

ROCKINGHAM AND YORKSHIRE

The Political, Economic and Social Role of Charles Watson-Wentworth,
the second Marquis of Rockingham

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ROCKINGHAM AND YORKSHIRESUMMARY

Charles Watson-Wentworth, second Marquis of Rockingham, is, perhaps, the most overlooked Prime Minister of the eighteenth century. The aim of this thesis is to re-examine the current assessments of the marquis, that he was immature, inept and unfit for high office, and to revise them as necessary. It also aims to indicate the areas where he may have been misjudged.

The marquis primarily is placed in his local context of Yorkshire. His upbringing is studied to give some insight into his background and then his rôles of landowner and local magnate are examined. His duties of Lord Lieutenant are dealt with by looking at four specific episodes in which he was involved. His political career is investigated at local level both as leader of the Rockingham party and particularly in his ability to influence Yorkshire politics between 1753 and 1782. The wider interests and concerns of Rockingham in Ireland and America are also studied.

Rockingham showed great promise as a child although he suffered from a debilitating illness which recurred throughout his life and probably caused his sudden and early death. Far from being incompetent and immature, he was an active estate developer and improver and was a key figure in the social, economic and political life of the neighbourhood of Wentworth Woodhouse. He virtually controlled Yorkshire politics for twenty years and led the largest and best-organized opposition party in parliament during that time. His views on the problems of Ireland and America have been under-valued and his personal qualities both for attracting loyalty and friendship and for his active leadership of his party have not been given sufficient recognition. In spite of his faults Rockingham was far more capable and a far more complex person than has been realised.

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ABBREVIATIONS

W.W.M.	Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments
PwF	Portland Papers, University of Nottingham

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INTRODUCTION

In most general history books and text books Charles Watson-Wentworth, second Marquis of Rockingham, scarcely receives a mention. If he is referred to, it is all too frequently in passing. He formed an administration in 1765; he repealed the Stamp Act; he was replaced by the Earl of Chatham in 1766. His short second ministry of 1782 is usually overlooked completely. It is difficult to discover more about who he was, where he came from and what he did before and after his apparently meteoric rise to - and fall from - power.

Contemporaries of the marquis divided sharply into supporters and opponents. Walpole thought that he was 'more childish in his deportment than in his age [and] he was totally void of all information. Ambitious, with excessive indolence; fond of talking business, but dilatory in the execution; ... proud and self-sufficient'. Walpole accused Rockingham of being a 'silent First Minister', of being 'weak of person and nerves' and of being known to the public only by 'his passion for horseraces'. The marquis' only talent, so far as Walpole was concerned, was 'in attracting dependants yet ... he had almost as many governors as dependants'. He credited Rockingham with possessing a blameless personal character but 'unfortunately, the time required something more than negative qualities'.¹

On the other hand, the Duke of Richmond believed the marquis to be 'estimable to the publick [sic] and valuable to his friends',² while Charles James Fox never knew a man with 'so much firmness without the least tincture of harshness, so much softness and practicability with so strict an adherence to his Principles'.³

Subsequent research into the high politics of the eighteenth century

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1. Horace Walpole, Memoirs of the Reign of George III (London, 1851), 2, 197.
 2. W.W.M. F63-24. Richmond to Fitzwilliam, 2nd July 1782.
 3. W.W.M. F63-23. Fox to Fitzwilliam, 1st July 1782.

has done little to revise Walpole's assessment of the Marquis of Rockingham. The general consensus of historians is that he was personally inadequate although he was able to inspire deep loyalty. Turberville asserts that 'had it not been for their association with the effulgent ideas and the broad sweep of Burke's political philosophy, the Rockinghams might figure in history simply as a set of uninspiring politicians'. As for the marquis, Turberville states that he was of small intellect, and a bad and nervous speaker who was more at home on the racecourse than in parliament. However, he was 'conscientious and universally respected ... and had the invaluable capacity of inspiring loyalty in his followers. He was successful in maintaining party cohesion ... and he could stand up to the king when occasion demanded it'.¹

White says that the marquis had 'decent morals and a blameless mediocrity of intellect' but believes that it was 'fortune, friendship, family tradition, the reflected glory of men of genius and talent among his followers' which brought him to 'an elevation in the politics of the time which his own abilities scarcely could have brought him to attain'. White considers the marquis to have been a man of 'second-rate powers and uncritical self-identification with the cause he served, devoured by jealousy and mistrust of abler men' such as Bute, Chatham and Grenville.²

Owen follows the traditional view of the marquis and dismisses him as 'a shockingly poor speaker, an inept politician, dedicated more to the racetrack than the Cabinet Board'. He goes on to say that he 'originally had no clear ideas of importance on political issues, and that 'it is easy to sneer at Rockingham for his amateurism and incapacity'. Owen

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1. A.S. Turberville, The House of Lords in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927), pp. 322-323.
 2. R.J. White, The Age of George III (London, Heinemann, 1968), pp. 97-98.

does stress the marquis' 'ability to command intense loyalty, even during sixteen long years in the political wilderness' and notes that his sincerity and capacity for friendship, his geniality as a host and his popularity in Yorkshire were quite outstanding.¹

John Brooke entirely agrees with Walpole's verdict on the marquis that he was 'a weak childish and ignorant man, by no means fit for the head of Administration' and adds that Rockingham was 'without great abilities, with little application, diffident and ineffective as an orator'.² Brooke also describes the first Rockingham administration as

a constitutional anomaly. It is the strangest Cabinet in British history. It is the only one to be presided over by a Royal Duke. It is the only one formed around the principle members of the Jockey Club [and] none of the men who filled the three principle departments of state had ever before held political office. 3

It seems strange that such an apparently ineffective politician could command such strong affection and loyalty among his followers. The intention of this thesis, therefore, is to explore the areas of the Marquis of Rockingham's life which hitherto have been either neglected or dealt with piecemeal, and to draw a fuller portrait of an important landowner, public figure and politician.⁴ This will be done by looking closely at the man himself and his impact in and upon Yorkshire where he was born and which he loved. Of necessity the bounds of the thesis extend beyond the county because Lord Rockingham was a national figure with an interest in the American Colonies and Ireland. His interest in the latter

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1. J.B. Owen, The Eighteenth Century (London, Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1974), pp. 180-181.
 2. John Brooke, The Chatham Administration (London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1956), p. 25.
 3. John Brooke, King George III (London, Constable & Co. Ltd., 1972), p. 122.
 4. The foregoing survey of the Marquis of Rockingham's character and abilities deals with the general comments which have been made. More specific comments are discussed in detail where appropriate.

was economic as well as political since half his annual income originated in that country.

The main archival sources used are the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments which include the papers of the first Marquis of Rockingham and the Earls Fitzwilliam as well as the extensive collection of documents belonging to the second marquis. The Rockingham Papers and those of the first marquis and fourth earl which are relevant to the period 1730 to 1782 have been used exhaustively since related documents have been scattered throughout the Muniments over the past two centuries. The Accounts and Stewards' Papers are a mine of information concerning the estates themselves and have been used to trace the management of the Wentworth Woodhouse and Irish estates. These documents, which number tens of thousands, cover almost every aspect of the second marquis' domestic and political life.

Other primary sources such as the Portland Papers, the Shibden Hall Muniments and the Courtiers of the Corporation of Doncaster have been used to fill in gaps which occur in the Rockingham Papers, as have many of the printed primary sources. The number of secondary works dealing specifically with the marquis' non-political career are rather limited and consequently the argument of the thesis will rest mainly on the Rockingham Papers themselves.

The many facets of the Marquis of Rockingham's interests and activities have been unravelled from a central archive with the inevitable result of a sectional approach to each of them. Consequently each chapter is self-contained to a certain extent and has its own chronological structure. This will necessitate some overlap of information.

The first chapter looks at Charles Watson-Wentworth's background, his upbringing and his early life and the influence of his early years and teenage life in moulding his outlook. Rockingham was a sickly man

and his early illnesses, which were well-documented by his mother, are investigated and some tentative diagnosis is made of the ill-health which dogged his life.

Chapter two concentrates on the Wentworth Woodhouse estates. Rockingham was known as an estate improver and developer and this aspect of his life is looked at in connection with his attitude towards domestic and farm staff, estate employees and the rôle of the Wentworth Woodhouse estate as a micro-economy in south Yorkshire. The marquis' interest in horses and the construction of the new stables are dealt with, along with his other building projects, and the scientific experiments he undertook.

Moving outwards, chapter three examines how the Marquis of Rockingham fitted into the social life of the immediate area around Wentworth. His views on religion and his dealings with local Dissenters and recusants are examined against the contemporary background. His involvement with Doncaster Corporation and the Commission of Sewers is considered, as well as his importance as a source of patronage and means of access to parliament.

Chapter four looks at four specific episodes with which Lord Rockingham was concerned as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding. The first two cover the food riots of 1756 and 1766 and the militia riots of 1757. He was expected to deal with these events in his official capacity as well as in the capacity of landowner and did so without resorting to government support. The second incident took place in 1769 in Halifax and was of national importance because it involved the clipping and coining of specie. Finally an investigation will be made of how the Marquis of Rockingham dealt with the problem of Hull's lack of defences in 1778 when John Paul Jones threatened the port.

Rockingham's political career is investigated in the two subsequent chapters. Chapter five consists of detailed enquiries into the Rockingham

'connection': that is, the marquis' political allies and how they were linked to the leader of their party. Also in this chapter is some attempt to explore the relationship between Edmund Burke and his patron to discover, if possible, whether the marquis depended heavily on Burke.

Chapter six is based on the marquis' rôle in Yorkshire politics from his first foray in 1753 until his death in 1782. The part he played in the 1768 petitioning movement and the 1779 County Association is detailed and his importance in the county is assessed. The Rockingham Club, based in York, is also examined since that organisation gave so much local support to the marquis.

The last two chapters represent the wider ramifications of the career of Charles Watson-Wentworth since they concern Ireland and America. The Irish estates of the marquis were among the best managed in that country and were financially of great significance to Rockingham. His attitude to his tenants there was enlightened and his concern for them possibly coloured his views on Catholic Relief and religious toleration. America was a vitally important aspect of the mid-eighteenth century political scene, with differences of opinion between Britain and America degenerating into war and culminating in the creation of an independent nation. It was an aspect of politics which formed a major theme of Rockinghamite opposition and was one of the issues around which Rockinghamites coalesced.

Chapter seven examines the marquis' relationship with his Irish tenants and agents and explores the little-known incident concerning the proposed Irish Absentee Land Tax in 1773 and his opposition to it. The chapter also looks at the marquis' proposals to make trade concessions to Ireland and the part played in this by his knowledge of the Yorkshire woollen industry.

The last chapter concerns the American question. It is generally

considered that the Marquis of Rockingham had no policy towards America in the period from 1765 to 1782 but this chapter reassesses that assumption and emphasises his concern for trade and manufacturing in Yorkshire which were seriously affected by the several colonial crises and subsequent war. The chapter deals necessarily with national politics but the rôle of local needs is assessed to achieve a revision of current thinking.

It is hoped that the thesis will show that the Marquis of Rockingham has been misjudged and overlooked by contemporaries and later historians who have not seen the whole man but rather have looked at specific incidents or have concentrated on one aspect of his life or career. By drawing together the whole picture, a different view may be gained; by placing him in his Yorkshire context a different character emerges.

CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY YEARS

Environment and upbringing help to mould a man's character. This has always been true and there is no reason to believe that the eighteenth-century nobility were any different except perhaps in that more was expected of an eldest son than subsequent sons, since he was to inherit the estates of his father. The sons of a noble family would usually be educated at home by a private tutor and then would be sent on to a public school such as Westminster, Eton or Harrow. From there they would go to university and then to Europe on the Grand Tour. Eventually the eldest would inherit the lands and wealth of his father; the other sons would either live on a fixed income or make their own way in the world.

There was little education in estate management and less in political conduct even though the heir could find himself actively engaged in both. An eldest son might be encouraged to take an interest in politics especially if his father were a Whig, but he would be more likely to take an interest in gentlemanly sports, activities and pastimes. He would be expected to marry an heiress in order to extend the family estates, and to rear children to whom the lands could be passed at a later date.

A detailed study of the background and minority of Charles Watson-Wentworth sheds some light on the formation of his character and political views. He grew up in a period of uncertainty. The '45 Jacobite rising occurred while he was still in his teens and a war was being fought in Europe into which Britain had been drawn. The war was barely over when he made his Grand Tour. All these influences must have played their part in making the man.

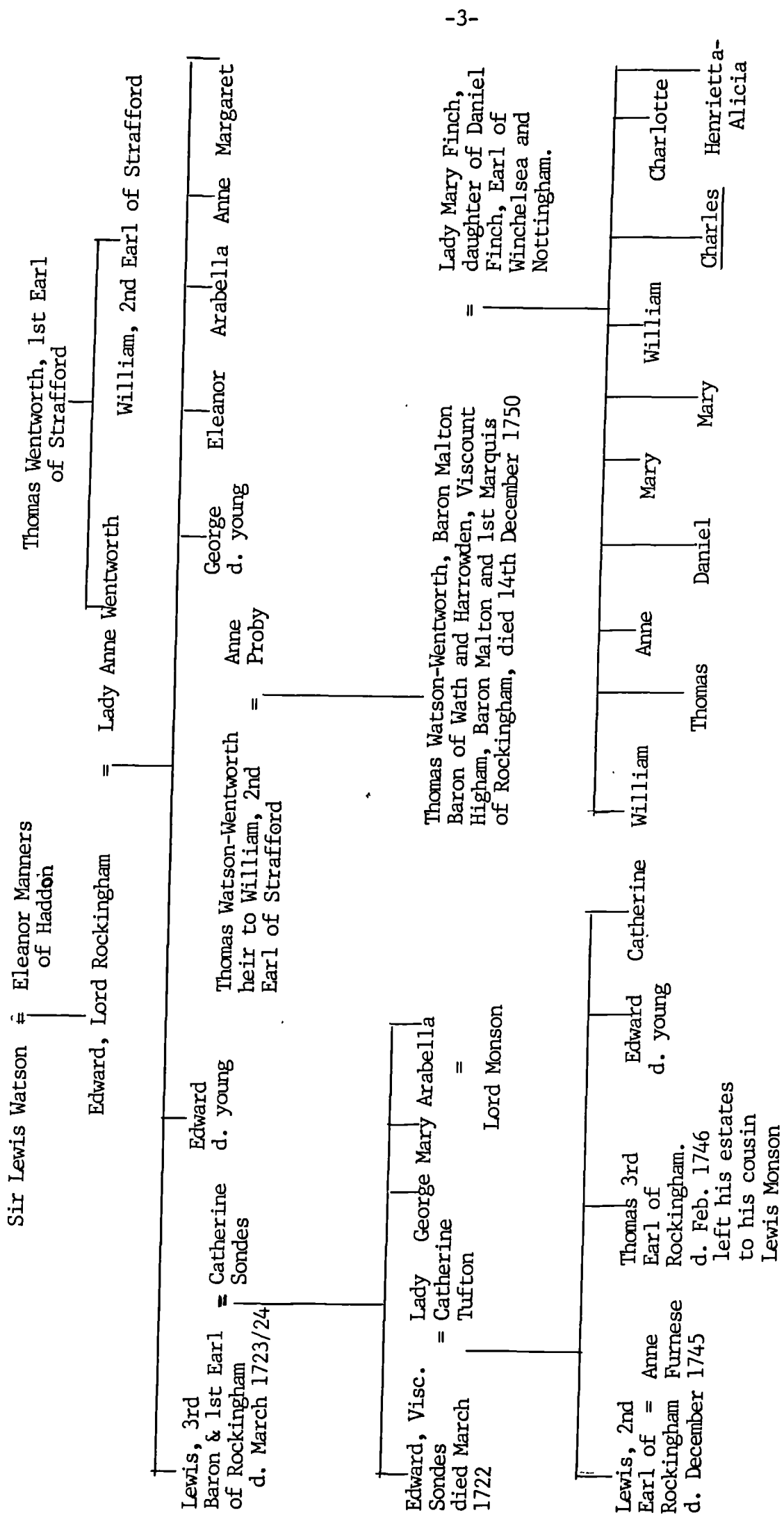
When Charles Watson-Wentworth was born on 13th May 1730 there seemed little likelihood of him ever being anything other than a younger son of a noble family. Charles was the eighth child of Thomas Watson-

Wentworth and his wife Lady Mary Finch. Of his older siblings, two brothers and two sisters were still alive and two girls born after Charles completed the family of Baron Malton.

The family could trace its ancestry back to Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, on the distaff side. Lady Anne Wentworth, the daughter of the Earl of Strafford, had married Edward Watson, Lord Rockingham, in 1654. They had eight children: Thomas Watson-Wentworth I was their third son but he inherited Wentworth Woodhouse from his uncle William, the second Earl of Strafford. He married Anne Proby and their only son and heir was Thomas Watson-Wentworth II. Although he owned large estates he did not have any titles until 1728 when he was created Baron Malton; in 1734 his titles were extended to 'Baron of Wath and Harrowden, Viscount Higham and Earl of Malton'.¹ The title of Baron Rockingham was given to him in February 1746 when Thomas, third Earl of Rockingham, died. The marquise was conferred on Thomas Watson-Wentworth on 19th April 1746. This junior branch of the family only inherited the titles and lands of the Rockinghams because of a series of early deaths and childless marriages: Thomas Watson-Wentworth was only the half-cousin of the second and third Earls of Rockingham but was also the only surviving blood-relation. The family tree [overleaf] shows the complete sequence of events.

Thomas Watson-Wentworth, the first Marquis of Rockingham, was one of the great landowners in Yorkshire and had powerful connections at national level. He sat as M.P. for Malton between 1715 and 1727. He had a large interest in the constituency which he increased until it became a pocket borough. In the election of 1727 he became M.P. for Yorkshire but was elevated to the House of Lords the following year.

1. J. Foster, Pedigrees of the County Families of Yorkshire (London, 1874). The Watson-Wentworth pedigree. There is no pagination.



FAMILY TREE OF THE WATSON-WENTWORTHS

Thereafter he was able to nominate his successor who represented the county. In 1753 he was made Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding and Custos Rotulorum of the West and North Ridings.

Wentworth attached himself to Walpole and was known as the leader of the 'court party' in Yorkshire. He had been at Cambridge with the Duke of Newcastle where they had become firm friends. Wentworth's marriage to Lady Mary Finch brought close contact with the Earl of Winchelsea [his new father-in-law]; he was already related to Lord Sondes and Lord Monson. Wentworth cultivated friendships with other great landowners in Yorkshire, such as Lord Irwin of Temple Newsam and the Darcy family of the North Riding. His relationship with the Duke of Newcastle enabled Wentworth to extend his political influence in the county because the duke owned the boroughs of Boroughbridge and Aldborough and had access to funds to help Wentworth to win support. By the time he died, Rockingham headed the largest political group in Yorkshire.¹

Not only was he a leading local politician - he seems to have spent more time in Yorkshire than he did in London - but he extended the Wentworth estates considerably. The estate in south Yorkshire in 1695 was over 9,420 acres in size.² The first marquis added a further 4,500

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1. J. F. Quinn, 'Yorkshiresmen Go to the Polls: County Contests in the Early Eighteenth Century', Northern History XXI (1985), 153-154 suggests that Malton lost his influence in Yorkshire as a result of his failure to have Sir Rowland Winn returned for the county in the 1734 election. C. Colyer, 'The Rockinghams and Yorkshire Politics 1742-1761', Publications of the Thoresby Society XLI, - Thoresby Miscellany 12 (1954), 360, suggests that he still led Yorkshire opinion as late as 1747.
 2. For this and subsequent information on the increase of the lands of the Watson-Wentworths I am indebted to Mr. Melvyn Jones of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Sheffield Polytechnic, who is carrying out research into 'The Evolution of the Management of the Watson-Wentworths' English and Irish Estates in the Eighteenth Century'.

acres by purchase in some 98 separate transactions and enclosed commons in Bradfield, Greasborough and Brampton. By 1750 the estate covered 14,206 acres. The bulk of this land surrounded Wentworth Woodhouse and the park alone consisted of 1,784 acres. Besides this, he enlarged the estates around Malton by about 3,500 acres to secure the pocket borough, and at Higham Ferrers and Harrowden in Northamptonshire he added a further 3,000 acres by purchase. There was also a house in Grosvenor Square. Besides the lands in England, the Watson-Wentworths inherited an Irish estate of about 54,000 acres. Most of this was in County Wicklow but there were some properties in County Kildare and County Wexford. Wicklow was one of the most prosperous counties in Ireland and the Wentworth estates were well-managed. Half the income from the Irish estates came from 2,000 acres of woodland which was coppiced and conserved, at a time when other estate managers were allowing trees to be cut at will. The remainder of the annual Irish income was produced by rents from the other 52,000 acres. In 1750 therefore, the first marquis was the owner of 75,000 acres of land in England and Ireland.

In 1704 the Hon. Thomas Watson-Wentworth had purchased an Act of Parliament to make the River Derwent [in North Yorkshire] navigable. When he bought Malton he also gained control of the Derwent Navigation on which he spent £4,000 making improvements. This was also inherited by the first marquis who leased out the tolls. Trade on the navigation was modest and was mainly to and from Hull, although the lease brought in £440 a year after 1744.

The first marquis had a survey made of his properties and revenues in 1747 because he believed that they were in a state of disorder. It transpired from the investigation that he had an income of about £40,000 per year, half of which came from his lands in Yorkshire and Northamptonshire, the other half from Ireland. He spent a good proportion of this

income on reconstructing and extending his home at Wentworth Woodhouse. He employed Flitcroft as the architect; the design was based on Lord Tilney's house at Wanstead in Essex.¹ It became one of the largest mansions built in the eighteenth century and covered an area of three acres: the frontage alone stretched for over two hundred yards.

The gardens near the house were used to cultivate exotic plants and trees. In 1746 the marchioness was able to present a delighted George II with grapes and pineapples which had been grown at Wentworth.² Besides being interested in horticulture, Thomas Watson-Wentworth was also a dabbler in scientific experiments. In 1750 he had a staircase in the house moved so that a big room could be made where he could conduct his experiments in 'Electricks, Opticks, Pnewmaticks, Hydrostaticks or Chymicall'.³ Both horticulture and science were areas of interest for the second marquis: presumably he was encouraged in these interests by his father.

Another source of expense to the first marquis was his charity payments. He maintained schools at several villages on his estates and in 1745 he began to rebuild the 'New Hospital' at Barrow just outside Wentworth village.⁴ The original foundation of the hospital had been in 1694 and was an almshouse for twelve pensioners whom he maintained at his own expense. He was interested in the people who lived in his estate and took much trouble to concern himself in their affairs. Because he spent so much time at Wentworth he was also able to supervise the building of the house which employed many local people. It seems from the first marquis' papers that he all but put one stone on top of the

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1. Catalogue of Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Sheffield City Library.
 2. W.W.M. R169-164. First marquis to Lord Malton, 29th April 1746.
 3. W.W.M. M2-538. First marquis to Lord Malton, 12th May 1750.
 4. W.W.M. A 1273.

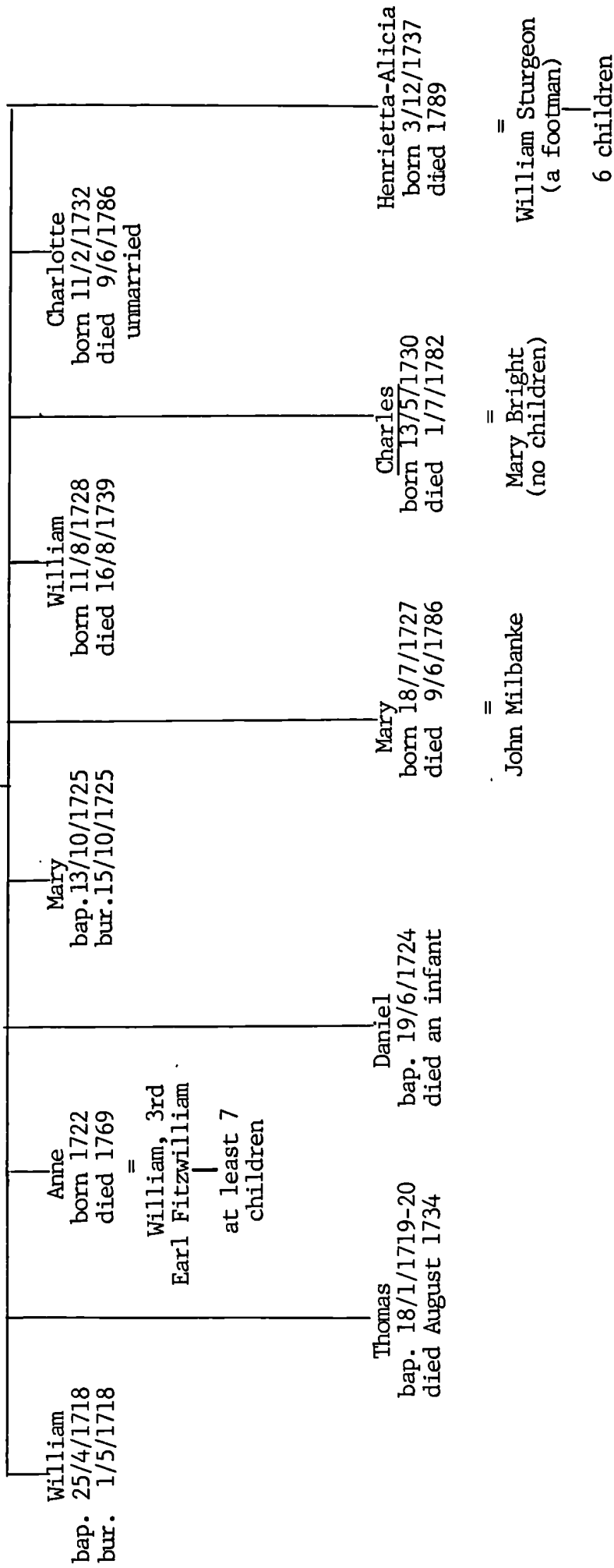
next himself, so great was his involvement.¹

Charles Watson-Wentworth was thus born into a wealthy, influential family with many diverse interests. In spite of the traditional eighteenth-century practice of being wet-nursed as babies and then being handed over to a governess the family was very close-knit.² The first marquis and his wife had already lost three children: William their first-born died just a week after his baptism in 1718; Daniel the fourth child died as an infant; and their second daughter, Mary, died two days after her baptism, just over a year after the birth of Daniel. The infant mortality rate was high in the early eighteenth century - about fifty per cent of all children died before they reached the age of five³ - and the Rockinghams did not escape the consequences of inadequate sanitation, poor nutrition, poor medical knowledge and fatal illnesses. Their second son, Thomas, died of smallpox while he was in Leyden when he was fourteen [1734]; the first marquis subsequently availed himself and his family of the inoculation against smallpox, taking three of the four girls to London himself for the treatment.⁴ Because Charles was ill at the time he was not inoculated with the others.

William, the seventh child, had a far more chequered childhood. On one occasion when he was four, he was running through the state rooms slamming the doors shut behind himself and narrowly escaped death when a picture above one of the doors fell off the wall as he ran under it. Two years later his father pulled him out of the goldfish pond outside the house in a state of semi-consciousness.⁵ In 1739 the boy began to

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1. Melvyn Jones' research.
 2. M. Brander, The Georgian Gentleman (London, Saxon House, 1973), pp. 4 and 6.
 3. M. Flinn, An Economic and Social History of Britain since 1700 (London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1965), p.3.
 4. W.W.M. M7-51. Lady to Lord Malton, 18th August (1741).
 5. W.W.M. M2. Notes made by the first marquis about his family.

Thomas Watson-Wentworth = Lady Mary Finch



THE FAMILY OF THE FIRST MARQUIS OF ROCKINGHAM

suffer from an unspecified feverish illness and after a month died. By 1739 then, the Rockinghams had five children surviving: Anne aged seventeen; Mary aged twelve; Charles aged nine; Charlotte aged seven and Henrietta-Alicia aged two.

As Thomas Watson-Wentworth's titles increased, so his eldest son was given a courtesy title. In 1734 William became Lord Higham because his father was Earl of Malton. When William died Charles took the title Higham until 1745. In that year Wentworth became Lord Rockingham and Charles' title changed to Lord Malton. Not that titles were often used within the family. All the children were referred to by their pet names or nicknames. Charles was 'Punch', Charlotte was 'Pussy' and Mary was 'Polly'. Henrietta-Alicia was never called by her baptismal name: she was always either Harriot [sic], formally, or 'Grim', 'Grimmy' or 'Grimlock'.¹

Charles Watson-Wentworth began his life with many advantages. His maternal grandfather was an earl, his godparents were Lady Monson, the Duke of Somerset and Sir Roger Mostyn. At the age of eight he was sent to Westminster School to begin his formal education. The régime was harsh; flogging was not only accepted as a normal part of school life, but was expected.² While he was there he became friendly with Sir George Savile,³ a friendship which was to last until Charles' death. Charles' time at Westminster was cut short when he became ill in 1741.⁴ He seems to have been an exceptionally sickly child whose mother 'under Providence has preserved you amongst us, when your Life was more than

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1. W.W.M. M2. and throughout W.W.M. M7. Notes made by the first marquis about his family.
 2. Brander, Georgian Gentleman, p.15.
 3. Sir George Savile, Bart. of Thornhill, West Yorkshire and Rufford, Nottinghamshire. An independent gentleman who sat as M.P. for Yorkshire 1759-1783.
 4. It has been possible to date all the letters in W.W.M. M7 from a few letters carrying sufficient information.

once despaired of'¹ and consequently any signs of illness caused an over-reaction from his parents.

The whole family suffered from ill-health. Lady Malton had a 'return of her old complaints' in 1740. Lady Mary suffered from asthma.² Charles had been ill in 1738 or 1739³ but his condition in 1741 and 1742 caused much anxiety for his parents not least because he was so ill for so long. It has been said that in the eighteenth century hypochondria was known as the 'English disease' and to be ill was fashionable.⁴ The word itself means 'lower abdomen' and the Watson-Wentworth family was given to taking purges and emetics. It is more than likely that they all ate large meals and Lord Malton enjoyed his alcohol. His health suffered and he was obliged to 'keep his stomach warm' and to 'route out his gutts [sic] with Heira Peira'.⁵ Towards the end of his life he was 'taking a course of Physic, my legs appearing Dropsicall [sic]'⁶ and he laid great stress on his appetite or lack thereof. However, it is unlikely that an eleven-year old was hypochondriac on his own account; it is possible that his parents made more of his ill-health than was necessary because he was their only son, but the symptoms described by his mother were unpleasant: so were the 'cures'.⁷

From the information given by Lady Malton about Charles' illness it seems likely that he suffered from a urinary infection, probably cystitis, which was not uncommon in the eighteenth century. It may be that Charles had a congenital defect of his urino-genitary system which

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1. W.W.M. R220-4. Rockingham to Malton, 1750.
 2. W.W.M. M2-61 and 123. Lady Isabella Finch to Lady Malton, 12th June 1740 and 27th May 1743.
 3. W.W.M. M2-84. Winchelsea to Malton, 20th August 1741.
 4. Roy Porter, 'Eat Your Heart Out', New Society, supplement (20/27th December 1984), no pagination.
 5. W.W.M. M7-3. Lady to Lord Malton, 3rd February 1742.
 6. W.W.M. M2-500. Rockingham to Lady Isabella Finch, 24th October 1748.
 7. For a detailed account of this early illness, see Appendix 1. pp. 451-457.

would cause a multitude of side-effects such as swollen joints, a sore throat, boils and eventually the destruction of the kidneys. The threat of operating on the boy probably meant that there was possibly the added complication of a bladder infection: epididymitis. That could have caused sterility and may account for his childless marriage. A congenital defect might also result in long-term damage to the urinary tract causing unspecific pains. It is now known that in middle life such a patient may suffer severe toxæmia, low blood pressure, circulatory collapse and shock precipitating sudden and unexpected death. Anyone with this condition would today be expected to be pale and thin.¹ The tentative diagnosis of such a congenital defect fits the symptoms displayed by the boy in 1741-42 and since he was pale and thin, and died unexpectedly and suddenly it could be that this was the cause. It is perhaps not surprising that Charles' family was so concerned about his constant ill-health since they would not have been aware of the extent of the problem and certainly there would be no cure. What is outstanding is the amount of care Lady Malton took of the boy.

When he was twenty Charles, by then Lord Malton [his father had been created Lord Rockingham⁷, made a detour from Venice to Padua while in Italy on his Grand Tour. Padua was the centre of medical learning from the Renaissance onwards and everyone who could went there to study medicine. Malton consulted the eminent physician Niccòlo Scanagati² about a 'poisonous venereal discharge'³: he had contracted gonorrhoea

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1. I am grateful to Dr. R. S. Morton, M.D.; F.R.C.P.(ed), D.H.M.S.A., Honorary Lecturer in History of Medicine, University of Sheffield, for his time, advice and expertise in arriving at this diagnosis of the Marquis of Rockingham's illness.
 2. I am grateful to Richard J. Palmer of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine for information on Niccòlo Scanagati.
 3. W.W.M. R170-20. Niccòlo Scanagati, Padua, 20th July 1750. I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Bemrose of the Department of Italian, University of Sheffield, for a translation of this document. See Appendix 2, pp. 458-461.

in Venice which proved so painful that he had to take to his bed. Scanagati followed the accepted treatments for both gonorrhoea and syphilis since they were thought to be different stages of the same disease. Malton was isolated until the acute inflammation had disappeared and was given purgatives, mercury and laudanum to ease the effects of the disease. These would have disappeared after about a month anyway although recurrent relapses would possibly occur. The only long-term result would be sterility.

The second marquis' correspondence makes frequent references to ill-health and the medication he used. Rockingham often wrote about his 'old complaint' in letters to his friends.¹ Perhaps one of the most telling was a letter to the Duke of Portland written in May 1782 just five weeks before the marquis died.

I have for some weeks past undergone much Pain & much inconvenience from something similar to my old Complaint in my side and Stomach. The Learned whom I have consulted do not allow that there is any Reason to suspect that Mischief is advancing, & so far their opinions seem to be well-founded, as I think upon the whole, I am now much better than I have been. 2

Three weeks later he told Lord Charlemont that his health was 'but Moderate. The Influenza attacking me while I was only recovering from my old Complaint render'd me little capable of much active labour'.³

He suffered frequently from outbreaks of 'boils' and complained of headaches and stomach disorders.⁴ Rockingham was noticeably less physically active as he moved into his thirties and only occasionally exerted himself by riding any distance even though he had enjoyed hunting when he was younger. He found the pains caused by his 'old complaint'

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1. For example W.W.M.R1-16, 17,71; R1-80; R1-190,196,221; R1-1568; R153-1; R140-49; R1-1928; R1-1568.
 2. W.W.M. R1-2094. Rockingham to Portland, 25th May 1782.
 3. W.W.M. R1-2096. Rockingham to Charlemont, 17th June 1782.
 4. For example W.W.M. R1-1238; R1-1257; W.W.M. R140-49; R1-1511; R1-1568.

made him feel so ill that he was unable to concentrate on 'any Manner of Business' and on occasion it seemed likely to prevent him from attending parliament.¹ He also suffered from a gallstones problem from quite an early age.²

It does seem probable that the Marquis of Rockingham really did suffer from a serious and debilitating illness which may account for his apparent inability to take decisions at crucial moments. At other times - when he was fit - he was quite clear-headed, quick-thinking and decisive. He was very conscious of being unwell and made frequent visits to spa towns such as Tonbridge Wells and Bath and often had to conduct his party's management from out of London because he was either taking the waters or had fallen ill at Wentworth.

The sort of condemnation passed on him by contemporaries and historians alike needs to be rethought in the light of evidence that Rockingham was for the most of his life afflicted by a serious illness. Simply being able to maintain an active life in national and local politics and keeping a continual hold on his large estates would seem to point to a man of great abilities and strength of character. It is remarkable that he was able to do - and did - so much, under the circumstances.

Once young Charles had recovered from his illness of 1741-42 he was further educated at home and then at Cambridge University. He would have attended the wedding of his sister Anne in 1744 when she married William, the third Earl Fitzwilliam. He would also have spent time at

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1. W.W.M. R153-1. Rockingham to Burke, 31st October 1767; R1-1928. Rockingham to Savile, September 1780; W.W.M. R1-1238. Rockingham to Dowdeswell, 20th October 1769.
 2. R.J.S. Hoffman, The Marquis: a study of Lord Rockingham 1730-1782 (New York, Fordham University Press, 1973), p. 35. Although he does not give the source of his information, Hoffman asserts that Rockingham was in Bath between March and August 1761 suffering from gallstones. The marquis would have been 31 years old.

Wentworth riding, hunting and in other gentlemanly pursuits. In 1745 the calm at Wentworth Woodhouse, as elsewhere in England, was shattered by the news of Charles Edward Stuart's arrival in Scotland and the defeats of the English army at Edinburgh and Prestonpans. As the Jacobites marched south so the amount of loyalty to Hanover was revealed, especially in Yorkshire, although there were some Jacobite sympathisers in England who at least said prayers for the prince even if they did not actively join the rising.¹ One of the first reliable accounts of what was going on in Scotland and the borders was sent to Earl Malton by Major Hugh Wentworth,² the commander of the garrison at Fort Augustus, on 23rd August 1745.³ He estimated the strength of the Jacobites at about six thousand. Other reports were sent to Wentworth by Richard Milnes of Wakefield, one of the Milnes family who later became firm friends of young Charles, Lord Higham.

By early September there was a strong sense of urgency in the North Riding. Activity to form some kind of self-defence groups had begun because the leading Whigs had little confidence in the government which showed no signs of increasing the leisurely pace of its preparations. The men most involved were Archbishop Herring of York, Viscount

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1. 'A Prayer for the Prince', November 1745, Ushaw Manuscript Collection, Vol. 3, 114c., Ushaw College, Durham. 'We beseech thee O Heavenly Father ... look mercifully down ... upon thy Servant C--- S--- our most gracious Prince who ventur'd his life in the Rebellious Nation for his most Royal Father & for the good of his true & faithfull /sic/ Subjects that long in distress have Mourned for him; ... comfort & preserve him in all Dangers; fight all his Battles & turn the hearts of all to fear & love him confound all the devices of his Enemies ... After him pray for the King & Duke of York'.
 2. Wentworth was a professional soldier and had been on active service in Europe and the West Indies in the War of the Austrian Succession as a captain. He was a distant relation of the Watson-Wentworths and became their Irish estate agent.
 3. C. Collyer, 'Yorkshire and the '45', Yorkshire Archaeological Journal 149 (1952), 71-95.

Irwin of Temple Newsam, Sir John Ramsden of Byrom and Longley Hall¹ and Lord Malton. The traditional defence of the counties was the militia, which was duly ordered out by the government. Unfortunately the militia had fallen into a state of decay over the preceding twenty-five years - since the last Jacobite invasion - because taxes had not been levied for its upkeep. There was little equipment available and there was a shortage of weapons. This increased the fears that the Scots would arrive before Yorkshire could be adequately defended.

The inadequacy of the militia and heightened fears of invasion prompted the setting up of local volunteer units through Loyal Associations. They were manned entirely by volunteer recruits and were maintained by voluntary subscriptions. These units were probably more efficient than the militia simply because there was no coercion involved and they also allowed men to demonstrate their loyalty to Hanover. The system was begun by Lord Irwin in the East Riding in September, but because the Duke of Devonshire [the Secretary of State] wanted to call out volunteers on the Chatsworth estates too, the government decided to give almost unlimited powers to Lords Lieutenant for the security and defence of their jurisdictions. Subsequently, far-reaching commissions were sent to Lords Irwin and Malton and to Sir Conyers Darcy who was acting as Lord Lieutenant of the North Riding in the absence of Lord Holderness, the other Secretary of State.

In Yorkshire the volunteers replaced the militia because the three Lords Lieutenant chose not to call out the latter. On 11th September a meeting was held at Byrom which was attended by Lords Irwin and Malton, Sir John Ramsden, Sir Rowland Winn, Sir William Lowther and Lords Galway and Lonsdale. They decided to call a general meeting of Yorkshire free-

1. Sir John Ramsden was the step-father of Mary Bright who became the wife of Charles, Marquis of Rockingham, in 1752.

holders on 24th September at York Castle. They also decided on a plan for a Loyal Association, the establishment of a volunteer force for each Riding and for a county subscription to maintain the force. The county meeting was to be made as general as possible: Archbishop Herring managed to unite Whigs and Tories in the common cause of self-defence and only known Jacobite sympathisers were excluded. The government decided not to interfere in case it upset the proceedings in Yorkshire.

The York meeting had some eight hundred men in attendance; the Loyal Address was carried and the Association was agreed to. The archbishop had opened a subscription at Bishopthorpe on 22nd September and by 23rd some £20,000 had been raised. Within a few days the Association had more volunteers than they had dreamed of and most of the forty-one companies were at full strength by October. Each company had fifty men plus a captain, ensign and four N.C.O.s who were, as far as possible, ex-regular soldiers. Within a few weeks, therefore, at least 2,300 men had volunteered. The West Riding had twenty-five companies, the North Riding had nine and the East Riding had seven companies. The city of York formed another four companies which were maintained by the city from a collection of £2,600 and Hull provided a further twelve companies by December. Sheffield also formed a small force under the auspices of Lord Malton. By early November all the companies were fully armed.

