA/414D/N247	SCA
1706	Barber	John	Hallfield	Tailor	SCL/ D&T/135	SCA
1710	Atkin	Samuel	Norton	Sicklesmith	SCL/D&T/144	SCA
1712	Gillott	Joshua	Bolehill	Scythesmith	SCA/414D/N247	SCA
1712	Leavick	Elizabeth	Himsworth	Spinster	SCA/4/4D/N257	SCA
1714	Morewood	Joseph	Himsworth	Gentleman	SCA/4/4D/N258	SCA
1715	Iberson	Christopher	Dore Moorside	Husbandman	SCL/D&T/144	SCA
1716	Gill	Henry	Oaks	Gent	SCA/414D/N260	SCA
1717	Green	Samuel	Dore	Combmaker	SCL/D&T/145	SCA
1721	Greaves	Robert	Totley Bents	Husbandman	SCL/D&T/ 150	SCA
1721	Pindar	Peter	Totley Bents	Husbandman	SCL/D&T/152	SCA
1723	Watson	Stephen	Dore	Combmaker	SCL/D&T/ 154	SCA
1724	Godward	Thomas	Derbyshire Lane	Scythesmith	SCA/414D/N237	SCA
1726	Greaves	Henry	Dore	Butcher	SCL/D&T/164	SCA
1734	Torr	Thomas	Dore	Baker	SCL/D&T/170	Borthwick
1736	Unwen	John	Dore	Blacksmith	SCL/D&T/172	SCA
1738	Dalton	Edward	Totley	Scorer	SCL/D&T/ 160	SCA
1746	Greaves	Anne	Totley Bents	Widow	SA/DT/189	SCA

1.4 Parish of Rotherham

YEAR	SURNAME	FORENAME	LOCATION	OCCUPATION	INV CAT REF	SOURCE
1691	Giles	Thomas	Rotherham	Tailor	March 1690/91	Borthwick
1691	Thompson	Gilbert	Rotherham	Chapman/Husbandman	March 1690/1	Borthwick
1693	Gascoyne	Henry	Rotherham	Labourer	Feb 1693/94	Borthwick
1694	Simpson	John	Rotherham	Yeoman	Feb 1694	Borthwick
1697	Wrigglesworth	Christopher	Rotherham	Chapman	Sept 1697	Borthwick
1702	Cutfonthay	John	Rotherham	Tallow-Chandler	Jan 1701/02	Borthwick
1704	Rodger	John	Catcliffe	Yeoman	March 1704/05	Borthwick
1705	Beal	John	Rotherham	Tailor	Jan 1704/05	Borthwick
1705	Smith	James	Catcliffe	Husbandman	July 1705	Borthwick
1706	Goodwin	Nathan	Rotherham	Cordwainer	April 1706	Borthwick
1717	Sparald	Thomas	Rotherham	Pewterer	Dec 1717	Borthwick
1718	Walker	John snr	Rotherham	Carrier	April 1717/18	Borthwick
1719	Steele	William	Rotherham	Barber	Nov 1719	Borthwick
1719	Stones	Samuel	Rotherham	Blacksmith	Oct 1719	Borthwick
1720	Shepley	John	Whitehill	Yeoman	March 1720	Borthwick
1721	Austin	George	Masborough	Forgeman	Sept 1721	Borthwick
1725	Dolphin	Jeremiah	Rotherham	Housepainter	SCA/4/4D/N257	SCA
1726	Foster	Godfrey	Rotherham	Wheelwright	Dec 1726	Borthwick
1726	Pugh	Reece	Rotherham	Innkeeper	March 1726	Borthwick
1729	Bradley	John	Rotherham	Currier	March 1728/29	Borthwick
1729	Jarvis	Thomas	Rotherham	Yeoman	Oct 1729	Borthwick
1729	Radley	Thomas	Rotherham	Carpenter	Sept 1729	Borthwick
1730	Fisher	George	Rotherham	Scythestone maker	April 1730	Borthwick
1732	Johnson	James	Rotherham	Shoemaker	July 1732	Borthwick
1732	Popplewell	Charles	Moorgate	Innkeeper & Tailor	Feb 1731/32	Borthwick
1733	Greenwood	Joseph	Rotherham	Cooper	Dec 1733	Borthwick
1735	Barton	Joseph	Rotherham	Butcher	March 1735	Borthwick
1744	Scamadine	John	Rotherham	Butcher	May 1744	Borthwick
1748	Hewitt	George	Rotherham	Roper	May 1748	Borthwick
1749	Bingley	William	Rotherham	Innkeeper	Jan 1748/49	Borthwick
1749	Stones	John	Masbrough	Saddletree maker	Nov 1749	Borthwick
1750	South	Henry	Rotherham	Clockmaker	May 1750	Borthwick
1752	Jones	Bartholomew	Rotherham	Joiner	March 1752	Borthwick