There was a fairly large Roman Catholic community in Yorkshire and many Protestants feared that these people would be Jacobite supporters. On 5th September a national requirement was proclaimed for the administration of the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, and the implementation of the Five Mile Act. The weapons and horses of Catholics were to be seized. The laws were not enforced in Yorkshire because although toleration was not allowed by law, in fact it was practised in the county. Some investigations were undertaken following reports of

disaffected Catholics but these revealed nothing.¹

Lord Malton personally gave £1,000 to the county subscription and had his own force of sixty foot and fourteen horse. The men were servants from Wentworth, farmers' sons and merchants: it was easy to raise men in the West Riding because work was slack and unemployment was high. Malton did not find that his plans proceeded smoothly. He had difficulties in getting hold of the amount of arms needed, but was told by the Master of Ordnance that the problems had been created because the Lords Lieutenant had failed to follow the correct procedure of appointing an agent to receive the weapons from the Tower. Malton's answer was that the 'red tape' could have been cut, since there was a crisis in the country. His son later had the same problems with the government but short-circuited the system first and pleaded ignorance later.

Higham was a colonel of one of the West Riding regiments, and on 2nd November 1745 Lord Malton ordered his son to call out the 'several Captains in your Regiment, that they appear with their respective Companies [sic] upon the Common near Rotherham where the Horseraces have usually been ... to be received by your Affec^tiona^lte Father'.² Higham was in charge of about five hundred men, all armed and ready to obey his orders. At the age of fifteen, Higham was a keen soldier-in-the-making. One of his Lieutenants-Colonel was his boyhood friend Sir George Savile who shared Higham's interest in things military. Once Malton was satisfied that his son's men were adequately drilled he prepared to send them to Pontefract where they would form part of an army chain which he had organised to stretch across west Yorkshire. The regiment was in Wakefield by mid-December, although by that time the

1. C. Collyer, 'Yorkshire and the '45'', p. 84.

2. W.W.M. M2-293. Malton to Higham, 2nd November 1745.

Jacobites had advanced as far south as Derby and had begun to re-trace their steps back to Carlisle. The nearest the Scottish army got to Yorkshire was Macclesfield on 1st December and Derby itself between 4th and 6th December. On 18th December Charles Edward Stuart's vanguard was involved in a skirmish with a troop of horse from Cumberland's army.¹ Cumberland had lost forty men in the fray; the prince lost thirteen killed and a few wounded, but Cumberland's dragoons had fled.²

Also on 18th December young Higham got bored with sitting about doing nothing. He was a colonel, a volunteer; he was only fifteen and he wanted to see some action. Without telling anyone what he was up to, he decided to go to the war. 'I broke open my Trunk, took out my pistols, and least [sic] I should be stopt by the watch prepared a pass'.³ The pass was for one Henry Shelley who had 'obtained my leave to go and serve under the Duke of Cumberland as a volunteer'. The bearer was to be allowed free passage and the pass was signed by Higham in his own name so the signature, if nothing else, was genuine.

The whole scheme indicates how quick-witted Higham was: giving himself a pass in the first place showed foresight, but his plan to escape was even more ingenious. He went hunting with his friends in the morning but returned to Wakefield early on the pretext of being hungry. There he changed horses and saddles and armed himself with the brace of pistols, a steel Highland pistol and a 'Scymeter'. His servant

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1. The Duke of Cumberland was brother of George II, recently returned from Europe and the battle of Fontenoy. He was Commander-in-Chief of the British army, the 'Butcher' Cumberland of Culloden in 1746. He was the head of the first Rockingham ministry in 1765 and died in the same year.
 2. The information on the Jacobite army is taken from my Cert. Ed. dissertation 'Aspects of the Jacobite Movement', submitted at Alnwick College of Education in 1968. The only copy is in my possession.
 3. W.W.M. M2-351. 'The Journall [sic] of a Young Gentleman who went from Wakefield to serve as a Volunteer in the Army before Carlisle, Commanded by his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland', written by Higham, 1745.

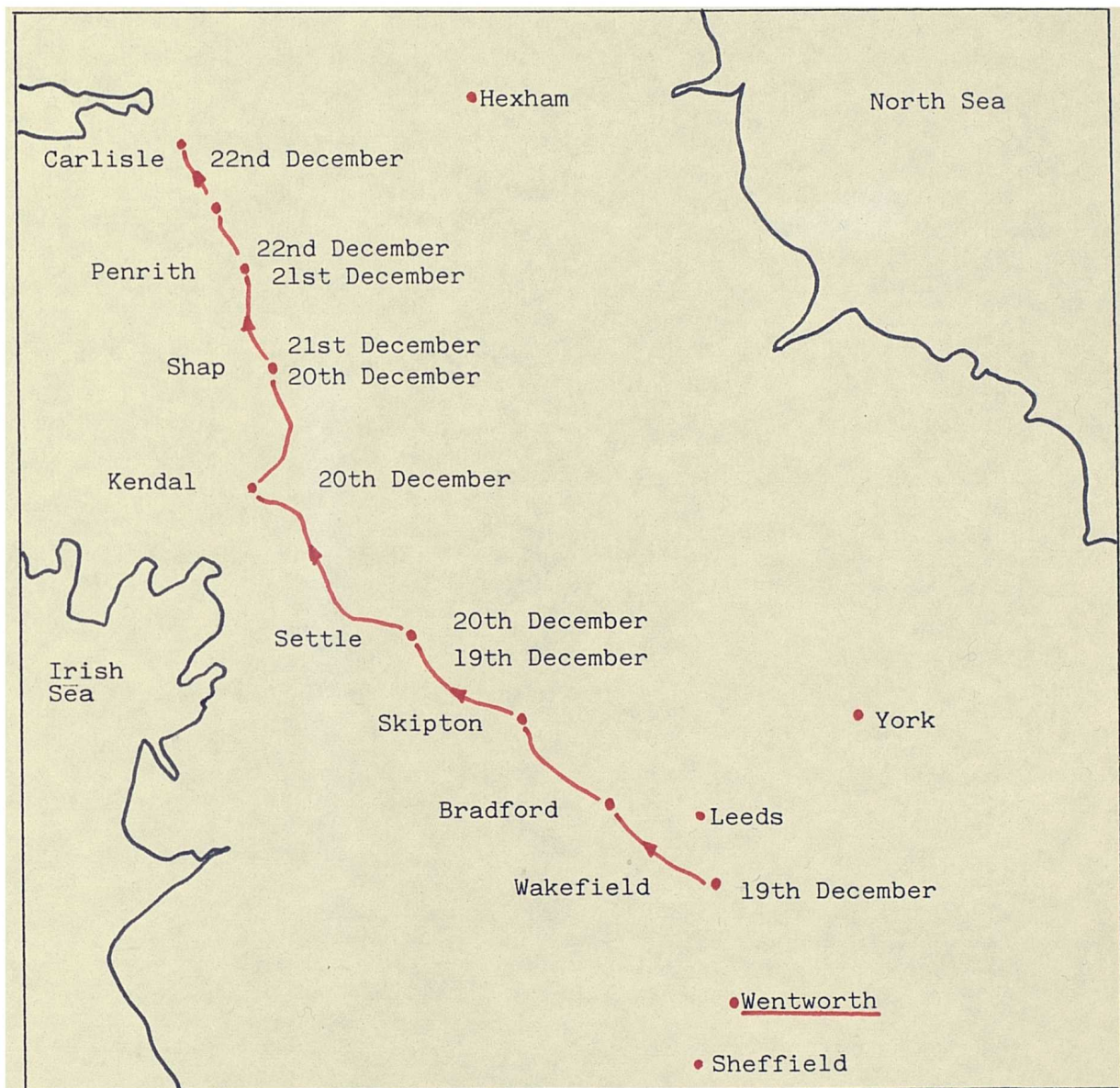
was oblivious to what was going on and 'to disguise it the better /ī/ left word, that if I was enquired for at dinner time, desired something might be set by for me'.¹ He stopped for dinner at Bradford where he wrote an explanation for his absence to Colonel Greenwood, a friend of Lord Malton. Higham obviously expected to be followed when his escapade was discovered, so he sent the messenger to Greenwood on foot, to give himself more chance to make good his departure. Greenwood would then have to inform Lord Malton by which time there would be little chance of overtaking the boy.

From Bradford he rode to Skipton where he had to produce his pass for the watch and ward. He reached Settle that evening 'without a Guide being thirty-two computed Yorkshire Miles, over a Mountainous Country unknown to myself and Man'.² He was almost arrested at Settle because the landlady thought he was 'a Young Fellow of the Rebel Army' and was intending to 'send for the Constable to secure us, tho. she had observed I had a brace of Pistols laid on the Table and a third stuck in my belt'. He left Settle at 5 a.m. on Friday 20th December, stopping at Kendal before going on to Shap at night. He was conscious of his dishevelled appearance and since he had not thought to take a change of clothes he 'washed and Ironed the Sleeves of my Shirt without taking it off'.³ The ingenuity of the youth is quite amazing, but how he managed that particular feat is difficult to comprehend. He was told that the Young Pretender had slept in the same bed only a few nights before, and the next day he was informed of the skirmish at Clifton Moor which had

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1. W.W.M. M2-351. 'The Journall /sic/ of a Young Gentleman who went from Wakefield to serve as a Volunteer in the Army before Carlisle, Commanded by his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland', written by Higham, 1745.
 2. Ibid. One wonders if Yorkshire miles were a different length to miles elsewhere.
 3. W.W.M. M2-351. Higham's 'Journall', 1745.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

1745



taken place three days earlier. The two men he asked for - Colonels Honeywood and Mostyn - were not at Carlisle so Higham was forced to spend an uncomfortable night in the upper room of a farmhouse.

where the Bed was placed upon the Joyce /sic/ (there being no Floor) the Farmer having secreted his Linnen /sic/ & Furniture for fear of the Rebels, I lay in my Wastecoat /sic/ and Breeches between two Blankets, with my Coat under my Head for a pillow. And all the Supper and Breakfast I could get was some Barley Bread and Skimmed Milk. 1

By that time Lord Malton had sent out search parties for his son. Higham met up with Mr. Grobath /who was carrying letters from Malton to the Duke of Cumberland/ and Sir Everard Faulkener /the duke's secretary/, who had money and a change of clothes for Higham's use. The boy made himself as presentable as possible and then was received 'very graciously' by the duke who ordered Higham to stay near his quarters. Cumberland asked the boy what he thought he had been doing 'by coming so far without your Lordship's leave, and the Duke was well pleased with all his Answers'.² Higham was told not to go near the Hussars, Hunters or Rangers. If there was 'anything done, worth seeing' Cumberland promised that he 'would show it to him without the least danger'. Cumberland also wrote to Malton assuring him that the boy was safe and praising Higham for his 'Zeal on this Occasion' which 'shows the same principles fixt in him that you yourself have given such strong proofs of. And are at present exerting yourself for'.³ He intended to keep Higham with him for four or five days 'when I shall return to London and Lord Hiam /sic/ home to you'. The letter was written personally by 'your Affectionate Friend William'. This would seem to indicate that

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1. W.W.M. M2-351. Higham's 'Journall', 1745.
 2. W.W.M. M2-338. Grobath to Malton, 23rd December 1745.
 3. W.W.M. M2-338. Cumberland to Malton, 23rd December 1745.

the two men were well-known to each other and on familiar terms. Futhermore, Higham's exploits endeared him to the duke who became a close friend and eventually the head of the first Rockingham ministry in 1765. It is possible that the second marquis' appointment partly resulted from the favourable impression he made on Cumberland in 1745. Cumberland was entrusted with the formation of a new ministry by the king, and placed Rockingham at its head. 'The Duke himself held no office but presided at Cabinet meetings and was the real Prime Minister'.¹

Higham eventually got round to writing to his father to apologise for his behaviour. It was worded in such a manner that Malton could not really react any way other than favourably. Higham said he knew that he should have written earlier to beg pardon for deserting the Yorkshire Volunteers - a court-martial offence in itself - 'and leaving without Notice the best, and most indulgent of Fathers, But the more I thought on it, the less I know what to say to excuse so Great a Rashness'.² But [he continued] although Cumberland had reprimanded him for his behaviour, 'yet as I Came with a Design of serving my King and Country, it greatly paliated my Offence'. Malton could do little in the face of such obvious royal approval of his son's actions.

Malton had informed several members of his family of the boy's escapade almost as soon as he had been told and on 24th December he received their replies. Lady Isabella Finch³ had been given the job of informing her sister of the news which she broke as gently as possible. Lady Bell was worried in case 'riding and fatiguing himself at the rate He must have done, may really make him sick ... tho' indeed the Spirit

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1. John Brooke, King George III, pp. 121-122.
 2. W.W.M. M2-340. Higham to Malton, 24th December 1745.
 3. Lady Isabella Finch was sister to Lady Malton and Charles' aunt. She was known as Lady Bell. She never married and acted as a source of information from London to Malton and the second marquis.

and Courage of the Monkey, one cant [sic] help liking'.¹ Lady Malton was most concerned about Higham's health and demanded that her husband must 'insist on his being blooded and that He takes the salt Draughts for at least 4 or 5 days'.² Earl Fitzwilliam³ and his wife had 'been under the Greatest uneasiness and Anxiety unimaginable' since they had heard the news although they went on to congratulate Malton on Higham's courage and spirit.⁴ Lady Mary Wentworth⁵ wrote to George Quarme⁶ on Charles' behalf. She admitted that she was partial towards the boy which made her see his behaviour in the best possible light: 'what is Imprudence I construe Spirit and trust in God the Rest of the World will Judge as favourably of it as I do'.⁷ What she dreaded was Malton's anger and she was 'terrified [sic] to death about it and shall not have a Moments [sic] Ease till I hear the poor Dear Boy is forgiven'. She begged Quarme to do all he could 'to molifye [sic] papa, and to Convince him that this Step of Higham,s [sic] has nothing wrong with it'.

Higham's secretive departure was assumed to have been because he felt that he could not trust anyone with his idea; he caused everyone a great deal of anxiety but rather upset Sir George Savile who tried to follow him. Malton was obliged to 'make use of military Authority' to prevent Savile from riding off after his friend.⁸ Charles came out of

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1. W.W.M. M2-344. Lady Isabella Finch to Malton, 24th December 1745.
 2. W.W.M. M2-343. Lady to Lord Malton, 24th December 1745.
 3. William, third Earl Fitzwilliam married Lady Anne Watson-Wentworth in 1744 and was Malton's son-in-law. His son inherited the Rockingham estate on the death of the second marquis in 1782.
 4. W.W.M. M2-341. Fitzwilliam to Malton, 24th December 1745.
 5. Lady Mary was Higham's elder sister, then eighteen years old.
 6. George Quarme was a captain in Higham's regiment of the West Riding Volunteers and was a friend of Malton. He was a Commissioner of the Excise and in 1746 accompanied Higham to Europe on the first stage of his Grand Tour.
 7. W.W.M. M2-342. Lady Mary Watson-Wentworth to George Quarme, 24th December 1745.
 8. Ibid..

the incident very well. Cumberland interceded with Malton on the boy's behalf;¹ Lady Malton was very proud of her son once she was satisfied that his health had not suffered and reported that:

Never anything met with such General Applause, in short He is the Heroe [sic] of these times, and his Majesty talks of this young Subject in such Terms, as must please you to hear. The Duke's favourable Accounts of his Manner and Behaviour, in his letters to St. Jame's [sic] keeps alive the discourse, of this little Warrior, that in the Drawing Room, no two people talk together, but he makes part of the discourse. 2

Fitzwilliam thought that Higham deserved all the praise he was getting³ as did Lady Bell although she thought that Malton might have 'some Difficulty in keeping him out of the Army, which maynt be just the place you'd Chuse for an only son, therefore, tho, [sic] impossible for you ... to express a dislike of what you must approve, yet a little Check should be given to this military Genius - unless you are determined to let him follow it'.⁴

Lady Mary's dread of Malton's anger was ill-founded. The earl revelled in the attention and approval which was given to Higham; so much so that he sent the boy's 'Journall' and pass to the press⁵ and the countess wanted a 'full and true Account [of] this wild Boy's scampers' from Charles himself.⁶ She found the 'Journal of the Young Nobleman ... very diverting [sic] ... when she has the Pleasuer [sic] to see his L[or]dship here [i.e. at Harrowden] she will assure him of it her Selfe'. On his return Higham was packed off to Harrowden with Sir George Savile who was expected to 'Quiete [sic] the Rover as he is

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1. W.W.M. M2-345. Everard Faulkener to Malton, 25th December 1745.
 2. W.W.M. M2-347. Lady to Lord Malton, 28th December 1745.
 3. W.W.M. M2-348. Fitzwilliam to Malton, 28th December 1745.
 4. W.W.M. M2-350. Lady Isabella Finch to Malton, 31st December 1745.
 5. Ibid.
 6. W.W.M. M2-357. Lady to Lord Malton, 4th January 1746.

a Prudent young Gentleman ... A kind Wellcom /sic/ he is sure to meet with & y/ou/r Lordship's good Self shall be sure of a warm bed & so shall the young Volunteer so that he may Venter /sic/ to Pul /sic/ of /sic/ his Wastcoat /sic/; his Zeal for his King & Country kept Warm'.¹

Higham's impulsive action gained for him approval in the highest circles of society including the royal family. He impressed the Duke of Cumberland and established for himself the reputation of being courageous and patriotic. He suffered neither physical nor mental harm except perhaps that he acquired a liking for the military life. He continued to take an interest in the militia and local volunteers for the rest of his life and used the experience he gained in 1745 at various periods later. The incident proved beyond a doubt that he had now grown up although his immediate family still thought of him as 'the poor boy', 'the little monkey' and 'the scamp'. He showed that he was well able to look after himself, and for the first time he publicly displayed a mind of his own. What started as a desire for adventure ended up in him gaining great credit, and similar 'gut reactions' throughout his life had an almost identical effect. Whatever Charles Watson-Wentworth did, he had the courage to stand by his convictions and was rarely proved wrong.

In February 1746 the Earl of Malton was created the first Baron Rockingham and in April was elevated to the marquissate. Young Lord Higham's title changed to Lord Malton and his father sent him off to Europe to begin his Grand Tour under the watchful eye of George Quarme. This first part of the tour to the Hague, Frankfurt and Geneva was possibly to keep the young man from dreaming about joining the army and

1. W.W.M. M8-65. Elizabeth Thirly, the housekeeper at Harrowden, to Malton, 8th January 1746.

to teach him how to conduct himself. Malton let the independence go to his head and by December 1747 Quarme had to write to Rockingham explaining that they had no money. Malton had been extravagant and had not paid his bills which were huge. Quarme had tried to settle the accounts but did not have enough money of his own to do this: he hoped that Rockingham would pass over the boy's indiscretions with a mild reproof.¹ Quarme was again acting as intercessor for Charles but this time he was not so successful. Rockingham ordered his son to return to Wentworth for a short time, where the error of his ways was pointed out.

The following year preparations were made for Malton to make his Tour proper. In July the marquis began to clear the way for Major James Forrester to act as tutor to his son at an annual salary of £300.² Forrester was a regular soldier and needed leave of absence from his regiment to accompany Charles. Normally permission would have been requested from the officer commanding the regiment but Rockingham applied directly to the Duke of Cumberland as the person most likely to look favourably on the application. Both Marquises of Rockingham shared the same trait of starting at the top of any hierarchy when they wanted something. Cumberland was pleased to grant the leave because of the Watson-Wentworths' 'Zeal for King and Country'³ which they had so amply displayed in 1745 and 1746. The first marquis had even built a monument on his estates to commemorate the defeat of the Jacobites.⁴

Malton and Forrester set off in great style. The marquis had 'sent him abroad in so handsome a manner, that one may truly say, he has

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1. W.W.M. M2-451. Quarme to the first marquis, 22nd December 1747.
 2. W.W.M. M2-488. Series of letters concerning Forrester's leave, July 1748.
 3. Ibid. Cumberland to Rockingham, July 1748.
 4. Hoover Stand was opened in 1748. It is a triangular monument, standing on one of the highest points on the Wentworth estates, clearly visible for miles around Rotherham.

every Advantage that's posible [sic] and Consequently one may expect at his Return to see him a very accomplished valuable young man'.¹

The Grand Tour was considered to be an essential part of the education of the heirs apparent of the peerage. It was supposed to prepare the young gentlemen for the part they would later play in politics, war and diplomacy. In France they were to polish their manners, fencing, horsemanship, ballroom dancing, deportment and dress besides becoming fluent in the language. They went to Paris to practise their social graces and to Italy to soak up the glories of ancient Rome and the beauties of Renaissance art and architecture. From Italy they would be expected to visit various European courts where the remaining 'rough edges' would be removed. Letters of introduction opened up European society to the travellers and because the routes were well-travelled, comfortable accommodation was easily available.²

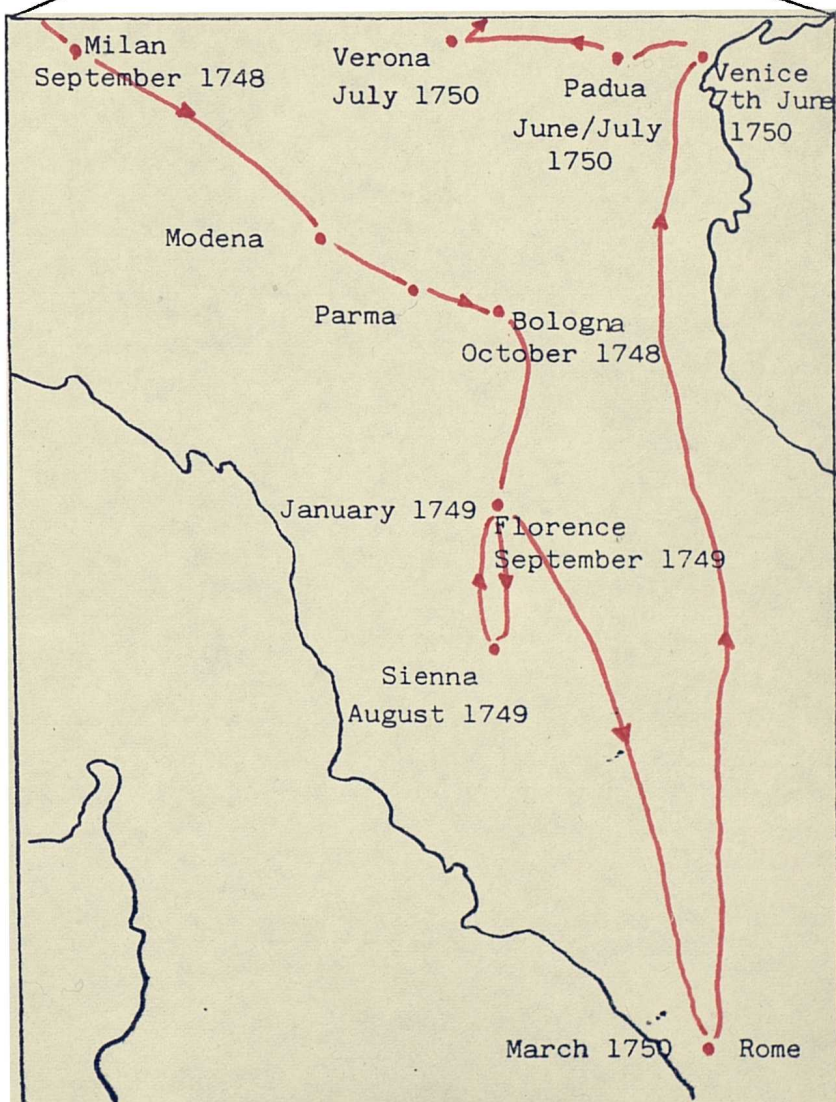
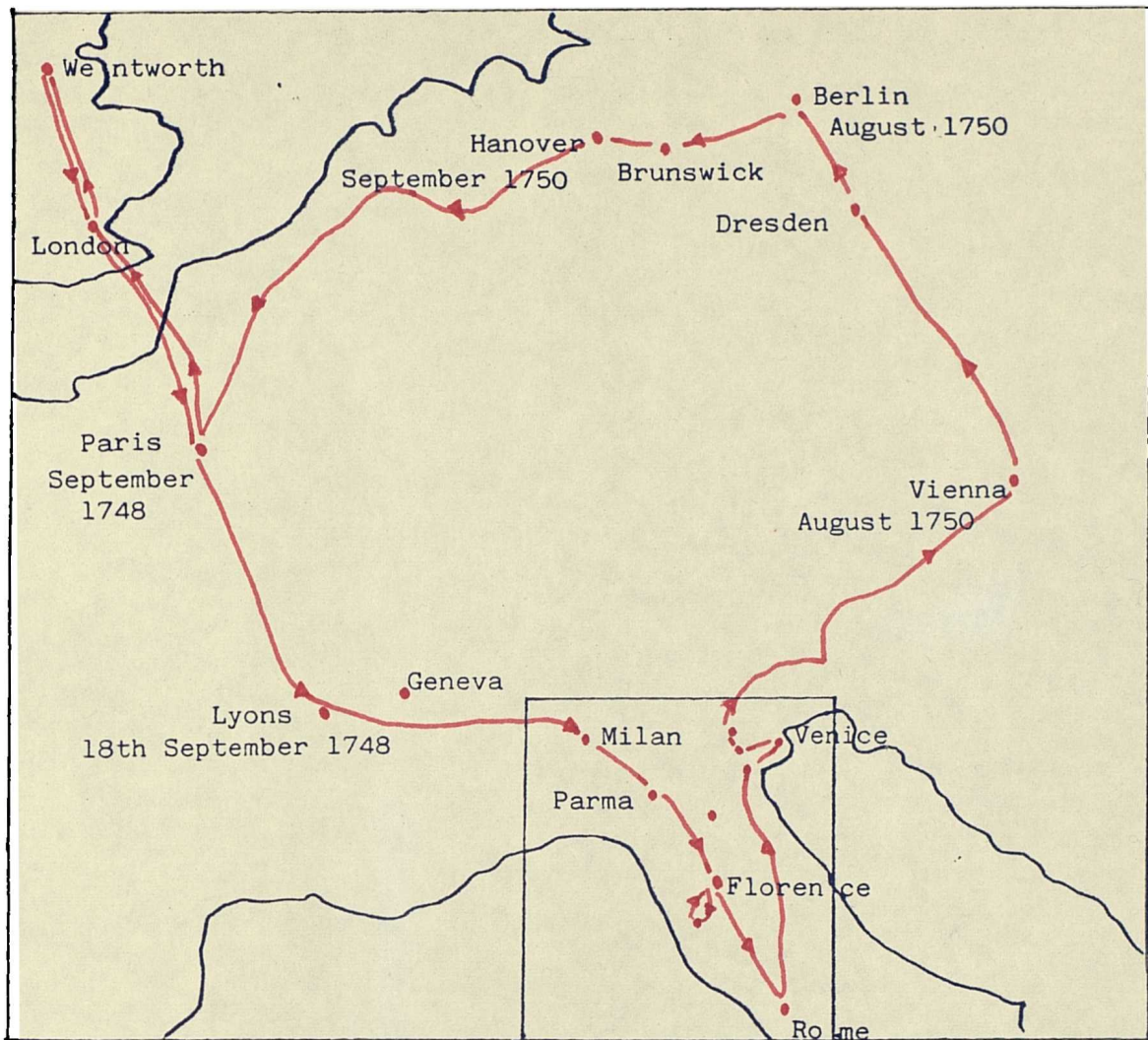
Malton began his tour like many others, in Paris. He was well-received at many of the fashionable salons and proved to be a good linguist. From Paris he travelled south for Florence but at Lyons he had to write to his father asking for more money: he had spent up already. He hoped that he would be able to live within his allowance once he had arrived in Florence.³ He intended getting to Florence via Milan, Parma, Placentia and Bologna, a journey which took just over three months. He arrived in Florence on 3rd January (N.S.): it was 24th December 1748 in England.⁴ Forrester wrote that everyone thought

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1. W.W.M. M2-494/5. Lady Isabella Finch to Rockingham, 13th October 1748.
 2. R.J. White, The Age of George III, p. 157.
 3. W.W.M. M2-508. Malton to Rockingham, Lyons, 18th September (NS) 1748.
 4. The difference in dates is accounted for by the fact that England did not change to the Gregorian Calendar until 1752. England was eleven days behind the rest of Europe.

very highly of Malton and he was pleased that the youth was so respected and liked.¹ The marquis feared that Forrester was too fond of the boy and thought that Forrester's control might be too light,² which it probably was.

Rockingham had spent almost £80,000 on the rebuilding of and extensions to Wentworth Woodhouse and had built a number of niches which he intended to fill with marble statues.³ His son was in the right place to buy such objects so he commissioned Malton to purchase eight of them for the house hall, each about six feet high. He allowed £400 to £500 to cover the expense.⁴ Lord Malton also helped to furnish the house. In August he was in Sienna buying furniture of yellow Sienna marble; in September 1749 he was in Florence buying paintings of various poets such as Dante and Boccaccio.⁵ By March 1750 he was in Rome⁶ where he witnessed the reading of the annual Curse Against the Heretic.⁷ He had thought that it was read by Cardinal Stuart, the brother of Charles Edward Stuart, but he had been mistaken. Cardinal Stuart had read the Curse the previous year. Malton expected 'that this Winter, between the

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1. W.W.M. M2-508. Forrester to Rockingham, 3rd January (N.S.) 1749.
 2. W.W.M. M2-510. Rockingham to Forrester, February (N.S.) 1749.
 3. W.W.M. A 1273. Will of the first marquis.
 4. W.W.M. M2-515. Rockingham to Malton, no date.
 5. W.W.M. M2-518/9.
 6. W.W.M. M2-531. Malton to Rockingham, March 1750.
 7. The Curse Against the Heretic was actually the annual publication of the Papal Bull *In Coena Domini* - 'on the Lord's Supper'. It consisted of a series of excommunications of specified offenders against the faith (for example, §1, Hussites, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anabaptists, 'et singulos alios haereticos, quocumque nomine censeantor') and morals. Originally it was read on Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day and the feast of the Chair of St. Peter (18th January). The practice dated from at least the papacy of Honorius III (1216-1227) and was read annually both in and outside Rome until its suspension by Pope Clement XIV in 1773 and its abrogation by Pope Pius IX in 1869. I am grateful to Fr. Michael Sharratt who helped me to trace the origin of the Curse, to Mr. Michael Walsh, Librarian of Heythrop College for this information concerning it and a copy of it, and to Mrs. Deirdre Woulfe for translating it.



THE GRAND TOUR

Torys [sic] and Jacobites, We poor Whigs, Should have been quite overpowered [but] we were at least four to one'.¹ He reported that there were no 'Persons of Rank about the Pretender' /i.e. the 'Old Pretender' James III] and was surprised that less was known of the whereabouts of Charles Edward Stuart in Italy than was known in England 'where intelligence is, not very good'.

Malton intended to stay in Rome for a few more days but wanted to be in Venice for Ascension Day which fell on 7th June in 1750. He was then going on to Hanover as his father had ordered, to be there in September for George II's birthday on 10th November; after that he would leave Hanover and go to Paris where he would stay until January 1751. His itinerary was altered to include a visit to Padua where he consulted Niccòlo Scanagati and received treatment between 12th June and about 12th July; he went to Verona on 14th July and stayed there until early August; he was in Vienna from 10th August and arrived in Hanover on 15th September via Vienna, Dresden and Berlin. Malton was looking forward to going to Hanover to pay his respects to the king. He had heard that George II 'takes it very kindly to his subjects who pay him their Duty there, & the length of the Journey makes it still more agreeable as it marks more the Affection to his Majesty which your Lordship from Your example has fixed in me'.²

While in Rome Malton spent all his allowance and he again had to write home for more money. He excused the expenditure of £200 in four days by saying that he could not resist the temptation to buy medals and antiques. He had also bought a marble table which he wondered how to get home in one piece and a harpsichord which must have caused similar anxiety. During his visit to Italy the young man made the start of a

1. W.W.M. M2-537. Malton to Rockingham, Rome, 15th April (N.S.) 1750.
2. Ibid.

renowned collection of foreign medals and coins together with a large number of books in French, Italian and English on the subject.¹ He also collected books on the monuments and statues of ancient Rome while he was there. The marquis once again subsidised his extravagant son and reminded him to tidy up his handwriting which was becoming almost illegible.

Her Imperial Highness Maria Theresa received young Malton at her court in Vienna and allowed him to inspect her army. The young man was most impressed by both the army and his welcome.² He then moved on to Berlin where he saw a carousel which amused him, and was snubbed by Frederick the Great, which did not. Malton wrote a pen-portrait of Frederick for his father which emphasised that the king had no time for anyone other than his troops who [according to Malton] wanted to desert. Malton further remarked that the taxes in Silesia were far too high.³ He had enjoyed himself in Brunswick and found on his arrival in Hanover that the Duke of Newcastle was there. Newcastle insisted that Malton dined with him every day and the king 'did me the honour of speaking to me more or less every day' because Malton went to court every day, both morning and evening. He was graciously received because the members of the court 'had an Air of Satisfaction at seeing a person of whose Loyalty and Fidelity His Majesty had a very good Opinion'.⁴

Rockingham was pleased with his son's progress. He found it agreeable that Malton had fixed his politics 'by the Good of your Native Country & Judge True Greatness to consist in protecting & Justly ruling the Subjects'.⁵ Malton's comments about Frederick the Great clearly

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1. W.W.M. A 1212. Executors records, 1782.
 2. W.W.M. M2-545. Malton to Rockingham, 10th August 1750.
 3. W.W.M. M2-545. Malton to Rockingham, 1st September 1750.
 4. W.W.M. M2-553. Malton to Rockingham, 30th October 1750.
 5. W.W.M. M2-550. Rockingham to Malton, 3rd October 1750.

demonstrated to his father that he was becoming a politically mature Whig who would defend the principles of the Bill of Rights under all circumstances. It is perhaps not surprising that the second Marquis of Rockingham prided himself on his Whig principles: he had been brought up to believe in them and he showed at an early age that his upbringing had paid off. The first marquis thought that his son's books, medals, statues and minatures were well chosen but was more impressed with them 'as the sign you have cultivated your Mind & improved from the Great Civilitys /sic/ shown You'.¹ He hoped that the cultivation would never be 'defaced by the Temptations of Wicked Courses' and reminded Malton that 'Vitious /sic/ Pleasures ever destroy the Bodily Constitution & Choak /sic/ the Intellectual Spirit'. Unfortunately, the warning had come too late. Besides warning his son of the dangers of wicked ways, the marquis also warned against the dangers of gambling and drinking which would 'reduce the Reasonable to an unreasonable being' and of spending too much time 'in Swallowing largely very Bad Liquor in much worse Company'.² The advice about drinking seems to have had some effect because Charles Watson-Wentworth rarely seems to have drunk too much; the advice about gambling was not so effective. The second Marquis of Rockingham was well-known for his interest in horse-racing and kept a stud at Wentworth where he built stables which were almost the same size as the house.³ However, his gambling never got out of hand and he never bet so much as to reduce himself and his family to penury as some eighteenth-century gentlemen did.⁴

Towards the end of 1750 the first marquis, who by then was fifty-

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1. W.W.M. M2-551. Rockingham to Malton, 3rd October 1750.
 2. Ibid.
 3. The stables are today often mistaken for the house itself, in fact.
 4. For example, Lord Grosvenor almost bankrupted himself through racing and gambling.

seven years old and was ill, wrote a long letter to Malton in which he gave much paternal advice in preparation for his son's coming-of-age in May 1751. The letter strongly indicates that the first marquis did not expect to see his son again, since he also advised him on estate management and political conduct. He then told Malton to deal with others as he would wish to be dealt with, and to use the abilities and capacities with which he had been blessed to good purposes. Rockingham praised his own father and suggested that Malton should use his grandfather's ideals as a pattern for his own life: 'equal them at least, and surpass the best if you can'. Malton was warned that 'many that have been acquainted with this Family, Already watch your Steps with a ... Partial Eye' and he was bidden to use his abilities 'for your own Eternal Welfare, for the good of your country, the Benefit of all round you, and a thorow [sic] charity towards all men, I mean a universal Sincerity, in wishing the well doing of every individual, and the Christian Forgiveness of any Trespass afforded to yourself'.¹

Malton was expected to follow a straight course, politically speaking; never using his position for personal ambition or to pervert the course of justice. As to the estates, he had a duty to his predecessors and successors to look after them. He was not to squander his inheritance but was to use it for the benefit of 'the King, ... your Country ... all your Tenants and Dependants, for every one of these in some Degree, feel the Benefits of a large Estate virtuously Employed, Or the Miseryes [sic], from one Brutally dissipated. The former Cherisheth, the latter plunges ... Hundreds of Familyes [sic] into Distress and Difficultyes [sic], for Want of a good Landlord, who ought to be a nursing Father to all who have Dependants [sic] on him'. Rockingham recommended economy in expenditure to set a good example and to enable

1. W.W.M. R220-4. Rockingham to Malton, undated but 1750.

his son 'generously to help the Distresses of those you may think it proper to assist'.¹ Again, the new heir took the advice to heart. He embarked on the development of his estates and extended the charitable works of his father. He often gave money to the needy and looked after his retired retainers and tenants and in many ways he became a model landowner by eighteenth-century standards. His parents must be given credit for the character of Charles. They took a lively and active interest in his upbringing. His mother especially showed a deep concern about him and spent a great deal of time with the boy. Rockingham laid the foundations of his son's political convictions and encouraged catholic interests in the boy, ranging from science to geography and history to politics. Malton was raised in an atmosphere of religious toleration although the whole family was Anglican by conviction as well as by necessity: Malton seems to have been a firm believer in and practiser of Anglicanism, even though he took some interest in Methodism.

So far as his servants were concerned, Malton was advised to reward the good ones and punish the bad for his own sake and that of everyone's well-being. He followed this too. In the 1770s he proved that many of his servants were taking advantage of their positions and, having given them adequate opportunity to mend their ways, sacked them. He was more remiss over paying his way as he went along: he was often in debt to local suppliers. Where estate management was concerned, his father suggested that he should let only good and cheap farms to tenants, even in Ireland, since that would double the value of the estates. The second marquis did this and ensured that his tenants improved the

1. W.W.M. R220-4. Rockingham to Malton, undated but 1750.

lands by giving long leases and asking reasonable rents. He upset his agent in Ireland by letting land to the best man rather than to the highest Protestant bidder - so much so that lands were let directly to Catholics when elsewhere in Ireland they were being discriminated against.

The first Marquis of Rockingham died on 14th December 1750 and was buried in York Minster. Charles, Lord Malton, succeeded to the marquissate of Rockingham and all his father's estates. His mother went to live at Harrowden where she died in 1761. The new Marquis of Rockingham became one of the most eligible bachelors in the country. Besides his landed inheritance he had the advowsons of twenty-three livings and five chaplaincies in the Anglican church¹ and just after his twenty-first birthday he was named Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the North and West Ridings and of the city of York. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on 7th November 1751 by which time he was already a member of White's and the Jockey Club. He had residences at Wentworth Woodhouse, Malton [Ireland], Higham Ferrers, Malton [North Yorkshire] and Newmarket. He began his parliamentary career by speaking in defence of the woollen manufacturers of Yorkshire in the controversy over the branding of sheep with pitch and tar and the fraudulent adding of rubbish to spun wool for which the weavers and manufacturers paid. It was the first time that the second marquis stood up in the House, and it was also the first formal occasion on which he spoke for the people of the West Riding but it set the pattern for the future.

1. W.W.M. A1273 and R2A-3. They were: Tankersley, Handsworth, Reveston, Harworth, Worksop, Hooton Roberts, Bulmer, Yeadingham, Thurnscoe, Higham Ferrers, Harrowden, Irthlingborough, Harpole, Covington, Ecclesfield, Wentworth, Swinton, Smeaton, Tinsley, Greasborough, Dore, Malton, Molesworth, Claxby, Preswith, Normanby and Wollaston.