1.5 Parish of Sheffield

YEAR	SURNAME	FORENAME	LOCATION	OCCUPATION	INV CAT REF	SOURCE
1690	Hancock	Henry	Sheffield	Grocer	Oct 1690	Borthwick
1690	Harrison	George	Sheffield	Cutler	Oct 1690	Borthwick
1690	Taylor	William	Sheffield	Tallow Chandler	March 1690/1	Borthwick
1691	Spooner	Thomas	Sheffield	Cutler	April 1692	Borthwick
1692	Staniforth	Samuel	Attercliffe	Pinner	Dec 1692	Borthwick
1694	Stewardson	Charles	Sheffield	Cutler/Innkeeper	Jan 1695	Borthwick
1695	Tickill	Robert	Bridgehouses	Cutler	Feb 1696	Borthwick
1696	Lee	John	Sheffield	Shopkeeper	March 1697	Borthwick
1696	Vintin	Peter	Attercliffe Forge	Carpenter	Aug 1696	Borthwick
1696	Webster	Richard	Sheffield	Distiller	July 1696	Borthwick
1697	Baxter	Nathanial	Attercliffe	Clerk	Jan 1697/8	Borthwick
1697	Holland	John	Sheffield	Merchant	Jan 1698	Borthwick
1697	Jessop	Mary	Sheffield	Widow	Dec 1697	Borthwick
1697	Nawl	Lewis	Sheffield Park	Cutler	Oct 1697	Borthwick
1697	Patten	Ephraim	Sheffield	Cordwainer	May 1698	Borthwick
1697	Smith	William	Bellhouse	Cutler	Sept 1697	Borthwick
1698	Abbott	Wiliam	Bridgehouses	Maltster	Jan 1699	Borthwick
1698	Brammall	Joseph	Sheffield	Filesmith	July 1698	Borthwick
1698	Wild	Elizabeth	Attercliffe	Widow	TC 1052	SCA
1699	Dale	Thomas	Sheffield	Sicklesmith	April 1699/1700	Borthwick
1699	Ruslin	Richard	Sheffield	Cutler	Feb 1700	Borthwick
1700	Hides	Ralph	Sheffield	Shearsmith	June 1700	Borthwick
1700	Sorsbie	Robert	Sheffield	Gent	Feb 1701	Borthwick
1700	Stacey	Joshua	Sheffield	Cutler	July 1700	Borthwick
1700	Trickett	Elias	Sheffield	Cutler	May 1700	Borthwick
1701	Hoole	William	Brightside	Cutler	Oct 1701	Borthwick
1701	Roberts	Edward	Sheffield	Barber-Surgeon	June 1701	Borthwick
1702	Hine	Thomas	Hallam	Yeoman	May 1703	Borthwick
1702	Smith	Richard	Sheffield	Smoothing Iron mfr	April 1702	Borthwick
1703	Creswick	Godfrey	Sheffield	Cutler	June 1704	Borthwick
1703	Diston	Thomas	Sheffield	Ironmonger	Oct 1703	Borthwick
1703	Robinson	John	Hills, Sheffield	Cutler	March 1703	Borthwick
1703	Wood	John	Sheffield	Innholder	July 1704	Borthwick
1705	Lee	Joseph	Sheffield	Grocer	Feb 1705	Borthwick
1705	Towle	John	Sheffield	Cutler	June 1705	Borthwick
1709	Symon	Charles	Bridgehouses	Hardwareman	Nov 1709	Borthwick
1711	Smith	Joseph	Crookesmoor	Cutler	June 1711	Borthwick
1712	Ludlam	Mary	Sheffield	Grocer	SC432	SCA
1713	Barlow	Obadiah	Sheffield	Cutler	Oct 1713	Borthwick
1713	Barlow	Thomas	Heeley	Scissorsmith	April 1714	Borthwick
1713	Lee	Jonathan	Little Sheffield	Lead Merchant	Jan 1714	Borthwick