On 13th May 1751 the young marquis' coming-of-age was celebrated at Wentworth Woodhouse 'in a very magnificent manner'.¹ Over ten-thousand guests attended the event and of those three thousand or more were 'entertained in the House'. The writer listed some of the food provided: 110 dishes of roast beef, 70 pies, 55 dishes of mutton, 48 hams, 55 dishes of lamb, 70 dishes of veal, 40 dishes of chickens, 104 dishes of pork. The liquid refreshment included thirteen hogsheads of ale, twenty of strong beer, eight of punch and four of wine. After the guests had dined, the remains of the feast were taken outside for the local residents, who had 'Strong Beer and Ale as much as they pleased'. The celebration continued into the next day when forty loads of wheat were baked into bread and pies and a further eight hogsheads of strong beer was drunk.²

On 26th February 1752 Rockingham married Mary Bright of Golden Square. The ceremony was performed by the Archbishop of York, Matthew Hutton. Miss Bright was the daughter of Thomas Liddell Bright and Margaret Norton. Thomas Bright died leaving Mary as his heiress, worth £60,000. Her mother had subsequently married Sir John Ramsden of Byrom and Longley Hall, one of the first marquis' political allies and personal friends. Presumably the young couple met through their parents although a contemporary noted that 'Lord Rockingham had made some visits to Miss Bright [in May 1751] and very probably it would be a match'.³ Miss Bright's dowry included estates at Ecclesall and Badsworth which were added to Rockingham's already large inheritance. However, although

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1. The following description of the event is taken from the Leeds Mercury, 23rd May 1751.
 2. A hogshead is 54 gallons, therefore on two days the assembled guests drank 22,896 pints of liquor - almost a gallon per guest - excluding those who were not house guests, who drank as much as they pleased.
 3. P. Roebuck, Yorkshire Baronets 1640-1760 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980), p.243. Source not given.

most marriages of the nobility in the eighteenth century were arranged - and there is no reason to believe otherwise of this one - the couple seem to have been very affectionate towards one another. Lady Rockingham took a lively interest in all her husband's concerns and acted as his secretary, adviser and political agent besides entertaining his guests. On many occasions she was asked to write to Rockingham's political followers to pass on information to them or to discuss the marquis' ideas with them and he acknowledged quite openly that he valued his wife's opinions.¹ On 31st March 1767 he said in a letter to Sir George Savile that Savile 'must come, for that now that I have not my Minerva at my elbow I must beg - my Mentor will come'.² Lady Rockingham kept up to date with the latest political manoeuvres and policy decisions while the couple were separated³ and in turn she made her feelings known, whether approving or not of what was being done.⁴

Their close relationship was an unusual occurrence in the eighteenth century when many women were expected to be little more than decorations to the house and the producers of children. Lady Rockingham clearly was well-educated and politically aware otherwise she would have been unable to undertake the duties which the marquis delegated to her with such confidence. That they had no children must have been a source of disappointment, but it is never mentioned in any of the correspondence so one might logically presume that they expected to be childless in

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1. For example W.W.M. R147-4; R156-11. Many of the copies of letters sent by Rockingham are in Lady Rockingham's hand.
 2. W.W.M. R156-9. Rockingham to Savile, 31st March 1767.
 3. For example W.W.M. R156-17; R156-13; R140-38; R156-9; R156-12.
 4. For example W.W.M. R168-19. Lady to Lord Rockingham, undated but clearly 1768: 'I hear of nothing but y/ou/r coming to the Treasury again, I can hear of few things more disagreeable but I dare say There is no immediate truth in it, or you would have made me comprehend it by some sign or other. You cannot think what miseries I can work myself up to from that Idea, God save the King & long live L/or/d Chatham as Minister, say I'.

view of the marquis' state of health. At times he left the running of the estate to the marchioness, who tackled the job with great enthusiasm, particularly if the task was to do with the gardens, greenhouses or menagerie. She took an interest in the servants and estate personnel and was always generous and considerate towards the ill and needy. On occasion she nagged Lord Rockingham until he visited estate staff even though she had already done all she could and continued to 'remind' him to undertake duties he found unpleasant.¹ She must have found it difficult to adjust from living at Byrom to being in charge of a household the size of Wentworth. In 1753 there were fifty-four full-time staff at the house; by 1767 there were eighty-eight. These figures exclude part-time staff and extra help which was called in on special occasions. The marchioness had control over these people within the hierarchy of staffing and was also responsible for the smooth running of the house. All-in-all, she seems to have been an extremely competent woman and a most useful wife for the marquis. Furthermore, she extended the already wide connections which Rockingham had. Her half-brother married the heiress of Lord Irwin of Temple Newsam and her step-father was related to Lord Lonsdale; her half-sister Elizabeth married William Weddell who was M.P. for Hull from 1766 to 1774 and who extended Rockingham's influence in the constituency.

The second Marquis of Rockingham's political leadership in the county of Yorkshire was to some extent inherited from his father. Family relationships accounted for a number of political allies in parliament, such as Viscount Irwin, the Fitzwilliams, Lord Monson and

1. For example W.W.M. R168-42; R168-52; R168-18. Lady to Lord Rockingham, undated. 'I am quite vex'd always to have forgot reminding you of the D/uke/ & D/uche/ss of Norfolk, but I hope you have thought of them'.

Lord Winchelsea,¹ and several national figures such as the Duke of Norfolk, Sir Conyers Darcy, Lord Hardwicke and the Dukes of Manchester, Newcastle and Devonshire had been close friends and colleagues of the first marquis. Sir George Savile, one of Rockingham's oldest and closest friends, brought contacts with the Earl of Scarborough: his sister married the fourth earl; and in Yorkshire the young marquis had the support of Peregrine Wentworth, Viscount Downe, John Fountayne the Dean of York, Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory, George Quarme and Sir Miles Stapleton. The young man had to prove himself politically, of course, but he had many persons whom he could ask for advice if he so wished and who would give him the backing he needed.² His connection with Sir George Savile gave Rockingham direct contacts with the leading merchants and manufacturers in West Yorkshire. Savile owned lands in the county and was much concerned with men like the Milnes of Wakefield from whom the marquis gained much influence. In 1753 the Whig Club in York was renamed the 'Rockingham Club' in honour of the marquis and he could rely on its members for all the help he ever needed, politically speaking. Almost from the moment he became Marquis of Rockingham, Charles Watson-Wentworth was catapulted into the forefront of local and national political life. He became more prominent after 1754 when the Duke of Newcastle became Prime Minister, for the old duke saw himself as the marquis' mentor and father-substitute and insisted on guiding the younger man's activities. In 1752 the marquis had been made a Lord of the Bedchamber to George II; in 1755 he was created Vice-Admiral of Yorkshire and in 1760 he was made

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1. Irwin was Lady Rockingham's half-brother's father-in-law; Earl Fitzwilliam was his brother-in-law; Monson was his uncle and god-father; Winchelsea was his maternal grandfather.
 2. See chapter 5 below for a full discussion of Rockingham's political activities in Yorkshire.

a Knight of the Garter. In 1756 it seemed as though the marquis was to become one of the household of the Prince of Wales. Rockingham believed that the king was 'rather Unwilling to part with me, & that weighs much with me'.¹ He intended to take the 'best and the Surest advice I can get' even though he hoped his wife would 'think me right in being Cautious': he wanted to upset neither the king nor the Prince of Wales. As events turned out, he stayed with George II and was also a Lord of the Bedchamber to George III until 1762 when he resigned as a protest at the 'Massacre of the Pelhamite Innocents'. The king's answer to Rockingham's resignation was brief: 'He did not desire any person should continue in his Service any longer than it was agreeable to him'.² The marquis probably overplayed his hand with the king. He reported to the marchioness that he had told the king 'with how much uneasiness and Regret I had seen the Tendency of all the late domestic Measures ... and that I was grieved to see that all persons - who had long been steadily attached to his Majesty's Family &c - were not more the Object of his Majesty's displeasure than of his favour'.³ Given that the two men were of much the same age [Rockingham was only eight years older than the king] and that the king was intent on ruling 'above party' and on getting rid of his grandfather's advisers and courtiers, it is perhaps not surprising that George III accepted the marquis' resignation with such alacrity. Then the king promptly stripped him of all his county offices and duties in what looks remarkably like a fit of pique and spite.⁴ The Duke of Cumberland was 'most sincerely sorry that we live in such

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1. W.W.M. R160-1. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 25th October 1756.
 2. W.W.M. R1-323. Rockingham to the Duke of Cumberland, 4th November 1762.
 3. W.W.M. R160-3. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 3rd November 1762.
 4. See chapter 5 below. All Newcastle's supporters were removed from their offices systematically: it was no accident. For example, W.W.M. R1-323; R1-333/336/341/342/343.

times that a man of your Rank and steady attachment [sic] to the King and his Family should find himself necessitated to take the step you have taken', and he remained Rockingham's 'very affectionate friend - William'.¹

Rockingham's opposition to the ascendancy of the Earl of Bute cost him dearly in terms of political advancement. His personal supporters lost their jobs as well, simply because they were attached to the marquis who had become persona non grata. His uncle, Henry Finch, was one of the first to suffer,² then Hugh Bethel's candidacy at Beverley was opposed by Bute, as was Lascelles' candidacy in Yorkshire. The marquis gained much support and sympathy in his home county for his stand against the king and Bute and he showed that he had the ability to lead an orchestrated opposition from the front, no matter what the cost. It may be that his personal example was responsible for his increased importance among the Newcastle Whigs, apart from the fact that his youth attracted younger Whigs to the party. The Duke of Devonshire wanted to retaliate against the dismissal of inferior government officers who had the patronage of the Newcastle group but he was far more cautious than the young marquis. 'I am for Battel [sic], but I am against appearing in a weak opposition as we shall make an insignificant figure, prejudice our Friends & do no good'.³ By that time a small group of Whigs had met at George Onslow's⁴ including the Duke of Grafton, Lords George, Frederick and John Cavendish, Lords Middleton and Villiers, Thomas Townshend, Charles Townshend, Richard Hopkins, Lord Bessborough and Thomas Pelham. They persuaded Rockingham that an opposition club should be set up although the Duke

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1. W.W.M. R1-324. Cumberland to Rockingham, 5th November 1762.
 2. Finch was removed from the office of Surveyor-General of the Board of Works in favour of Thomas Worsley, a friend of Bute's.
 3. W.W.M. R1-339. Devonshire to Rockingham, 26th December 1762.
 4. George Onslow was a nephew of the Duke of Newcastle and a supporter of the Rockingham Whigs.

of Newcastle was against the idea. At this point the young Whigs began to desert the older group around Newcastle and to follow the Marquis of Rockingham. In March 1763 the marquis acted as a 'whip' leading forty-eight peers in a division against the Cider Tax bill. An opposition party of some strength had begun in parliament and, apart from the two short periods while he held office, it was led continuously by Charles Watson-Wentworth.

In 1763 the Duke of Newcastle managed to get the Marquis of Rockingham elected as one of the governors of Charterhouse School. This was the greatest of all charitable foundations and the conferring of a governorship was a great honour besides providing opportunities for patronage for the holders. There were fourteen governors [plus the headmaster]; they were some of the most eminent men in England and could nominate their successors. Normally the Prime Minister was a governor, but Grenville had been passed over in favour of Rockingham.¹

Rockingham attracted to himself a hard core of supporters in both Houses of Parliament who stuck with him through thick and thin, even though the marquis chose sixteen years in opposition rather than compromise his principles. John Brooke condemns the Rockinghamites for priding themselves on their consistency, 'which with foolish people means that once you have said a thing you must adhere to it for evermore'.² However, they were consistent in their policies and moreover they were eventually proved right in their assessment of the situation. These Whigs were led by Rockingham: that is, he made the policy decisions, albeit

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1. Governors of Charterhouse School in 1763: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, the Dukes of Bedford, Devonshire, Rutland, Dorset, Newcastle; the Lord Chancellor Lord Thurlow; the Earls of Holderness, Hardwicke, Sandwich, Mansfield and Bute; and the Marquis of Rockingham.
 2. John Brooke, King George III, p. 124.

after taking advice from his followers on many occasions, but he can scarcely be described as a man 'of second-rate powers and uncritical self-identification with the cause [hē] served ... devoured by jealousy and mistrust of abler men than himself [such as] Newcastle or Edmund Burke'.¹ No man who could hold together a large opposition party for so long, who was involved in the petitioning movements and who had a tight hold on one of the largest landed estates in the country can be dismissed as having 'a mediocrity of intellect' and 'dumb devotion to his rather negative idealism'.² Neither can the popular, outgoing, enthusiastic marquis justifiably be described as 'reserved and remote'.³

In 1765 the Marquis of Rockingham was appointed as First Lord of the Treasury in the government formed by the Duke of Cumberland.⁴ A vast amount of material has been produced on the first Rockingham ministry⁵ dealing with the high politics of the period. Perhaps insufficient attention has been given to the marquis' motives for the repeal of the Stamp Act and his subsequent proposed but sadly unachieved legislation for America. Likewise, although his attainment of power has rightly been attributed to the influence of the Duke of Cumberland, the fact that the two men were old friends seems to have been overlooked. The extent of Rockingham's support in Yorkshire has perhaps not been sufficiently stressed. Certainly he looked to the more influential men

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1. R.J. White, The Age of George III, pp. 97-98.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. John Owen, The Eighteenth Century (London, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1974), p. 180, suggests that Rockingham did little work during this ministry; that the marquis was amateurish and incapable; but that his sincerity and capacity for friendship should not be under-estimated.
 5. For example, Paul Langford, The First Rockingham Administration (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973); Frank O'Gorman, The Rise of Party in England: the Rockingham Whigs 1760-1782 (Aberdeen, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975); R. S. J. Hoffman, The Marquis.

in the county but he was a popular figure with the common people and he was able to link Whigs of all persuasions in the common cause of national prosperity and peace with America. His ability to mix easily with men of all ranks helped him to advertise his views and the number of addresses he received on his dismissal from office indicates the strength of his following.¹

The Marquis of Rockingham was happier on his Yorkshire estates than anywhere else. He enjoyed overseeing his farming experiments and planning the landscaping of the park and he was actively involved in the minutiae of management.² He took an interest in his tenants - some 277 of them in 1750³ - scattered round south Yorkshire, and he tried to ensure that his employees were never out of work: his colliers were given employment as farm labourers when his pits were laid off, for example. Hospitality was one of the things for which Rockingham was renowned. He got great satisfaction from entertaining his friends at Wentworth and he often held political 'summit meetings' there when parliament was not in session. His allies lived near enough to travel to the house and there was always accommodation available. His local influence was largely built up on the affection, goodwill and respect which he won from his attitude towards friends, retainers, tenants and local inhabitants.

He spent over £83,000 over a period of about twenty years on Wentworth Woodhouse, including the building of the stables, general repairs, housekeeping expenses, gardening, home farm development, charity payments and all the other costs involved in running such a vast

1. See chapter 8 below.
2. See chapter 2 below.
3. W.W.M. A221.

estate. The spending was closely linked with the local economy. Wherever he could, the marquis bought locally, Furthermore, he helped to improve the standards of agriculture in the area through his own experiments and introduction of new implements. His development of coal mines and the canal he had built helped others to follow suit. One of his weaknesses where expense was concerned, was books. He collected a huge library at Wentworth and Grosvenor Square; the range of subjects is extensive.¹ The collection of books on coins and medals he began when he was in Italy, and a series of medical books speaks for itself. Other subjects included religious dissertations, books on the history, geography and politics of America [which appears to give lie to the theory that he was ignorant on the subject of the colonies]; books on mathematics, botany, chemistry, various classics, several military treatises and books on the new farming. The possession does not necessarily mean that he had read them, of course, but when the books were recently auctioned, most of them were well-thumbed² which indicates that someone had read them. Rockingham also took an interest in guns: he owned at least forty, including six brace of silver mounted pistols, a smooth bore gun and a 'new air gun'.³

His family had a claim on his estate financially: he provided allowances for his three sisters and a dowry for Mary when she married John Milbanke. He also helped to support Lady Isabella Finch and his unmarried sister Charlotte. His youngest sister caused a great scandal in 1764 when she eloped with William Sturgeon, an Irish footman who 'attended behind the Coach'.⁴ The whole family was shocked at her action

1. W.W.M. A 1212.

2. I am grateful to Mrs. Freda Crowder of Rotherham Public Library for this information.

3. W.W.M. A1204. Contents of Lord Rockingham's gun closet.

4. W.W.M. R143-13. Lady Mary Watson-Wentworth (?) to Rockingham, 21st October 1764.

but Rockingham paid her an allowance every quarter out of his Irish estates: it was practically the only thing which kept the couple and later their family solvent, because Sturgeon seemed unable to keep Lady Harriot in the manner to which she was accustomed. The Earl Fitzwilliam continued to help the Sturgeons after he inherited the estate. In 1771 the marquis tried to arrange a suitable match for Miss Mary Ramsden, one of his wife's relatives. He arranged for her to go to Wentworth 'either in September or October, because it could then be so easily contrived that the Gentleman might come along with your Grace [i.e. Portland] & pass some days, without anyone having the lease [sic] Idea of the Object of the Visit'.¹ He later found out that the gentleman was attracted to horseracing, gambling and bad company, but he hoped that if the match could be arranged the gentleman might mend his ways. Sadly nothing seems to have come of Rockingham's matchmaking activities, since there is no further mention of the affair.

Charles Watson-Wentworth was much involved in the affairs of south Yorkshire because of his social position and from inclination. He had many contacts from his father but developed close links with the area for himself. He was, for example, a guest at the Cutlers' Feast in 1771 and 1774 where his views on America met with the approbation of the assembled company, with whom he was very popular.² His paternalism and humanitarianism enhanced his reputation and he fully justified all the expectations of him from his family and friends. Obviously he was born with

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1. PwF 9047 Rockingham to Portland, 24th August 1771. Portland Papers, University of Nottingham.
 2. Rockingham to Burke, 13th September 1774. The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, ed. T.W. Copeland [and others], (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958-1978), 3, 25. Hereafter, Burke Correspondence. R. E. Leader, The History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire (Sheffield, Pawson & Brailsford, 1905). Lists of guests at the several Cutlers' Feasts.

all the advantages of wealth and status but he made the most of both for the benefit of others as well as for himself. His abilities, which were underestimated by contemporaries and continue to be underestimated, were especially in the areas of relationships with others no matter what their status, and his genuine concern for others.¹ He had an essentially considerate nature and was able to tolerate even those he disliked, as well as forming deep and lasting friendships with many contemporaries.

The second Marquis of Rockingham was inculcated with the ideals of Whiggery and was brought up to believe in the concept of aristocratic government. His early illnesses possibly resulted in a concern for his health which turned into hypochondria later in his life although he probably suffered from a serious illness which at times was extremely debilitating.

Until he was nine years old he was a 'younger son' and would have received no special treatment from his father. It was only on the death of William in 1739 that Charles became the heir to the estates and probably he had much ground to make up. His close-knit family life would have created an atmosphere of stability and his mother obviously cared for and loved her son, in spite of the unpleasant 'cures' she inflicted on him to treat his ailments. His upbringing differed little from that of other eighteenth-century noblemen except perhaps in his short brush with military life. Even so, his rash action in riding to join Cumberland showed courage and resourcefulness and served him well later in his life.

Politically he had many important friends and relations and was expected to become active in both local and national politics after the death of his father. He accepted Dissenters and Recusants individually

1. J. Owen, The Eighteenth Century, p. 180 acknowledges Rockingham's tremendous popularity in Yorkshire and notes that he was an agreeable companion and a genial host who could command intense loyalty.

as equals and had seen that the non-implementation of the penal laws could be advantageous. His charm is evident from the reactions of those with whom he came into contact throughout his youth and he appears to have been at ease in almost every sort of company. At the age of twenty-one he was thrown headlong into politics and estate management and became one of the most important men in Yorkshire. He was able to deal with his new status fairly competently which would seem to indicate that he was a confident, capable young man with at least a modicum of intelligence and common sense. His suddenly increased wealth did not go to his head and before long he was making his presence felt on his estates, in Yorkshire and in London.

CHAPTER 2

THE WENIORTH WOODHOUSE ESTATE

In the eighteenth century landed property was the one thing necessary for political influence, wealth and status. Landowners had the right to vote and large landowners could sit as Members of Parliament. The Anglican aristocracy had an almost automatic seat in the House of Lords. Prior to about 1785 the number of peers in England was steady at 160 to 170, almost all of them living on their landed revenues.¹

Mingay characterises the ruling aristocracy as suffering the defects of 'pride, ostentation, extravagance, acquisitiveness and to some degree contempt for the "lower orders"'. He also notes that they were refined, cultured, humane, conscientious; ambitious improvers of their estates and energetic figures in commerce and industry. They claimed no special privileges of importance and 'did their duty' towards their tenants, servants and the community in general.²

An eighteenth-century landowner might be expected to become involved in farm improvement, to encourage the use of new farming methods by his tenants, to landscape and exploit the resources of the estate to the utmost. He would take care of his servants and tenants; he would give to, and personally support, charities; he would keep a careful watch on the management of his estates. The mere existence of the estate and the demands of the household would maintain and expand the local economy.³

There is no doubt that the second Marquis of Rockingham numbered among the richest men in England in the mid-eighteenth century. This chapter seeks to assess his personal worth as a landowner and to discover how he compared with the best examples among his contemporaries in

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1. G. E. Mingay, English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century (London, Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1963), p. 6.
 2. Ibid., p. 14.
 3. Ibid., passim.

each of these areas.

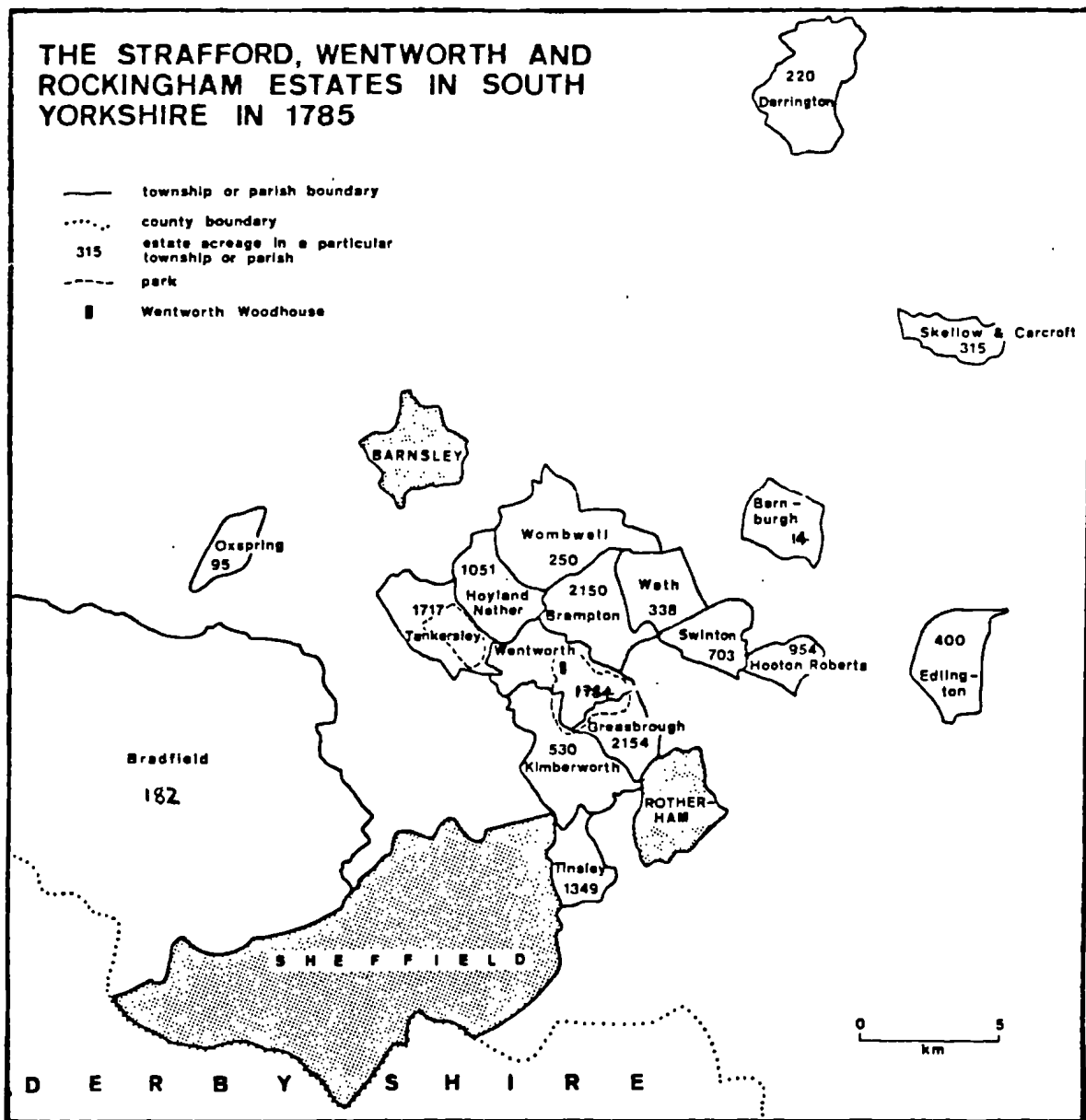
The south Yorkshire estates which the second Marquis of Rockingham inherited amounted to some 14,206 acres [see map overleaf] and his marriage to Mary Bright in 1752 added the Bright estates in Ecclesall, Grimesthorpe, Little Houghton, Badsworth and Ackworth - a further 3,000 acres. The total south Yorkshire estates therefore were of around 17,000 acres.¹ The park at Wentworth Woodhouse covered almost 2,000 acres; Greasborough village was almost entirely in his possession; and he owned over 2,000 acres in the parish of Brampton and over 1,000 acres in Hoyland. The map [overleaf] shows the estate acreages in detail.²

Rather less than half of the marquis' annual income of about £40,000 came from south Yorkshire³ but it was there where he preferred to spend his time and money. In an age of vast country houses built by the aristocracy, Wentworth Woodhouse was one of the largest country mansions in England to which the second marquis added a huge stable block almost as impressive as the house itself. The first Marquis of Rockingham was responsible for the virtual rebuilding of the house but he relied substantially on his son for statues, mirrors, tables and other European items of decoration while Malton was on his Grand Tour. The result of the extensions was what can best be described as a double-fronted [or back-to-back] mansion with the new façade being the entrance.

The Household

When Arthur Young visited Wentworth Woodhouse in 1770 he wrote

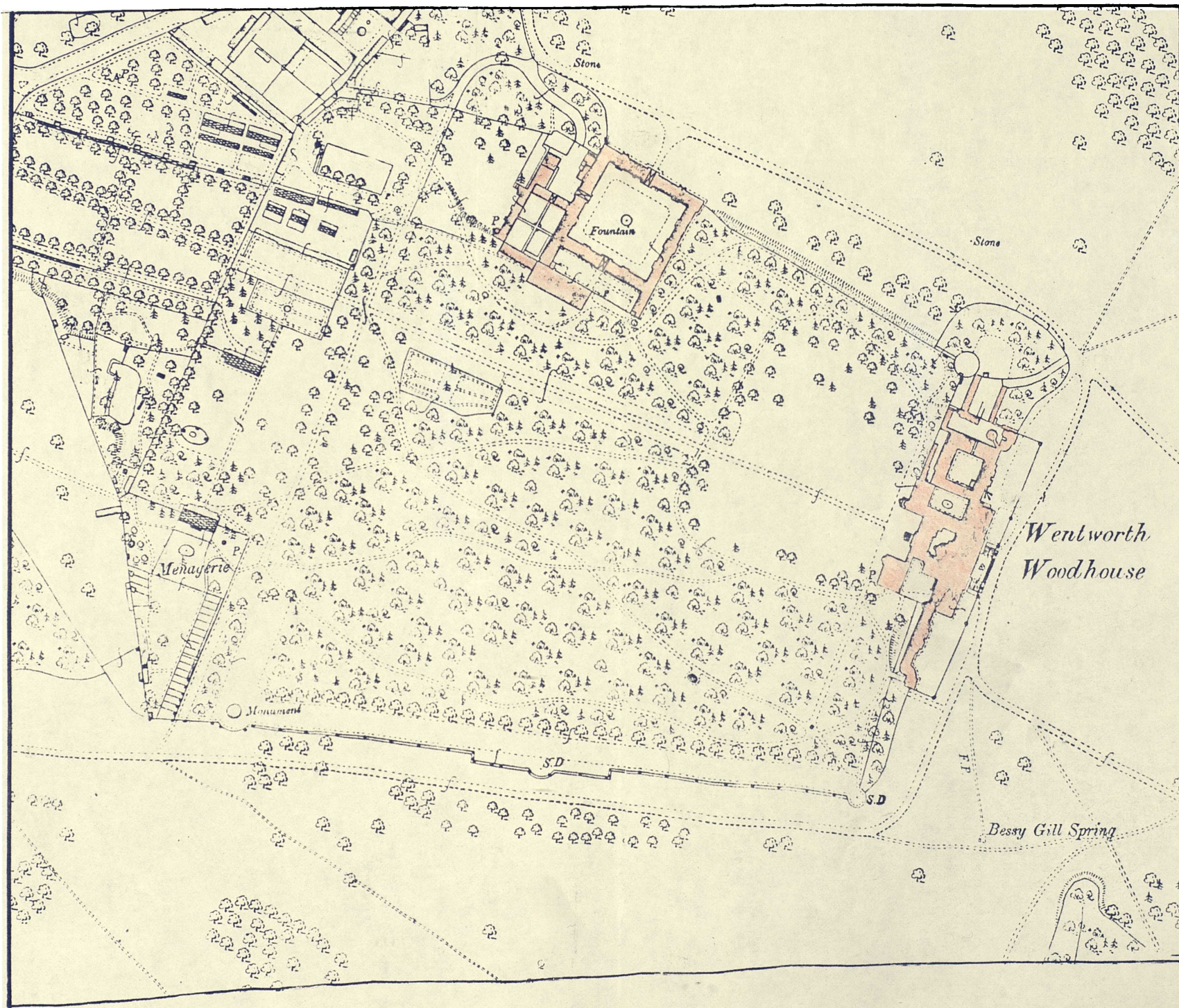
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1. Melvyn Jones' research.
 2. The map was compiled by Melvyn Jones for his own work and is hitherto unpublished. I am grateful to Mr. Jones for this copy which he has given permission for me to use.
 3. £20,000 came from his Irish estates. He also owned estates in Harrowden and Malton.



MAP COMPILED BY MELVYN JONES

that 'the palace of the Marquis of Rockingham is situated between Rotherham and Barnsley, in the midst of the most beautiful country, and in a park that is one of the most exquisite spots on the world'.¹ Palace was scarcely an exaggeration. The map [overleaf] shows the extent of the house, gardens, and stables.² In the inventory taken of Wentworth on the marquis' death in 1782 some 130 rooms are listed by name³ although the servants' quarters are omitted, presumably because the contents were not part of the household goods. The state rooms included a long gallery of 135 feet, a library, dining room and withdrawing rooms. These rooms were luxuriously decorated: an ante-room had a marble fireplace, a carved ceiling and Italian mirrors. The so-called Van Dyke room had a carved and gilt ceiling and contained a beautiful and very large Waterford crystal chandelier made up of 2,000 pieces of crystal. The 'Whistlejacket' room featured a Stubbs painting of the second marquis' racehorse of that name besides a portrait of the first marquis, and also contained two mirrors brought from Italy. The fireplace there was of steel and ormolu. The great saloon was sixty feet square and sixty feet high; the marble floor was made almost single-handed by Charles Clerici, a scagliola craftsman.⁴ Besides the state

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1. Arthur Young, A Six Months Tour Through the North of England, 6 Vols. (London, Strahan & Nicoll, 1771), I, 278.
 2. This Ordnance Survey map of 1905 was supplied by the Wentworth Woodhouses Estates, to whom I am grateful. There had been very few additional buildings since the eighteenth century.
 3. W.W.M. A 1204. Inventory of household goods, 1782. The rooms include such as the winter bedchamber, summer bedchamber, Lord Rockingham's guncloset, Bedlam and pickle closet.
 4. R.B. Wragg, 'The Scagliola Craftsman', Country Life (10th October 1957), 718-721. Scagliola is a kind of artificial marble plaster-work produced from gypsum and glue with a surface of marble dust. Clerici was employed by the architect John Carr at Thoresby Hall. Clerici was paid a guinea a week by Rockingham and was employed by him for almost twenty years. Besides making the great saloon's floor he also made chimney pieces, pedestals and tables for the mansion. In 1774 he moved to Rockingham's house in Grosvenor Square to work on the interior decoration there.



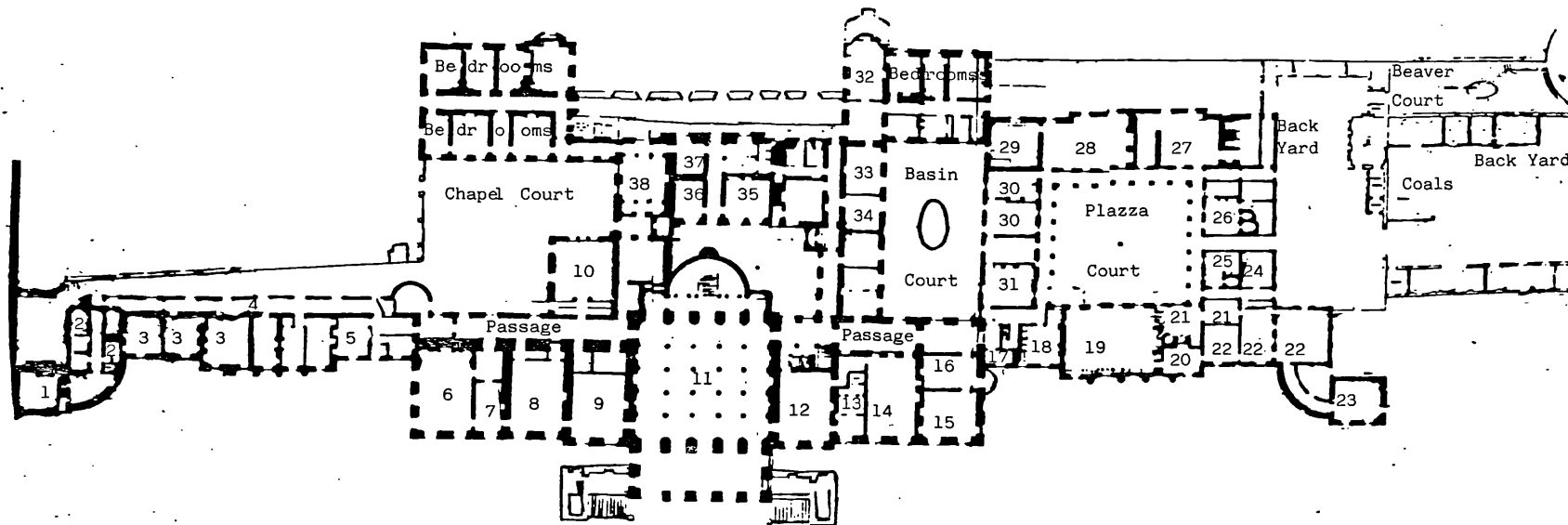
rooms there were the family apartments, situated on the ground floor. These were much smaller and were used by the family for everyday living. They were still beautifully decorated and all the furniture was made by Chippendale craftsmen.¹ The floor plans [overleaf] give some idea of the extent of the mansion.²

Such a house needed an army of staff working there so that it could function properly. In February 1753, fifty-four servants were given money from the estate of the late first marquis. Of those, thirty-four were house servants, seven worked on the home farms or estates and thirteen were stable staff of some description.³ The amounts they received varied from fifteen guineas [the housekeeper], thirteen guineas [the confectioner], to £2 each for the gamekeepers. Between them the servants received a total of £253.1s.0d. By 1766 there were thirty-nine household servants;⁴ in 1767 the number had risen to eighty-eight;⁵ by 1773 the marquis employed a total of ninety-seven household staff.⁶

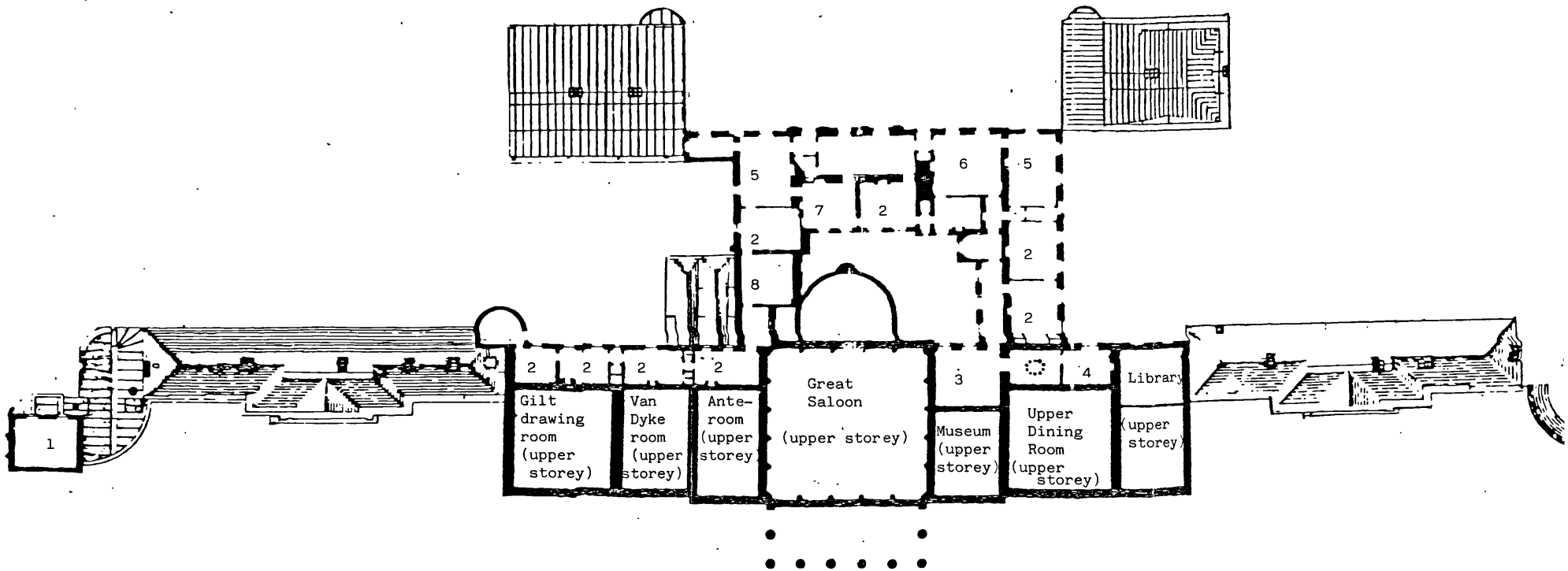
All the domestic staff were provided with liveries, and some of the estates staff were also given clothing. Part of a gamekeeper's wages was a complete set of clothes but Rockingham also provided suits for his huntsman, the 'poest [sic] boy', the 'Ruff Rider' [horsebreaker] and dog-feeder. Some members of his outdoor staff were given buckskin

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1. I am grateful to Mr. Beresford of Sheffield City Polytechnic for a guided tour of the Polytechnic's part of the mansion and for the information with which he supplied me.
 2. I am grateful to the Wentworth Estates Office and particularly to Mrs. Pelly for their help and kindness in supplying me with many details of the house and for the ground plans. I am grateful also to Mrs. C. Yates and Mrs. P. Keenan for reducing the plans for my use. The plans are dated 1829 but the house had changed little since the 1740's, although some rooms have different names.
 3. W.W.M. R186-46. List of staff and bequests, 3rd February 1753.
 4. W.W.M. R186-19. List of the family at Wentworth, 22nd March 1766.
 5. W.W.M. R2A-39. List of servants, 31st October 1767.
 6. W.W.M. A 1100.