Appendices

1713	Shirtcliffe	John	Sheffield	Cutler	Feb 1714	Borthwick
1713	Staniforth	Jonathan	Owlerton	Cutler	June 1713	Borthwick
1714	Turner	Jonathan	Sheffield	Whitesmith	May 1714	Borthwick
1714	Waterhouse	John	Sheffield	Doctor	March 115	Borthwick
1715	Silcock	Samuel	Sheffield	Carrier	Sept 1715	Borthwick
1716	Ashford	John	Brookhouse	Tailor	Dec 1716	Borthwick
1716	Smith	Martha	Bellhouse	Widow	June 1716	Borthwick
1717	Bamforth	William	Darnall	Gent	July 1717	Borthwick
1717	Bason	William	Heeley	Nailor	Sept 1717	Borthwick
1717	Lord	Thomas	Fulwood	Husbandman	July 1717	Borthwick
1717	Sylvester	Field	Sheffield	Gent	July 1717	Borthwick
1718	Almond	John	Bridgehouses	Maltster	Oct 1719	Borthwick
1719	Arther	Zachariah	Sheffield	Innholder	June 1719	Borthwick
1719	Taylor	William	Norwood	Mercer	March 1719	Borthwick
1720	Crawshaw	Peter	Sheffield	Butcher	MD 3521	SCA
1720	Revell	Richard	Sheffield	Schoolmaster/Gent	June 1720	Borthwick
1721	Ashmore	Joseph	Sheffield	Gent	Oct 1721	Borthwick
1721	Atkin	William	Little Sheffield	Sicklesmith	Dec 1721	Borthwick
1722	Caterer	John	Sheffield	Hosier	SA/DT/120	SCA
1723	Bamforth	George	Darnall	Soapboiler	SCA/414D/N260	SCA
1724	Bate	John	Sheffield	Linen Weaver	SCA/414D/N237	SCA
1724	Oxley	Jonathan	Sheffield	Tallow Chandler	May 1725	Borthwick
1724	Sceoles	Samuel	Sheffield	Apothecary	SA/DT/189	SCA
1724	Shimeld	Jonathan	Sheffield	Tanner	SA/N/59	SCA
1724	Woolhouse	Alexander	Bridgehouses	Husbandman	May 1724	Borthwick
1725	Hague	Edmund	Sheffield	Innkeeper/Carrier	June 1725	Borthwick
1726	Bamforth	Thomas	Sheffield	Cutler	Oct 1726	Borthwick
1726	Steer	William	Sheffield	Chapman	Jan 1727	Borthwick
1727	Bright	Mary	Ecclesall	Widow	Dec 1727	Borthwick
1727	Canlin	Sampson	Sheffield	Innholder	Nov 1727	Borthwick
1727	Wallace	John	Sheffield	Cutler	March 1728	Borthwick
1728	Bradshaw	William	Crookesmoor	Grinder	Sept 1728	Borthwick
1728	Park	James	Sheffield	Linen Draper	Feb 1728	Borthwick
1728	Simon	Ezra	Bridgehouses	Hardwareman	July 1728	Borthwick
1728	Turner	Joseph	Sheffield	Bookseller	June 1728	Borthwick
1729	Ashwood	Rob	Darnall	Soaper	April 1729	Borthwick
1729	Staniforth	Nathan	Owlerton	Cutler	April 1729	Borthwick
1729	Swaine	William	Sheffield	Chandler	Dec 1729	Borthwick
1730	Bright	Jonathan	Attercliffe	Carpenter	May 1730	Borthwick
1730	Simmons	Neville jnr	Sheffield	Bookseller	July 1730	Borthwick
1730	Sykes	George	Sheffield	Innholder	Feb 1730	Borthwick
1730	Taylor	Thomas	Sheffield	Filesmith	Sept 1730	Borthwick
1730	Wilkinson	Jonathan	Sheffield	Grocer	July 1730	Borthwick
1731	Allen	Thomas	Sheffield	Anvil smith	Dec 1730	Borthwick
1731	Poole	Winifred	Sheffield	Widow	Oct 1731	Borthwick
1731	Worrall	Richard	Sheffield	Shopkeeper	Sept 1731	Borthwick

Appendices

1732	Crooks	Richard	Sheffield	Apothecary	July 1732	Borthwick
1732	Holiday	Richard	Sheffield	Innkeeper	March 1732	Borthwick
1732	Hurt	Jonathan	Sheffield	Mercer	July 1732	Borthwick
1732	Marshall	Francis	Ecclesall	Surgeon	Aug 1732	Borthwick
1733	Batty	John	Sheffield	Schoolmaster	Oct 1734	Borthwick
1733	Osborne	George	Attercliffe	Insign	Feb 1734	Borthwick
1733	Trickett	Jonathan	Bellhouse	Cutler	April 1733	Borthwick
1733	Walklett	Thomas	Sheffield	Glazier & Plumber	June 1733	Borthwick
1733	Wallace	Ebenezer	Sheffield	Cutler	Aug 1733	Borthwick
1734	Wildsmith	Francis	Sheffield	Innkeeper	Aug 1734	Borthwick
1735	Emmott	Hosea	Bridgehouses	Temsemaker	Oct 1735	Borthwick
1735	Hawksworth	William	Longley	Filesmith	Sept 1735	Borthwick
1737	Parramoor	Samuel	Sheffield	Button maker	Sept 1737	Borthwick
1738	Ingall	Robert	Sheffield	Innkeeper	June 1738	Borthwick
1739	Mitchell	'Widow'	Sheffield	Widow	TC1055	SCA
1739	Wynn	Thomas	Sheffield	Grocer	June 1739	Borthwick
1740	Watson	Thomas	Attercliffe	Innkeeper	April 1740	Borthwick
1741	Swift	Joseph	Darnall	Cutler	July 1741	Borthwick
1744	Jervase	George	Attercliffe	Scissorsmith	June 1744	Borthwick
1745	Bullas	William	Attercliffe	Butcher	May 1745	Borthwick
1745	Wadsworth	Samuel	Attercliffe	Farmer	Sept 1745	Borthwick
1746	Marriott	John	Attercliffe	Baker	Dec 1746	Borthwick
1747	Rutherford	Joseph	Attercliffe	Maltster	Sept 1747	Borthwick
1750	Yates	Jonathan	Longley	Button maker	Aug 1750	Borthwick
1753	Sybrey	Jonathan	Attercliffe	Blacksmith	Nov 1753	Borthwick
1754	Henfrey	John	Attercliffe	Scissorsmith	Dec 1754	Borthwick
1754	Turner	Joshua	Sheffield	Shearsmith	MD 566	SCA
1754	Wilson	Jonathan	Attercliffe	Yeoman	Aug 1754	Borthwick
1759	Jackson	--	Sheffield	Joiner	TC 1054	SCA
1759	Wadsworth	Silvanus	Sheffield	Asst Vicar	TC 1052	SCA
1763	Heaton	John	Sheffield	Cutler	TC 1059	SCA
1780	Hibbard	William	Attercliffe	Carpenter	Dec 1780	Borthwick