PLAN OF THE GROUND FLOOR



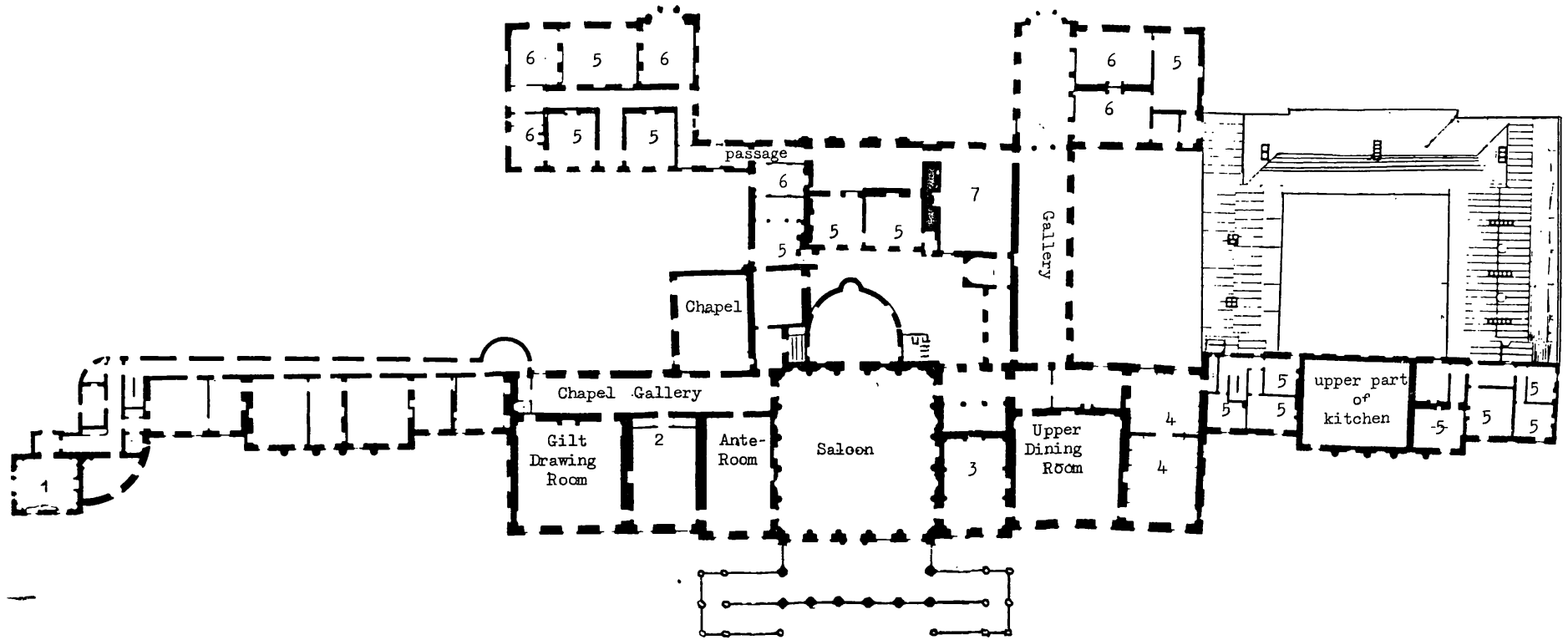
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|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Men's room | 14. Servants' hall | 27. Brewhouse |
| 2. Coals | 15. Steward's room | 28. Laundry |
| 3. Men's bedroom | 16. Porter's hall | 29. Wash house |
| 4. Bedlam passage | 17. Pickle closet | 30. Dairy |
| 5. Office | 18. Confectioner's room | 31. Housekeeper's room |
| 6. Low dining room | 19. Kitchen | 32. Upholsterer's room |
| 7. Waiting room | 20. Pastry | 33. Capt. Buck's room |
| 8. Painted drawing room | 21. Scullery | 34. Steward of the Chamber's bedroom |
| 9. Ante-room | 22. Larder | 35. Porter's bedroom |
| 10. Chapel | 23. Stores | 36. Valet's room |
| 11. Pillared hall | 24. Gloryhole | 37. Shell room |
| 12. Butler's pantry | 25. Still | 38. Billiard room |
| 13. Butler's quarters | 26. Bakehouse | |



PLAN OF THE MEZZANINE FLOOR

1. Vane Room
2. Bedroom
3. Pantry Staircase
4. Pet-room
5. Dressing room
6. Sitting room
7. Nursery
8. Oak staircase

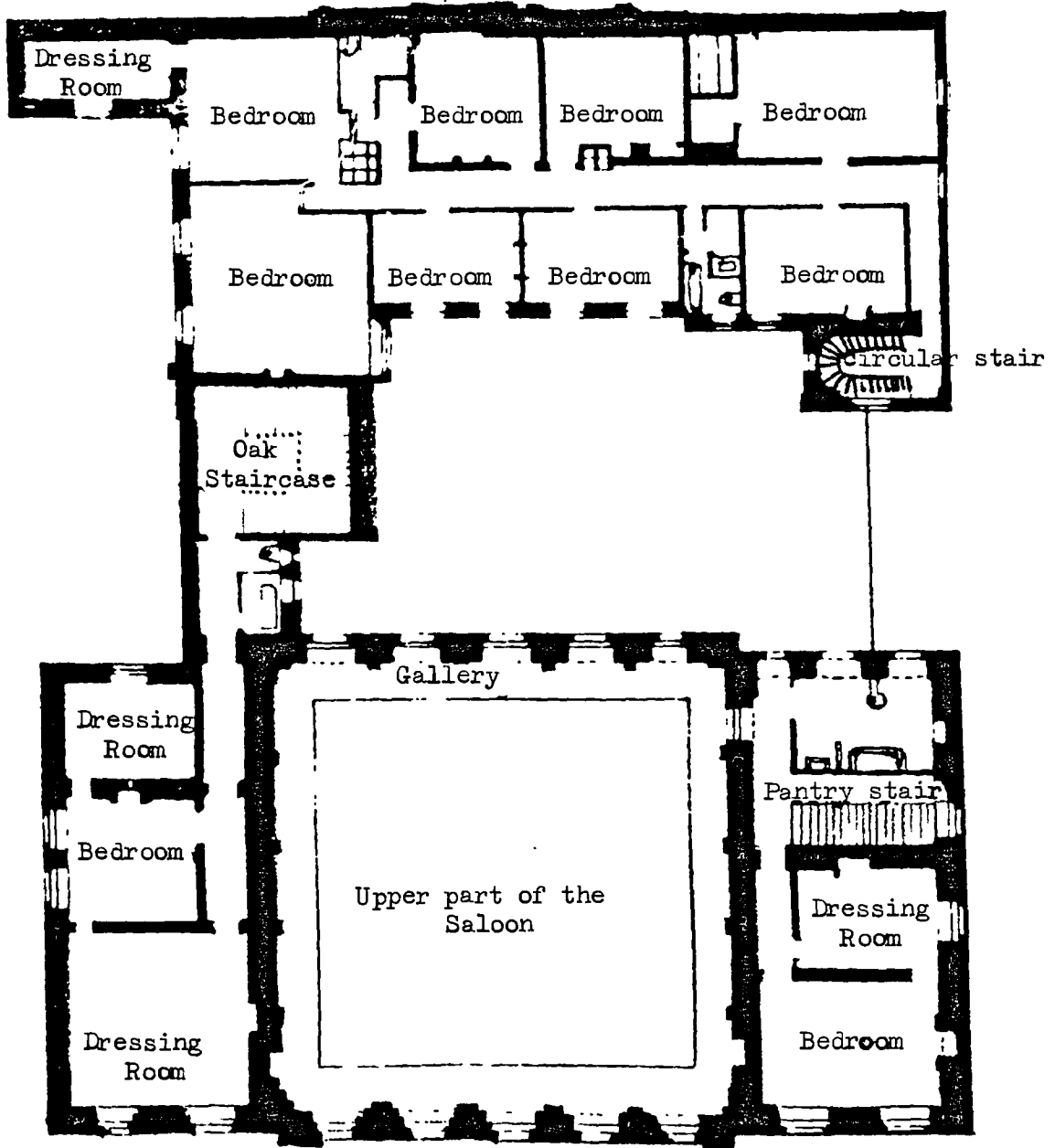
Plan of the Principal Floor



- 1. Tower Room
- 2. Vandyke Drawing Room
- 3. Museum
- 4. Library

- 5. Bedroom
- 6. Dressing Room
- 7. Breakfast Room

Plan of the Supplementary Floor



breeches at a guinea a pair and boots at 18s. a pair.¹ The male house staff had 'Scarlott Wastecoats' [sic] and breeches, thread and silk stockings at 5s. and 15s. a pair respectively and each had a livery coat, frock coat and great coat besides livery hats, frock hats and velvet caps. Each livery had eight yards of velvet lace costing 10s. and sixteen yards of silver lace costing £1. One suit of livery cost £3. 13s. 6½d. and was made up of 3¾ yards of drab-cloth [a] thick, strong grey woollen fabric⁷, 4½ yards of grey shalloon [a] light woollen material for coat linings⁷, 1¼ yards of yellow cloth, 2½ yards of white shalloon and one yard of yellow shalloon. The twenty-two yards of lace were added as were twenty-four coat buttons and thirty two breast buttons.² If one works on a nominal sum of £4. 10s. 0d. per servant for clothes, stockings, shoes and headwear, and an arbitrary figure of fifty male servants the marquis would have paid £225 for clothing in an average year: on top of that was the cost of having the clothes made. Between May 1772 and February 1773 he bought a considerable quantity of cloth from his friends and political allies the Milnes of Wakefield. This included 105 yards of yellow cloth at 8s. 6d. per yard, 60¼ yards of great coat cloth at 9s. per yard and 224 yards of livery cloth also at 9s. per yard. These alone cost a total of £172. 10s. 9d. He also bought ten pieces of shalloon and twenty pieces of livery cloth but unfortunately there is no available price per piece.³

All the resident staff were fed at the expense of the marquis who had records kept of the amounts of food consumed. In 1763, 12 English and 81 Scots beef cattle were slaughtered as were 286 sheep, 14 porkers, 13 bacon hogs, 13 calves, 9 lambs and 2 bulls. The total weight of

1. W.W.M. R186-51. Cloth for servants' liveries.

2. W.W.M. A 1380. Memo by Rockingham of the cost of one livery.

3. W.W.M. R186-51. Cloth for servants' liveries.

butchered meat was twenty-seven tons; in 1764 it was almost thirty tons.¹

In January 1772 some ninety-two servants were provided with food at the marquis' expense as part of their salary: sixty-seven at Wentworth and twenty-five in London.² By 1773 the number at Wentworth had been reduced to thirty-two during the clean sweep of untrustworthy staff.³ This reduction must have had a quite large effect on the size of food bills besides cutting the amount of wages considerably.

Those who were provided for in the steward's room included Doctor Bourne the surgeon, Mr. Dixon the chaplain and John Thesiger the marquis' valet, apart from the steward himself.⁴ It is not surprising that Rockingham provided for Dr. Bourne in view of his ill-health and the fact that Bourne had been treating him as early as 1741.⁵ He appears to have been the resident doctor at Wentworth Woodhouse although the servants were treated by Dr. Simpson⁶ and were looked after and/or laid out by Sarah Womack who was more usually employed as a laundry maid after 1772.⁷ Prior to that she supplied eggs to the house.⁸

The marquis was conscious of the high costs of running the house and in May 1770 demanded that William Martin the steward should do more to keep costs to a minimum. Martin replied on 24th May that he was unable to comply since Rockingham let his servants get away with too much and that he should make sure that orders for goods went only through Martin since 'there are some people who would not scruple sending in

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1. W.W.M. A 1452. Meat butchered.
 2. W.W.M. A 1380. List of servants fed at the marquis' expense.
 3. W.W.M. A 1530. List of Wentworth staff fed at the marquis' expense.
 4. W.W.M. R186-19. and A 1380. Servants' wages 1766 and 1772.
 5. W.W.M. M7-55. Lady to Lord Malton, 1st September 1741.
 6. W.W.M. R186-24. William Martin to Rockingham, 25th November 1767.
 7. W.W.M. A 1100 and A 5.
 8. W.W.M. A 234. Account for eggs for the year: £6. 5s. 0d.

Twenty Pounds worth of goods, upon the orders of a Stable Boy'.¹ The whole issue exploded over a bill of more than £390 for the refilling and cleaning of beds, of which feathers accounted for £200. Martin went on to show how the marquis was being fleeced by his servants by using William Smith the joiner as an example. Smith was allowed to buy the wood he needed for a job himself and had estimated it at £59. The actual cost of the wood was £117. 18s. 8½d. but Smith had been allowed to get away with underestimating - or buying more than he needed. 'If your Lordship suffers such things to escape without notice and a reprimand; what I say to them will be of little use and my service to your Lordship of very little significance' because people were extending 'small jobs to great pieces of Work with very little Authority'.² It seems, judging from the lists of servants, that the marquis then began to watch his servants closely. In 1773 there was a big change in the staff.³ William Martin had retired at the end of 1771 and had been replaced by Benjamin Hall at the start of 1772. Of the seventy-eight resident staff employed at Wentworth Woodhouse in 1773 only forty-six had been there in 1771 and some of them were subsequently replaced, such as the head store-room maid Sarah Jackson and the housekeeper Mrs. Broughton.

The first marquis' housekeeper was Mrs. Hannah Jennet. She still held the post in 1768 at exactly the same annual salary of £30⁴ but after 1766 she was assisted by Elizabeth Broughton.⁵ In 1771 Mrs. Broughton is listed as the housekeeper with Mary Evans as her assistant⁶

1. W.W.M. A 1100 and A 1101.

2. W.W.M. R187-14. William Martin to Rockingham, 24th May 1770.

3. W.W.M. A 1100'. List of servants.

4. W.W.M. R186-46. and 35b..

5. W.W.M. R186-35b. Wages due on 24th June 1768.

6. W.W.M. A 1099.

but by July 1773 Mrs. Broughton had been replaced. When she became housekeeper she would have been totally responsible for the stores, linen, servants and the running of the household. On 25th February 1773 Mrs. Broughton married Edward William Townley by licence at Wentworth parish church.¹ Two months later the Rockinghams were considering removing her unless she changed her ways.

Benjamin Hall had had a difficult time in trying to establish his authority over the servants at Wentworth. Even the marquis sympathised with his position and hoped that gradually the servants would get into 'a more regular Course of attention to their respective employments, than they have been used to ... & then it will be easier afterwards for you'.² Hall had written to the Rockinghams about 'great irregularities' and had enclosed comparative accounts for six months' consumption at Wentworth: they were 'amazed & most agreeably surprised' at the figures, which had fallen substantially in the second quarter. They had agreed to remove the 'grand obstacle' [Mrs. Townley] and were pleased with Hall's 'reformatations' although Lady Rockingham wanted the changes brought about 'in a right way' because she believed that the 'best Ends are never to be obtain'd by the wrong Means'. She was 'sorry & surpriz'd ... about Betty Dixon [the farm governess] for I really thought she was amongst the very few strictly honest folk'.³ Hall was told to dismiss Mrs. Townley's maids forthwith, but out of kindness to have a word with 'poor Tom' about the conduct of Betty Hankin which made it necessary to sack her and suggesting that she should be placed in a 'lesser family with fewer fellow serv[an]ts & temptations' after which 'she might be

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1. Copy of Wentworth Parish Registers, held by Doncaster Archives Department. All housekeepers were addressed as 'Mrs.' whether they were married or not.
 2. W.W.M. Stewards' Papers 1-1. Rockingham to Hall, 10th March 1772.
 3. W.W.M. Stw. P. 2-6. Lady Rockingham to Hall, 15th June 1773.

more careful of her behaviour & do well'.¹ 'Poor Tom' was Thomas Hankin, the porter at Wentworth.²

By the end of June, 'upon fully considering The Behaviour of Mrs. Townly [sic]' Lord and Lady Rockingham 'are clearly of the opinion that she can not be continued as Housekeeper at Wentworth'. They were also dissatisfied with the behaviour of Mr. Townley their land surveyor and decided to sack him too.' He had been guilty of 'thinking so high of himself' which had 'occasioned many of the Improper Things which he may have said & the improper suggestions which he may have tried to inculcate into others.'³ Rockingham wanted his steward to make an inventory of the linen and stores left by Mrs. Townley: it seems that she had been diverting both sets of items to purposes other than use at Wentworth Woodhouse. In May 1773 Hall had already sacked 'Dolly' [Smith] a house maid whom Lady Rockingham had always thought to be 'a sad Trollop'.⁴ Her ladyship hoped that 'all things will come right' after the removal of the Townleys but she was more concerned about the linen. She did not know 'what will become of the laundry, for the last Maid I took [Sarah Womack] is very slow & I fear she will never do, the Linnen [sic] at Present is not at all managed as it should be'.⁵

The couple had already appointed another housekeeper who would begin work after Richard Fenton, their solicitor, had given notice to the Townleys. The housekeeper was to be Mrs. Croft, a widow with a two-year-old son. She held the post until after the marquis' death at the same salary as had been paid to Hannah Jennet thirty years before.⁶

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1. W.W.M. Stw. P. 2-6. Lady Rockingham to Hall, 15th June 1773.
 2. W.W.M. A 1380,
 3. W.W.M. Stw. P. 1-17. Rockingham to Hall, 29th June 1773.
 4. W.W.M. Stw. P. 2-5. Lady Rockingham to Hall, 22nd May 1773.
 5. Ibid.
 6. W.W.M. A 1100.

A further eight servants were dismissed during the course of 1773. One was the coal carrier Thomas Swift who had begun that job only in January 1772. The others were two kitchen maids, a housemaid, Sarah Cooper the baker, Richard Beaumont the usher in the hall, Thomas Wigfield the lobby waiter, and one of the stable assistants. All were in a position to divert goods from the house and make a profit for themselves at Rockingham's expense. They were the ones who were caught by the 'new broom', Benjamin Hall. The frauds must have been going on for a long time either unknown to the previous steward or with his acquiescence. It may be that such activities were seen as part of the perquisites of working somewhere like Wentworth.

Lady Rockingham's footmen were also involved in some untoward activities. The marquis had told his wife that she had 'no right to order the discharge of these Maids while I continue Robert [Needham] in my service, & there in some truth in that'.¹ What he had done remains a mystery, but by the end of June 1775 she had dismissed the other footman, William Bruce. He had been 'behaving strangely': he had taken to staying out all night and to frequenting alehouses. William claimed to have married Thompson, another servant, in January, but then he ran off with a juggler. The marchioness wanted to know if Thompson was 'so great & so unfortunate a fool as to be really married to this poor, idleheaded, good for nothing Creature'.² If she really had married him, she had no means of a second start. Divorce was only for the rich.

The marquis was not very prompt at paying his servants' wages. Sometimes they were paid for two years at a time, in arrears. The domestic servants suffered worst in this respect, since their pay was

1. W.W.M. Stw. P. 2-6. Lady Rockingham to Hall, 15th June 1773.
2. W.W.M. Stw. P. 2-14. Lady Rockingham to Hall, 1st July 1775.

not high to begin with. Housemaids received £5 p.a. and kitchen maids £4. 10s. 0d. This must be compared with, for instance, the molecatcher [£5. 5s. 0d. p.a.], stableboys [£5 p.a.], and the pheasant-keeper [£12 p.a.] although the outdoor staff did not receive board and lodging as part of their wages. The wages bill for 1768 came to £592. 4s. 6d. which included payments for two years in many cases, but was a vast reduction on the wages bill for 1766 which had come to £1062. 7s. 4d.¹

Lord Rockingham took upon himself the responsibility of looking after his staff as and when they were in need. In December 1773 he paid ten guineas to William Poles the poor guardian to indemnify a servant, Joseph Cattanie, 'from a Bastard Child born in the township of Wentworth'² and he paid for the nursing of sick servants. If necessary he met their funeral costs too. In 1773 Hannah Smith was paid 6s. for nursing Thomas Palmer, a groom, for twelve days. His shroud cost a further 6s.³ Sarah Womack, the wife of George Womack, a waiter in the house, supplemented their income by nursing the sick.⁴ When Thomas Hobson's apprentice lost thirteen days 'from a misfortune in slipping down and breaking his arm when at Work in the Kitchen' the marquis paid Hobson 19s.⁵ Benjamin Burgon the upholsterer was 'allowed by his Lordship towards Boarding out & Care Taking of his Wife who is & has been for some Time Disorder'd in her Senses £2. 10s. 0d.'⁶ and the cost of Sarah Murphy's wedding [£6. 17s. 6d.] was met by Rockingham.⁷ While this might seem to be a good example of paternalism at work, it must be pointed out that the same accounts show payments of £9 and £17. 12s. 0d.

1. W.W.M. R183-35b and A 1099.

2. W.W.M. A 1100.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Doncaster Diocesan Records, P55/6/B5/41. The Womacks had moved from Thurlston in February 1742/3 with their four children.

5. W.W.M. A 1100.

6. W.W.M. A 1002. 30th April 1778.

7. W.W.M. A 1001. 27th March 1774.

being made respectively to John Hutton for 'Pine Apple Plants' and to Mr. Foxley for 'exotick [sic] plants'.¹ It might be said, however, that there was no obligation on the part of the marquis to provide any financial assistance to any of his staff other than their wages and what money he did provide was purely voluntary.

In January 1766 Robert Goodey fell ill and died: the marquis' accounts show that he paid 18s. 6d. for nursing and funeral expenses.² The sum was obviously unimportant to a man of his wealth but was a large amount for a workman or his family. In 1757 when there was a food shortage the marquis provided grain but apparently insufficient since his agent at Ecclesall reported that the people there 'seem to expect something more from you towards buying Corn for the Relief of the poor Inhabitants there. If your Lord[shi]p pleases I will make up w[ha]t I have already given them on your Acc[oun]t 10 Guineas'.³ Again, to the marquis the amount was small but to the poor it meant the difference between food and hunger: that they expected more is indicative that he was the person to whom they naturally looked to provide charity in times of need. The other side of the coin is, of course, the amounts which Lord and Lady Rockingham spent on themselves. In November 1768 Rockingham sent his wife £50 with a note saying that she had thrown away 'an opportunity of having £100 for if you had wrote for that or more on the Idea that you could not return without it, I must have sent it'.⁴ Larger sums of money were sent by two posts: the notes were torn in half to prevent thieves being able to make use of them. Once both halves of the notes had arrived they were changed for cash in Sheffield.⁵ The

1. W.W.M. A 1001. 27th March 1774.

2. W.W.M. R186-3. January 1766.

3. W.W.M. R184. Battie to Rockingham, 2nd March 1757.

4. W.W.M. R156-17. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 29th November 1768.

5. W.W.M. Stw. P. 1-3. Rockingham to Hall, 2nd April 1772.

marquis was equally generous to his friends. Colonel James Forrester, his companion on the Grand Tour, fell ill in 1761 and it was recommended that he went to the south of France which he could not afford to do. The marquis offered to pay his expenses and begged him 'not to be Scrupulous'.¹ Eventually Forrester went to Bristol at the marquis' expense and in November 1764 had arrived in Toulouse² where he later died.

The marquis and marchioness became personally involved in the affairs and concerns of their tenants. Two undated letters from Lady Rockingham to her husband show this very clearly, and also show that the driving force behind their concern was founded on Christian beliefs. In one letter it seems that 'young Evans' had died and his mother - possibly the assistant housekeeper - was unaware of it. Lady Rockingham sympathised with the mother and felt that she must 'say and do everything kind and comfortable towards her, for let people have never so many faults when they are oppress'd by affliction, humanity and Christianity prompts one to give all the comfort one can'.³ The marchioness does not seem to have liked Mrs. Evans much. She did like Captain Newton who lived near Wentworth and who was dying: he had sent her a dog and a dove. In return she urged Rockingham to visit Newton before he died and if possible to move him to somewhere more comfortable. The letter concluded by Lady Rockingham saying that no doubt the marquis had already called and done whatever he could,⁴ a comment which shows that concern came naturally to them both. In 1770 Adam West of Street Farm was dying: William Martin the estate agent thought it was 'exceeding kind of your Lordship to consider West in the manner you do ... he has a great family

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1. W.W.M. R1-204. Rockingham to Forrester, October 1761.
 2. W.W.M. R143-4. Forrester to Rockingham, 4th November 1764.
 3. W.W.M. R168-42. Lady to Lord Rockingham, undated.
 4. W.W.M. R168-52. Lady to Lord Rockingham, undated.

[of six small children] so that any kindness your Lordship may chuse [sic] to render him, will be a great act of Charity'.¹ Although not specified, it seems that Rockingham did not remove the family from the farm and in 1773 he was paying an annuity to Edmund West of Greasborough Park.² Perhaps the most telling letter - again undated - is one in which Lady Rockingham gave vent to her feelings at the news that Lord Grosvenor had lost £26,000 on one bet.

Monstrous indeed! quite [sic] wicked in my opinion, so to rob the fatherless and poor, & even his own family; It is frightful to think what an acc[oun]t of our Stewardship we shall have to make at the Great Day, for I fear none can say that they strictly fulfil the Divine Will, in the Gifts he so bounteously bestows. 3

Two men employed initially by the first marquis and retained by the second Marquis of Rockingham became successful in their own right. Dominicus Negri, the confectioner to the first marquis, kept Rockingham's accounts for a visit to Tonbridge Wells in 1754 and apparently accompanied him. He was also responsible for settling the bills, which was completed within a month of the visit's end.⁴ Negri ceased to appear on the servants' lists but in 1762 the Marquis of Rockingham's London expenses included payments to a confectioner called Negri.⁵ The name is too unusual for there to be no connection, and by 1775 there was a D. Negri & Co., Confectioners, in London. The firm was used by Rockingham from 1762 until 1782.

William Malpass, a mere Usher of the Hall in 1753 also made good.⁶ In June 1760 Rockingham's accounts show a payment of £2. 13s. 1d. to Malpass for tiles and lime as part of the marquis' land improvement

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1. W.W.M. R187-20. Martin to Rockingham, 23rd July 1770.
 2. W.W.M. A 1100.
 3. W.W.M. R168-9. Lady to Lord Rockingham, undated.
 4. W.W.M. A 1093. Negri's accounts, 19th June to 16th August 1754.
 5. W.W.M. A 1298. London Expenses, 1762.
 6. W.W. . R186-46. 3rd February 1753.

programme.¹ Malpass took over Edward Butler's Swinton pottery in 1763. This was situated on land rented from Rockingham and it produced household pottery which was exported to Europe and America.² Rockingham patronised the establishment which extended its range of wares as finer clays were discovered and exploited. In 1776, for example, the company sent an account for six one-pint purple bowls, six half-pint bowls, two yellow tureens and various other items³ and the 1782 inventory of 'Swinton Wares' shows that the pottery produced yellow, blue-and-white, brown, purple and 'coloured' goods.⁴ By then Malpass had left the pottery which had been taken over by John Brameld and Charles Bingley. This Swinton pottery eventually became the famous Rockingham Pottery, named in honour of the marquis.

Malpass received payments from the Wentworth estates for many and varied services. In February 1764 he was sent by Richard Fenton of Banktop⁵ to Rockingham with information about the Tinsley-to-Doncaster turnpike. Fenton wrote of Malpass as an inn-holder of Kilnhurst.⁶ In March Malpass was sent by Rockingham to enquire into the cost of brick making. At Newport he pretended he was a buyer and then went to Higham Ferrers where he dug for brick-making clay. It seems that the marquis wanted to produce his own bricks and pantiles and Malpass was experienced in making both whereas estates employees at Higham Ferrers were not. Malpass offered to go to Higham 'when the Brick [sic] are Ready to be Burnt and take a Man along with me'⁷ but thought it would be cheaper for

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1. W.W.M. A 234. Accounts 1st June to 1st July 1760.
 2. M.E. Happs, 'Rockingham and its neighbouring potteries 1745-c. 1914' (undergraduate dissertation, Merton College, Oxford, 1969), p. 14. Original with author.
 3. A.A. Eaglestone and T.A. Lockett, The Rockingham Potteries (Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1964), pp. 10-11.
 4. W.W.M. A 1204.
 5. Richard Fenton was the Wentworth steward between 1755 and 1769.
 6. W.W.M. R1-403b. Fenton to Rockingham, 2nd February 1764.
 7. W.W.M. R1-416a. Malpass to Rockingham, 22nd March 1764.

the Higham clay to be sent to him at Kilnhurst via Hull so he could make the bricks and tiles locally.¹ Rockingham went on to estimate the cost of manufacture at both Higham and Swinton for himself. The cheapness of coal in Swinton made local production more viable.² It was typical of the Marquis' thoroughness to double-check any estimates for himself, rather than take the word of someone else.

Later the same year Malpass was selling lime to Rockingham and carting it from Kilnhurst to Wentworth;³ in 1765 he was involved in pottery,⁴ ale, carriage, and freight, coal carrying and wharfage.⁵ From being an usher in the hall, Malpass had gone a long way.

The maintenance of Wentworth Woodhouse was a perpetual expense for the marquis. The upholsterer Benjamin Burgon was paid £2. 0s. 6d. a month and Robert Poole a whitesmith and John White a cabinet maker each received £2. 14s. 0d. a month for their work in and around the house. John Salkeld was employed as a painter in the house and John Cooper worked as a carpenter.⁶ His services were clearly appreciated since he was given a guinea in November 1780 'for diligence and attention to his business'.⁷ John Salkeld was worked hard. He painted the house when the Rockinghams were away from Wentworth but Lady Rockingham was likely to change her mind about the decorations. In 1773 the Green Room next to the gallery had been decorated but she wished that the doors had been painted white 'but I fear if they were done now it would smell when we come ... therefore I believe the doors must remain as they are

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1. W.W.M. R1-416a. Malpass to Rockingham, 22nd March 1764.
 2. W.W.M. R1-416b. Rockingham's notes. Five chaldrons of coal at Higham would cost £9 but only 15s. at Swinton. This halved the cost of the bricks and pantiles.
 3. W.W.M. R174-4. July 1764.
 4. W.W.M. A 1381. Journal of purchases, 1765.
 5. W.W.M. R192-1. Accounts payments to Malpass.
 6. W.W.M. A 1001.
 7. W.W.M. A 11-2. Accounts 1780.

... except the Painter is quite sure of getting the Smell off in a fortnight or three weeks'.¹ In 1764 one John Smith was in full-time work carrying coals in the house from the beginning of January until 26th May, a job he also had done in October 1763.² Smith was on the staff from at least 1763 and was still there as late as 1773³ although in 1768 he was employed as the 'corn man' and was owed £7. 13s. 3d. by the marquis.⁴ Any coal carrier at Wentworth earned his money. In 1780 Burke 'could hardly help smiling at Lord Rockingham finding his fingers so cold in an house where nine hundred chaldrons of Coals are consumed annually & where a vast coalpit is within a quarter of a mile of him'.⁵ A chaldron weighed about 25½ cwt., so if Burke is not exaggerating the amount of coal used, the weekly consumption was twenty-two tons - carried by hand through the house. Obviously it was not all used in the state and private apartments. Andrew Speight took coal to the laundry every Friday in 1764:⁶ it was probably laundry day on Friday. Coal was also used in the bakehouse and brewhouse and it was turned into coal oil for pitch.⁷

In May each year the house cleaning began. Men were employed to remove rubbish from the house⁸ and William Eyre swept the chimneys for £2. The front of the house was cleaned and painted; the lamp-posts were serviced, cleaned and painted also. All the windows were cleaned - an unenviable job in a house that size - and the woodwork was painted. Any necessary plastering was done and the gutters were cleaned out. The

1. W.W.M. Stw. P. 2-6. Lady Rockingham to Hall, 15th June 1773.

2. W.W.M. A 1519.

3. Ibid. and A 1530.

4. W.W.M. R186-35b. Wages due, 24th June 1768.

5. W.W.M. R140-50. Burke to Lady Rockingham, 16th January 1780.

6. W.W.M. A 1519.

7. Ibid. Luke Smith boiled coal oil for pitch in January 1764.

8. Ibid. The following details are all for 1764 but each year was very similar. The staff changed periodically.

beds were cleaned and refilled¹ and the carpets were removed and beaten. The general impression is that while Lord and Lady Rockingham were away, the whole house was turned upside-down. The marquis' absence could be virtually guaranteed in May since the One Thousand and Two Thousand Guinea Classic races at Newmarket were run in the first week of the month, the first two Classic races of the season. It is possible that he might then have gone on to Chester for the Chester Cup and Chester Vase races but more likely he went to London for the closing of parliament which was usually in May or June.²

Interior decoration was a major expense at Wentworth. In 1763 three new rooms were to be fitted out. The wallpaper was blue and gold /at 1s. 3d. per yard7, the window curtains, bed and chairs were to be of blue silk and stuff damask. The borders were to be of gilt cord. Exclusive of putting up, the bill came to £133. 12s. 0d. Six globe glasses cost £9 and a 57" x 45" mirror was a further £45.³ The marquis also had a new 'Bathe Room' installed with a cold bath [10' x 8'] filled from the canal in the park and a hot bath [5' 6" x 8'] filled from the boiler in the brewhouse. The room measured 16' x 24'6" in all.⁴

Household Costs

The running expenses of the house varied considerably, depending on whether or not Lord and Lady Rockingham were in residence. The house-keeping bill for January to March 1766 was almost £400 but it was down to just £30 between March and June that year.⁵

Although the marquis had a huge income he had equally large over-

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1. W.W.M. R187-14.
 2. F.M. Powicke and E.B. Fryde (eds), Handbook of British Chronology (London, Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1961), pp. 541-542.
 3. W.W.M. R185-8. Order to Mr. Bromwich, 8th August 1763.
 4. W.W.M. R185-17. Rockingham's plans for the new bathroom.
 5. W.W.M. R2.

heads, some essential, others not so necessary but expected of such an important person. In 1751 the marquis' outgoings came to just over £2,265. The housekeeping expenses accounted for £575 and his twenty-first birthday party accounted for another £422. Stables and travelling ranked third at £314 followed by husbandry costs at £236. House repairs took up a further £231 and the remainder went in small amounts, apart from the garden expenses which came to £178. Land and window taxes and poor rates also made inroads into his £40,000 p.a., particularly when one considers that Wentworth Woodhouse is reckoned to have 365 windows. A sample of four years' taxation follows, although it was small in comparison to the marquis' total outlay each year.

Year	Taxes ¹	Total Expenses ²
1766	£152. 10s. 4d.	£10,368. 0s. 3 d.
1767	£246. 9s. 0d.	£10,832. 0s. 5 d.
1768	£158. 11s. 10d.	£10,737. 13s. 9 d.
1769	£100. 7s. 17d.	£ 8,427. 3s. 8½d.

These payments exclude the salaries of the domestic staff and the personal expenses of the marquis and marchioness. In the last quarter of 1765 the most expensive item was corn which cost over £553 followed by 'hounds &c Keeping' at £336. 2s. 0d.³ The third most expensive single item at £236. 10s. 1d. was his charities, closely followed by hay and straw for his horses at almost £232.

Besides the steward's accounts the Marquis of Rockingham kept accounts of his own, presumably as some kind of double check. He certainly went through the accounts with a fine tooth comb and knew exactly where his money came from and went to. An example of one of the marquis'

1. W.W.M. R192. Taxes and poor rates.

2. Ibid. Total outlay.

3. Ibid.

personal accounts for the period September 1756 to August 1757 is given to show how his money was spent. The list has been arranged to prioritise the items according to cost.¹

	£.	s.	d.
servants' liveries	755	6	5
travelling expenses	644	6	5½
house expenses	554	0	5
servants wages	376	16	1
wine, brandy rum & cyder <u>[sic]</u>	279	14	9
physic & surgery	121	12	8
furniture	81	8	0
stables	72	11	11
equipage	59	28	6
annuities	25	0	0
charities	22	15	0
payments to myself (official)	21	0	0
gardens	20	13	8
books and stationery	7	9	8
Lady Rockingham	5	5	0
	<hr/>		
	3,037	17	8½
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Each year the marquis paid out £5,680 in annuities or interest on loans. His three sisters each received £600 and his aunt Bell [Lady Isabella Finch] received £360. Charles Yorke was paid £2,000 as interest on £55,000; Henry Finch received £80 and Lord Mansfield's loan of £18,000 fetched £720. It is one of the accounts which Rockingham kept himself and took a sizeable piece out of his income.²

Another unnecessary but expected item of expenditure was charity payments. The marquis maintained the hospital built by his father, schools and other good causes and was generous to the needy when he passed by them. These charities took their toll on his income because they were an annual outlay. Between May 1772 and February 1773 the Marquis of Rockingham bought twenty pieces of 'charity cloth'.³ This

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1. W.W.M. unnumbered bundle following R170/R175, September 1756 to August 1757.
 2. W.W.M. A 1097.
 3. W.W.M. R186-51. Cloth for servants' liveries.

was to provide clothes for the residents at the charity schools or Barrow Hospital which he supported. The marquis maintained schools at Barrow, Greasborough, Hoyland, Hooton Roberts, Swinton and Wath which accommodated a total of 129 children, and the almshouses at Barrow which accommodated twelve pensioners. In 1761 clothing the children cost about £70 and the schoolmasters' salaries totalled £29. 10s. 0d. p.a.¹ By 1772 the cost of maintaining the schools had risen to over £155 p.a.² Each year Rockingham gave a St. Thomas' Day dole to the poor of 6d. each.³ It varied annually: in 1752 there were 707 recipients; in 1759 there were 901; in 1763 the number had risen to 1,110.⁴ He also made a habit of giving Christmas boxes to the colliers working in his pits at Carr House, Parkgate, Lowwood, Elsecar, Westwood, Swinton Common and Cortwood.⁵ Besides these regular payments one can find the marquis giving money 'to a blind boy at York'⁶; to prisoners at York Castle; £3. 3s. 0d. to 'a poor woman at the door'.⁷ In August 1758 he gave £8. 9s. 6d. to various York charities besides £9. 3s. 6d. to individuals or groups of poor persons.⁸ He also gave twenty guineas annually to the hospital and lunatic asylum in York.⁹ It is noticeable that his York charities benefited most around the week of the races.

The account books show that Rockingham regularly gave money to charitable causes, paid quarterly. Although the totals vary the amounts were quite substantial in terms of real money.¹⁰

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1. W.W.M. A 234.
 2. W.W.M. A 1380.
 3. 29th December.
 4. W.W.M. A 223, A 234 and A 239.
 5. W.W.M. A 223 and A 234.
 6. W.W.M. A 1096. 23rd August 1758.
 7. W.W.M. A 997. 28th August 1758.
 8. Ibid.
 9. W.W.M. A 1001. 27th March 1774.
 10. W.W.M. R192. Charity payments.

1766 - £178. 13s. 0d.
1767 - £183. 2s. 10d.
1768 - £291. 18s. 10d.
1769 - £185. 16s. 1d.

He also made several payments to men who had been in the Yorkshire militia or who had joined Napier's Regiment during the Seven Years' War. He had promised a bounty of a guinea to every recruit who enlisted and £5 at the end of the seven years' service. Consequently in 1763-64 the estates accounts show a payment of £40 to James Stovin of Doncaster 'for eight men', £2. 2s. 0d. to a soldier's widow and £30 to Mr. Stevenson of Hull to reimburse him for payments made on behalf of Rockingham and Savile to six men of Napier's Regiment. In 1764 Thomas Lee of Leeds received £87. 6s. 0d. to give to 'soldiers of Napier's Regiment', Stovin was sent £15. 10s. 0d. for 'one man and 5 widows' and Mr. Roebuck was paid £112. 14s. 0d. for 'soldiers and Widows': in all, a cost of £257. 12s. 0d. which made good the promise he had given in 1756.¹

Rockingham found 'so much real private business & so much amusement in riding about inspecting farming & other occupations'² that at times he had little inclination towards politics especially if he was also kept busy entertaining visitors which he enjoyed doing. In September 1768 Lady Rockingham was ill with 'low fever' and had been confined to bed for ten days. In spite of that there had been 'on average about 9 Ladies at a Time in the House and about a dozen Gentlemen' including Lord and Lady Spencer, William Murray, Lady Catherine Murray and Archbishop Hay. The marquis was pleased that 'none have caught the Fever' especially since some people in the neighbourhood had died of it.³

1. W.W.M. A 240.

2. Hoffman, The Marquis, p. 176. Rockingham to Dartmouth, 15th August 1767.

3. PwF 9009 and 9010. Rockingham to Portland, 12th September 1768.

The guests enjoyed the lavish hospitality at Wentworth in which drink played its part. In 1754 the cellar was stocked with twenty-nine different wines. Rockingham seems to have enjoyed a drink; an example of the state of the cellars indicates the quantities his lordship and friends managed to consume.¹

	1754	1755	1756	1757	13-8 1758	14-8 1758
claret	1214	1148	1374	1296	542	914
red port	279	113	78	461	94	257
brandy	110	198	175	77	32	45
White Lisbon	283	336	175	195	-	167
Rhenish	304	392	272	239	-	62
champagne	262	114	153	143	60	77
rum	184	260	222	170	88	119

Apparently the cellar was replenished on 14th August 1758 since all the totals increase from the previous day. Rockingham also had sufficient containers for almost every drink conceivable, from twelve water glasses to claret, burgundy and sherry decanters. He had eleven port decanters and eight champagne decanters, thirty-one champagne glasses but only three beer glasses.² The odd numbers probably are a result of breakages.

The Park and Gardens

The park at Wentworth Woodhouse extended over some 2,000 acres. Some of it was a deer park; some was given over to the house, stables and gardens. The whole area around the house was landscaped so that 'which way soever you approach, very magnificent woods, spreading waters and elegant temples break upon the eye at every angle'.³ One such temple was that built on Temple Hill; a circular mock Doric folly erected once the hill had been levelled. It would seem that Rockingham wanted

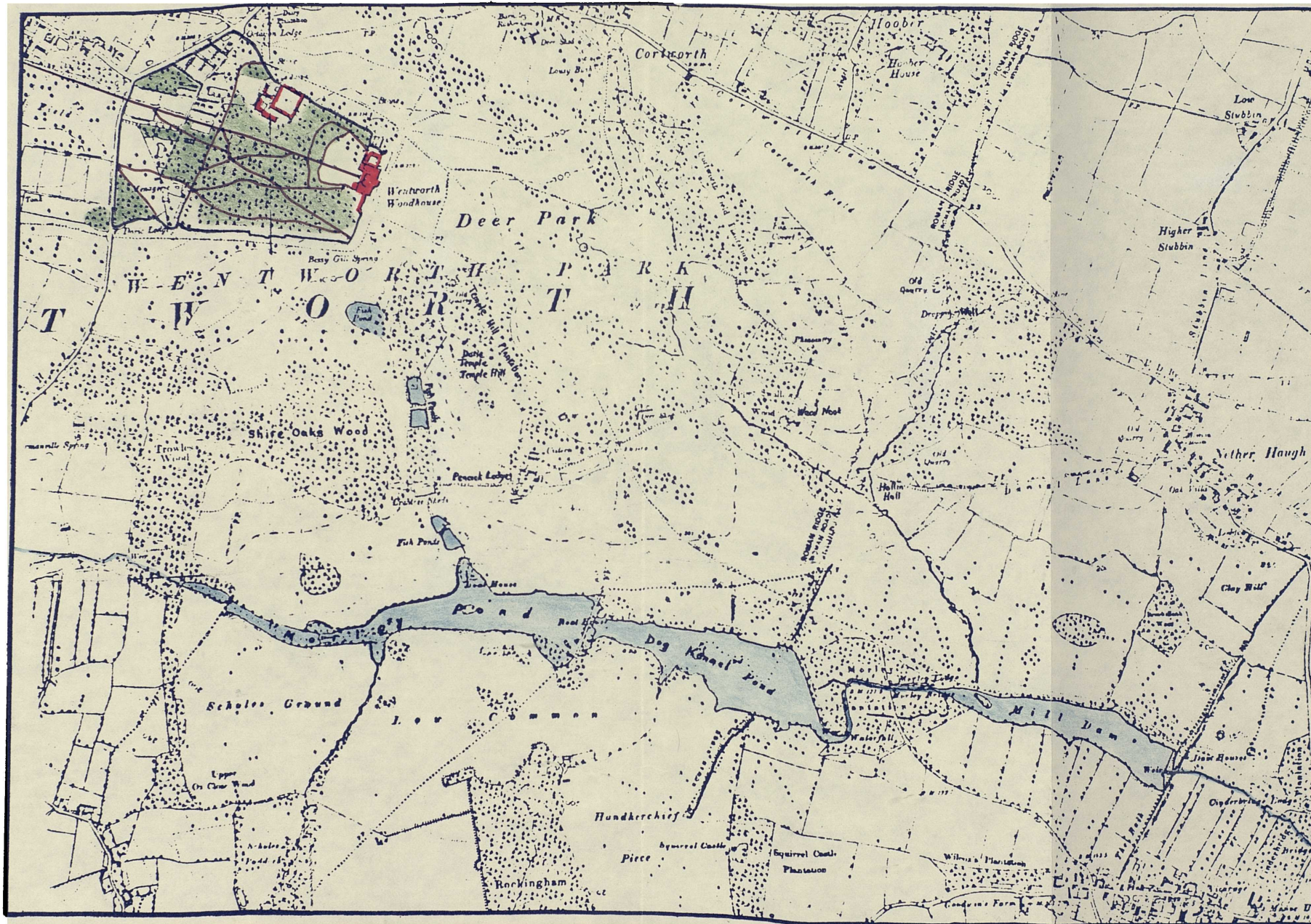
1. W.W.M. A 1385. Wine Book.
 2. W.W.M. A 1204. Glassware in the butler's pantry.
 3. Arthur Young, Northern Tour, 1, 294.

the house to be revealed after a bend in the road but to do so he had to have a large part of the hill cut away because it 'projected too much before the front of the house'.¹ The work was the responsibility of Saintforth Wroe, the resident Surveyor of Works who had charge of fifty-six men,² and who was paid £35 p.a. The bills for levelling the hill first appear in the July-September 1765 accounts at £50, rising to £373. 12s. 3½d. in 1769. When Young visited Wentworth in 1770 he noted that 140,000 square yards of earth had been removed but the work was incomplete.³ The account was still being paid in June 1782 and by then totalled £2,706. 11s. 5¾d.⁴ It was indeed 'an immense work' as Young said, although he perhaps put it a little too strongly when he added 'which required the spirit of a Rockingham to undertake',⁵ since most other noblemen were having their estates landscaped at that time and levelling a hill was almost easy if compared to the gravity-feed waterfall and fountain at Chatsworth, for instance.

The 'spreading waters' in the park are now referred to as the 'Greasborough dams'. These dams were part of the second Marquis of Rockingham's landscaping and eventually provided the water supply for the canal he had constructed to link his lands with the Don Navigation. The names of the ponds have remained unchanged over two hundred years. The map [overleaf] shows their situation. In 1760 work was being carried out at Morley Pond which included dressing bricks.⁶ At the east end of the pond a dam wall and weir were constructed with stone slabs being laid into the pond to a depth of over twelve feet. Fish ponds were

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1. Arthur Young, Northern Tour, 1, 300-301.
 2. W.W.M. A 1380. There were twenty masons, five joiners, thirteen carpenters and eighteen labourers.
 3. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 300-301.
 4. W.W.M. A1-22.
 5. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 300-301.
 6. W.W.M. A 234.

WENTWORTH WOODHOUSE - THE GARDENS, PONDS AND DEER PARK



also made for the marquis, to add interest to the gardens.

One area of craftsmanship which thrived at Wentworth was that of the stonemasons who built the stables for the Marquis of Rockingham. They were a monument in themselves but the men also built the Doric Temple on Temple Hill, the Needle's Eye monument at Coaley Lane,¹ Keppel's Column in Scholes Coppice and a mysterious obelisk which was built in the south west corner of Scholes Spring, but no longer exists. In 1773 John Hobson provided an estimate of £90. 16s. 11d. for 'the Mason Work on the Pedestal & Obelisk intended to be built'.² The obelisk was to be taken from the garden and was to be set on a fifty feet high pedestal which was to have sixty winding steps to a platform at the base of the obelisk itself. The marquis produced his own drawing for the monument which would have stood eighty-five feet when completed since the obelisk was forty-five feet tall.³ The work had begun by November 1773 because payments were being made to Hobson & Co., Masons 'on account of the Obelisk' from then until May 1780,⁴ and it was originally built in Scholes Spring, or Coppice. However, in 1778 Keppel's Column was built there: it is the wrong height, shape and date to be the same construction so the marquis must have had the original obelisk moved again. At Birdwell, the estates of Rockingham and the Straffords of Wentworth Castle meet and a forty-five feet high obelisk marks the boundary of their lands. It is almost identical to the marquis' drawing although it does not stand on the tall plinth and the existing base is obviously a second-rate affair. It does meet the specifications of

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1. This monument was supposedly built as a result of the marquis betting he could drive a coach and four through the eye of a needle. In fact it was intended to mark the northern entrance to the estate down a straight road through Rainborough Park and Lee Wood. The project was never completed.
 2. W.W.M. A 1380 and Stw. P. 1-16. Rockingham to Hall, 18th May 1773.
 3. W.W.M. A 1509. Loose sheet in the book.
 4. W.W.M. A 1100.

being 'hammer scapled' and it is possible that the Birdwell obelisk erected in 1775 might well be the missing landmark of Scholes.¹ Keppel's Column was built to commemorate Admiral Keppel's acquittal at his court-martial in 1778. It was dedicated in 1780 to 'Naval Honour and Naval Integrity'. It took several years to complete and on 2nd October 1780 the marquis held a party at which 'we shall fire some Cannon and drink some Ale at the Christening of a large Column'.² The column is still a local landmark, sadly now neglected and delapidated like all the other monuments on the estate, including Rockingham's mausoleum built by his nephew and heir the Earl Fitzwilliam.

The gardens received a great deal of attention and time. The gardener was paid £30 p.a.³ - the same as the housekeeper - and twenty-four labourers were employed at a cost of over £20 per month.⁴ As might be expected, part of the kitchen garden was given over to herbs: in May 1753 chervil, parsley and basil seeds were sown. At the same time the marquis bought '200 Collyflower Plants at 6d' and '400 Collyflower Plants at 6d'. Between 2nd May and 4th June a total of 447 cauliflowers and 108 cucumber plants had been bought at a cost of £2. 15s. 4½d. The peach houses were extensive, covering about eight acres, and were heated by a 'great stove' which stood between two separate greenhouses. The marquis designed these himself and worked out how the heating system would operate.⁵ It obviously worked well because in August 1772 he asked for pineapples, melons, peaches and other fruit to be sent to him at Wimbledon from the Wentworth greenhouses and complained that the fruit

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1. I am grateful to Mr. R. D. Happs for his help in tracing this information.
 2. W.W.M. R140-92. Rockingham to Sir Richard Hotham, 1st October 1780.
 3. W.W.M. A 1099. Wages paid 1766.
 4. W.W.M. A 1507. Wages paid 1772.
 5. W.W.M. R185-7a.

already sent had been too ripe before its despatch,¹ and in 1778 the marchioness sent two peaches to Rockingham saying that the 'Gardener reckons them quite ripe, & as good as they ever would be'.² Cherries were also grown in the hothouses and in September 1780 the marquis compiled a list of 'Exotick [sic] Plants at Wentworth'.³ There are about 350 different varieties listed including eight types of amarillis, three sorts of azalea seven varieties each of cactus and geranium and five different mimosa plants. In 1780 an expedition financed by Doctors Fothergill and Pitcairn, Lord Tankerville and Mr. Banks was to go to the Cape coast of Africa where Mr. Brass was to collect seeds and plants for them. Unfortunately Dr. Fothergill died so James Lee wrote to Rockingham asking if the marquis wished to subscribe in Fothergill's stead since 'I know your Lordship is fond of new & beautifull [sic] plants, & that almost everything that comes from that country is new'.⁴ It is uncertain whether the Marquis of Rockingham was tempted by the offer but in July 1781 he wrote to the son of Sir Charles Linnaeus offering to send exotic bulbs, plants and shrubs from the hothouses at Wentworth.⁵ Pine-apples, oranges and grapes were grown in the hothouses as a matter of course, and behind the hothouses was a 'neat agreeable room for drinking tea'.⁶

The marquis kept a menagerie 'containing a prodigious number of foreign birds, particularly gold and pencil pheasants, cockatoos, Mollaca doves &c., &c.'⁷ He had three China geese and two horned owls

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1. W.W.M. Stw. P. 1-9. Rockingham to Hall, 19th August 1772.
 2. W.W.M. R168-25. Lady to Lord Rockingham, 2nd June 1778.
 3. W.W.M. R201b-35. 18th September 1780.
 4. W.W.M. R210b-1. James Lee to Rockingham, 24th March 1781.
 5. W.W.M. R210b-9. Rockingham to Linnaeus, 18th July 1781.
 6. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 294.
 7. Ibid.

sent by Mr. Williamson of Hull on one of Samuel Walker's vessels¹ and he employed an aviary keeper and assistant to look after the birds. Peacocks and peahens were also kept. The menagerie was near the aviary and included a bear pit. The marquis was sent deer and moose from America² and other animals such as camels were kept although there was little success with them. The moose was not at Wentworth: it was kept in the garden of the Grosvenor Square house. One reached the aviary along a winding walk from a little drawing room. The aviary was a 'little light Chinese building ... It is stocked with canary and other foreign birds which are kept alive in winter by means of hot walls at the back of the building; the front of open network in compartments'.³

Paul Bowns was employed as the pheasant keeper at an annual salary of £12. The birds cost £14. 15s. 6d. between June and September 1765⁴ and the marquis took a personal interest in the rearing of them. In February 1774 he gave orders as to how the pens were to be divided and for only golden pheasants to be bred. Bowns was told to be particularly attentive to the breeding of a large stock of them that year,⁵ probably for shooting, possibly as ornamental birds.

The gardens, aviary and menagerie were kept separate from the expenses of farming possibly because they were for pleasure rather than for profit. In 1760 the account for the gardens was almost £371 which included the wages of the labourers.⁶ The cost of garden labour remained almost static at around £60 while farming expenses shot up from £24 to £278 over the same periods between January and June 1766.

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1. W.W.M. R176-19. Williamson to Rockingham, 13th September 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R187-20. William Martin June 1769.
 3. Young, *Northern Tour*, 1, 197-198.
 4. W.W.M. R192-1. Accounts midsummer to Michaelmas 1765.
 5. W.W.M. A 1380. Rockingham's notes, 2nd February 1774.
 6. W.W.M. A 234.

The Stables and Racing

There can be little doubt that an establishment the size of Wentworth Woodhouse was extremely expensive to maintain, but even more so because Rockingham was an 'improving farmer' and racehorse breeder. Craftsmen had to be employed to repair all the buildings and after September 1766 a large item of expenditure was the new stables he had built. Payments were still being made for these until he died.¹ There were eight masons employed on the stables and nine labourers in December 1766; by August 1767 the project employed twelve carpenters, three joiners, ten masons and seventeen labourers. In October 1775 there were six carpenters, five joiners, twenty-four masons and twelve labourers.² The masons' and labourers' wages for building the stables came to over £12,741.³ The most expensive year was 1772 when their wages topped £1, 413. He gave just £119 to charity in that year. Arthur Young visited Wentworth in 1770 while the stable building was in progress and saw fit to comment that

His Lordship is building a most magnificent pile of stabling; it is to form a large quadrangle, inclosing [sic] a square of 190 feet, with a very elegant front to the park; there are to be 84 stalls, with numerous apartments for the servants attending; and spacious rooms for hay, corn &c &c dispersed in such a manner as to render the whole perfectly convenient. 4

The stable project generated a mini-economy in its own right. Besides keeping between forty and forty-seven men employed on the actual construction, six carters were employed to bring in the materials⁵ which included slate, brick, iron goods, wood, lead, glass and the stone

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1. W.W.M. A 2 to A 22.
 2. W.W.M. A 1509.
 3. W.W.M. A 2.
 4. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 293-294.
 5. W.W.M. A 1509. They were Joshua Holmeshaw, John Chapman, Francis Holmes and Flint, James Woodcock, Matthew Bower, and George Denton.

itself.¹ Most of the materials were produced locally which must have boosted the economy of the area.

Besides the new stables at Wentworth, Rockingham kept stables at Swinton where there was a training ground for the horses. This was more or less oval in shape with a circuit length of $\frac{1}{4}$ miles.² He had eight boys there in 1757, rising to seventeen in 1758 and eighteen in 1759. They were taught to read, write and keep accounts besides being expected to look after the horses.³

Another area where Rockingham made money was in breeding horses. In 1764 his racehorse 'Swiss' covered nine mares and he kept an accurate record of all his brood mares and stud stallions so that pedigrees could be produced.⁴ These horses were then sold at a profit. He knew exactly what horses he had, how old they were and on which estate they were kept⁵ besides taking an interest in their performance on the race-course.

In 1774 he was corresponding with Catherine the Great's chamberlain, Prince Narischkin, about horses and their breeding, gelding and racing. The marquis had sold some of his horses to the prince, providing more income.⁶ He had already sent tar to Catherine herself as a wood-preservative besides obelisks and cups which adorned her cabinet. In return she offered to send the marquis some marble for Wentworth house to please 'her very good friend'.⁷

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1. W.W.M. R189-22.
 2. 1850 Ordnance Survey map, Sheet 283; 6"=1 mile.
 3. W.W.M. R200c. Swinton stables accounts, 1757-1759.
 4. W.W.M. R2a-23 and R2a-27.
 5. W.W.M. R2a-32.
 6. W.W.M. R195c. Correspondence between Rockingham and Prince Narischkin, 1774.
 7. W.W.M. R148-2. Sir Charles Knowles to Rockingham from St. Petersburg, 4th October 1771.

Farm Improvement

The actual running of the estates as farmland employed many local inhabitants, as might be expected since Wentworth Woodhouse was relatively isolated from the major towns. Supplying the house and estates brought in some money but full-time work on the land was the basic source of income. The Marquis of Rockingham was known as an agricultural improver and he liked nothing better than 'the pleasures one enjoys at one's own place in the country [which] very far exceeds the scenes which we have been used to in public life'.¹ He had a highly developed sense of duty towards his tenants and the local population and was content with a simple way of life - so far as the aristocracy's life may be labelled 'simple'.

I have everything wherewithal to gratify my wishes within the bounds of reason & moderation. My time does not hang heavy upon me for want of matters to occupy and entertain my mind with; I often think, that I could set down here, watch on the Wants & necessities of those who are near to me, be of Use & Assistance to many & finally secure to myself the Comfort of thinking, that I have done some good. ²

Arthur Young was full of praise for the marquis' farming experiments and was delighted to be allowed to visit Wentworth Woodhouse as part of his northern tour of 1770. Although Young devoted several pages of his book to describing the house he believed that

the husbandry of the Marquis of Rockingham is much more worthy of attention than that of any palace; the effects which have and must continue to result from it are of the noblest and most truly national kind: A short sketch of his lordship's operations, will convince you how much an extensive tract of country is obliged to this patriotic nobleman for introducing a cultivation unknown before. ³

The 'short sketch' takes up forty-six pages of the book. According to

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1. W.W.M. R1-1199. Rockingham to Richmond, May 1768.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 307.

Young, the marquis was disgusted to find his property being 'cultivated in so slovenly a manner':¹ whether this is a reflection on his tenants or his father's management or the inefficiency of the steward Evan Evans is not specified. Rockingham wanted to substitute better methods in place of 'such unpleasing as well as unprofitable ones'. Young believed that 'this country wanted a Rockingham to animate its cultivation' because much land needed draining, the pasture and meadow was laid down in an unprofitable ridge and furrow system, the soil was exhausted from over-cropping, turnips - although grown - were not hoed, and the implements were not adequate for the job.

On the 2,000 acres which the marquis kept in hand, improvements were undertaken. The wet lands were drained by means of covered drains, 'the most perfect [method] that experience has hitherto brought to light'. This had been started by 1759 as had turnip growing and hoeing, manuring the land and growing clover.² In that period the marquis paid £3. 11s. 8d. for turnip seed and bought lime from William Malpass.³ Draining the wet lands got rid of the varieties of weeds which thrived on wet soil and enabled corn to be grown in previously unproductive parts of the estate. The ridge and furrow fields were levelled by ploughing and harrowing and then were fertilised with clover crops and compost additives. The marquis also limed the land which helped productivity and instigated a programme of hoeing turnips, a job done mainly by women. They also feighed, or cleaned, the land which included removing stones and loading them into carts.⁴ Young emphasised that no part of the marquis' new régime 'is beyond the reach of a common farmer; a principal view

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1. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 307. The following section is taken from Young, pp. 307-353.
 2. W.W.M. A 234. 1st June 1759 to 1st July 1760.
 3. Ibid.
 4. W.W.M. A 234. and A 1519.

of his Lordship in all his husbandry. Here are no two years lying fallow, nor any loss by laying without a crop of corn.¹ The Marquis of Rockingham tried to persuade his tenants to follow the new methods by example and explanation, according to Young, and eventually succeeded. He also introduced new implements, none of which was common in Yorkshire. These included a seed drill which cost him three guineas, a turnwrist plough for the same price, a horse-hoe at £1. 7s. 0d. and a spiky roller for aerating the soil. In 1761 he bought a turf-dividing plough from Mr. Dancer for £2. 14s. 0d. although a week later he paid twice as much for a camera obscura.² He also established two farms, one using Kentish methods, the other the Hertfordshire system. Young described at length the methods which Rockingham used in producing various crops and gave his seal of approval to the way in which the land was fertilised. Among experiments to find different fertilisers the marquis tried rabbit dung: women were employed to sweep the fields with besoms to collect the raw material. He also tried tree bark, burned clay, foul salt and pigeon dung: this latter cost £1 a load and was sufficient for only one acre.³ The burned clay was unsuccessful, ending up as large hard chunks of clay and glass. Other strange 'manures' included soap boilers' ashes, coal ashes, horn shavings, curriers' shavings, molehills and turf.⁴

Rockingham described himself to John Arbuthnot of Mitcham as 'a dabbler in Improvements in Husbandry'⁵ and he had a well-stocked library of books on the subject which he kept in the lumber-room. Amongst the collection were the Complete Body of Planting and Gardening by

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1. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 307-353.
 2. W.W.M. A 1000. 1760-1764.
 3. W.W.M. R183. Booklet in Rockingham's hand concerning farming at Wentworth and Tankersley.
 4. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 350-353.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1495. Rockingham to Arbuthnot, undated.

William Hanbury in two volumes; the Gardener's Dictionary; Hale's Husbandry; The Gentleman Farmer and the Farmer's Guide.¹ He also had a copy of Mills' Practical Husbandry. He referred himself to this book in notes he made on manure.² In these notes he decided that turf and coal slack were cheaper than cut grass. He also queried the economics of using more coal slack in the kilns used for burning road stones, which would produce more 'slack for manure, and he made a note to find out the nearest place to Wentworth where peat might be dug to burn for ashes for manure.³ He had mud taken from Morley Pond which was to be mixed with lime and laid on the sixty-acre piece between the pond and the plantation. This would cost 11s. 6d. per acre 'exclusive of the Trouble & expense of mixing the lime & mud & laying, turning & spreading on the ground'.⁴ The lowest cost would have been £34. 10s. 0d.

Arthur Young dedicated his Course of Experimental Agriculture [2 volumes, 1770] to the marquis and in his Tour thanked Rockingham for giving encouragement to his project. Young commented on the expense to which the marquis went to introduce new methods and implements, some of which he invented for himself:⁵ his employees also helped in this. Adam West of Street Farm submitted a diagram of an implement for levelling 'aunt [sic] hills', for example.⁶ The problem of farm implements was that each had to be made from the inventor's plans and broken or worn parts had to be replaced by hand-made substitutes since there was no form of standardisation in the eighteenth century, and the tools were for the most part made of wood which broke or wore easily. Rockingham

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1. W.W.M. A 1204. Inventory of the estates.
 2. W.W.M. F70-8. Undated notes.
 3. Ibid.
 4. W.W.M. R174-30. Undated notes.
 5. Young, Northern Tour, 6, pp. xvii-xviii.
 6. W.W.M. R2a-34.

was perhaps better off than southern farmers because he was in an iron and steel making area and the local craftsmen could produce metal parts for implements such as ploughs, and the Abbeydale works - which he owned - made iron-and-steel scythes as its normal output.

For all that George III apparently had a low opinion of the marquis as a politician, it seems that the king thought well of him as an improving farmer. In 1774 the king distributed seeds of Siberia [or summer] wheat among agricultural improvers, some of which was sent to Wentworth. Rockingham sowed some himself and distributed the rest to his friends in February 1775. Rockingham hoped 'to find my Siberia wheat in a good state, and by what I hear most of my crops look well'.¹ Even when he was in London the Marquis of Rockingham kept in touch with his estates in Yorkshire. The Siberia wheat was sown at Street Farm in fields near those sown with English wheat, presumably as a control for the experiment. The Siberia wheat produced 6 gallons 1 quarter per acre to the English wheat's 5¼ gallons per acre. The marquis also wanted to know the comparative produce of flour per acre.²

Arthur Young probably met Edmund Burke through the Marquis of Rockingham. Burke was another keen improver, very interested in root and grain crops. He tried unsuccessfully to fatten his pigs on carrots and believed turnips to be of great importance. Rockingham also wrote a letter of introduction for Young to the Duke of Portland, asking the duke to allow Young to visit Welbeck and Worksop.³ It would be logical to deduce that Portland was also interested in agricultural improvement which was one way in which great estate-owners could increase their

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1. Rockingham to Burke, 11th July 1775. Burke Correspondence, 3, 177.
 2. W.W.M. A 1380. Rockingham's notes of the wheat experiments.
 3. PwF 9009. Rockingham to Portland, 12th September 1768.

income. Rockingham may well have contemplated writing a book or article on agricultural improvements at one point. In some undated notes he wrote that it 'may not be totally useless, if the thoughts of a Person should be offered to the Publick' on husbandry, even if his theories were not conclusive or he was not 'sufficiently experienced by long and diligent practise, as to be able to ascertain that the Modes he recommends will prove never to fail'.¹ He further commented that 'Weeds are the Robbers of the Land!.

The home farms of the estate were at Woodnook and Street with Frierhouse being added later. These farms grew wheat, oats, beans and barley which were used at Wentworth Woodhouse. In 1767 the marquis had almost 1,340 acres in hand scattered round his Wentworth estates.² Most of this was in Wentworth park [573 acres] and mainly was used for producing hay and clover although Wentworth, Woodnook and Street also produced wheat. Oats were grown at Frier's Ground, Woodnook and Street, barley at the two latter and peas at Woodnook. In 1767 there were no rye or bean crops grown at all and Linfit Cliffe [15 acres] produced no crops.³

Oats were used to feed the swans, pheasants and fowls at the plantation⁴ and the corn crop was used mainly as animal fodder including the wild pigs in Greasborough Common, as seed and at the house. Some was sold, some was used at the malthouse and the rest was used as bird food. Meat had to be bought to supply the needs of the household and Rockingham kept a close watch on what was delivered. He knew that wet

1. W.W.M. R81-186.

2. W.W.M. A 1495. Land in hand at Wentworth Park, Frier's Ground, Upper Farm, Rainber Park, Linfit Cliffe, Woodnook and Street Farms, Badsworth and Tankersley.

3. Ibid.

4. W.W.M. A 1148. Accounts 1765.

meat weighed more than dry meat which was advantageous to the vendor since it was sold by weight, and he noted that of the eighteen flitches of bacon he bought from Thomas Walker, none were very good. Three had been used but of the remainder, eight were soft and the other seven were soft and 'resty' or reasty: rancid.¹ Rockingham knew the difference between good and bad meat and was not impressed by the fact that he had paid £20. 16s. 3d. for the meat because 'the fat &c is of different colours & it appears that they are Flitches of old pigs - or Sows'. Beef was much eaten at Wentworth and it was fairly common for bills of £300 to be paid for heifers and bullocks. In 1766 these cost £5 each with a cost of £11. 10s. 0d. for delivery on the hoof.² Livestock was also bought: in the period 1751-52 over £12,534 was spent on this at Wentworth and a further £6,088 at Malton.³ Bread corn was bought, as was barley for brewing. In less than a year the bills for these came to £277 and the soap bill for a month was £46. 9s. 0d.⁴

Farming expenses were a big item in the Wentworth Woodhouse farming accounts. The following table shows the outgoings from June 1765 to June 1769.⁵

Year	Farming Outgoings	Total Income ⁶
1765-6	£553. 0s. 9 d.	£ 9,794. 7s. 11¼d.
1766-7	£204. 13s. 2 d.	£ 9,422. 3s. 2¼d.
1767-8	£365. 10s. 7½d.	£11,045. 13s. 7¼d.
1768-9	£144. 14s. 0 d.	£10,492. 17s. 2 d.

These amounts covered items such as implements, seeds and manure and

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1. W.W.M. R176-27. Notes on bacon, 28th June 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R171-6b. Stock bill, 30th September 1766.
 3. W.W.M. A 1098. Stock purchases 1751-52.
 4. W.W.M. A 222. Accounts October 1751 to June 1752.
 5. W.W.M. R196. Farming expenses.
 6. W.W.M. R192.

are quite high although the marquis would have made substantial savings by growing his own wheat which sold at 48s. a quarter in 1765 and 53s. 9d. a quarter in 1768.¹

It is evident that Lord Rockingham took a personal interest in the farming activities at Wentworth. In 1772 the mowers asked for a pay-rise to which the marquis agreed because the prices of food and other goods had risen, and he did not think the pay-rise would add much to the expense of haymaking. However, he did wonder which grass was thick enough to warrant paying them 2s. an acre and which deserved only 1s. 8d. He also wanted more men to be employed to get in the hay faster - in three weeks instead of six.² Furthermore he agreed to pay women haymakers 6d. a day but ordered that the numbers employed were to be restricted and said that 'there ought not to be too many Wimen [sic] in a Field, They should be divided into small companies, & then they would make the Hay, & not loiter in talking &c'.³ He had also struck a bargain with John Lyell of Melton for oats which were supplied at eleven stones per sack [exclusive of the weight of the sack]. He was equally aware that he could get oats delivered from Doncaster at a good price.⁴

Benjamin Hall may have been the estate steward but the marquis was always in control. In one letter alone, Rockingham covered a wide variety of estate matters which amounted to orders for Hall. The first subject of his attention was the price of building stone from various quarries near Wentworth which was followed by a discussion of possible sources of stone on the estate itself. Still on the subject of building

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1. J.S. Stratton, Agricultural Records 220-1968 (London, John Baker Press, 1969), pp. 80-82.
 2. W.W.M. Stw. P. 1-5. Rockingham to Hall, 7th July 1772.
 3. W.W.M. Stw. P. 1-7. Rockingham to Hall, 15th July 1772.
 4. Ibid.

stone, Rockingham detailed how much would be needed to repair the Fence wall. He then moved on to the necessity of buying barley for malting quickly to keep the price down and suggested possible sources. Hall was further told to provide Welland [the tenant at Woodnook] with a new plough-horse and to sow the Windsor Beans which the marquis was sending him. An account of how to sow them and the prices thereof was included. The letter concluded with an account of exactly which horses were to be put to grass and where, and included instructions for their care.¹

Good estate management was a feature of eighteenth-century farming but the extent to which the Marquis of Rockingham was involved - over and above all his other activities - is remarkable in itself. He seemed to know exactly what was going on and exactly what needed to be done to keep the estate running smoothly. He was aware of the costs of Wentworth but also tried to ensure that the income from his lands was maintained.

A substantial source of income was from rents on his various estates. The Irish lands netted about £20,000 p.a.; Harrowden produced almost £1,430 p.a. gross but only about £852 after taxes and payments had been made² and Higham Ferrers netted about £535 p.a. also.³ Malton [Yorkshire] produced £5,511 p.a. after the expenses had been paid⁴ and the Wentworth estate provided the remainder. In 1750 rents were collected from 277 tenants, the majority of whom lived in Wentworth [507], Brampton [48] and Greasborough [44].⁵ Their rents came to over £3,875 but in 1752 Mary Bright's lands came into his possession and increased the rents by £827. 18s. 8d. Furthermore, many of the rents were increased:

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1. W.W.M. Stw. P. 1-12. Rockingham to Hall, 12th March 1773.
 2. W.W.M. 1-1187. Rockingham's notes on the reverse of a letter 1766.
 3. Ibid.
 4. W.W.M. R171-1a. Fenton's accounts, 3rd November 1765.
 5. W.W.M. A 221. Accounts 1750.

Greasborough rents rose by £500 between 1750 and 1751 and by a further £400 in the next year;¹ at Scholes and Thorpe there was a rise of £80 in the same period. By 1753 his rental income was £5,342 p.a.² In 1758 it was up to £6,090 and by 1763 had reached £6,465.³ Most of the rents either remained static or increased; on rare occasions land was taken into the park or the rent of a tenant was reduced. Many of the increases were a result of the acquisition of land rather than by a simple rent-rise. In 1759 the number of tenants in Greasborough had risen to sixty-five and at Wentworth to fifty-six.⁴

Boon work was part of the rent and was calculated in cash so presumably tenants could either perform the boon work or pay cash in lieu; fowls likewise were a part of the rent and were calculated in money: again, one could presume payment could be made in cash or kind. An example of the rental accounts would illustrate this more clearly.⁵

Place	No. of Tenants	Rents Due	Rent Fowls	Boon Labour	Total
		£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d
Wentworth	50	355-13- 4¼	2- 3- 4	4-11-0	362- 7- 8¼
Scholes and Thorpe	24	225-18- 3	11-10	1- 2-0	227-12- 1
Hoyland	28	406- 2- 9	8	2-13-0	408-16- 5
Wath	10	143- 9- 6	16- 8	2-11-0	146-17- 2
Brampton	48	900- 7-10	2-15- 0	6-16-0	909-18-10
Tankersley	34	479-18- 8	1-13- 0	2-19-0	484-10- 8
Greasborough	44	673- 9-10	2- 6- 2	6- 3-0	681-19- 0

The costs were worked out on the following basis:⁶

1 labourer	=	1s.	1 capon	=	1s. 6d.
1 draft team	=	4s.	1 hen	=	8d.

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1. W.W.M. A 221 and A 222. Accounts 1750, 1751 and 1752.
 2. W.W.M. A 224. Accounts 1753.
 3. W.W.M. A 234. Accounts 1758. and W.W.M. A 240. Accounts 1763.
 4. W.W.M. A 234.
 5. W.W.M. A 221.
 6. W.W.M. A 234.

Elizabeth Arundel of Brampton owed one labourer, one hen and £3. 10s. 0d. per year in rents, a total of £3. 11s. 8d. Joseph Bingley's rent was £44. 16s. 0d., two draft teams and two capons or £45. 7s. 0d.¹ On rent days [i.e. Lady Day and Michaelmas] the farmers were provided with dinner at Rockingham's expense. In the steward's room the meal consisted of 'boiled chickens, pigeon pie, broccoli, roast lamb, roast beef, loyn [sic] veal, pudding, a ham, Scotch collops' and on a side table 'boiled beef, pudding, salad pie, cold roast mutton'.² The amount per day came to five pieces of boiled beef, four legs of mutton, four quarters of cold mutton, four pieces of cold roast beef, four boiled puddings, four baked puddings, seven pies and four dishes of greens.³ Besides that, on St. Thomas' Day, Rockingham's labourers were 'served with Beef and 6d'.⁴ In 1760 there were 252 of them ranging from colliers to tailors, limeburners to residents of the charity hospitals. At 6d each the cost was £6. 12s. 0d. besides the cost of the food. Rockingham probably saw these treats as part of his duty as the owner of the estate, but he made sure that every penny of the expense was accounted for.

Some tenants rented cottages or land in several different places on the estates. William Arundel had to pay rent at Hoyland and Tankersley, as did Thomas Shaw, John Dickinson, William Hoyland and James Wigfield.⁵ Thomas Rhodes, Richard Foulstone and Thomas Richardson paid rents at Wentworth and Greasborough.⁶

Many other tenants worked on the estates, especially residents of Wentworth and Greasborough since these villages bordered the estate.

1. W.W.M. A 234.

2. W.W.M. A 1380. Rent day dinner.

3. Ibid.

4. W.W.M. R2a-42. Labourers served with beef and 6d, 1760.

5. W.W.M. A 221. List of tenants, 1750.

6. Ibid.

Wentworth was built for the estates staff in community courts and it was quite common to find married couples working for the marquis, as the Womacks did. Matthew White and Philip Flint of Wentworth, and Joshua Roberts and William Flint of Greasborough were employed to fetch lime to Wentworth Woodhouse; William Hoyland of Hoyland was a coal getter at Cortworth; John Rawlin of Wentworth was a day-labourer making barrels.¹ A number of men were employed on agricultural work such as hedging and ditching, threshing and feighing.² Joshua Cobb the gamekeeper rented land in Greasborough Ings besides being in full-time employment on the Wentworth estates.³

In about 1740 Joshua Cobb had been employed as a hunting groom to the young Lord Malton.⁴ By 1753 he was a groom and by 1766 he was a gamekeeper earning £40 p.a. - £10 more than the housekeeper.⁵ He kept the post until at least 1771.⁶ Cobb, 'my old Stud Groom and Park Keeper' died in 1780⁷ so the marquis employed young Joshua in his place and continued to retain the widowed Mrs. Cobb who had worked on the estate for thirty-five years. Clearly the staff at Wentworth stayed a long time even though their pay was rarely increased. Young Cobb earned £40 p.a. in 1782 as a gamekeeper: the wages had not increased in at least fourteen years.⁸

Wentworth Woodhouse estates demanded a large number of labourers to keep them operating successfully in a labour-intensive age. Men were needed to clear the ponds, to hedge, ditch and spread lime. The stone-

1. W.W.M. A 222.

2. Ibid.

3. Fairbank Collection, Sheffield City Library, M.P. 378. Canal survey.

4. PwF 9145. Rockingham to Portland, 14th February 1780.

5. W.W.M. A 1099. Wages paid January to December 1766.

6. W.W.M. A 1100. List of servants, September 1771.

7. PwF 9145. Rockingham to Portland, 14th February 1780.

8. W.W.M. A 1101. Servants' wages 1782.

masons needed labourers as did the bricklayers and carpenters, and men were needed to dig out Temple Hill. In October 1763 Joseph Gillott was variously employed at the Sunk Fence at Cortworth, calling in the boon workers, working at Lowwood, Cortworth and Scholes, and at Swallow Wood fence. George Sorsby also worked on 'digging at the Sunk Fence at Swallow Wood', cutting a sewer at Cortworth, digging at Temple Hill, getting stones at Cortworth, working in Clifford's Lodgings with the 'marable men'¹ and making a sewer at Glasshouse Green. Henry Hurst was employed solely as a bricklayer's labourer. On 3rd October Joseph Butterworth was sent to London with the horses and did not return until 20th October. Andrew Speight carried coal to the laundry on Fridays and the rest of his time was divided between working for the bricklayers and stonemasons, riddling earth at Lowwood and working at the limehouse. Thomas Cusworth spent all month washing bottles in the brewhouse. In November 1763 Sarah Parkin and Mary Ranby spent most of their time gathering stones 'from the paddock' and loading stone at Cortworth quarry or Temple Hill except for the 21st and 22nd when they were helping at the furnace and carrying in ice.² Women seem to have done most of the unskilled lifting work around the estate. There was always work for the joiners, carpenters, blacksmiths, farm workers, masons, gardeners and labourers: in July 1769 the wages due to these men totalled £330. 15s. 2½d.³

Estate Development

A thousand acres of the Wentworth estates, that is about 6%, was covered by woodland of some description⁴ and the marquis also owned

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1. Clifford's Lodgings were a suite of rooms off the long gallery. They were in the oldest part of the house and presumably were being re-decorated.
 2. W.W.M. A 1519. Use of labour, 1763.
 3. W.W.M. R176-23. Wages due, 1st July 1769.
 4. G.G. Hopkinson, 'The Charcoal Iron Industry in the Sheffield Region', Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society 8 (1958-63), 127.

Tinsley Wood, another 358 acres. Wood was necessary for the production of iron until Darby's coke process was perfected and used widely, and it was still needed for producing steel. As Arthur Young pointed out, Rotherham was 'famous for its iron works, of which it contains one very large one, belonging to Mr. Walker, and one or two smaller' and 'Sheffield contains about 30,000 inhabitants, the chief of which are employed in the manufacture of hardware: the chief branches are the plating work [and] the cutlery',¹ so the demand for timber was high and it fetched a good price. Lord Rockingham made sure that the timber was felled in strict rotation, so conserving a major asset instead of allowing indiscriminate destruction of the resource. Coppicing was also undertaken as was the cutting of hedgerows: a job which had to be done anyway and so was used to make a profit. The wood cut at Bassingthorpe Spring in 1755 fetched £445; the fall at Hagg Wood and the hedgerows cut at Badsforth the following year brought in £1,100. Even small woods like Luke Spring at Hoover fetched over £100.² It is noticeable that these woods and all the others mentioned in Bower's accounts may still be identified on modern Ordnance Survey maps, not just by name but still as woods, unlike so many other estate developments which cut down woodland for arable land or pasture. Rockingham and his successors were conservationists if only to maintain a regular income.

The two biggest ironmasters in the Rotherham area were Samuel Walker and John Fell. Walker had built an iron furnace at Masborough in 1746 with the financial help of Jonathan Booth, who was associated with the Spencer syndicate. Booth was a nail chapman: he collected nails produced as a cottage industry and exported them. In 1748 the

1. Young, Northern Tour, 1, 122-126.

2. W.W.M. R184-1. John Bower's wood accounts, 1747-1764.

firm of Walker-Booth built a steel furnace and in the 1750s the firm expended rapidly. Eventually Walker had mills along the Don Navigation from Holmes to Conisborough. Walker bought leases of coal and ironstone from both Rockingham and the Earl of Effingham: their estates took in part of the Barnsley coal seam beside which is a rich ironstone seam.¹ John Fell leased blast furnaces at Chapeltown, Staveley and Clipstone and slitting mills at Attercliffe and Rotherham. He had a forge at Roche Abbey and mined iron ore at Thorne and Hollin Delph. These enterprises gave him a business relationship with the Dukes of Portland, Norfolk and Devonshire, the Marquis of Rockingham and the Earl of Scarborough. The iron which Fell produced was sold to Kenyon, Broadbent, Wilson and Broomhead among others: these four all exported goods to America.

Walker and Fell, as businessmen, obviously wanted to buy their raw materials at the cheapest possible rate which had to include proximity to their works to reduce the cost of transport. The most convenient place for them both to obtain their ironstone, coal and wood was from Rockingham's lands: but he too was a businessman who wanted the best price he could get for his leases. The result was a clash between Walker and Fell and an inflated profit for the marquis.

In March 1757 Bower valued the wood to be felled at Ecclesall at £694. 19s. 8d.² The estate agent for the marquis' lands at Ecclesall, Westwell and Sheffield, William Battie, sent this valuation together with 'Walker's proposal (I suppose) concerning the price they will give for them, for I send them unopened having desired to have them given up to me sealed up, that I might not know the Contents, in order to

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1. This information on Samuel Walker was taken from a lecture given by Dr. David Hey.
 2. Ecclesall was a detached part of the parish at Thorpe Hesley.

avoid any suspicions of partiality between them & Messers Fell & Co'. Battie asked Fell & Co. to make an offer for the wood which they refused to do 'seeming to take it not well that the Walkers (who are opposing them in Trade) should be permitted to bid against them'. Fell was angry at Walker's counterbid since he felt he had always paid a fair price for the wood and was an old customer for the marquis' woods. Battie believed Fell would pay the full valuation and asked if 'I should treat with them and leave the Walkers out of the Question'.¹

The conflict also extended to the ironstone deposits at Tankersley. Fell was charged £40 per acre for his ironstone; Walker was charged 3s. 4d. per load.² In 1764 Fell paid £130 for the ironstone rights to keep Walker out, and also paid well above the real value for wood from Houghton Park and Skyers Spring for the same reason. Fell died in 1765 and the Walkers became the major ironmasters in Rotherham.

The Walkers owed much to Rockingham. He bought large amounts of iron from them: in 1760 he bought iron, steel and ironware from them for £57³ and continued to buy such goods from them. Periodically some of his debt would be paid off. In November 1767 he owed them £118. 14s. 6½d. of which £60 was paid 'on account' in January 1768.⁴ The marquis' poor record of paying outstanding debts was a constant worry for William Martin because 'many of the People are Clamouring for their Money and are really in great distress for want of it'.⁵ Rockingham ordered cannon from the Walkers for the defence of Hull in 1779 and arranged government contracts for them during the War of American Independence so at least one company did well out of him.

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1. W.W.M. R184. Battie to Rockingham, 2nd March 1757.
 2. W.W.M. A 234. Woods.
 3. W.W.M. A 234.
 4. W.W.M. R192 and R186-25.
 5. W.W.M. R186-16. Martin to Rockingham, 4th February 1766.

The Wentworth estates are situated on top of rich coal deposits and Rockingham was quick to develop this source of income. The Barnsley seam [as it is now known] is about nine feet thick and is of good quality coal. The first place where coal deposits were exploited on the estates was at Elsecar where in 1750 Richard Bingley leased the pit from the marquis for two years at an annual rent of £35. 14s. 0d. The contract stated that Bingley was to be responsible for cleaning, feighing and repairing the level already begun by Mr. Monckton and to continue the sough up to Great Arm Royd. The penalty for failing to do this was £200. Furthermore he was not to employ more than two getters, or colliers.¹ At the end of the two-year lease Rockingham decided to take over the pit himself in the belief that he could make more money that way: he had already worked out the cost of running the pit before he made his decision.

On 1st September 1752 he gave detailed instructions to Thomas Smith concerning the operating of Elsecar pit. It is indicative of Rockingham's thoroughness in his approach to the estate that first he kept a copy of his instructions and second that he had considered every detail. He also expected everyone to work at the same speed he did. The first two items ordered Smith 'To buy All things necessary for Immediate use; To begin work tomorrow Morning'.² Smith was to employ two getters at 1s. 8d. each for thirty-nine pulls - an odd number when forty pulls was one pit-load of seven tons; one filler and one hurrier at 5d each for thirty-nine pulls and two men above ground at the same rate.³ The stacker was to be paid 7s. a week but was to live at the pit and

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1. W.W.M. F96-1. Agreement between Rockingham and Bingley.
 2. W.W.M. F96-8. Instructions to Thomas Smith, 1st September 1752. All the following information is taken from this document.
 3. The filler filled the corves with coal, the hurrier pushed the tubs to the surface. All were paid piece-rates.

was to keep account of the coal got and sold. The men were to be paid fortnightly. Smith was paid wages as a workman for the work he did but also received £20 p.a. as colliery overseer.