Appendix Two

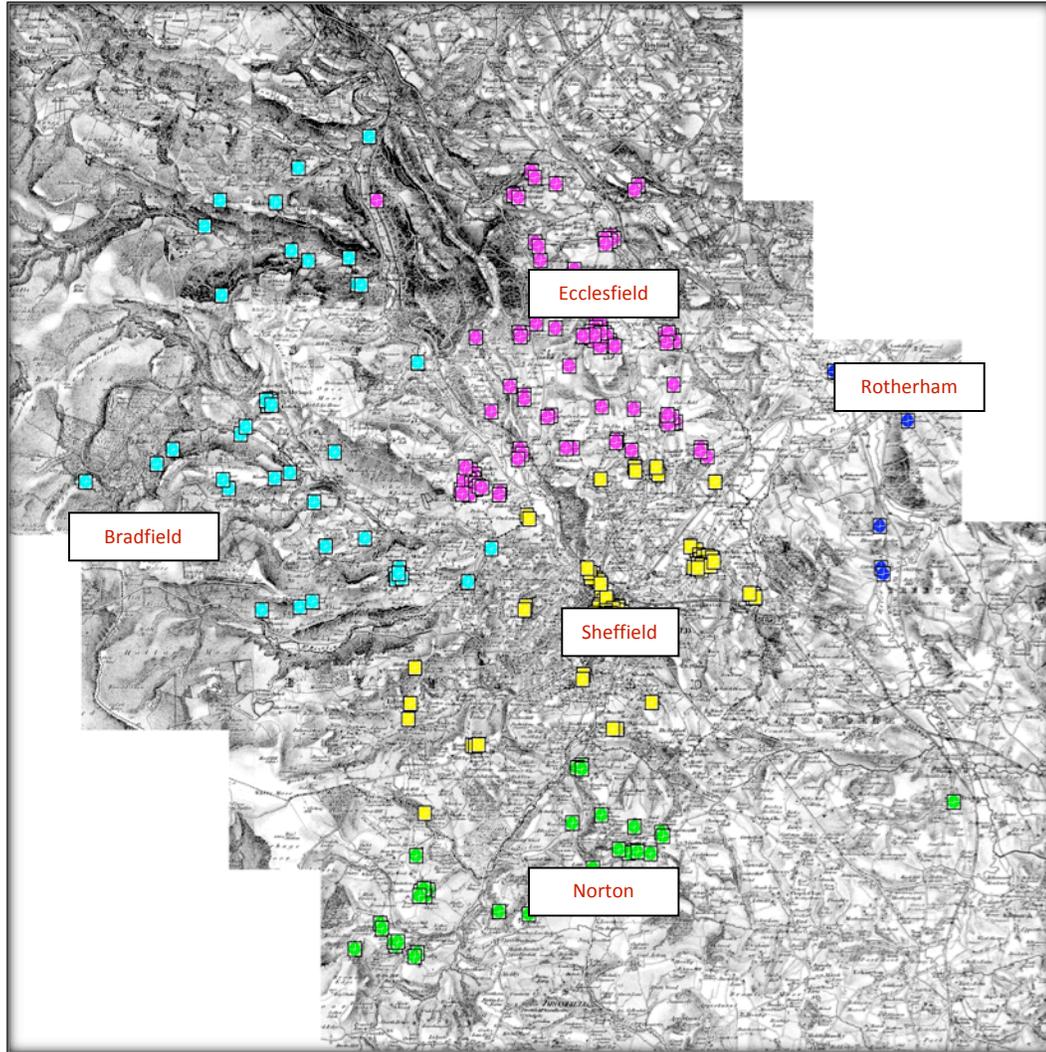


Fig. 2.0.0 Map showing the distribution of inventories in the Hallamshire sample by parish. Created from Ordnance Survey Old Series Edition maps first published between 1805 and 1874 ©Cassini maps.