The work began on schedule on 2nd September. Two weeks later they were paid £4. 11s. 8d. between them for getting twenty-four pit loads of coal: 168 tons. The horse was paid 2d for each load it pulled.¹ The output was extremely high. Effectively each collier was producing fourteen tons of coal a day over a six day week. Further expense was incurred by the need to pay labourers at the sough in Elsecar. A sough is a tunnel for draining water from a mine and four men worked there over a period of three to nine days clearing and extending the channel.² The following month Barnabas Bailey received £2. 2s. 4d. for two weeks' work at the level.³ He extended the level by 10½ yards [at 1s. a yard], cleared away the rubbish he produced [at 4d per yard], filled thirty-four pit-loads of coal [at 5d a load] - a total of 238 tons - and 'barrowed' for 14s. 2d.⁴ On 7th October the miners were provided with 6lb. of candles and they used a further 4lb. of candles in the period 21st October to 4th November.⁵ By 2nd December 1753 the marquis had paid out £12. 9s. 4d. in wages and a further £3. 18s. 8d. on incidentals but only £2. 9s. 6d. worth of coal had been sold.⁶

On 2nd December 1753 Rockingham received a statement of progress from Thomas Smith saying that they had 'got the new pit down though not without some Difficulty for one of the Men took off and left his

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1. W.W.M. F95-1. Wages bill, 23rd September 1752, and horse's pay, W.W.M. F95-8.
 2. W.W.M. F95-1.
 3. A level was a drainage road taking the water in the pit off to the sough. Also a working drift or roadway into a coal seam.
 4. W.W.M. F95-4.
 5. W.W.M. F95-3 and 4.
 6. W.W.M. F95-1 to 5. Accounts.

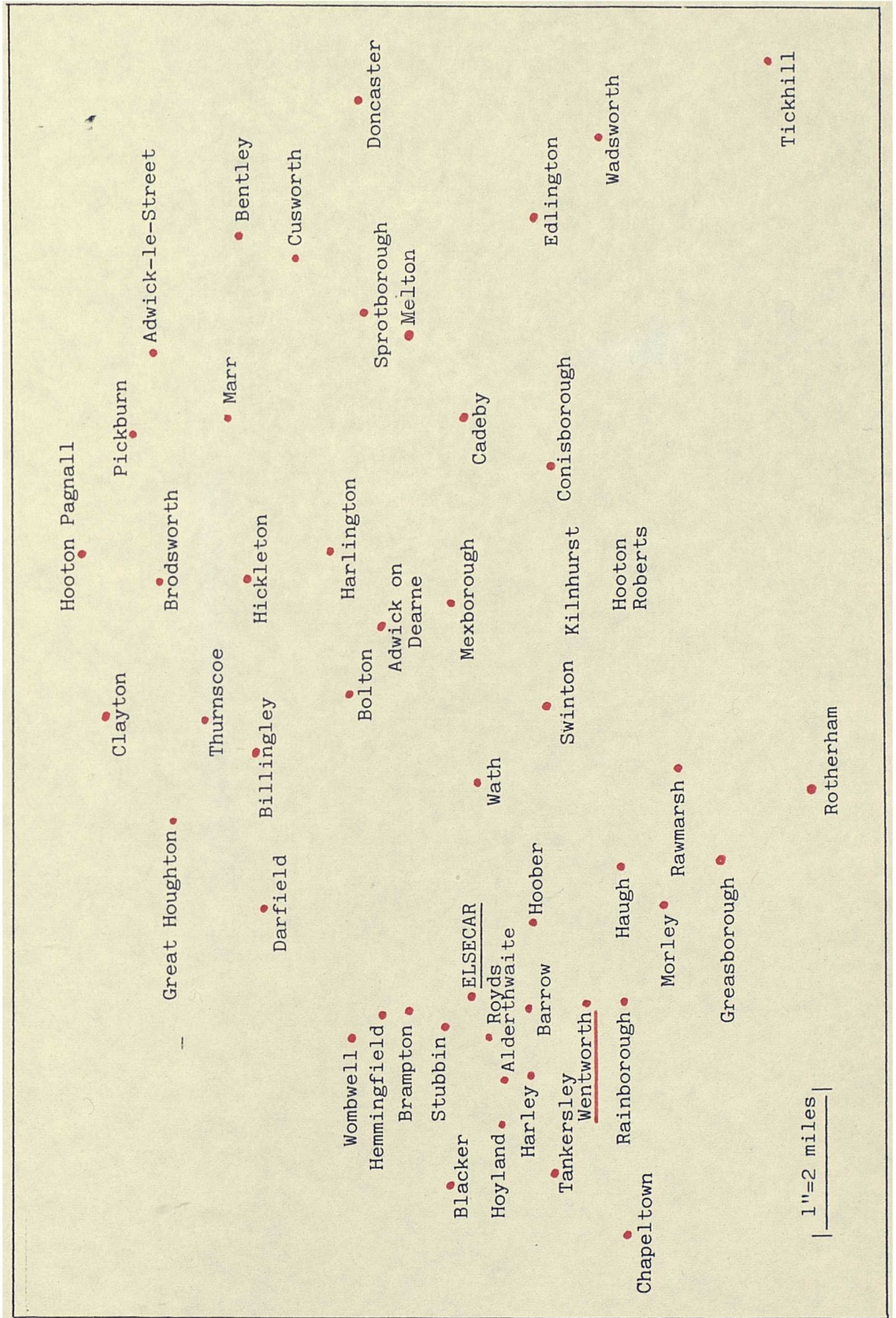
Wages of Ten Days behind him'. The pit had been bottomed and the other underground workers were in the process of 'sinking the Well in the Quarry at the Intake'. The new pit was $15\frac{1}{3}$ yards long and had cost 5s. a yard to prepare. The consolation was that 'the Coal is Exceedingly good in the new pit'.¹ By the end of the month Smith had sold $584\frac{1}{2}$ tons of coal but still had over 1,000 tons left.² He had collected only £20 of the money owed for the coal which was sold at 3s. 6d. per dozen³ so he was still owed £26. 17s. 10d. and had stocks to the value of £81 left.

The basic problem was the lack of easy transport. The roads near Elsecar pit were only poorly made and maintained local roads, and the turnpikes were some distance away so the pit relied almost totally on local trade. The map overleaf shows the extent of the sales area. It had scarcely extended in 1766, still concentrating on the immediate vicinity of the pit.⁴ It seems clear that Elsecar was one of the few pits on the Barnsley seam which produced any volume of coal: the coal was sold in places where there are now pits in existence. Sales continued to increase. Between 2nd February and 16th June 1753 their value was over £317 but by 11th August there was so much coal stock-piled that Smith closed the pit for eight weeks, until 6th October.⁵

The workers at the pit were allowed one pull, or $3\frac{1}{2}$ cwt, of coal a week for the getting price of $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. for their domestic fires according to custom⁶ and the marquis continued the practice of holding an

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1. W.W.M. F95-5. Smith to Rockingham, 2nd December 1752.
 2. W.W.M. F95-6. Smith to Rockingham, 30th December 1752.
 3. 1 dozen = 42 cwt.
 4. W.W.M. A 1585. Coal sales, Elsecar colliery, 1765-66.
 5. W.W.M. F95-15. Accounts for 11th August to 6th October show a nil return for coals got, and Smith told Rockingham, 6th October 1753 'we have pull'd no Coals by Reason of being Over Stock'd'.
 6. W.W.M. R98-8.

COAL SALES FROM ELSECAR COLLIERY IN 1753 (W.W.M. F96-15)



annual coal feast. The bill for the feast of 1769 was £2. 1s. 1½d. and included malt and hops - presumably the beer was brewed at Wentworth - beef, veal, bread and butter and 1ld. for pipes and tobacco.¹

In its first year of operation Elsecar pit produced a clear profit of £194 in spite of the eight-week stoppage² even though it was competing with Lowwood pit which was leased from Rockingham by Richard Bingley. Lowwood was doing better than Elsecar because 'their Roads Both Level and Better repaired [sic] than Some of our Roads are'.³ Again, the importance of good communications may be stressed and perhaps it was for this reason that Rockingham became so involved with turnpikes, navigation and canals soon afterwards.

In June 1754 Thomas Smith bought and erected a two-horse gin which was working by 15th July. This eased the job of the hurrier but the horses were still paid 5d for the loads they pulled up the shaft: the gin-boy also got 5d a day.⁴ The pit had five shafts by 1757 and was ventilated by a furnace and firebasket, although natural ventilation was helped by the upward slope of the land. Firedamp was a problem: Michael Hague - possibly a relation of Joseph Hague the stacker-cum-account-keeper - was paid 1s. 3d. in 1769 for 'clearing the methane with a fire-pan'. One large source of coal sales was to the marquis himself at Wentworth, Higham Ferrers, Malton and London. He had coal sent via the Don Navigation and Derwent Navigation to his pocket borough for sale there and he also sent coal by sea to London via Kilnhurst and Hull. William Malpass was often used as the haulier at Kilnhurst and dealt with the Hull shippers for Rockingham.⁵

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1. W.W.M. F98-8. Charges for the coal feast.
 2. W.W.M. F96-18. Review of the year's accounts, 1752-53.
 3. W.W.M. F95-11. Smith to Rockingham, 21st May 1753.
 4. W.W.M. F95-23.
 5. W.W.M. R174-29b. Coals to London, 9th September 1764.

The pit was out of production again in 1770, this time for twenty weeks, due to over-stocking and lack of sales. The employees were put to work hedging, ditching, road-building and harvesting. It would seem likely that the colliers helped in the fields every harvest since coal production fell in September and October when the heavy and important work of reaping and haymaking was done.

In 1757 Rockingham leased Bassingthorpe pits to William and Thomas Fenton, for which they paid £324 p.a. The lease was renewed in 1759 at a new rate of £648 p.a.¹ The Fentons had the lease of the Derwent Navigation already and had interests in the woollen industry and were corn merchants too. The Don Navigation provided their outlet for the coal mined at Bassingthorpe, Parkgate and Carr House pits. They built lime kilns at Cinderbridge and became involved in the lime-burning industry. The magnesian limestone which was found to the east of Wentworth/Rotherham was used as a fertiliser but was also used in the iron-making process as was the coal they produced. Furthermore, they would probably have used their own coal for burning the lime which may well have been brought from Sprotborough and Doncaster via the Don Navigation. The Fentons built wagonways from their pits to the Don Navigation but after it had been built, used the marquis' canal from Cinderbridge to the Don. By 1773 the Fentons had sent 20,000 wagons of coal down the Don: about half their total output.

When Richard Bingley's lease of Elsecar pit expired in 1752 he still kept control of Lowwood pit at an annual rent of £133. 17s. 6d.²

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1. The information on the Fentons is taken variously from J. Goodchild, 'Coal Kings of Yorkshire', Wakefield Historical Publications (1978), 27-34, and G.G. Hopkinson, 'The Development of the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Coalfield 1500-1775', Trans. Hunter Arch. Soc., 7 (1957), 195-319.
 2. W.W.M. A 234.

This was reduced to £124. 19s. 0d. in 1761¹ but in 1764 the lease terminated and the marquis took control himself under the management of Michael Bisby. By the 1770s Lowwood had a deep level and a basset level and was driven into the hillside towards Coaley Lane and the Needle's Eye monument. Coal from the pit was sent to Grosvenor Square when the Don Navigation was open to traffic: this was a problem in 1763² but generally Lowwood was more profitable than Elsecar. Between June 1765 and June 1766 the total profit was £413. 9s. 4d.³ In 1775 it had risen to £564. 6s. 6d. and by 1781 reached over £1,169. Like Elsecar, Lowwood sales were mostly local. The Marquis of Rockingham bought coal for estate use at the home farms at Frierhouse, Woodnook and Street, at the house itself; for the gardens, Temple Hill and the malkiln.⁴ To ease transportation costs of the coal to Rotherham he spent almost £20 having the lane to Stump Cross, at Coaley Lane end, repaired along its length of forty-seven roods - 258½ yards. The amount of nails used at Lowwood is extraordinary. Granted that the shoring was made of wood and all the constructions were wooden including the gin, one can see that nails were indispensable but what was done with 4,500 nails in a period of six weeks is difficult to explain.⁵

Rockingham kept a close watch on what went on in his collieries even to the extent of working out the cheapest methods of transport and the differing amounts of coal sold at the pits. A Lowwood dozen was eighty-four cubic feet while a Parkgate wagon was ninety-six cubic feet, for example. As he astutely noted, '96 cubic feet is 12 cubic feet more

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1. W.W.M. A 238.
 2. W.W.M. R186-2. William Martin to Rockingham, 25th October 1765.
 3. W.W.M. R192. William Martin's accounts.
 4. W.W.M. A 1579. Lowwood coal sales 1780.
 5. W.W.M. F99b. Robert Watson's nail account.
 6. W.W.M. F7-25. Undated note by Rockingham.

than 84 ergo ls. 7d.'.¹ The point of his notes was to work out that Lowwood prices were inflated by the cost of transporting the coal four miles from the pit to Cinderbridge: the note must have been made in 1780 or later because the only good reason for shifting coal to Cinderbridge would be to send it down the canal.

Besides Elsecar and Lowwood pits, which he kept in hand himself, Rockingham had a substantial annual income from leasing pits. Furthermore, he always made sure that the number of colliers to be employed was written into the agreement so his lessees could not overproduce and either cut the price of coal or deprive him of his markets.²

Lessee	Colliery	Number of Employees	Rent p.a.
John Bowden	Carr House	12	£ s d 252- 0- 0
Richard Bingley	Lowwood (to 1763)	7	133-17- 6
William Finney	Orgreave	1	10- 0- 0
W. & T. Fenton	Bassingthorpe	16	324 (648 in 1761)
John Hall & Co.	Elsecar, Kilnhurst		340- 0- 0
J. & W. Parkin	Bolsterstone		3-10- 0
C. Fairham	Westwood		70- 0- 0
Mrs. Jackson	Cortwood (to 1760)	4	31- 0- 0

The agreement drawn up between Rockingham and John Bowden, who leased Carr House pit, was for a period of ten years but clearly the marquis was concerned that he was not getting a fair deal. He had agreed not to open another colliery which might prejudice the sale of Bowden's coal so long as Bowden leased the pit, which he could leave at any time if the coal ran out. It seems that the coal measures ran under someone else's land at one point because the marquis reckoned it would cost him two hundred guineas to buy the 'intervening coal' so Bowden could mine it.³ He queried

1. W.W.M. F70-25. Undated note by Rockingham.

2. W.W.M. A 234 and A 238. Collieries 1759 and 1761.

3. W.W.M. F96-3. Rockingham's notes, undated.

whether it might not be more adviseable /sic/ for me to drop the Colliery he now works as he possibly would agree to take another of me at the same rate of 240 G per Ann/um/ for Five Years - providing after that Term he will agree to give me up the Lease and Covenants by which I am bound to open no Collierys /sic/ within the above-mentioned districts. 1

He also thought that the rent should be at least doubled under a new lease because 'at the Time the Lease was given & Rent fix't Coals sold at 4d per Doz they now sell at 8d per Doz'.

In 1752 Lord Rockingham received a proposal from John Macye of Ballifield for renting the colliery at Hooton Roberts. Macye wanted to make a trial bore at his own expense and if he liked what he found, wanted to pay £12 p.a. per getter with a lease of twenty-one years. This meant at least £96 p.a. rent since he intended to employ no less than eight getters. He also wanted permission to drain the pit with an engine to be given land for a wharf at the river and for a 'rail road' to the wharf; to be able to employ as many men as he wanted to 'make Gobbins or packings ... to drive level headings and load and barrow coal'; to have land 'at a reasonable rent' for his horses and to be given any coals got during his trials.² The marquis understandably turned down the proposal.

To make sure that he could compete with other coal-owners the marquis kept a record of what was going on elsewhere. He noted that Mr. Lee of Limes paid his colliers 14d per cwt. and his hurriers 6d; that coke was sold for 3s. 6d. per cart-load and he paid the coker 1s. a cart load.³ He also had discovered that in Manchester the best coals sold at 5d per cwt. but would have been 8d except for the Bridgewater

1. W.W.M. F96-3. Rockingham's notes, undated.
2. W.W.M. F96-7. John Macye to Rockingham, 23rd January 1752.
3. W.W.M. R174-2. Rockingham's notes, 1764.

Canal. It was during the same period that he became interested in canal construction for perhaps fairly obvious reasons: he reckoned that at Parkgate the coal at the pit-head could not cost more than 3s. 5½d. per dozen but to make a profit by taking the coal to the town the price would need to rise to 6s. 0½d. per dozen, or 2d per cwt.¹ The coal at Parkgate was mined by John Fenton and a Mr. Hirst. In the period 1771-72 they sent 34,656 wagonloads of coal down the Don Navigation and in 1773-74 shipped out 36,754 wagonloads.² They also sold coal locally so their output was high.

A member of the Royal Society, Rockingham was interested in things scientific; a landowner with an eye to earning money, he was interested in new developments. The two came together in about 1762 when he had the notion of 'extracting the Oil and Pitch of Coal in a Commercial View'.³ The document deals at length with the requirements and logistics involved in such a scheme and in the same year the marquis experimented with Lowwood and Cortworth coal.⁴ Using a hundredweight of coal from each pit, and working over a twenty-four hour period, Lowwood coal produced 70lb. coke, 1½ gallons of water and half a gallon of oil. Cortworth coal produced 71lb. coke, two gallons of water and a gallon of oil.

Limeburning was another area where he tried to save money. Bringing in lime from the nearby magnesian limestone deposits was expensive because of the poor state of roads to Kilnhurst and the Don Navigation. He was concerned at the time - and hence money-wasted in transporting coal to the Don and lime to the estates and wondered whether a three-wheeled wagon drawn by four horses could make the five-mile journey

1. W.W.M. F70-5. Rockingham's notes, undated.

2. W.W.M. F70-25. Quantities of coal sent down the Don Navigation from Parkgate.

3. W.W.M. R175-1. Undated, undesignated, unsigned.

x 3. W.W.M. R175-3. Rockingham's experiment data, 1762.

three times in a day. The answer was 'yes', provided he had a stable at Kilnhurst,¹ and he would gain 12s. a day. Malpass charged him 2s. 4d. per chaldron of lime whereas if Rockingham used his own lime from Hooton Roberts it would only cost 7d per chaldron [̄a chaldron was three tons], plus carting from Hooton. Shortly after making these calculations Rockingham began burning his own lime in kilns at Lowwood where the coal was readily available and cheap.

He also began making his own bricks and pantiles, having decided it was cheaper than buying them. First he checked on what the Duke of Bridgewater was paying to produce his bricks and then worked out the cost for himself.² Pantiles were going to cost 16s. per thousand; bricks would cost 5s. 6d. per thousand. He intended to sell them at £1. 5s. 0d. and 9s. per thousand respectively. He therefore employed one Mr. Flint to look out a place near coal deposits, turnpikes and Wentworth where pantiles could be made. He appears to have wanted to use pantiles himself too because they were 'cheaper than the slates we now fetch from Bolsterstone'.³

The Canal

The marquis found a use for the ponds which had been made in Wentworth park. The three ponds were fed by several streams and the Mill Dam provided water to drive the mill at the east end. From there the water escaped to the River Don. By 1762 a wagonway had been built from the Don to just south of Wentworth park and Bassingthorpe so that the coal mined there could be more easily transported to the Don Navigation, and so to more distant markets. The Duke of Bridgewater had proved that the expense of constructing a canal was far outweighed by

1. W.W.M. R174-4. Rockingham's notes, July 1764.

2. W.W.M. R174-2 and R174-1. Rockingham's notes, July 1764.

3. W.W.M. R174-1.

the benefits and it is not surprising to find that in 1769 the Marquis of Rockingham commissioned John Varley, one of Brindley's assistants, to survey the land and estimate the cost of building a canal from Cinder-bridge at the end of the Mill Dam to the Don Navigation. Varley proposed a $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile long canal with three locks but the plans were put aside and nothing was done until 1775 when the marquis employed John Smeaton to re-survey the line of the canal.¹ However, in October 1764 the marquis clearly had some idea about the possibility of a canal since he made detailed notes about distances and the fall of the land.² From Cinder-bridge to the Don was just over $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles with a land fall of only $41'1\frac{3}{4}''$ but he also seems to have intended, even at this early stage, to have had a branch leading to Swallow Wood pit.³

Smeaton's survey estimated the cost at £3,952 which included the use of £1,000 worth of Rockingham's own land. It also allowed for three locks. This plan was never undertaken. By 1778 William Fairbank was re-surveying the land although he also undertook an extensive survey of all the estates for the marquis.⁴ It was Fairbank's plans which were eventually used for the canal.

Early in 1779 negotiations were opened with various landowners to acquire the necessary land for the canal. The marquis tried to either exchange or purchase land so the canal could follow the straightest possible route. Most people lost very little: Thomas Rhodes lost over an acre, Peter Smith lost one perch of meadow. Thomas Whiteley, who lost over six acres, came off worst. Many of those who held lands along

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1. J. Goodchild, 'Coal Kings', p. 30 and Charles Hadfield, Canals of Yorkshire and North East England, 2 vols (Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1972), 1 p. 81.
 2. W.W.M. R174-3. Rockingham's notes, October 1764.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Fairbank Collection of maps at Sheffield City Libraries.

the line of the canal were tenants of the marquis and so had very little say in whether they lost land or not. Others like the Feoffes of Rotherham or Francis Ferrand Foljambe had to be given land in exchange.¹

Foljambe was a difficult man to deal with. He owned lands at Aldwarke in Rotherham and was a political supporter of the marquis but was kept on the periphery of the group. Rockingham had written to Foljambe asking for an exchange of land and Foljambe duly surveyed his holdings in Cortworth, Greasborough and Lower Haugh. He had put the details 'into Mr. Anderson's hands in order to make out the quantity, Valuation &c. for your Lordship's inspection'.² Unfortunately there is a gap in the correspondence between the two men until April 1779 but it is clear that Foljambe was being somewhat unhelpful. He was not prepared to exchange thirty perches of land [165 yards] at Greasborough Ings for a similar amount of land elsewhere. The marquis' reply is one of sheer exasperation: 'As so much difficulty had arisen in regard to the exchange of your small bit of land in Graresborough [sic] Ings, I quite give up all expectation of the more considerable exchange of your Land in Cortworth and Grearsborough [sic']'.³ Eventually all the necessary land was acquired by foul means rather than fair. Jessop sought and received permission to use land belonging to the Rawmarsh churchwardens, the Rotherham poor guardians and Samuel Tooker but was not prepared to wait any longer for Foljambe to make up his mind. 'I thought it advisable to lose no more time but to cut through it [i.e. Foljambe's bit of land] before Mr. Foljambe was aware of it'.⁴ Jessop had done this without Rockingham's knowledge and was prepared to take the blame so 'they can

1. Fairbank Collection.

2. W.W.M. R1-1791. Foljambe to Rockingham, 15th November 1778.

3. W.W.M. R1-1822. Rockingham to Foljambe, 26th April 1779.

4. W.W.M. R1-1824. Jessop to Rockingham, 4th May 1779.

look to your Lordship for nothing but an adequate satisfaction'.¹ In May 1779 William Jessop, a pupil of Smeaton, began to build the canal although his plan - and the completed project - had four locks and a reservoir. The canal was probably completed by 1780 because Rockingham paid land tax on it for the first time in 1782: just before he died, so he had little benefit from it. A completed map of the canal appears in the Fairbank Collection for 1783.² The main canal ended at Cinderbridge where lime kilns had been built but a short spur was built to Sough Bridge. From these terminals, tramways ran to the pits rented by the Fentons at Squirrel Castle and White Gates. The Ochre Dike ran alongside this spur. The map overleaf shows the line of the canal.³ Town Lane [marked in green] runs downhill all the way to the spur of the canal as does the road from the old sough [marked in purple]. The original coach roads are marked in brown and the new turnpike roads in red. It will be noted that the coal pits are within easy access of a road leading to the canal as are many of the quarries. At the canal head at Cinderbridge was the Ship Inn where the bargemen could find accommodation if necessary.⁴

The Estate and the Local Economy

Lord Rockingham paid his servants irregularly but at least they were guaranteed food and clothing as part of their wages. His irregular settling - or non-payment - of bills to local tradesmen was more of a problem.

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1. W.W.M. R1-1824. Jessop to Rockingham, 4th May 1779.
 2. Fairbank Collection.
 3. Since the map is part of the 1851 Ordnance Survey, features such as the Midland Railway appear which did not exist in 1778. Other features such as the tramways have disappeared and are impossible to trace. The coke ovens at Mangham were built by the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam.
 4. The Ship Inn was converted into cottages later, but they have been demolished in the past thirty years.



SCALE: 6" = 1 mile.

In 1766 William Martin sent a letter to Rockingham stating that more outstanding accounts amounting to over £343 could be added to the last outstanding accounts of over £2,518. Rockingham owed £2,834. 14s. 2½d. to a host of local manufacturers, labourers and workmen about whom Martin was becoming concerned. 'There is scarce ever a day passes but some of them are applying for there [sic] Money and the Labourers and other Workmen was Really a many [sic] of them in great distress'.¹ Martin's comments apparently went unheeded. Two years later he again wrote to the marquis suggesting that his employer should put the payment of his bills onto a 'regular plan' so that the debts could be cleared. Martin thought that if the marquis paid regularly he would obtain better service and would know what his commitments were.² One wonders how suppliers managed to continue when one sees the size of the debt owed by Rockingham although it has been suggested that they all overcharged, knowing their payments would be delayed.³ A sample of debts [overleaf] will give some indication of the size of the problem.⁴ By March 1769 Rockingham owed £3,063. 13s. 3d. mainly to local suppliers who could probably ill-afford the sums they were owed. Things were little better by 1771. Some of the larger bills had some payments made but the total debt had risen by £700 and the number of creditors had increased.⁵ John Carr the architect was paid two years' wages in one fell swoop but the Milnes were still owed £239.

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1. W.W.M. R186-10. Martin to Rockingham, 22nd February 1766.
 2. W.W.M. R186-34. Martin to Rockingham, 21st December 1768.
 3. This information was given to me by Paul Nunn. Since then, Dr. Nunn has presented his work, 'The Management of some South Yorkshire Landed Estates in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, linked with the central economic development of the area: 1700-1850' (University of Sheffield Ph.D. thesis, 1985). I am grateful to Dr. Nunn for permission to use his research prior to its presentation.
 4. W.W.M. R102-39. Debts, 25th March 1769.
 5. W.W.M. R187-40. Debts, 26th April 1771.

Creditor	Goods	Date of first Account	Debt in Dec. 1768 £ s d	Debt contracted in 1768 £ s d	Total £ s d
Milnes of Wakefield	cloth	April 1767	294- 7-10	29- 3- 8	323-11- 6
Booth & Walker of Rotherham	iron	October 1766	56- 0- 7	20-13- 3	76-13-10
Richard Eyre of Rotherham	sadler's work	running a/c		41-13- 3	41-13- 3
Joseph Ross	plasterer's work	1762	156-14- 6½		156-14- 6½
John Tyas of Rotherham	groceries	Jan. 1768	94- 0- 0	25-00- 0	115- 0- 0
James Catton	wages	Nov. 1767	15- 8- 2		15- 8- 2
Benjamin Blaydes Thompson		Jul. 1768	162-16- 9	69-12- 9	232- 8- 9

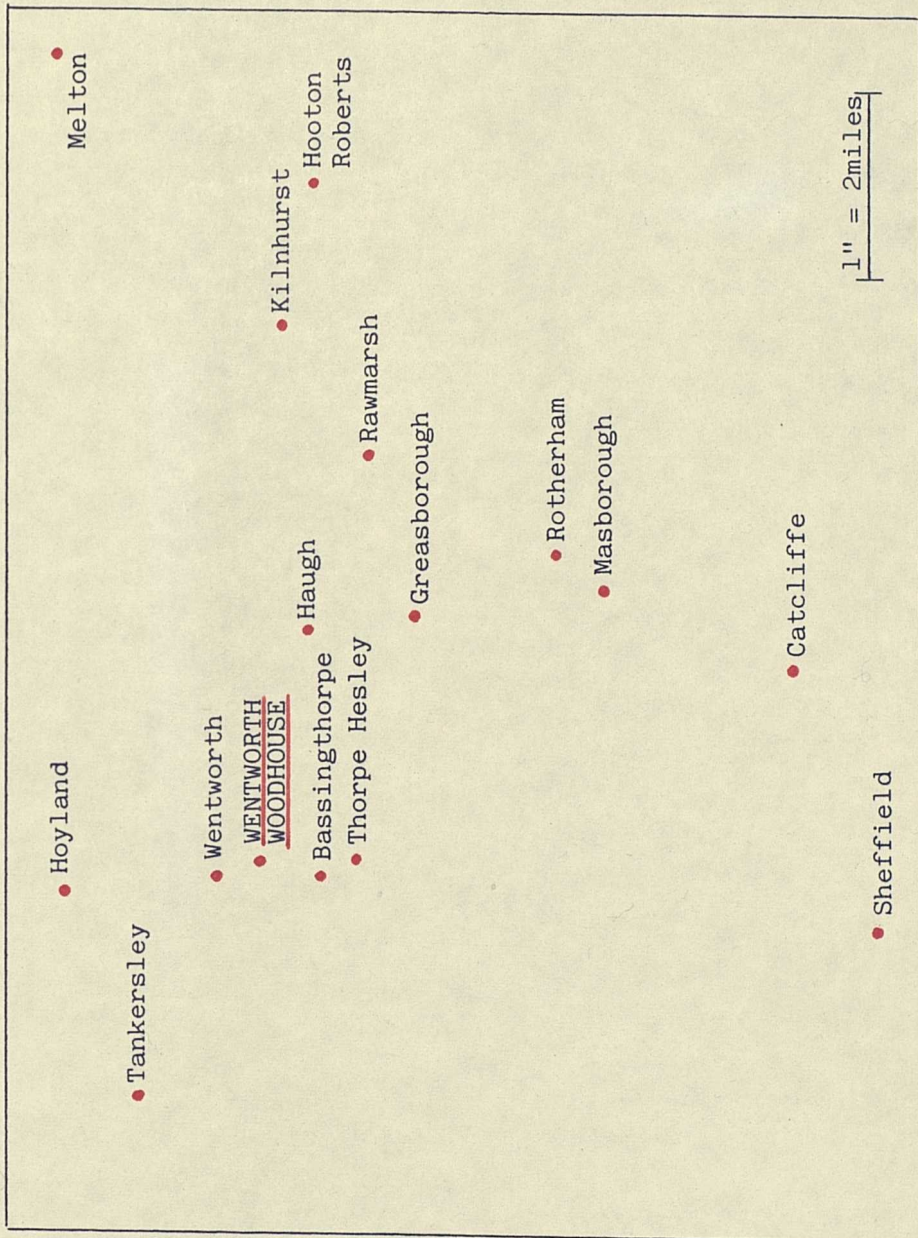
Rockingham's indebtedness: March 1769.

Most of the requirements for the house and estates were supplied locally.¹ Sheffield understandably was the main source of cutlery, and nails were obtained from a number of suppliers who probably produced them as part-time employment. Samuel Walker was frequently used as the supplier of iron and iron goods, which again is understandable as he owned the largest ironworks in Rotherham. Glassware was obtained from John May of Catcliffe where a glass-kiln operated, and stationery came from Sheffield companies. Ralph Hodgkinson was the Sheffield druggist whom Rockingham used to supply his medicines and sweets. His purchases between May 1775 and August 1778 from Hodgkinson were many and varied: they included 56 lb. glue [possibly for the scagliola work], 'ingredients for the Bite of a Mad Dog', clyster pipes [for enemas], syringes, ½lb. mercury, Pontefract cakes, sugar candy, laudanum and 4oz. alkanet root, from which a red dye could be obtained.² Pottery was bought from the Swinton pottery and from another in Rawmarsh. Grain, hay and straw were purchased from a number of places in the area. The map overleaf shows the location of Rockingham's suppliers in 1766 although the pattern of purchasing locally changed very little in twenty years, and frequently the same tradesmen were used over this period.³

Rockingham did not buy locally for the sake of it. He went to the best supplier and checked that he was getting value for money. An undated memorandum which he made compared the price of a musket, bayonet and scabbard, cartridge box and belts produced by Thomas Richards of Birmingham and by Thomas Smith of Sheffield. Smith asked 6s. 6d. more than Richards for the weapon which was 3'6" long with a 16" bay-

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1. W.W.M. A 1099. Business payments for 1766.
 2. W.W.M. A 1100. Suppliers in 1772.
 3. Ibid.

WENTWORTH WOODHOUSE : LOCAL PURCHASES



onet.¹ It is possible that these were to be used by the Yorkshire militia; it is difficult to believe that the marquis wanted a musket and bayonet for his own use. The weapons may even have been intended for the Wicklow Volunteers.

It is no surprise to discover that tenants at Greasborough and Wentworth particularly, but also from other nearby villages, supplied the Wentworth Woodhouse establishment with a variety of services. Richard Stancel rented a cottage and land in Hoyland and was also the schoolmaster there. The marquis paid him £5. 10s. 0d. p.a. and he then paid some of that back in rents.² Benjamin Burgon of Wentworth made the charity clothes for the children in the various schools which Rockingham supported besides being the resident upholsterer, and he was assisted with the charity clothes by Thomas Blackamore. Benjamin Gothard of Wentworth supplied nails; John Smith of Greasborough supplied bricks. Gorbott Hole of Wentworth made charity clothes and made and mended clothes for 'Dumb Jack'. His wife Mary was employed as a feigher at Frierhouse. John Uttley rented land at Wentworth, Tankersley and Hoyland and was a mason, being employed as such on the paddock stables. William Poles of Hoyland, Wentworth and Brampton supplied halters and packthread; Richard Beardshall provided stay spades and cow drinks.³

In spite of Rockingham's indebtedness the mere existence of the estate is likely to have generated trade in both the villages around Wentworth and in Sheffield and Rotherham. Sheffield silver-platers could sell their wares to Wentworth in the knowledge that their craftsmanship would be seen by other aristocratic families who might also

1. W.W.M. Stw. P. 12a-29 and 30. Undated memo by Rockingham.
2. W.W.M. A 221, A 222 and A 1099.
3. W.W.M. A 222. Tenants supplying goods to Wentworth, 1751.

purchase from them. Similarly the Swinton potteries benefited although Rockingham ware became popular only after the marquis' death. Stonemasons were kept busy building the stables, repairing and altering the house, repairing and building walls and erecting monuments on the estate. Colliers, farmworkers, servants, gardeners, craftsmen and stablelads were all drawn from the villages of Wentworth and Greasborough, were paid and then spent their money locally thus invigorating the rural economy, especially in craftsmen's trades where normally there would have been little demand for their skills.

To judge from the picture which emerges of Lord Rockingham one might conclude that anyone living in and around Wentworth was luckier than most. The marquis was a keen improver and experimenter on his farms and encouraged his tenants to copy his methods. He introduced the latest equipment and invented implements of his own. In times of hardship and illness he could be relied upon to help those in need. The rents he charged were fair and tenants were given long leases so that they would maintain their property and undertake land improvements such as drainage and fertilizing.

The estate was exploited for its coal and iron reserves and the woods became profitable as well as being conserved for future generations. Savings were made by the domestic production of bricks, pantiles, lime, tar and pitch as well as the quarrying of estate stone for the building projects he undertook. The wages he paid were comparable with, if not higher than those of his contemporaries and the existence of the house and lands stimulated the local economy quite considerably.

The marquis not only kept an eye on his stewards but also double-checked the accounts, worked out his own estimates and planned money-saving schemes like the canal. He was quick to remove dishonest stewards and servants but took care of the reliable ones. He appears

to have been a caring employer and was generous in his support of the charity schools and hospitals. Doubtless he could have done more where other charities were concerned and probably also with land improvement, but it is difficult to see how he could have done more in many areas such as caring for his dependants and developing his estates.

Eighteenth-century society operated on a hierarchical system which largely depended on 'everyone knowing his place' in the absence of a civilian police-force to detect crime and apprehend criminals, and on a reciprocal relationship between the upper and lower orders. Part of the rôle of the upper class was to maintain law and order through the somewhat antiquated legal mechanisms. Equally the lower orders expected help in time of hardship and looked to their 'betters' for such help. If assistance was not forthcoming they would make their dissatisfaction felt - forcibly and possibly through riot.¹

Rockingham was fully aware that his privileged position carried duties and responsibilities, and knew that one of these responsibilities was to protect and care for his dependants. He was also duty-bound to help the poor. In doing these things he was fulfilling his rôle in society but also he was being eminently sensible. The mere act of taking care of his tenants, servants, local inhabitants and the poor of the several nearby parishes helped to strengthen the magnate/lower orders' relationship and to prevent large scale unrest. To have ignored such an essential obligation of the 'lord' would have weakened the fabric of deferential society, on which so much depended in country areas.

Rockingham was typical of many landowners in that he had the parkland landscaped and erected follies and obelisks on the land. His extensions and building projects such as the stables - his major work - created employment as did the demand for a multitude of servants and farm labourers

1. E.P. Thompson, Whigs and Hunters (London, Allen Lane, Penguin Books Ltd., 1975), pp. 258-269; David Roberts, Paternalism in Early Victorian England (London, Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 15-22.

His cultivation of exotic plants and the development of the greenhouses was another feature of some landowners as were the keeping of a menagerie and aviary. He preferred Wentworth to almost anywhere else and enjoyed overseeing his estates to the extent that he wanted regular reports in his absence. On many occasions he supervised leases himself for farms and collieries, apparently not trusting his steward to deal competently with the matter.

Rockingham must rank among the best landowners for estate development, building projects, resource exploitation and consideration for his dependants as well as for many other areas of estate management, and he could be cited as a good example of an improving and progressive eighteenth-century landowner. That is impressive in itself. The Marquis of Rockingham was not only a landed magnate with an interest in agricultural improvement, however. He was also a leading local and national politician and the focus of law and order in Yorkshire. His work at Wentworth was only part of the achievement of the man.

CHAPTER 3

ROCKINGHAM AS LOCAL MAGNATE

There can be no doubt that Lord Rockingham was master of the Wentworth Woodhouse estates and that his word was law, but how far his pre-eminence spread outside the estates is open to exploration. Landowners held a virtual monopoly of government from Westminster down to local offices as magistrates and parish overseers, and were often in a position to influence the appointments of others. The most important landowner could expect to be appointed as Lord Lieutenant of his county and thus have control of the appointment of Commissioners of the Peace and the Grand Jury. He would call out the militia in times of need and would be the point of contact between court and county.

Such an important person might expect to be called upon to lend his support in a multitude of local affairs, from implementing the laws against Catholics and Dissenters to approving the construction of turnpikes. It would be usual to find his friends being appointed to various positions because of his 'recommending' persons to others. Furthermore, he might use his local influence to increase his political following in the county.

This chapter will look at the part played by the Marquis of Rockingham in the area immediately around Wentworth. Wentworth Woodhouse was the largest landed estate in south Yorkshire and apart from the years 1762 to 1765 Rockingham was Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding, which gave him a great deal of power in the county. This was enhanced by his status as an active national politician leading the largest opposition group in parliament from his seat in the House of Lords.

Religious Toleration

The mid-eighteenth century was a time of increasing religious toleration. One reason could have been that the Anglican Settlement had of necessity been breached on the accession of William III: the

Calvinist king could scarcely have been penalised for nonconformity. The Toleration Act of 1689 freed nonconformists from the operation of the penal laws as long as they took the oath of loyalty and the declaration against transubstantiation although they were still debarred from office under the Test and Corporation Acts. The Occasional Conformity Act of 1711 imposed penalties on any office-holder found attending a Dissenting service, in an effort to prevent those Dissenters who had occasionally received Communion according to Anglican rites from evading the Test Act. After 1727 the almost annual Indemnity Acts allowed Dissenters to take Anglican sacraments after, instead of before, election to office, but some Dissenters still found the regulations irksome and in the 1780s there was a renewed campaign for their repeal. Furthermore, the hope of freedom of worship among Dissenters was raised after 1714 since the Whigs began to look for support among their ranks. The Dissenters were becoming an increasingly important section of the community, especially in the industrial towns.¹

Because Dissenters were prevented from holding offices, they turned to trade, manufacturing and industry - the only avenues left open to them. None of this formal toleration was extended to Roman Catholics since they were still seen as traitors bound by allegiance to a foreign prince; the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 did little to ease the situation.

A remarkable number of Lord Rockingham's friends and political supporters were Dissenters. Dr. Fothergill and Richard Champion were

1. S.C. Carpenter, Eighteenth Century Church and People (London, John Murray, 1959), p. 89.

both Quakers, for example;¹ the Milnes family of Wakefield were Dissenters;² the Johnsons of Barley Hall were Methodists. Many of the local tradespeople with whom the marquis did business were also Dissenters. Samuel Walker the ironmaster was an Independent, having broken from Wesley's Methodists; Samuel Shore the ironmaster and John Roebuck³ were both Sheffield-born Dissenters.

The Marquis of Rockingham was brought up as an Anglican and held a deep conviction that he had a duty to use his position and wealth for the benefit of others, which may well account for his concern towards both his tenants and the poor. The practice of his convictions can be seen in the marquis' actions and attitudes; the outward signs - or lack of them - caused Lady Rockingham much anguish. She had to urge him to receive Holy Communion more regularly since he was 'most negligent' in regard to the Easter obligation 'yet I am confident tis not from the Heart that you slight y/ou'r Religion, nor is it from ignorance ... but it is from a too great worldly disposition'.⁴ Perhaps her scolding succeeded. While he was visiting Sir John Griffin the marquis wrote that he had heard a 'very Good Sermon on Sunday' in the gothic chapel which had 'painted glass windows &c'.⁵

Part of Rockingham's inheritance were the advowsons of twenty-

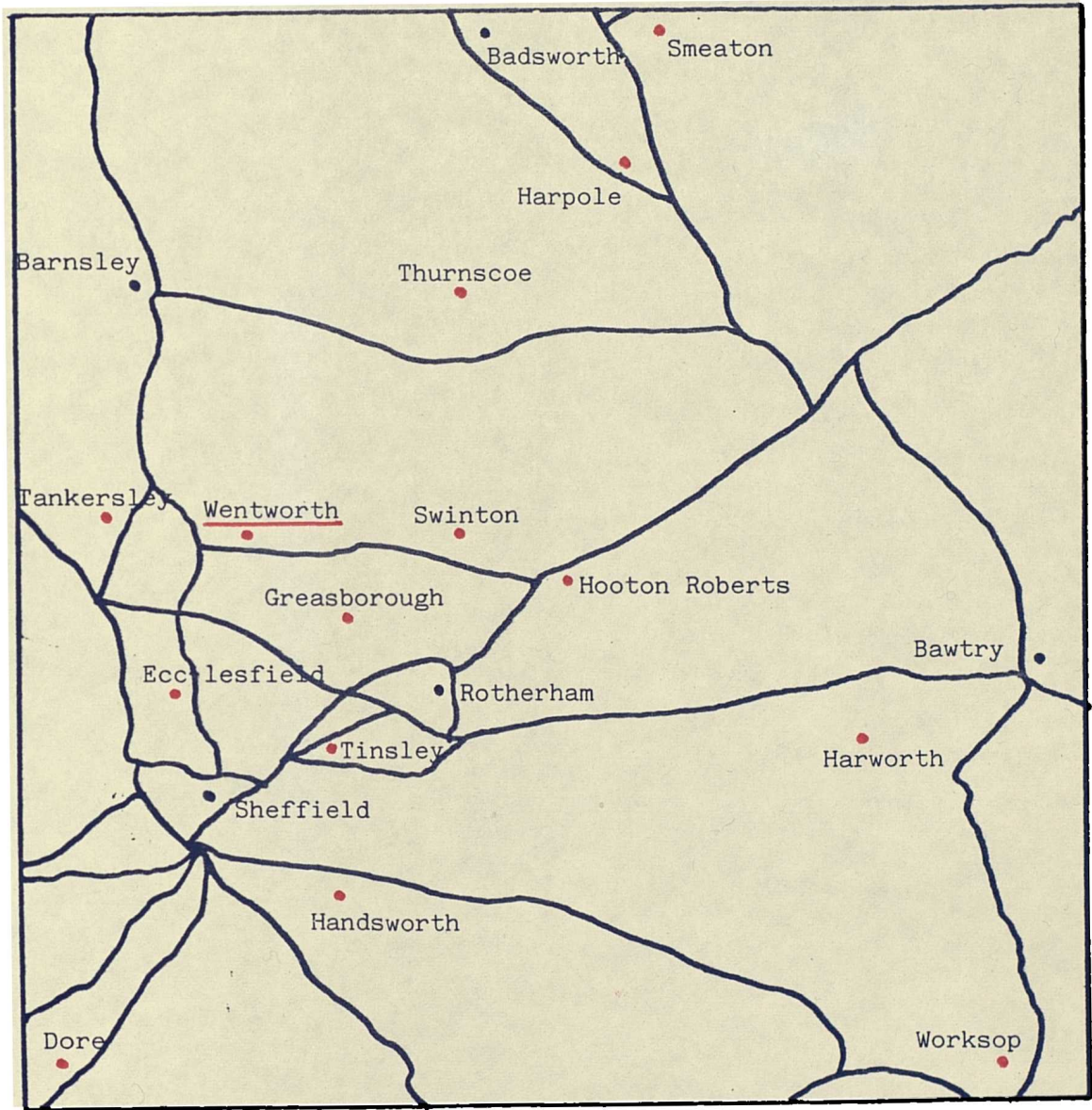
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1. Dr. John Fothergill was a Quaker physician and radical and a friend of Benjamin Franklin. He came from a landed Yorkshire family and was Rockingham's physician for a time. Fothergill knew many Americans and supported Rockingham's repeal of the Stamp Act. Richard Champion was a Bristol merchant and porcelain manufacturer and was a friend of Edmund Burke. He wrote regularly to Rockingham and passed on news from America in the period 1765-80, to help Rockingham's cause.
 2. The Milnes family of Wakefield were woollen manufacturers who traded with America. All were active in local affairs and were supporters of Rockingham.
 3. John Roebuck was the son of a Sheffield master-cutler. He studied medicine and became a manufacturers' consultant. He founded the Carron ironworks.
 4. W.W.M. R168-79. Lady to Lord Rockingham, 14th March 1761.
 5. W.W.M. R156-22. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 19th October 1773.

eight parishes, of which fourteen were in south Yorkshire.¹ The map [overleaf] shows their proximity to Wentworth. He collected tithes from Hooton Roberts, Brampton, Wentworth, Thorpe, Hoyland, Tankersley, Wath and Tinsley besides holding glebe land in Hooton Roberts.² Such advowsons were a method of giving patronage and it would have been easy to allocate a living to a friend or acquaintance instead of looking for a suitable candidate. In 1763 the Rev. Middlemore Griffith, rector of Treeton and Whiston, died. Although Rockingham did not have the advowson of the parish he received a number of letters asking for the living and the Archbishop of York wanted to know if the marquis intended to dispute his nomination of William Simpson.³ The others asked for livings for men such as James Wilkinson, the vicar of Sheffield; for a Mr. Dixon of Worsborough; and for a Mr. Drake of South Carolina.⁴

In 1767 Rockingham apologised to the Duke of Portland for his being 'troubled on the affair of the Living of Ecclesfield', one of the marquis' advowsons. It seems that a Mr. Howard had approached Portland on behalf of a Mr. Downes, who had been turned away by the marquis already. Downes was 'an admirable Sollicitor [sic] & has a large Family, but is not quite necessitous'. The present incumbent was expected to die 'and I have many Rev/[eren]d Divines whom I must assist & ... if I don't give Them the Livings which fall in my Gift as Patron - It may be Some Time before my friendship can be of any use to Them in procuring Crown or Chancellor's Livings for them'.⁵ Rockingham obviously tried to help his friends if possible.

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1. W.W.M. A 1273.
 2. W.W.M.A 234 and R-189.
 3. W.W.M. R1-384. Archbishop of York to Rockingham, 26th October 1763.
 4. W.W.M. R1-386, 388 and 390.
 5. PwF 8994. Rockingham to Portland, 17th December 1767.

THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE ADVOWNSONS OF THE
MARQUIS OF ROCKINGHAM



| 1" = 4 miles |

In 1782 when Rockingham was again Prime Minister he had so many requests and recommendations for livings that he compiled a book in alphabetical order to help him sort out the requests for patronage.¹ The requests were made by peers, parents and M.P.s for their candidates. For example, Lord Edward Bentinck asked that Mr. Hume should be made Prebendary of Worcester; Lord Jersey asked for any benefice for Mr. Alt; Mr. Barstow asked for any preferment for his son.² The book lists 279 people making recommendations and 408 candidates: the whole thing is cross-referenced and shows much painstaking work. Sadly the marquis did not live long enough to deal with the requests. The marquis paid the stipends of the clergy at Wentworth, Tankersley, Greasborough and Tinsley, all of which were pittances. The curate at Greasborough received £10 p.a. - rather less than the £14. 18s. 6d. which the marquis paid in window tax at Wentworth Woodhouse. Rockingham also held the lease of Malton rectory for which he was entitled to tithes. In 1760 the secretary to the Archbishop of York refused to renew the lease until the marquis paid £187. 10s. 0d. for nine years' rent arrears.³ An annual rent of little less than £21 should not have caused too many problems for a man of Rockingham's wealth, but paying debts was not one of his strong points.

Numbered among Rockingham's friends were two Archbishops of York and one Dean of York. Archbishop Matthew Hutton conducted the Marquis of Rockingham's marriage to Mary Bright and Robert Hay Drummond⁴ was politically active on the marquis' behalf. Dean John Fountayne was

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1. W.W.M. R115. Other politicians such as the Duke of Devonshire and Lord North also kept lists of those requesting patronage.
 2. W.W.M. R114.
 3. W.W.M. R172-28. R. Bewley to Rockingham, 5th September 1760.
 4. Robert Hay Drummond was Archbishop of York 1761-1776. His son Peter married Bridget Milnes, daughter of Pemberton Milnes of Wakefield. Drummond was a protégé of the Duke of Newcastle.

regularly visited by Rockingham and was also a politically active Whig. Usually the bishops supported the government. Yorkshire's ecclesiastics followed the consensus of the county and followed Rockingham.

The eighteenth century Anglican church failed to animate the bulk of the population not least because of pluralism and absentee clergy. The parochial system had been by-passed by a shift in the population and large towns were not provided with sufficient churches or clergy. The 'Age of Reason' meant the abandonment of ritual and mysticism. Churches were whitewashed and plain; sermons were very long; services were dull. Not surprisingly, John Wesley's new and different approach to Christianity had a huge impact where Anglicanism had proved inadequate.

In 1740 there were only a few score Methodists in Yorkshire; a chapel was built in Sheffield in 1741 only to be razed to the ground by a mob in 1743. By 1749 Sheffield had become the centre of a Methodist circuit with a membership of seventy.¹ Lord Rockingham came into contact with Methodism very early in life. In 1733 John Wesley visited Wentworth Woodhouse and preached a sermon there for the first marquis.² Since Charles was only three years old at the time, the event is unlikely to have made much impact on him, but Wesley was a frequent visitor to Barley Hall at Thorpe Hesley, just a few miles from Wentworth Woodhouse. He visited there annually between 1743 and 1746, for instance, and preached in Sheffield regularly.³ His message was well received by the skilled artisans of the town where Anglicans were unable or unwilling to evangelise the lower orders.

The Johnsons of Barley Hall were friends of the Rockinghams be-

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1. B. Greaves, 'An Analysis of the Spread of Methodism in Yorkshire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: 1740-1831' (University of Leeds M.A. thesis, 1961), pp. 7 and 38.
 2. M.H. Habershon, Chapelton Researches (Sheffield, 1893), p. 129.
 3. Ibid.

sides being their neighbours, so much so that in 1755 Lord and Lady Rockingham attended a Methodist meeting and heard a sermon preached by James Kershaw at the Johnsons' home. The marquis may well have been a sympathiser with the Methodist cause; certainly he was not anti-Methodist because he allowed them to establish societies on his estates. In 1760 he was taken to task about this by a visitor who was amazed that he should even contemplate such activities taking place on his lands, let alone encourage them. The visitor asked Rockingham to use his power to stop such schismatic groups but was silenced by Rockingham's comment that the Methodists 'preached immediately under his Majesty's eye'.¹

Methodism was scorned by many Anglicans as being 'too enthusiastic' - to be avoided at all costs by the aristocracy - and for its levelling tendencies; the connection stressed that Christianity was a way of life not a set of beliefs which were brought out of storage on Sundays, and it taught that each believer must attempt to live a 'life of Christ' in his daily affairs.² There was great material and spiritual concern for the underprivileged and an emphasis on the natural equality of all men before God. Methodists were encouraged to follow what has become known as the 'Protestant Ethic' of hard work, frugality and diligence.

It may well have been a deliberate political move by the Marquis of Rockingham to seek support from Dissenters. In the 1753 York election he sought out Richard Shackleton the Quaker leader, Mr. Rootes a Dissenting minister and Mr. Drummer a Methodist minister. They dis-

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1. M.H. Habershon, Chapelton Researches, p. 134. The source of the information is not given.
 2. Methodism remained within the auspices of Anglicanism officially until 1795 but had effectively broken away long before then.

cussed 'the Welfare of the City, the Good of the Established Church, & the Support of the Whig Interest'.¹ Rockingham's interest in the Dissenters' ideas was apparent even at this early stage and it continued throughout his life. These gentlemen were in a position to encourage their congregations to support the marquis either politically or in other ways and this episode possibly marks the start of the connection between Rockingham and the non-Anglicans which continued until his death. His efforts were well rewarded. These groups did support him thereafter. Furthermore, their support extended beyond the boundaries of Yorkshire. In the 1774 General Election at Tewkesbury, William Dowdeswell's brother-in-law Sir William Codrington was the Rockinghamite candidate seeking re-election. Dowdeswell² advised the marquis that he believed most of the Dissenters would give Codrington one vote but that Codrington made less progress with the Quakers. Dowdeswell asked if his lordship 'could ... get Dr. Fothergill to write to Mr. John Millard in favour of Sir W^{illiam} Codrington? ... His inclination is with Us; ... but I am afraid the rest of the sect are incl^{ined} against Us'.³ Dowdeswell also asked Rockingham to write to an Anabaptist teacher in Hull, one Mr. Lambert, to solicit Lambert's son's vote for Codrington.⁴ In the event, Codrington was successfully returned to parliament.

During the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765 and following Rockingham's repeal of the Act in 1766 the number of Dissenters who gave him their support is most marked. The petitions for repeal and addresses of

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1. W.W.M. F35-15. London Evening Post, 8th December 1753. Newspaper cutting kept by Rockingham.
 2. William Dowdeswell was M.P. for Worcestershire and leader of the Rockinghamites in the Commons. He was the marquis' trusted adviser. He sought to broaden the base of the party's support. He was married to Codrington's sister.
 3. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 8th June 1774. Dowdeswell Papers, William L. Clement Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
 4. Ibid. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 12th June 1774.

thanks are signed by many such men and the witnesses called to parliament prior to the repeal of the Stamp Act were for the most part Dissenters.

In 1772 a conference was held at the Feathers tavern in London at which a group of clerics decided to ask for relief from subscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles. The so-called 'Feathers Petition' was the result of Unitarian leanings by Anglican clergy which was a feature of the eighteenth century. Some 250 clergymen signed the petition which was presented to the Commons by Sir William Meredith¹ on 6th February and was supported by Sir George Savile. The Bill to relieve Dissenting ministers from the Thirty-Nine Articles passed the Commons on 14th April 1772 and went up to the House of Lords on 19th May. In the meantime the Duke of Richmond² had given his support to the Bill at the request of the Dissenters in Sussex and London because he thought the Bill 'a just one, founded on Reason, good Policy & the true Principles of Whiggism & tolleration [sic]'. He supposed that Rockingham had also had similar requests and recommended that the marquis should support it since such an action 'will greatly recommend you to that weighty Body of men the Dissenters, who all over England are very powerfull [sic] & who stick pretty much together'.³ The Bill was rejected by the Lords by 102 votes to 29. Rockingham was not even present at the vote.

In Sheffield, Unitarianism was strong enough to warrant two ministers at the Upper Chapel from 1738 onwards. In 1763 the trustees

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1. Sir William Meredith was M.P. for Liverpool. He had been a member of Wildman's Club and was a supporter of Rockingham until the outbreak of the American War of Independence.
 2. Charles Lennox, third Duke of Richmond, was a friend and ally of Rockingham. He led the party for several periods between 1770 and 1780 when the marquis was unable to do so himself. Richmond lived at Goodwood, was a horse-racing enthusiast and was the uncle of Charles James Fox.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1403. Richmond to Rockingham, 26th April 1772.

of the chapel included the Samuel Shores, father and son, the cutlers and ironmasters, Samuel Staniforth, a linen draper, and Samuel Kirkby, a butcher. These and several other trustees signed the 1766 Sheffield address of thanks for the repeal of the Stamp Act.¹ The courting of Dissenters obviously could be a political bonus.

Many Protestant Dissenters in England gave the Marquis of Rockingham their full support in his efforts to repeal the Stamp Act partly because they saw the legislation as an attack on the colonies and partly because so many of them were adversely affected by the colonial trade boycott. They might not have been so inclined had they been able to peruse one particular document entitled Thoughts upon the Present State of the Church of England in America² in which Lord Rockingham proposed an American episcopacy and drew up plans for the payment of the bishops from colonial sources. He even contemplated actually establishing the Anglican Church in some colonies: New York, New Jersey, Virginia, South Carolina and Barbados. He did realise that Anglicans were not tolerated in New England, however. English Dissenters opposed an American episcopacy as strongly as their colonial counterparts. As late as September 1765 Archbishop Drummond of York was still planning to establish Anglicanism in Canada although so far as America was concerned 'it seems too disturbed a situation ... to enter into such a plan at present'.³ As Prime Minister, Rockingham probably had the power to pass the legislation. Fortunately he had the good sense not to try, although the idea was resurrected during Chatham's ministry. It came to nothing, as did so many of that ministry's plans. Oddly enough, in 1766 the marquis commented that 'the unfortunate disputes with America have

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1. W.W.M. R59-4 and J.E. Manning, A History of the Upper Chapel, Sheffield (Sheffield, Independent Press, 1900), List of Trustees 1763.
 2. W.W.M. R65-2. Rockingham's notes, June 1764.
 3. W.W.M. R1-497. Archbishop Drummond to Rockingham, 30th September 1765.

been a sad Stumbling Block for the Bench of Bishops'¹ while denouncing the restriction on political and religious freedom which had resulted from the American War.

It would seem that the Marquis of Rockingham had come to value religious toleration as a plank of his brand of Whiggery rather than just as a means of gathering valuable support. There can be little doubt that he was a tolerant man as an individual because his friends were from all religious persuasions but he also used his attitude as policy.

His toleration extended even to Catholics. This was remarkable because it was so unusual. His first contact with the Catholic 'bogey-man' was probably in 1745 with the Jacobite invasion of England when he was involved with the Yorkshire Volunteers raised by his father. The first marquis refused to implement the anti-Papist legislation and his son followed suit.

Catholicism was never stamped out in Yorkshire. However, the Duke of Norfolk, a staunch Roman Catholic, was Lord of the Manor in Sheffield and owned some 19,000 acres in the area besides owning corn and fulling mills, cutlery grinding wheels and an iron forge on the River Don. In 1728 the eighth duke established the 'Lord's House' in the centre of Sheffield where his steward could live.² Initially it contained rooms for priests, a chapel and a hospital, and by 1764 two priests were also resident there. The Catholic community numbered only three hundred but included a doctor, master-cutlers, artisans, tradesmen and labourers: the whole span of society, in fact.

Perhaps the best-known Catholic family in the area were the Eyres. During the Elizabethan period they had owned twenty manors and twenty

1. W.W.M. R1-1695b. Rockingham to unknown, December 1776.

2. Now the site of St. Marie's Roman Catholic cathedral, Norfolk Row, Sheffield.

thousand acres of land and branches of the family had occupied almost every large house in north Derbyshire and south Yorkshire. Because of the various penal laws and their refusal to apostacize, the Eyres had lost most of their property and wealth. Vincent Eyre I had an extensive personal acquaintance with many noble families because of his interest and expertise in genealogy and was an intimate friend of the Dukes of Norfolk and Devonshire. Of his five grandchildren, three became priests¹ and the eldest, Vincent II, eventually became steward to the Duke of Norfolk in Sheffield. He was a partner in the Walker, Eyre and Stanley Bank in Sheffield: the partners were strange bed-fellows, one being Congregationalist, one a Unitarian and the other a Catholic. Doubtless it was a good example of how different denominations could co-operate.

The Eyres intermarried with a number of noble families - the Derwentwaters, Widdringtons, Staffords and Fauconbergs, for example. They also used their noble connections to short-circuit the penal laws. Rowland Eyre made the Earls of Guildford and Strafford and the Duke of Devonshire trustees of his estate so that it would not be forfeit on his death. The same Rowland was the agent of the ninth Duke of Norfolk from 1761 and his son married Lady Mary Bellasyse, daughter of the first Earl Fauconberg, in 1766. Fauconberg had conformed in 1733 and rose to be a member of the Privy Council. He was a friend of Lord Rockingham until his death in 1774. All his family were brought up Catholic and he returned to the faith before his death. His estates were inherited by his brother, Charles, a Catholic priest.

Other Catholic families in south Yorkshire besides the Eyres were the Hancocks, Revells, Broomheads, Foxes and Staniforths. These are particularly notable because all were involved in manufacture or

1. Edward, John and Thomas. Thomas was the first President of Ushaw College, the senior seminary in Durham.

trade or both. They signed the Sheffield address of thanks following the repeal of the Stamp Act,¹ for their trade to America was resumed as a result of the marquis' legislation.

During the eighteenth century Catholics suffered from the taint of Jacobitism in spite of the marked loyalty of English Catholics to Hanover during the '15 and '45. Most Catholics wanted to be free of the stigma of disloyalty, to be allowed to play a full part in the life of their country and to be able to worship freely in their own Church. Most of the wealthy Catholics were also tired of the subterfuges they had to employ to buy or inherit land and one of their firmest friends was Edmund Burke. Being Irish, Burke had many Catholic friends and relatives, and his mother and wife were practising Catholics. Burke was openly sympathetic to claims for fair treatment and was even accused of being a Jesuit in disguise, although he was married. Even the Duke of Devonshire opposed Burke's appointment as secretary to Rockingham on the grounds of Burke's suspect beliefs: he also wanted his own candidate, James Royer, to have the post.

The 1778 Catholic Relief Act had a long history. There is some conjecture that a petition drawn up in 1764 was Burke's work.² This petition was signed by nine peers and 163 gentry and eventually laid the basis for the 1778 Act. The condition of Catholics in Ireland was a source of concern for the Marquis of Rockingham and it is quite possible that Burke had a favourable effect on his attitude towards them. Lady Rockingham appears to have been sympathetic towards Catholics in any case. In 1757 Admiral Byng was executed after his failure to re-

1. W.W.M. R59-4.

2. M.D.R. Leys, Catholics in England: a social history 1559-1829 (London, Longman Group Ltd., 1961), pp. 131-133.

lieve Minorca at the start of the Seven Years War. Lady Rockingham had heard 'that Byng dies a Roman Catholic, pray inform us if there is any truth in this report, I shall like it much better; & be Vastly more satisfied about is [sic] death'.¹

The Catholic Committee had been founded in 1759 with the aim of securing relief from the penal code. They were helped by the fact that although they were unable to work in the courts, a number of Catholics worked as conveyancers and with legal documents such as wills and deeds. The expertise therefore existed for drawing up petitions which were cleverly and carefully worded. In 1777 William Sheldon, a Catholic conveyancer, set up a group of Catholic landowners to organize a petition for relief. Irish Catholics had been allowed to take an oath of allegiance to the king in 1774 and the Quebec Act of the same year had granted wide freedoms to Catholics in Canada. The outbreak of the War of Independence in 1776 had called into question their loyalty once more and after France had joined the conflict the wisdom of the legislation was disputed. However, necessity helped Catholics in Ireland and England. A dire shortage of soldiers to fight in what became a world-wide conflict allowed the Rockinghamites to push through parliament a Catholic Relief Act, enabling - as a side-effect of the Act - Catholics to join the army for the first time.

Meetings between Catholic gentry and the Whig leaders in Yorkshire took place prior to the introduction of the Relief Bill to parliament and a committee was formed in London to negotiate with the Rockinghamites for the maximum relief.²

On 2nd May 1778 the Earl of Surrey, Lord Petre and Lord Linton

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1. W.W.M. R168-12. Lady to Lord Rockingham, undated but 1757.
 2. H. Aveling, Northern Catholics: Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire 1558-1790 (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 380.

presented an address to George III by the Catholic peers and commoners proclaiming their loyalty to the English Constitution even though they had been excluded from many of its benefits, and stating that 'our Dissent from the legal Establishment, in Matters of Religion is purely conscientious'. They also assured the king of their 'unreserved Affection to your Government, and of our unalterable Attachment to the Cause and Welfare of our common Country'.¹ Over two hundred men signed the document including the Duke of Norfolk, the Earls of Surrey and Shrewsbury, Lords Stourton, Petre, Arundel, Dormer, Teynham and Clifford, Henry Howard, Thomas, Vincent and Francis Eyre, Miles Stapleton, Robert Strickland and P.S. Mostyn. The address had been organized by William Sheldon.

Less than two weeks later Sir George Savile asked permission to present the Relief Bill to the Commons. A great deal of planning had gone into the content of the Bill especially by the Catholic Committee. Richard Challoner² advised William Walton³ that the best way of obtaining relief 'would be to ask for the Present at once a free toleration of Religion in private without any mention of particular Grievances. This ... wou'd be more easily granted & appears a reasonable demand ... it wou'd require no length of time for the Parliament to come to a determinum upon it'.⁴

On 14th May Savile presented his Bill which was supported by Lord

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1. London Gazette, 2nd May 1778. From the Ushaw Collection of Manuscripts. I am grateful to Fr. Michael Sharratt of Ushaw College for his help as archivist and kindness as host.
 2. Challoner was a Catholic bishop in charge of the London vicariate. In 1780 the Protestant Association had plans to capture him.
 3. William Walton was trained for priesthood in Douai and became Vicar Apostolic for the northern district in 1769. In 1775 he moved to York where he lived until his death in 1778.
 4. Challoner, Talbot and Hay to Walton, 1778. Ushaw Manuscript Collection, Vol. 2, p. 157.

John Cavendish. It passed through the Commons with relative ease and repealed clauses of the penal code relating to the prosecution of Catholic clergy [including Jesuits, whose Order had been suppressed in 1773], the perpetual imprisonment of any Catholic who kept a school and the disability of Catholics to inherit property. With reference to the clauses concerning Catholic education, Rockingham had investigated the matter in York. He estimated that in winter there were about 1,600 Catholics in the city, reducing to 1,100 in the summer. Catholic children were educated at the 'great School near Micklegate Bar - by the Nunery [sic]' and 'There is one Catholick [sic] who has a small School for Writing & Penmanship & Acc[oun]ts. This is a Day School. Some Protestant Children go there'.¹ It is obvious from these notes that that particular law was not enforced in York.

The Bill was supported in the House of Lords by Rockingham and Effingham. Rockingham's notes attacked the Penal Laws as 'repugnant to the principles of humanity, of Legislation in general, of the British Constitution in particular & indeed so contrary to the Genius of the Protestant religion itself we ought not to continue them a moment longer than the necessity which gave rise to them is evident'.²

The Act brought much-needed relief to the Catholics and allowed them to swear an oath of loyalty to the king and to abjure obedience to the Stuart family in exile.³ One of the first men to take the oath was Thomas Eyre, later President of Ushaw College. He travelled to Derby for the oath to be administered. By early June 1778 Catholic congregations were being encouraged to pray for the royal family, 'this being

1. W.W.M. R81-221. Rockingham's hand. Undated, but after 1774.
2. W.W.M. R94-6.
3. 18 Geo. III c. 60.

a duty which by the law of God all Christian people owe to their respective Sovereigns'.¹

The Rockinghamites had been instrumental in leading the calls for Catholic Relief in spite of opposition from extreme Protestants who feared the possible effect of such legislation. Rockingham himself had sufficient contact with Catholics and enough intelligence to see that religious toleration for groups on either side of Anglicanism could only strengthen the country and that religious upheaval would probably weaken England at a time when unity was essential.

In 1779 Frederick Montagu warned the marquis of impending trouble at the County meeting called for on 30th December by Christopher Wyvill. It seemed that 'all the Principal Catholics mean to Attend', and Montagu feared an outbreak of 'something disagreeable if they endeavour to take any active part'.² Wyvill was an Anglican minister who verged on Unitarianism. He had been involved with the 'Feathers' petition of 1772 and was dissatisfied with the outcome. The Rockingham group had not given their wholehearted support to the resulting Bill as they had to supporting Catholic relief. Not surprisingly, the more extreme Dissenters appear to have wanted revenge on both Rockingham and the Catholics and the County Association presented a way of achieving those ends.

Other Protestants also objected to the 1778 Act; notable among these was Lord George Gordon who demanded the repeal of Savile's Act. In 1780 Lords Stourton and Petre and Miles Stapleton waited on Lord Rockingham to inform him of the current activities of the Catholic Asso-

1. Richard Deboren and James Birthan to all the Catholic Clergy. 4th June 1778. Ushaw Manuscript Collection, Vol. 2, p. 158.
2. W.W.M. R136-28. Montagu to Rockingham, 28th December 1779.

ciation. They wished to assure him that they were concerned only about their private affairs but wished to mention to Rockingham the 'disagreeable situation in which they find themselves from the late Application of Lord George Gordon and ... the Protestant Association' which maintained the animosity against Catholics in spite of the oath they had taken and in spite of their demonstrations of loyalty.¹ They asked if some measures could be taken to stop Lord Gordon and put the matter in his hands 'whose Goodness and attention ... we have already experienced; being also thoroughly satisfied that our Welfare cannot be in better hands' than Rockingham's.²

Rockingham knew that 'many Speculative & pretended Zealots for Public Liberty' made him and his friends 'objects of odium' and was aware that many had adopted Lord Gordon's attitude by which the 'general trust and confidence' in the Rockinghamites was 'greatly damaged'.³ He made no comment about the 'Enthusiastick [sic] & pretended Zealots for the Protestant Religion'⁴ but was forced to face those people during the riots in London in June 1780. His house was threatened by the mob; Savile's house was broken into and much furniture was burned; Burke's house was threatened, as was Devonshire's town house. All had to be guarded by soldiers. Lord Mansfield's house was burned by the mob on 6th June: his crime was to refuse to prosecute Catholics under the penal laws. The result of the Gordon riots, which lasted from 4th to 8th June, was 285 dead, 173 wounded and a hundred Catholic-owned buildings, both churches and homes, as well as others, were burned and looted.

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1. Catholic Committee to Lord Rockingham. Undated, but just prior to June 1780. Ushaw Manuscript Collection Vol. 4, p. 315(c).
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. W.W.M. R91-1. Rockingham's notes, Some Serious Thoughts on the State of Our Friends, undated but 1780.

Twenty-five ring-leaders of the mob were hanged but Lord George Gordon was found 'Not Guilty' of treason and was set free. Compensation of over £100,000 was paid to Catholics for damage to private and public property.¹ The riots were condemned as divisive at a time when national unity was needed and because they had a tendency to 'dishonour the National Character, to discredit the Protestant Religion in the Eyes of other Nations & to furnish Occasion for the renewal of persecution of our Protestant Brethren in other Countries'.² It is possible that the last thought was for Protestants in France and perhaps Canada where they were outnumbered quite considerably by Catholics.

The Marquis of Rockingham's enlightened attitude towards religious toleration enabled him to build up a wide following in Yorkshire from all ranks of society and to extend that support throughout England through the good offices of members of the various sects. He was prepared to grant concessions to Dissenters and Catholics and to allow the establishment of Methodist groups because he felt that 'the Protestant /i.e. Anglican/ faith is so well established, that persecution is no longer needed'.³ His broadmindedness on the subject was valuable in Yorkshire since Dissenters were so numerous: the manufacturers and traders tended to belong to such groups. It made him more approachable to those who otherwise might have seen him as part of the Ascendancy and therefore as being opposed to them. Furthermore it paid off, because politically he became virtually unassailable in the county, representing all shades of opinion to the best of his ability except those of the Unitarians with whom he disagreed theologically. Because the marquis

1. G. Rudé, The Crowd in History (New York, John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1964), pp. 59-60.

2. W.W.M. R94-2. Resolutions of the House of Lords, 1780.

3. Ibid.

had some considerable national importance, especially in parliament, such diverse groups as Catholics and Dissenters were able to have their petitions presented to both Houses and it is probably not a coincidence that Yorkshiremen were the driving force behind the Catholic petition and the requests for Protestant toleration.

The Woollen Interest

Perhaps the most important branch of manufacturing in Yorkshire was that of woollen cloth. By the 1750s the West Riding produced 30% of England's woollen output, of which almost three-quarters was exported. Leeds, Halifax and Wakefield grew into prosperous towns, trading with Europe and then with America until this business was disrupted by the colonial crises after 1765 which culminated in the war of 1776-1782.

In 1752 a series of petitions was sent to parliament from the woollen towns of the West Riding¹ complaining about the branding of sheep with pitch and tar and asking that the 'deceitful winding' of fleeces should be made illegal. Pitch and tar made the fleeces unusable and 'deceitful winding' was a term used for the adding of rubbish to fleeces to make them weigh more. The petitioners included merchants, woolstaplers, clothiers and weavers of all kinds of cloth from worsteds to kerseys. The woollen manufacturers asked for legislation to prevent these practices and appealed to the young Marquis of Rockingham for help. He was only twenty-two and had taken his seat in the Lords fairly recently but apparently had made his mark among Yorkshiremen as an ally very quickly. Rockingham spoke on the matter and was disappointed that no changes were made in the regulations. In a letter to the petitioners he expressed the hope that they would try again to resolve their problems.²

1. Leeds, Halifax, Wakefield, Bradford, Birstal, Keighley, Guiseley, Calverley, Bingley and Craven.

2. W.W.M. R165-4. Rockingham to the petitioners, 1752.

His sister Charlotte kept a twenty-six page manuscript entitled Observations on the Practice of Marking Sheep with Pitch and Tar, & the double & deceitfull /sic/ winding of wool.¹ She endorsed the document as being concerned with the debate in the Lords. 'Soon after L^{or}d R^{ockingha}m took his Seat in that House he spoke on the Subject & his observations on the same were ... much approved by ... L^{or}d Walpole'.²

The woollens manufactured in the county were particularly suited to uniforms but trade suffered between 1764 and 1780. Worsteds were exported chiefly to America so when the American market collapsed because of government legislation there were riots in Leeds and five bankruptcies,³ which is not surprising since the colonies had bought Yorkshire cloth to the value of £1 million in 1772.⁴

By 1775 over 353 master clothiers were unemployed in the Leeds area alone,⁵ a fact drawn to parliament's attention by Samuel Elam who traded with America. Elam led the opposition in Leeds to Lord North's American policy and looked to Rockingham for support, which was willingly given. The marquis opposed the way in which the colonists were being treated and attacked the subsequent effect on Yorkshire.

While the Yorkshire woollen industry was hard-hit by 1779 the condition of Ireland was appalling. Lord Rockingham was attempting to have trade restrictions lifted from Ireland; to do so he inquired of Charles Clapham, a Leeds woollen manufacturer, for information about cloth and raw wool prices. Clapham advised that the Irish should be allowed to

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1. W.W.M. R165-5. Manuscript endorsed by Lady Charlotte Watson-Wentworth.
 2. Ibid.
 3. R.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants: the merchant community in Leeds 1700-1830 (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 58.
 4. Ibid., p. 62.
 5. Leeds Mercury, 24th January 1778.

export wool to relieve their hardship but thought English growers would object since the price of wool was falling.¹ The Irish legislation passed parliament in December 1779 without resulting in the dire consequences feared by many.

By late 1781 it was clear that the depression in the Yorkshire woollen industry was deepening. The wool merchants of Leeds met in committee to decide on measures which would help them to survive. The price of long coarse wool had collapsed and the committee wanted to prevent legislation intended to license the export of wool. The committee needed to export raw wool in order to get a better price so they turned to the Marquis of Rockingham for his help in obtaining the necessary papers.

Rockingham declined to help. He hoped that the calamity would be temporary and felt that they were entitled to an explanation of the cause of their problems. He blamed the war against America and subsequently against most of Europe for a start and then moved on to a detailed economic discussion. There had been an increase in the amount of long coarse wool produced and a decline in the export of manufactures using this wool because of the war. He blamed enclosures for producing meatier sheep but more short wool which was coarser and cheaper than the long wool. He recommended that the committee should conduct an enquiry into the state of trade and assured them that he would be attentive to their needs.²

The merchants' committee, chaired by William Smithson, sent a vote of thanks to the marquis for his 'obliging & polite behaviour on this occasion' and looked 'for your further Countenance & Support in so

1. W.W.M. R4-22(a). Clapham to Rockingham, 10th May 1779.

2. W.W.M. R81-222. Rockingham to the merchant committee, January 1782.

interesting an Affair'.¹ Rockingham made it clear that he did not support a change in the regulations regarding the export of raw wool. He argued that although Yorkshire woollens earned £3 million a year, other places also made woollen cloth and it would be immoral to change the law to help Yorkshiremen at the expense of others.² The Leeds merchants were advised to wait until the end of the war for the upturn in trade; by May 1782 the committee had again written to Rockingham thanking him for his help and stating that the Lincolnshire wool committee too had dropped their plan to export wool. The merchants were satisfied with the situation.³

Throughout this incident the marquis used Pemberton Milnes of Wakefield as his spokesman and saw Milnes regularly to explain the position which he had taken on the issue.⁴ It is remarkable that in spite of their hardship the merchants were willing to listen to and were prepared to accept Rockingham's advice even though it was not what they wanted to hear. His reputation was such that men were happy to follow his lead on most issues, valuing his judgement and sound sense.

Canals and Turnpikes

The marquis' support on almost any matter concerning Yorkshire was an asset. His involvement in the construction and maintenance of canals and turnpikes in Yorkshire was sought by the planners of the projects and he went to much personal trouble to check plans and estimates, particularly if the projects were near Wentworth.

The marquis was obviously interested in canals as has already been seen. His father had paid for an Act of Parliament in 1704 to make the

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1. W.W.M. R1-1972. Smithson to Rockingham, 10th January 1782.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1974. Rockingham to Smithson, 14th January 1782.
 3. W.W.M. R110-4. Smithson to Rockingham, 15th May 1782.
 4. W.W.M. R81-222 and R1-1974.

River Derwent navigable from Malton to the Yorkshire Ouse and went on to spend £4,000 on the project.¹ Tolls on the Derwent were leased after 1723 and in 1744 James Fenton leased the navigation for £440 p.a. In 1755 the second marquis raised the lease by £150 p.a. and Fenton in turn increased the freight charges from Malton to Hull, especially on firkins of butter and hogsheads of hams. As a result, trade declined, so Fenton proposed that if Rockingham reduced his rent to £540 p.a. he would restore the old charges. Failing an agreement, Fenton said they would both suffer financially from the loss of their trade.² In 1765 the merchants of Driffield and their supporters in Malton called in John Smeaton to make the upper reaches of the River Hull navigable. It seems possible that the people of Malton resented Rockingham's monopoly of the Derwent and were seeking an alternative which might be cheaper, especially since there was a reasonably good road between Malton and Driffield.³ In the same area, the Duke of Devonshire contributed £1,269 towards the making of the Market Weighton canal.⁴

The Dearne and Dove canal was begun in 1793 and was completed in 1804. Initial proposals for the canal were announced in the Yorkshire Courant on 11th August 1777 when a public meeting was called at the White Bear Inn, Barnsley.⁵ This meeting took place thirteen years after the idea of a Dearne Canal had occurred to Rockingham. In October 1764 he had the land between Lowwood Sough to the Don surveyed for distances and the fall of water along the line of the Dearne, presumably to estimate the changes of such a canal to ease transport problems for his coal

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1. Hadfield, Canals 1, pp. 97-98.
 2. W.W.M. R177-5. James Fenton to Rockingham, May 1755.
 3. Hadfield, Canals 1, pp. 86-87.
 4. Ibid., p. 91.
 5. John Addy, A Coal and Iron Community in the Industrial Revolution (London, Longman Group Ltd., 1969), p. 26.

at Lowwood and Elsecar pits.¹ The work was not begun but it is evident from a letter from John Fountayne, the Dean of York, that plans had been drawn up for the canal as early as 1773. Only the marquis had seen the plans and reports, which prevented others from objecting to them. The Dean complained that mill-owners and land-owners could suffer if the canal was built and that the builders seemed partial because they had shown only Rockingham the plans. Those who might be affected had sought help from a professional engineer. Fountayne was upset because Ludwell Spring - which fed his one mill even in dry weather - was to be diverted to feed Rockingham's mill at Barnborough first. Fountayne was 'certain your Lordship w^ould not accept any Advantage, wantonly taken at the Expense of the property of any Man living'.² Shortly afterwards Mr. John Cockshutt died and the Dean thought the event 'may put a stop (for the present) to the Derne Navigation'.³ Cockshutt was the owner of the Wortley Top Forge where iron and possibly steel was made, but he had large interests in the Spencer partnership of ironmasters which included the firm of Osborne and Gunning. This partnership of ironmasters invested heavily in the Don Navigation and Cockshutt apparently wanted another navigation to help the distribution of his goods. In the event the whole idea was shelved but it is necessary to give credit to the Marquis of Rockingham for the work he did in preparing the eventual route of the Dearne Canal: the Elsecar branch to Wombwell Junction and down-river from there would seem to follow the same line as his survey of 1764. However, Rockingham ordered that a survey from Lowwood pit to the Don Navigation via Wentworth should be made,⁴ also in 1764, so he cannot have been sure

1. W.W.M. R174-27.

2. W.W.M. R179-1. Fountayne to Rockingham, 7th December 1773.

3. W.W.M. R1-1477. Fountayne to Rockingham, 17th January 1774.

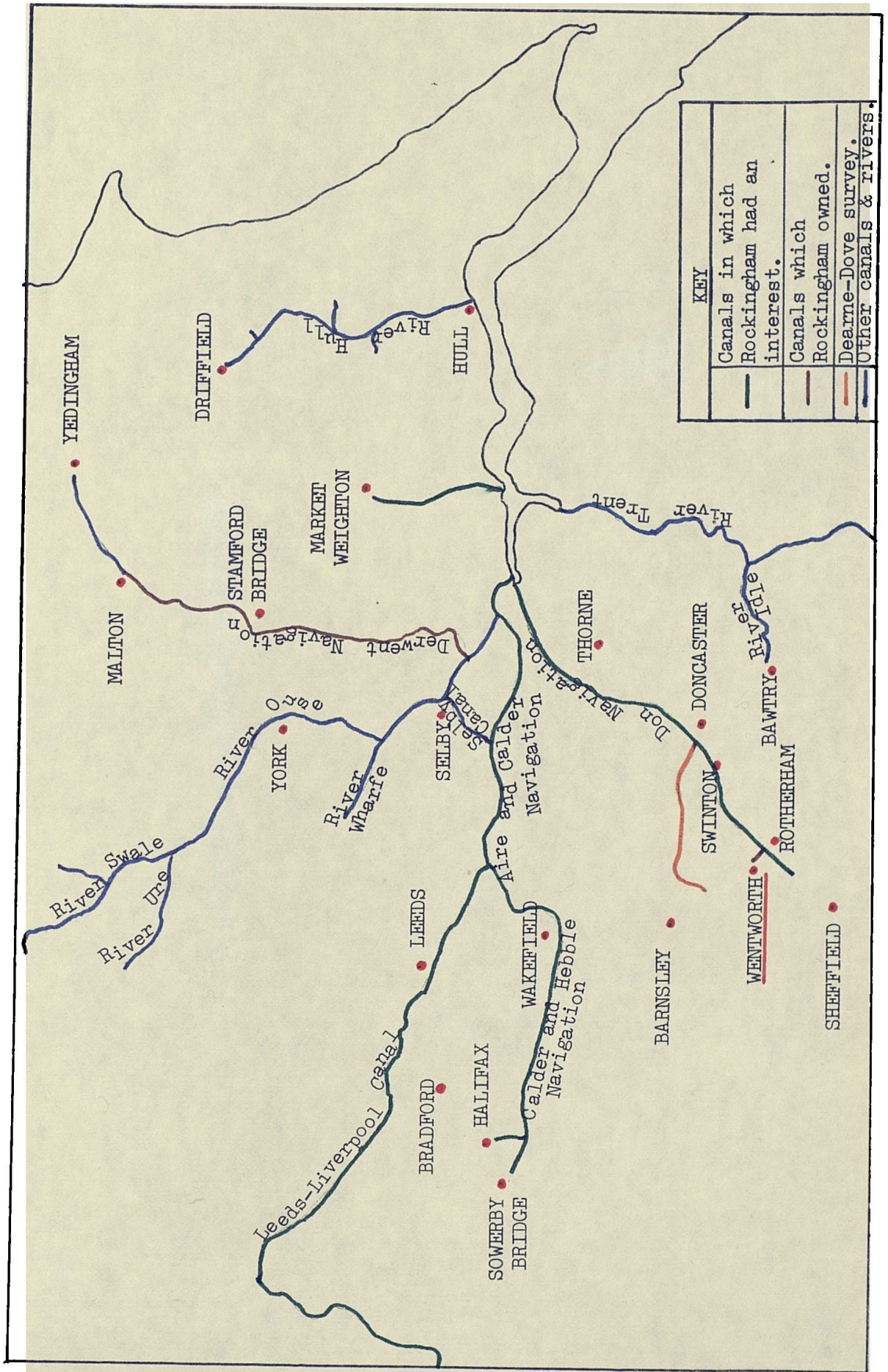
4. W.W.M. R174-3. October 1764.

about the best direction for a canal from Lowwood to the Don. In fact, although the fall of water on the Dearne and Dove route was 80' 9¼" whereas on the Wentworth route it was 421' 0¼" the latter route would have meant the canal running through Wentworth park to the Mill Dam and so to the Greasborough Canal when it was built. It would seem that this idea appealed neither to Rockingham nor to Fitzwilliam.