Key	
Bradfield Chapelry	■
Ecclesfield Parish	■
Norton 'Parish'	■
Rotherham Parish	■
Sheffield Parish	■

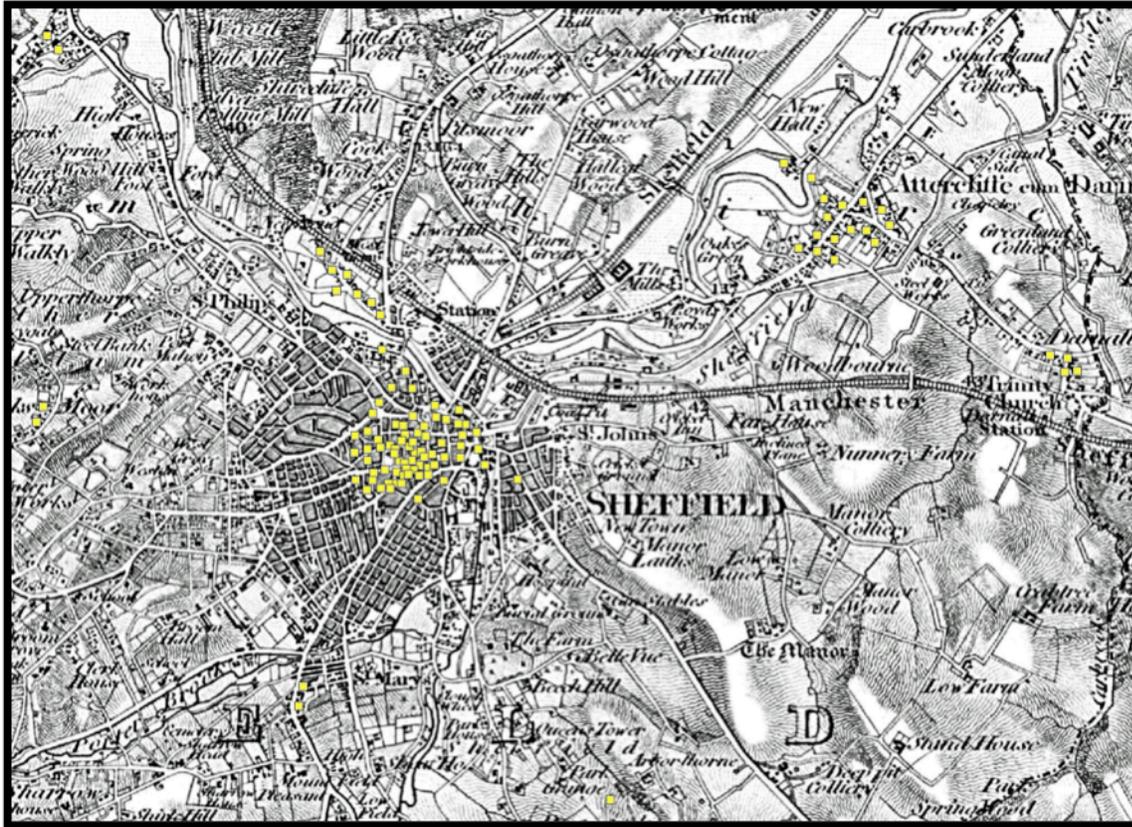


Fig 2.2.1 Sheffield and immediate vicinity showing approximate distribution of inventories. Created from Ordnance Survey Old Series Edition maps first published between 1805 and 1874© Cassini maps.

Appendix Three

3.1 Sheffield Assembly Subscribers 1747-50

Source: E. A. S., 'History of the Sheffield Assemblies', *Sheffield Independent*, Saturday, 28 November 1846.

Subscribers in 1747-48

Aldam, Coote, Harvey & Mr Dington – officers residing in the town
Bamforth, Mrs Bamforth, widow Geo Bamforth of High House
Boss, Mr
Bridges, Miss Bridges
Brown, Mr Dennis, surgeon
Browne, Mrs Browne
Clarke, Mrs & Miss Clarke
Cornish, Mr
Crabtree, Mrs Crabtree
Craven, Currie, Plastoe – officers on duty in the town
Dale, Mr John, mercer
Dale, Mrs Dale – wife of John Dale
Drake, Miss Drake – daughter of Robert Drake, apothecary
Ellison, Mrs Ellison daughter of John Fell I
Elmsal, Miss Elmsal, afterwards Mrs Clay m. Jos. Clay, Church Burgess
Girdler, Mr grocer, grandfather of Joseph Hunter
Hawley, Mrs Hawley
Heaton, Miss Heaton, Church Gate, dau. of Th. Heaton, merchant
Hildreth, Miss Hildreth, dau of Wm Hildreth, mercer
Hurt, Mr Francis, later Sitwell
Hussey, Mr, apothecary & uncle to Mrs Burton and Mrs Matthewman
Laughton, Misses Mary & Elizabeth Laughton
Lodge, Miss Lodge, mother one of innkeeper Christopher Pegge's daughters
Lunn, Mr
Osborne, Mr Walter, merchant, Church Burgess, nephew of Mrs Parkin, m. Miss Laughton
Ordidge, Miss Ordidge
Parkin, Madam Parkin, Mrs Elizabeth Parkin of Ravenfield (LSS)
Pickering, Miss Pickering
Pritchard, Miss Pritchard
Raines, Mr Andrew Raines, apothecary
Roebuck, Miss P. Roebuck (Dissenter)
Roebuck, Mr Benjamin (Dissenter)

Scriving, Mrs Scriving, Herdings, Norton, daughter of Samuel Morewood, the Oaks
Bradfield

Assembly Subscribers in 1747-48 cont'd

Shiercliffe, Miss Shiercliffe, Whitley Hall

Shore, Miss Shore

Staniforth Mr

Statham, Miss Statham – daughter of Wm Statham of the Stand, Sheffield Park

Steer, Miss Alice Steer, Miss Younge

Steer, Mr Joseph mercer, Church Burgess

Steer, Mrs Steer

Turner, Mrs Turner

Waterhouse, Miss E Waterhouse, Swinnock

Watson, Mr

Wright, Miss Wright

Younge, Miss P Younge, later wife of Thomas Asline

Younge, Mr, mercer, Church Burgess

Younge, Mrs Younge

1748-49 new subscribers

Bridges, Miss B Bridges

Broomhead, Miss Broomhead

Cooper, Miss Cooper

Dickson, Mr Dickson, attorney

Ellis, Mr Jno Ellis, attorney

Green, Miss Green, Thundercliffe Grange

Hawksworth, Miss Hawksworth & Miss B Hawksworth

Jodril, Mr Jodril & Capt Heartley, officers stationed at Sheffield

Oborne, Miss Oborne, sister of Walter

Oborne, Mrs Oborne – wife of Walter, nee Miss Mary Laughton

Parker, Miss Parker

Patrick, Miss Patrick married Revd Thomas Halliday of Loxley

Roebuck, Miss Sarah Roebuck

Roebuck, Mr Ebenezer Roebuck

Simmons, Mr Simmons, stationer

Skelton, Mr Skelton

Smith, Miss Smith

Smith, Mr Wheatley, Mr Hipping, Mr Wilkinson

Waterhouse, Miss Waterhouse

Whitehead, Capt – stranger

Wilson, Miss Wilson, Broomhead Hall

1749-50 new subscribers

Allen, Mr Allen of Chapelton?

Battie, Miss H. P. & S. Battie

Battie, Mr Battie, attorney and Church Burgess

Battie, Mrs Battie

1749-50 new subscribers cont'd

Boeman, Mr Boeman

Bower, Miss Bower (?) later wife of Revd John Guest, Northamptonshire

Downs, Mrs Downs

Eccles, Miss Eccles, Tideswell

Fringford, Mr Fringford, unknown

Hams, Mr Hams

Jessop, Miss Jessop, daughter of William Jessop of Broomhall

Longwood, Capt Longwood

Lowley, Capt Lowley

Marsden, Mr Marsden

Milnes, Miss Milnes

Newham, Mr Newham

Oates, Mr Oates of Leeds?

Oxley, Mr Jonathan Oxley

Oxley, Mr William Oxley

Parker, Mr, Woodthorpe? Esq

Phipps, Mr Phipps, High Green

Pyott, Mrs Pyott, later second wife of Vincent Eyre, agent to Duke of Norfolk

Scot, Miss Scot

Smith, Mr Smith, unknown

Spooner, Mr Spooner

Stead, Mr Stead of Borough Lee, married Miss Pegge

Turner, Mr Turner

Watts, Miss Watts, Barns Hall, Ecclesfield, later Lady Horton

Wild, Mr Wild

Wright, Mr Wright, attorney Bridge Houses

3.2 Subscribers to the Dancing Assembly November 5th 1789

'Dancing Assembly subscribers for the 1789 season', MD 5651/1 SCA

A stranger	Parker Revd & Mrs
Allet, J.	Parkin, John
Bagshaw	Parking
Bailey	Pearson
Binks, Wm	Pegge
Blonk, William	Radford, Revd W.
Booker, Lieut	Redfearne, Jo
Burton	Revd W Downes
Chadwick	Samburn
Cheney	Shore Esq (6) (Dissenter)
Close, Geo	Smilter, Geo
Colley	Smith
Dent, Robt	Smith, John
Dickenson, Edward	Smith, Samuel
Dr Steward	Spencer, Wm (silver plate mnfr)
Elliot, George	Staniforth (LSS)
Eyre	Staniforth (LSS)
Eyre, Capt	Steer, Geo
Eyre, George	Stone, J.
Fenton (silver plate mnfr)	Swallows
Fenton, Francis (silver plate mnfr)	Taylor, John
Greaves, George	Three ladies
Greaves, John	Tofield (attorney)
Gunning	Tudor (silver plate mnfr)
Hague, John	Turner, Samuel
Hounsfield	Watson, Thomas
Ibberson, Joseph	Webster, Leonard
Kenyon (silver plate mnfr)	Webster, Wm
Kenyon, Joseph (silver plate mnfr)	Wheat (A)
Law, Thomas	Wilkinson Revd & Mrs
Matthewman	Wilkinson, Thomas
McKenzie, Revd & Mrs	Wilson, Joseph
Milner	Wither, Benjamin
Nale	Woodhead
Newbould	Wright, Joshua
Parker	Younge, Dr (CB)

3.3 The Names of the Proprietors of the Theatre, when it was agreed on the 6th May 1776, to build a new theatre in Tudor St, at the corner of Arundel Street, the first stone of which was laid on 6th August 1777.

Source: Sheffield City Archives WILD 1-457 Wilson of Broomhead deeds, Sheffield miscellaneous items, *Assembly room and theatre (re Mr Atkinson's plan 1776)*.

Binks, Benj	Wilson, Miss
Binks, Wm	Withers, Benj
Birks, William	Wright, Joshua
Blonk, William	
Brittain, George	
Broomhead, Robert (table knife mnf)	
Buxton, Robert	
Close, Geo	
Dickenson, Eliz	
Eyre, George	
Fenton, Francis (silver plate mnf)	
Greaves, George, merchant (CB)	
Greaves, William	
Hartley, Capt Charles Abel	
Hawksley, John	
Ibberson, Joseph	
Jepson, Matthew	
Kenyon, James (silver plate mnf)	
Kenyon, William (silver plate mnf)	
Law, Thomas	
Loton, Aaron	
Matthewman, Josh. Merchant (CB)	
Owin, Joseph	
Parkin, John	
Pearson, Wm	
Smilter, Geo	
Smith, John	
Smith, Samuel	
Spencer, Wm (silver plate mnf)	
Stacey, George	
Stacey, John	
Turner, Saml	
Wilkinson, Thomas	

3.4 Subscribers to the Sheffield Monthly Club

Wheat Collection 1233, Sheffield City Archives

Allot, James, partner Sheffield Lead Works

B J Wake, attorney

Browne, Dr, founder Sheffield Infirmary and partner, Sheffield Lead Works

Butler, J

Earl of Surrey, later 12 Duke of Norfolk, 1786-1815

Eyre, Vincent, agent Duke of Norfolk

Foljambe, Frs. Ferrand of Aldwark

Greaves, George & George Bustard, Page Hall

Hawley, Richard Hawley

Leader Tho. (silver plate mnf)

Subscribers to Montly Club cont'd

Rawson, Thomas, brewery

Read, Jno

Rhodes, C.H. Barlbro' Hall

Rimmington, Th. Broomhead Hall

Roebuck Benjamin, merchant

Sayle, Benj. of Brightside

Shelton, Mark

Shore, Samuel, Norton Hall and sons, Samuel and Bohun Shore

Shore, William & John, bankers

Skellow J. D.

Stacye Revd John

Stead, Thomas Onesacre

Thomas, 3rd Earl of Effingham

Tooker, Samuel, Moorgate, Rotherham

Tudor, Henry (silver plate mnfr)

Verelst, Harry, Aston Hall

Walker, Samuel, Jonathan, Thomas & John Walker & Co, Masbro'

Webster, W

Wheat Henry

Wheat, James, attorney

Wilkinson, Revd Jas, vicar of Sheffield

3.5 Tontine Inn, Sheffield. Distribution of Shares on behalf of the Subscribers,

September 5, 1785

Wheat Collection, 1233-2/9, Sheffield City Archives

Earl of Surrey	Himself Mary, daughter of Mary Irwine, Cumberland Jane Irwine, as above Martha Jessett, Carlisle William, son of Mary Fawcett
Representative of the Late Duchess of Norfolk Athorpe	His sons Michael and Edward Jones son, Henry
Athorpe, Robert	-
Athorpe, Thomas	Son of Robt Athorpe Athorpe, Dinnington (Stacye, a builder)
Blades, Benjamin	-
Blonk, Ben	Henry Bright on behalf of Joseph Ibberson
Boulsover, Thomas	son of Sarah Hutton
Brightmore, William	son, Edward
Brittain, George	son, Frederick
Broomhead, Benjamin	daughter, Elizabeth
Broomhead, Samuel	Samuel Broomhead Ward, son of Joseph Ward, cutler
Broomhead, Joseph	Arabella, daughter of his brother Benj Broomhead
Clay, Joseph (CB)	Francis Foxlow of Staveley
Curt, John	daughter, Elizabeth
Eyre, Vincent	s sons, Vincent Henry Eyre and Thomas Joseph Eyre
Froggatt, John	son, Thomas
Greaves, George (CB)	son, George Bustard Greaves
Gunning, Thomas (CB)	daughter Elizabeth (partner of Walter Osborne)
Hawksley, Joseph	son, James
Howard, Henry	sons, Henry Thomas Howard and Edward Charles Howard
Kenyon, John (CB)	James, son of James Wheat of Norwood Hall
Matthewman, Joseph (CB)	daughter, Dorothea
Milner, Gamaliel (CB)	son, Gamaliel
Mitchell, Joseph	son, William
Morewood, John	John, son of Thomas Sanforth of Chesterfield
Parker, John	sons, Hugh and George
Parker, Kenyon	sons William and Francis
Phipps, Samuel	for himself
Rawson, Thomas	son of Thomas Steade, Hillsborough

Appendices

Read, John	son, Joseph
Roebuck, Benjamin	Benjamin, son of Francis Trenton, Sheffield
Thompson	son Henry, daughter Ann
Thompson, Anthony	Benjamin Thompson of Whiteley Wood
Townsend, George	Charles Nathaniel Eyre, son of Vincent Eyre
Tudor, Henry	niece, Augusta Ann Hirst, silver-plater
Watkinson, Jonathan	daughter, Hannah
Wheat, James (A) (CB)	sons James and grandson John Sparrow Stovin
Wilkinson, Rev James	Barbara Isabella, of Gray's Inn, now Wilkinson
Winter, John (CB)	nephew John Roberts, son of Samuel Roberts, silver-plater

3.6 Invitations sent out from the Gentlemen of the Hunt to an Undress Ball at the Tontine Inn, six o'clock, January 1786

Wheat Collection 1233 -8, 61 SCA

Ball, Wm
Basset, Mr Basset
Binks, Miss M Binks, Darnall
Binks, Misses Binks, Hall Carr
Burton, Mr & Mrs N
Cheney, Mr, Mrs, Miss, Sheffield
Clay Mr, Mrs, Miss, Sheffield
Clay, Miss, Bridgehouses
Clay, Mr Attercliffe
Clay, Mr John Clay
Creswick, Miss & Miss Scott's Companion, Norfolk St
Dawson, Miss Howard St
Didsbury, Mr & Mrs
Duncan, Dr
Eyre, Mr & Mrs V, agent to Duke of Norfolk
Fenton Miss J (silver plate mnfr)
Fenton, Mr & Mrs Fenton (silver plate mnfr)
Hague, Miss Walkley
Hague, Mr
Handley, Miss
Harmer, Mr James, Rotherham
Henfrey, Mrs
Hirst Mr Jos, Rotherham
Leader, Mr & Mrs Wm (silver plate mnfr)
Hunt Ball invitations cont'd
Marshall, Miss, Waterthorpe
Mower, Miss Mower
Newbould, Mr & Miss, Woodhouse
Parker Mr, Mrs, Miss, Woodthorpe
Parker, Mr & Mrs John Parker
Pegge, Miss
Proust, Mr
Radford, Mr & Mrs, Sheffield
Rawson, Mr & Miss, Wardsend (LSS)

Appendices

Rimmington, Miss
Rodgers, Jno, for his sister
Roebuck, B.
Roebuck, J
Roebuck, Mr & Mrs Roebuck
Sitwell, S
Stanley Mr
Taylor, Mr & Mrs Taylor, Canklow
Thomas Walker
Turner, A Turner & Miss Turner
Walker Mr & Mrs Joseph Masbrough
Webb, Miss
Wiley, Dr Wiley
Wilson, Miss Bath St
Woodhead, Mr & Mrs
Younge Miss, Union St

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C5/2/1, C5/2/3 Cutlers' Company Archive.

C9/1-3, C9/4 Liber Minut Societat Cutler in Hallamshire in Com, Ebor: Minutes of the Company of Cutlers' in Hallamshire, 1727-1830.

D1/1 Accounts of the Masters Cutler, 1625-1790.

D2/1 Accounts of the Masters Cutler, 1791-1793.

F1/2 Stock Book of the Corporation of Cutlers, taken 14th December 1820.

F7/1, Box 23, F7/2, F7/3, F7/4/8, F7/4/9, F7/4/10, F7/5, Minutes of the Building & Finance Committee, Sept 1832-April 1833, Box 33.

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ACM MS EBU 263/3, 4, 8, 9, 10 Plans for the building of the Tontine Inn.

ACM/S/476/4 Bill for furnishing Lord Surrey's room at the Tontine Inn, 1786.

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BHD/222

M173, W. Adams, attorney; diary and accounts, 1699-1703

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Hollis Hospital Trust

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Jackson Collection

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