The Don Navigation partially solved the problems of communication between south Yorkshire and the coast. Prior to the improvements on the river all goods from Rotherham and Sheffield were sent overland to Bawtry which was a large inland port and from there via the River Idle to the Trent and so to Hull. The first two attempts to pass an Act of Parliament failed,¹ but the attempt in 1721 had more support because better, cheaper transport was needed. Cutlers, merchants and manufacturers backed the idea of a navigation, although it was fraught with difficulties. One major problem was the land fall: 55' between Sheffield and Tinsley; 48'5" between Rotherham High Dam and Doncaster Mills.² This would mean the extensive use of locks. Another problem was the fact that such falls meant the river was greatly used by iron works and mills as a power source. Additionally, the Don was the centre of a complex drainage system particularly for Hatfield Chase for which the Commission of Sewers acted as overseers. Two Acts of Parliament gave the investors the go-ahead:³ among these were Lord Malton [later the first Marquis of Rockingham] and John Bright [father of the second Marchioness of Rockingham]. In 1732 the Rotherham Churchwardens sold some of their land for use by the Navigation at which point the impecunious Earl of Effingham stopped the work at Aldwarke. Effingham owned several iron

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1. In 1697 and 1704. Hadfield, Canals, 1, pp. 65-66.
 2. W.W.M. R174-27. Falls of the Don.
 3. 1726 and 1727. Hadfield, Canals, 1, pp. 66-69.

ROCKINGHAM'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CANALS OF YORKSHIRE



mills which used the Don as their power source which he did not want to lose and he embarked on litigation to stop the progress of the Navigation. He failed, but the Navigation did not reach Rotherham until 1740.¹ It took a further eleven years to continue the project to Tinsley where it was stopped, largely due to the intransigence of the Duke of Norfolk, who owned Attercliffe Common and who collected the road tolls until the turnpike road was built in 1755.

The second Marquis of Rockingham made much use of the Don Navigation from Kilnhurst where William Malpass had his wharfage and possibly also owned the Ship Inn. Goods going to Wentworth and coal from the estates tended to be transported from Kilnhurst down the direct road from Hooton Roberts to Wentworth.² On 10th August 1769, a delegation from the Don Navigation Company was sent to Rockingham for his approval to make the Rother navigable between Chesterfield and the confluence of the Don and Rother near Rotherham town centre. A meeting was subsequently called to gauge the amount of support for the project but it was not undertaken.³

Another project in which Rockingham showed an interest was the Aire-Calder Navigation. In October 1767 extensive damage on the navigation was caused by floods which made 'all navigation above Wakefield null and void'.⁴ Sir George Savile thought the cost of repair was probably more than the company had and 'nobody seems dispos'd to advance any

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1. From Aldwarke to Rotherham is a distance of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.
 2. The Manor House at Hooton Roberts had been the dower house of the Countess of Strafford and much of the village belonged to Rockingham. The road between there and Wentworth, now the B6090, looks as though it was built only to link the house with Hooton Roberts, and so the Doncaster-Sheffield turnpike, since it stops short at the village of Harley. It was extended from there to join the Wakefield-Sheffield turnpike. The main turnpike between those others is now the A6023.
 3. Hadfield, *Canals*, 1, p. 79.
 4. W.W.M. R1-864. Sir George Savile to Rockingham, 21st December 1767.

more'. So long as the navigation was out of use Savile estimated the losses at £70 a week in tolls and commented that what they needed 'is somebody to lend us about £10,000 at 5 per Cent without a prospect of ever seeing principal or interest'.¹ It sounds like an extremely broad hint but whether the marquis took it is uncertain. However, in 1769 the loan-stock holders were incorporated as the 'Company of Proprietors of the Calder and Hebble Navigation' with powers to extend the navigation to Sowerby Bridge.² The new company met at Halifax on 18th May 1769 and one of its first actions was to thank Sir George Savile for his help in obtaining the necessary Act of Parliament. Then in 1773 Rockingham was notified that a general meeting of the proprietors had decided to deepen the Aire and Calder rivers from Leeds to Wakefield to Airmyn,³ to make a cut from Huddlesay to Selby for the convenience of York and to submit the regulation tolls to the direction of parliament.⁴ It is obvious that Rockingham must have had some influence in the company for such a detailed report to be sent to him and it may even be that he was one of the proprietors and had not been at the meeting. Rockingham promptly agreed with the plan because he wanted a better navigation for the benefit of the manufacturing areas of Yorkshire. He disagreed with parliament's being given the right to fix tolls, however: he preferred a reasonable toll to make the use of the navigation as cheap as possible.⁵ He also approved the idea of a cut, which was made.

At the same time as the Calder and Hebble Navigation was being incorporated, the marquis was using his influence to further the plans for a canal between Leeds and Liverpool. William Tomlinson was obliged

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1. W.W.M. R1-864. Sir George Savile to Rockingham, 21st December 1767.
 2. Hadfield, Canals, 1, pp. 53-54.
 3. At the confluence of the Aire and Calder.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1470. J. Milner to Rockingham, 21st December 1773.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1471. Rockingham to Milner, 22nd December 1773.

to notify him that the parliamentary committee would not sit on 10th March as had been planned, although the marquis 'was pleased to promise us your Assistance in support of the Application'.¹ The Leeds-Liverpool canal was not started until 1770 nor finally completed until 1816, but it did eventually provide a trans-Pennine waterway for the export of woollen goods and other Yorkshire manufactures. Unfortunately it had become obsolete within 25 years with the coming of the railways.

Just as canals helped the development of manufacturing in Yorkshire by providing a cheaper, easier method of access to the sea, so the development of the turnpikes helped to speed up local transport. As a major landowner and as the man with the most influence at parliamentary level it is understandable that the Marquis of Rockingham should become involved in turnpike plans and disputes.

In 1763 it was proposed that a turnpike should be built between Tinsley and Doncaster as part of the system of communications after the opening of the Don Navigation to Tinsley. Arthur Young's verdict on the road in 1771, that 'from Rotherham to Sheffield the road is execrably bad, very stony, and excessively full of holes',² says little for the work undertaken in 1764. In December, thirty-five subscribers for a turnpike had been found, who between them raised £69. 9s. 6d.³ Among their number were the ironmaster Samuel Walker (£10. 10s. 0d.),⁷ several men from 'Wackfield' [sic], others from Mapplewell, and Sir Thomas Wentworth of Breton Hall. There was a problem as to where to fix the toll gates since 'there are so many Roads and Bridlesties that run parallel to the Intended Turnpike till they all join at Doncaster, that it will be very difficult to fix the Barrs [sic] so as to prevent their

1. W.W.M. R1-1168. William Tomlinson to Rockingham, 9th March 1769.
2. Arthur Young, Northern Tour 1, 122.
3. W.W.M. R1-399b. Subscription list.

being avoided'.¹ The proposers wanted Rockingham's approval for the road and William Malpass was sent to him with all the information. Consequently there is little documentation of the discussions. One interesting document is a petition to parliament from the 'Inhabitants of the Towns of Hooton and Thrybergh ... and of Several Gentlemen having Estates in the Neighbourhood' which states that they believed it was intended to change the course of the existing road to cut out Hooton and Thrybergh, 'which would be a manifest injury' to them.² Since the road does run through these places, their appeal must have been successful but no doubt Rockingham was relieved since the road from Wentworth joins the turnpike at Hooton Roberts, and any diversion would have impeded his access too, even though a more direct route would have been cheaper to build.

At the same time a petition was sent to parliament for permission to join the Rotherham and Tankersley turnpike to the Sheffield road so linking it to the Rotherham-Mansfield turnpike. John Metcalfe estimated the cost of this road at £943. 5s. 0d.³ Several miles of the road were built through the marquis' lands at Wentworth to join the Wakefield-Sheffield turnpike at Hood Hill. It was to this road that Rockingham extended his Hooton-Wentworth road, to give him access to the turnpike.⁴ Part of the Sheffield-Wakefield turnpike also ran through his estates but in spite of that he paid £275 to the Trust to help the work.⁵ In 1776 he was still owed £600 as was the Duke of Devonshire. The Duke of Norfolk was owed £1,200.⁶

In 1769 John Fountayne wrote to the Marquis of Rockingham requesting

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1. W.W.M. R1-399a. J. Wrightson to Rockingham, 24th December 1763.
 2. W.W.M. R1-409. Petition.
 3. W.W.M. R1-410.
 4. W.W.M. A 237. Payment to Saintforth Wroe for building a road from Harley to the Sheffield-Wakefield turnpike.
 5. W.W.M.A 234.
 6. Goodfellow, Sheffield Turnpikes, pp. 77-99.

his support for a turnpike from Doncaster to Wentworth via Sprotborough and Melton.¹ Fountayne left the proposals at Wentworth Woodhouse for Rockingham's comments on that route and a proposal for a branch from Wath to Wombwell and Stairfoot to join the turnpike there. It would seem that the plans went ahead since a road exists along the specified route.

Rockingham's interest in canals and turnpikes may well have been altruistic although the cost of the projects call that hypothesis into question. The road to Hood Hill was estimated at £942, the road from Rotherham to the Wakefield turnpike at £4,200 and a shorter route at £3,010.² A much more likely explanation is that the marquis wanted the developments to help the distribution of coal from his pits and timber from his woodlands and to help the carting of ironstone from his Tankersley lands to Rotherham. He stood to make money from these projects.

The Doncaster Connection

Lord Rockingham was involved with such bodies as Doncaster Corporation and the Commission of Sewers, the body which was responsible for the continued successful drainage of Hatfield Chase. The first Marquis of Rockingham had been elected a Freeman of Doncaster in 1735³ and the same honour was conferred on his son, along with Lord Viscount Downe and the Marquis of Granby in July 1751.⁴ Earlier in 1751 - on 13th May - the Mayor and Corporation went in force to Wentworth Woodhouse to pay their compliments to the marquis 'on Acc/oun/t of his coming of Age'.⁵ In December of the same year the Corporation elected Pierce Galliard as

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1. W.W.M. R176-14 and 28. J. Fountayne to Rockingham, 13th November 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R1-404e. Estimates by Metcalfe and Wroe, 8th February 1764.
 3. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 3, p. 704.
 4. Ibid., p. 798.
 5. Ibid., p. 798.

the Recorder.¹ The Recorder was the chief judicial officer of the Corporation and was required to have been a Barrister for at least five years. He acted as a Justice of the Peace and held a court weekly to give judgement on petty offences. Any man so elected needed royal assent to take up the post. Galliard fulfilled the requirement of being a Barrister-at-Law and although he came from Middlesex he had local connections. His aunt, Mary Bradshaw of Brampton-en-le-Morthern, had left her lead mines to him in 1728 and Galliard owned land at Treeton, Aston and Whiston. He also was entitled to tithes of corn, grain and hay at Brampton until he sold the rights to John Carver, Rector of Treeton, early in 1762. Galliard was distantly related to Dr. Charles Eyre of Doncaster which may have helped him get the appointment.²

In June 1754 the Corporation ordered James Stovin,³ one of the Capital Burgesses, to write to Galliard informing him that 'if he does not come down in two months from the Dale & reside in the Town & Act as Recorder, that they will then proceed to the Election of a New Recorder'.⁴ The next entry concerning Galliard was in October 1755 when the mayor, George Healey, and other members of the Corporation were ordered to see Rockingham, Downe and 'such other Gentlemen & Noblemen as ... have interested themselves in preventing Pierce Galliard ... from having his Fiat from the King' to ask them to withdraw their objection and actively to assist Doncaster to gain royal approval for Galliard as Recorder.⁵

1. Doncaster Courtiers Vol. 3, p. 801.

2. Sheffield City Libraries Parish indexes: Brampton.

3. James Stovin was the son of George Stovin of Crowle and Winterton. He was an Attorney-at-Law. In 1745 he married the daughter of the Mayor of Doncaster. In 1752 he was made a Freeman; in 1753 he became a Capital Burgess. In 1771 he was elected the Town Clerk. He was a supporter of Rockingham.

4. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 3, p. 815.

5. Ibid., p. 822.

The next month the Corporation formally petitioned Rockingham and Downe to 'be pleased to withdraw their Caveat against Pierce Galliard Esq. being approved on [sic] by his Majesty as Recorder of this Borough'.¹ Just why Lord Rockingham should suspend proceedings for Galliard's approval is a mystery. Even more odd is that, having threatened to sack the man in June 1754, the Corporation should go to such lengths to keep him the following year.

Rockingham made some reply to the petition because 'our Mayor has received yo[ur] letter but did not make it very public'.² Apparently the Corporation intended to persist in the choice of Pierce Galliard even though the man would probably have resigned had he been requested to do so. According to Molyneux, 'amany [sic] of the Corporation wish for a new Charter & that this affair wou'd bring it about'.³ Doncaster did not get a new Charter and in July 1756 Galliard still was not doing his job; the Corporation asked him to resign. When he failed to do so he was dismissed on August 26th 1756.⁴ Richard Frank of Campsall was elected in his place.

As Freemen both Rockingham and Downe could elect and could be elected as members of the Corporation. In 1757 James Stovin, by then a councillor, wrote to tell the marquis that Lord Downe had started to campaign for election to fill a likely vacancy. Stovin reckoned that Downe was doing it to oppose Rockingham's interest in the borough; he might well have been correct because Downe and Rockingham had already come into mutual conflict in the 1753 Yorkshire election when the marquis had been obliged to back down in the face of a concerted opposition to

1. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 3, pp 822-823.

2. W.W.M. F37-1. William Molyneux to Rockingham, 2nd December 1755.

3. Ibid.

4. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 3, pp. 832-833.

Sir George Savile's nomination from Lord Downe, Sir Conyers Darcy and the government. Downe was possibly attempting to get revenge on Rockingham in his own area. Stovin suggested that one solution was for the marquis to offer himself as a candidate.¹

At some point thereafter the marquis drew up a list of Corporation members 'for', 'against', 'neuter' and 'dubious' in casting their votes on his candidature.² He estimated that eighteen would definitely give him their vote, leaving twenty-two not voting for him.³ Stovin further informed him that several who had promised personally to give him their votes had retracted. Stovin thought that a defeat for Lord Rockingham could be embarrassing.⁴

Lord Downe was taking the affair very seriously. He refused to patronise Phillip Gill the grocer because he supported Rockingham. He whipped up his supporters to a meeting at the Angel - owned by John Jaques, another Rockingham man.⁵ Stovin believed that James Whitaker, also an innkeeper, had first suggested Downe's interference but Whitaker appears on the marquis' list as a 'for' vote.⁶ The two local candidates were Mr. Cave and Solomon Holmes, a fellmonger. Cave decided to resign his interest to Lord Downe so the election became a straight fight between Downe and Holmes: the Marquis of Rockingham had not publicly declared himself as a candidate, preferring to wait and see what Downe would do. Holmes was in a slight majority and Stovin's glee at the prospect of Downe being defeated by a fellmonger is scarcely hidden: 'he would be mortified'.⁷

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1. W.W.M. F43-3. Stovin to Rockingham, 14th November 1757.
 2. W.W.M. F37-9. Rockingham's voting list. Undated.
 3. Against, neuter or dubious.
 4. W.W.M. F37-3. Stovin to Rockingham. Undated - 15th December 1757?
 5. W.W.M. F37-4. Stovin to Rockingham, 16th December 1757.
 6. W.W.M. F37-9. Voting list.
 7. W.W.M. F37-4. Stovin to Rockingham, 16th December 1757.

Richard Sheppard, the Town Clerk, then wrote to Lord Downe saying that it was not in the interests of either the Corporation or the Charter to elect non-residents, especially noblemen or country gentry. On the other hand the Recorder, Richard Frank, admired Lord Downe and hoped to sway the Corporation in his favour. Stovin advised Rockingham to solve the whole issue by writing to each member saying that if Lord Downe withdrew his nomination Rockingham would not stand, but if Downe persisted then he [Rockingham] desired their votes and interest.¹

Even the Dean of York was involved. He thought that Downe had undertaken a 'wild Scheme' which was 'making the Corporation of Doncaster of too much Consequence' but believed that the marquis was 'Right not to let Him get the Management of it as they are a Rich Body & likely to be more so'.² Fountayne asked Messrs. Partrick, father and son, for their votes on the marquis' behalf.

The threat of a contest between two noblemen never came to fruition. Lord Downe withdrew his nomination because of the opposition from the Corporation and because he came to believe that discretion was the better part of valour. It was one thing to be beaten in an election by a marquis; it was something else to be defeated by a skin merchant. Solomon Holmes was elected and eventually in 1777 became Mayor of Doncaster.

The Commission of Sewers for Hatfield Chase provided a source of patronage for its members since it involved appointing men to various jobs and duties to do with the drains. Hatfield Chase was drained in the seventeenth century but to maintain the drainage channels and prevent flooding, since the course of the River Don had been changed at

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1. W.W.M. F37-5. Stovin to Rockingham. Undated. 17th December 1757?
 2. W.W.M. F37-2. John Fountayne to Rockingham, 19th December 1757.
 3. J. Tomlinson, Doncaster (Doncaster, 1887), p. 281.

the same time, the Commission had been set up. Each Commission lasted ten years, at the end of which time a new Commission had to be established. To do this, the noblemen, gentry and participants of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire had to petition the Lord Chancellor. Lists were drawn up of those eligible to serve, each county and the participants naming twenty persons.¹

As might be expected, Lord Rockingham was a Commissioner and was possibly elected as early as 1751 since the new Commission was chosen in that year. In 1757 it seemed that the Expenditor, one Francis Sympson, was likely to die and several persons were soliciting votes from Commissioners to fill the vacancy. Dean Fountayne of York had received a request from William Storr of Scala Park asking for his vote; Mr. Gill of Doncaster was another candidate. Fountayne decided to vote for Gill even though Mr. Storr had the support of Mr. Dawnay,² Lord Irwin,³ Sir John Ramsden and Sir William Lowther.⁴ He also wrote to Mr. Whichcot 'to desire him to keep himself unengaged in case y^{ou}/r L^{or}/dship sh^{ou}l^d espouse Mr. Gill's Interest or any other'.⁵ Clearly the marquis had those on whose votes he could depend in the event of elections as minor as the Commission of Sewers as well as in county elections. Sadly, the outcome of the election remains a mystery.⁶

In 1771 the new Commission was opened in Doncaster by an official

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1. J. Tomlinson, The Level of Hatfield Chase and Parts Adjacent, (Doncaster, 1882), p.308.
 2. John Dawnay was the Brother of Viscount Downe and no friend of Rockingham, as yet.
 3. Lord Irwin of Temple Newsam was also an opponent of Rockingham.
 4. Sir William Lowther of Swillington, Yorkshire. He was the brother-in-law of Sir John Ramsden.
 5. W.W.M. F37-2. John Fountayne to Rockingham, 19th December, 1757.
 6. I have been unable to trace any information about the Commission of Sewers other than the official working records, now held at the University of Nottingham.

dinner which the marquis attended.¹ The elections had gone smoothly but there were problems later on in the term of that Commission. In June 1781 John Danser, Clerk to the Commission, notified Lord Rockingham that there were sixteen vacancies on the Noblemen's list and three on the Yorkshire list. He complained that 'great inconveniencies have arisen to the County for Want of Commissioners to attend the Courts' to sort out legal problems arising from broken dykes, flooded land and lost property. Danser asked Rockingham to 'settle the Lists in such Manner as you think proper' and hoped for the marquis' support in his re-election as Clerk.²

Rockingham was annoyed that he had not had more warning that the Commission was so near to expiring. Had he been given the opportunity 'it would have enabled me to have made more enquiry in regard to proper Gentlemen to fill up the Vacancies' on both lists. He had seen the lists and decided that some alterations were necessary: 'there are ... some persons omitted who certainly ought to be in'.³

Although Yorkshire was allowed to nominate twenty Commissioners, the list of noblemen consisted of twenty-four names; Rockingham thought that Lords Carmarthen and Lumley should be added to them. The Yorkshire list had fourteen names to which he wanted to add Messrs. Lascelles, Duncombe and Ward.⁴ The most noticeable thing about the list of forty-three names is just how many supporters and friends of Rockingham appear. Of the thirteen peers, eight were definitely supporters⁵ and only one -

1. PwF 9049. Rockingham to Portland, 7th September 1771.

2. W.W.M. R173-1. John Danser to Rockingham, 18th June 1781.

3. W.W.M. R173-3. Rockingham to Danser, 28th June 1781.

4. W.W.M. R173-14. List of Commissioners, 1781. Annotated by Rockingham.

5. Devonshire, Portland, Scarborough, Effingham, Fitzwilliam, Monson and Lord George Sutton.

the Earl of Strafford - was an opponent.¹ Nine baronets are named, of whom six were Rockinghamites.² Even on the Yorkshire list of fourteen, the marquis could count on six.³ This meant that he had a majority on the Commission in Yorkshire and could therefore wield a great deal of voting power when it came to patronage.

The Racing Interest

On a lighter note, Rockingham played an important part in encouraging an interest in racing in Yorkshire. His stables at Wentworth and Swinton ensured that he had horses and jockeys who could race at all the big meetings including Newmarket, where the marquis was one of the founder members of the Jockey Club. He also kept a training ground at Malton and he could be found at the big race meetings in York every August, and at races in Doncaster and even Sheffield. The grandstand at York received several hundreds of pounds from Rockingham and was completed by 1754 largely because of the marquis' enthusiasm.⁴ The architect was John Carr, who did so much work at Wentworth Woodhouse. Under Rockingham's patronage 250 race-shares were taken at £25 a share. Each shareholder was granted free admission to the grandstand for a hundred years: the period of the lease by York corporation. Those who did not have a grandstand place could do what they had always done: sit in their carriages in the middle of the racecourse and pivot around to watch the horses.⁵

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1. The Straffords of Wentworth Castle were also descended from Thomas, first Earl of Strafford (d. 1642) and thought that they should have inherited the Wentworth Woodhouse estates. The ill-will still existed between the families.
 2. Robert Monckton, Sir George Armytage, Sir Rowland Winn, Sir William Milner, Sir George Savile and Sir Henry Frankland.
 3. John Fountayne, Charles Duncombe, Edwin Lascelles, Savile Finch, Childers Walbanke Childers and James Farrer.
 4. W.W.M. A 238, 239 and 240. A total of £417. 15s. Od. over 6 payments.
 5. John Stevens, The Knavesmire (London, Pelham Books Ltd., 1984), pp. 25-31.

York races were used by the marquis as a means of maintaining political support but in 1766 the August meeting was the 'Most numerous ... ever known'. Men flocked there to show 'the Greatest Appearance of Kind personal Friendship towards myself that I ever met with - even there'.¹ The manufacturing and trading towns in Yorkshire took the opportunity of his being there to send their addresses of thanks for the repeal of the Stamp Act 'thinking it more publick [sic] than coming to my own House'.² Rockingham conducted quite a lot of political business at York races throughout his career because all the important county men were usually present.

Rockingham paid subscriptions to Wakefield races but had more influence in Doncaster where he founded the St. Leger, the first and oldest Classic race in the world. Doncaster Corporation were quick to acknowledge the marquis' importance to racing in the town. The races had been held on Cantley Common in September each year and Doncaster Corporation contributed a plate worth £50 for one event every year. The Corporation had decided to change the date from September to July and had asked for Lord Rockingham's approval for the alteration, which he had given. However, in June 1769 the Town Clerk was ordered to write to the marquis saying that 'on further consideration ... they [i.e. the Corporation] were satisfied [sic] that having the races at the usual time in September will be more Beneficial' and asked if he minded the September date. 'If having them in July will be more agreeable to his Lordship they are very ready to have them at that time'.³ Since Doncaster races were - and are - run in September the date obviously

1. PwF 8984. --Rockingham to Portland, 28th August 1766.

2. Ibid.

3. Doncaster Couriers, Vol. 4, p. 92. 6th June 1769.

suited the marquis. The first St. Leger was run in 1776 at Cantley Common. It was recommended that the race should be named after the marquis, who declined the compliment and suggested that it be named after his friend Anthony St. Leger, who had proposed the race to Rockingham. The marquis' filly Allabaculia won that first St. Leger.¹

In the same year the Corporation decided to move the site of the races to its present ground. They referred the setting out and direction of the new course and the building of a grandstand to Rockingham, Peregrine Wentworth, James Farrer, Anthony St. Leger and Childers Walbanke Childers. The Mayor, four aldermen and two councillors were appointed as a Committee to carry out the orders of those gentlemen and to order the expenses to be paid by the Corporation.² It seems that there was some difficulty in paying the bills. On 5th February 1777 the Corporation ordered that 150 tickets for admission into 'the Stand to be erected upon the intended course' should be offered for sale at seven guineas each, with nobility and gentry from Doncaster and its neighbourhood having first refusal. That would raise over £1,100. To make sure of having enough money the Corporation also ordered that 'all Works be stopped (except the Stand and Race Ground)' until after 1st May 1779 and that no repairs should be carried out before then 'but what are absolutely necessary'.³ On 4th June 1781 it was decided to pay John Carr £105 'for his trouble in Architecting & directing the Stand'.⁴ Doncaster Corporation was wise to keep the marquis' support for the races. In 1780 he spent over £60 in the town and his presence encouraged other racegoers to go to Doncaster, creating an increase in trade and pros-

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1. I am grateful to Donald Cox, Manager of Doncaster Racecourse, for this information.
 2. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 4, p. 134. 26th September 1776.
 3. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 4, p. 137. 5th February 1777.
 4. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 4, p. 157. 4th June 1781.

perity each year.

A racecourse existed at Crookesmoor in the Manor of Ecclesall which belonged to Rockingham through his marriage to Mary Bright. In May 1777 three days of racing took place. Rockingham entered a horse for each race and won none, although his horse won one heat on the second day.¹

Racing was an extravagant interest of the Marquis of Rockingham. For three days' racing at Doncaster on 27th, 28th and 29th September 1780 he paid out over £66 excluding his bets and for five days at York in August 1780 the bill was almost £80.² His bets varied between ten guineas and £100 and on 15th August 1752 Mr. Stubbs 'the horse painter' received £194. 5s. 0d. for a 'picture' of a horse.³ Stubbs also painted a picture of Rockingham's favourite horse 'Whistlejacket', which was hung in a specially-made niche in Rockingham's private apartments in the house. The room, now known as the 'Whistlejacket' room, was designed to hold the painting which was completed in 1762. The room was still incomplete in 1801.⁴

Patronage

Any wealthy and politically active nobleman could expect to receive applications for patronage and the Marquis of Rockingham was no exception, as we have seen. He was heavily involved with the local community and he had the influence to help people at local and national level. Many petitions were sent directly to the marquis; others came second hand as, for example, a letter suggesting that he might help William Tingle of Newhall, Wath, who had claims to the pay and prize

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1. Miscellaneous papers, Sheffield City Library. Handbill for Crookesmoor Races, 1777.
 2. W.W.M. A 1296.
 3. W.W.M. A 1000. Account.
 4. Tony Davis, Wentworth Woodhouse (Sheffield City Polytechnic pamphlet, 1982), pp. 21-22.

money of his son Richard, who had been killed in action on the Hector in 1748.¹ In 1757 Joseph Sill of Hull asked Rockingham to find a place for Richard Moor, 'who has been a very unfortunate man & I believe not deserving of his Misfortunes'. Moor had been chief clerk to the Customs Collector in Hull but had 'incurred the displeasure' of the Customs Commissioner and had been sacked. Moor was married to the niece of Sir William Wentworth but was 'reduced to great Want with a large family'. Sill said that Moor's friends 'would be extremely glad if anything could be done for him as they think him a very honest Man & being so perfect a master of Accompts [sic] he is qualified for any Business your Lordship may think proper to recommend him to'.² Later the same year Robert Kaye wrote to the marquis from the Dublin, which was anchored at the Nore. He had been impressed and wanted Rockingham to secure his release if possible; failing that, he asked to be transferred to the Glasgow.³ Other early letters asking for patronage include requests for an appointment as Clerk of Works at Hampton Court,⁴ for the office of Clerk of the Peace in Doncaster,⁵ for a job as ship's master on a Man-o-War,⁶ for the living at Easington worth £120 p.a.⁷ The requests came from men of all social ranks and asked for a wide range of positions. One interesting letter written by Rockingham, undated and undesignated, noted that the marquis had proposed that George Quarme should be appointed as a Commissioner of Stamps. Quarme had been tutor to Rockingham in 1746 on

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1. W.W.M. R1-19. Gilbert Dixon to William Tingle, 31st October 1752.
 2. W.W.M. F49-2. Joseph Sill to Rockingham, 6th March 1756.
 3. W.W.M. R1-96. Robert Kaye to Rockingham, 28th July 1757.
 4. W.W.M. R1-116. Earl Harcourt to Rockingham, 4th February 1758, on behalf of James Stuart.
 5. W.W.M. R1-154. Richard Fenton to Rockingham, 31st October 1759.
 6. W.W.M. R1-155. Thomas Barstow to Rockingham, 1st November 1759, on behalf of his nephew Thomas Proctor.
 7. W.W.M. R82-1 and 2. J. Kerr to Henry Finch, 5th April 1761. Finch sent the letter to Rockingham.

the first part of his Grand Tour and he had served as an officer in the West Riding Volunteers during the '45 Rising. It is quite possible that the post which Rockingham had wanted for Quarme was linked with the Stamp Act of 1765: Commissioners were required to make the Act work and many Englishmen were appointed. Even Benjamin Franklin accepted such a post before the Americans made their displeasure felt. Lord Rockingham therefore suggested that perhaps Quarme might like the job of Customs Commissioner in Boston, Massachusetts, said to be worth £1,000 p.a. He only wanted Quarme to go if the post would be profitable. Fortunately for Quarme, he became a Commissioner of the Excise in England instead. Customs men in America became increasingly unpopular and were beaten up in Boston; eventually they were forced to leave the town.

As Prime Minister the marquis had even more patronage at his disposal and the requests flooded in. One of the most persistent applicants was the Duke of Newcastle, who wanted his friends [who had suffered as a result of the 'Massacre of the Pelhamite Innocents'⁷] to be restored to their offices. Newcastle asked for the son of Mr. Jennings to be made an equerry,¹ for the Cambridge seat to be given to one of the Yorkes and for the Governorship of Dover Castle to go to a friend.² He mentioned several people for whom he would like pensions³ and asked that his friend Mr. Staples should be restored to his lost offices.⁴ Newcastle expected - demanded - so much of Rockingham that eventually the marquis simply ignored the duke's letters. As a result, James West was treated badly for his loyalty; not because Rockingham intended to be unkind but rather because he had become so weary of Newcastle's attentions.

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1. W.W.M. R1-483. Newcastle to Rockingham, 18th August 1765.
 2. W.W.M. R1-507. Newcastle to Rockingham, 17th October 1765.
 3. W.W.M. R1-526. Newcastle to Rockingham, 19th November 1765.
 4. W.W.M. R1-601. Newcastle to Rockingham, 22nd April 1766.

Among the people whom Rockingham pleased during his first ministry was Lord Camden, whose brother received a preferment at the Treasury,¹ Henry Fox, whose friend Mr. Earle was restored to his position,² and James Farrer, whose ex-footman was released from gaol as a result of the marquis' intervention.³

Patronage did not necessarily always mean finding jobs for others. It might be helping an Act of Parliament to be passed or helping relieve distress. An important magnate would be in a position to do both these things and the marquis was no exception.

In 1770 landowners in Brampton-en-le-Morthern agreed to enclose their lands and used Richard Fenton as their agent, probably because Rockingham owned land in the manor. Fenton had been the Wentworth Woodhouse estate steward until the previous year when he had become a full-time solicitor. There was some dispute between the Duke of Leeds, who was Lord of the Manor, and Mr. Osborne the ironmaster who owned the most land, about the common land. The Commissioners had been given the power to determine the rights over common land and this delayed the Enclosure Act. Mr. Barwell had been sent to London to assist the passage of the Act; he went to Grosvenor Square to seek the support of Lord Rockingham against the Duke of Leeds. The marquis sent for the Bill of Enclosure on 2nd May 1771 and decided that it was in order. The Bill was passed on 8th May.⁴

Another incident in which the Marquis of Rockingham became involved was that concerning John Early who had been convicted of the murder of

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1. W.W.M. R1-494. Camden to Rockingham, 16th September 1765.
 2. W.W.M. R1-521. Henry Fox to Rockingham, 4th November 1765.
 3. W.W.M. R1-558 and 593. James Farrer to Rockingham, 24th March 1766, and Rockingham to Farrer, 3rd April 1766.
 4. Brampton Enclosure, Newman & Bond (Solicitors) Papers, Bundle 44. Sheffield City Libraries, Archives Division.

Thomas Ossling (or Ospling) at Doncaster. The clergy attending the man wrote to tell Rockingham that Early had been 'penitent in mind and of good behaviour'. He had confessed to the murder voluntarily to clear two innocent men who had been accused of the crime.¹ The marquis felt that Early's attitude entitled him to compassion although not to the mitigation of the death sentence. Rockingham wrote to the man, not to raise his hopes for a lesser sentence but to strengthen him before his execution. Rockingham's 'earnest wish and prayer of your fellow Christian' was 'that the Eternal God may have Compassion on you and Strengthen your Faith and Guide your mind to the most perfect Contrition and Repentance'.² Early was executed on 14th March 1773³ apparently having been uplifted the marquis' letter because he felt that 'if a man could show such compassion then he hoped God would, too'.⁴ Early's first sentiment had been to 'your Lordship's goodness and great humanity, whom most he had offended'.⁵

By 1779 the American War had been in progress for three years and Yorkshire was affected severely by the fall in trade. Manufacturers and traders suffered from lack of orders, and farmers were adversely affected by an unprecedented fall in prices resulting from an abundant harvest. In 1766 the marquis had put an embargo on grain exports to alleviate the distress caused by high prices; in 1779 Richard Bell of Welton Grange, Hull, told him that 'the distress'd state of Farmers in this County, is deserving the attention of the Legislature' and asked for Rockingham's help in making parliament devise something 'to rescue them from that

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1. W.W.M. R202-1. Rockingham to 'Sir', March 1773.
 2. W.W.M. R202-2. Rockingham to Early, 3rd March 1773.
 3. York Courant, Tuesday 16th March 1773.
 4. W.W.M. R202-4. Rooker to Rockingham, 14th March 1773.
 5. W.W.M. R202-5. Rooker to Rockingham, undated, March 1773.

poverty which now seemingly stares them in the face'.¹ The marquis was unable to help the farmers any more than he was able to bring the war to an end. In 1782 Lord Rockingham was in a difficult position because of the mutually opposed demands upon him as both Prime Minister and Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire. As Prime Minister he was attempting to end the war against the colonies while seeking to retain as much credibility as possible: as Lord Lieutenant he was asked to set his deputies to work in Yorkshire rounding up all the seamen in the county and sending them to the ports and to recruit others for the navy.² It is unlikely that he was able to do the latter not because of disinclination but from lack of time: he was dead within two weeks of receiving the request.

One of the duties of a Lord Lieutenant was to appoint deputy Lords Lieutenant and Justices of the Peace. Two lists are extant and show that the marquis' friends were appointed to the posts. However, there were others who were apparently unconnected who had suitable qualifications and consequently were named. On the Deputy Lords Lieutenant list of 1757 for the West Riding, twenty-six noblemen, eighteen baronets and 137 commoners are named. Eighteen may be discounted because they were dead. Of the remaining 163, over a third were either friends of Rockingham or political allies. Of the 210 named in 1761 as Commissioners of the Peace for the North Riding, sixty-eight were friends or allies and often they were the same men.³ The twenty-one named as the Yorkshire Grand Jury in 1769⁴ appeared on at least one of the other lists and ten were linked to Rockingham. These people helped Rockingham to lead the county politically and were drawn not just from the nobility and gentry

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1. W.W.M. R12-50. Richard Bell to Rockingham, 22nd November 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R125-40. Camden, Manchester, Dorset, Gower, Burke & Fox to Rockingham, 21st June 1782.
 3. Both lists are unnumbered and follow W.W.M. R170-R175.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1022. Yorkshire Grand Jury 1769.

but also from among the merchants and manufacturing classes.¹

Throughout his marquisate Rockingham received requests for patronage but never more so than during his second ministry. Within the space of fourteen weeks² he received around two hundred such requests:³ it worked out at an average of two letters a day. A number of the marquis' petitioners also wrote letters of thanks for his efforts, for example Martin Richardson, who became Steward of Clithero,⁴ and Sergeant Adair, who got a job in the Law Department.⁵ The peers of the realm suddenly became friends of Rockingham; Lord Hertford wanted to introduce his brother to the marquis;⁶ Lord Ferrers wanted the job of Chamberlain and sulked when it went to Portland;⁷ Francis Blake asked for a peerage.⁸

Rockingham's proposals for economic reform would have resulted in the reduction of placemen. One man who thought himself likely to be out of work was James Royer. Royer put himself under Rockingham's patronage and asked for the position of fifth Supernumary Chief Clerk at the Treasury. He enclosed a letter from his patron the late Duke of Newcastle:⁹ it is the same Royer whom Newcastle wanted to be the marquis' secretary in 1765. Another Treasury Clerk who feared for his job was

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1. For example the Milnes of Wakefield who were cloth manufacturers and merchants; the Listers of Shibden Hall who made their money in textiles; Samuel Shore of Sheffield, an ironmaster; John Roebuck of Sheffield a master-cutler; Thomas Lee of Leeds, the son of a Sheffield barber who married the daughter of a Leeds clothier and went into textiles.
 2. 24th March to 1st July 1782.
 3. Most of W.W.M. R108-1 to 153, a number of letters in the R109, R125 and R1 series. The patronage letters are scattered among the muniments.
 4. W.W.M. R109-3(a). Richardson to Rockingham, 24th March 1782.
 5. W.W.M. R109-5(b) and R110-7. Adair to Rockingham, 24th March and 23rd May 1782.
 6. W.W.M. R109-2. Hertford to Rockingham, undated but 1782.
 7. W.W.M. R109-6 and 7. Ferrers to Rockingham, 30th March and 1st April 1782.
 8. W.W.M. R109-10. Blake to Rockingham, 4th April 1782.
 9. W.W.M. R125-45. Royer to Rockingham, 7th April 1782.

William Dugdale, a man of sixty. He had worked there for thirty years - day and night when necessary - and wanted to be put on the Establishment at £40 or £50 p.a.¹

Rockingham dealt with his correspondence fairly rapidly. He answered many letters on the day that they arrived,² usually favourably if it was within his power. He gave orders for Baron Gedder to receive £50 of the king's bounty;³ for Mr. Hopkinson to be appointed Gaveler in the Forest of Dean;⁴ for Edward Mason's pension arrears to be paid.⁵ The sheer volume of letters is impressive in itself but the variety of favours requested is enormous. They range from peerages to pensions; from ecclesiastical preferments to a job abroad for a son who had disgraced himself.⁶

Rockingham also tried to look after his personal friends. The Earl of Scarborough had been appointed as one of the Vice-Treasurers of Ireland by Rockingham but died suddenly on 12th May 1782 leaving his family in 'very distressful circumstances'. Sir George Savile, the brother of Lady Scarborough, had already helped the family so much as to bring 'difficulties upon himself' which 'may prevent his being able to assist them to the extent of what may be necessary'.⁷ The marquis asked for the king's personal intervention to assist the family in some way, to alleviate their straightened circumstance.

Throughout his short second administration Rockingham was ill. None-the-less he was able to deal with requests for patronage, sort out the American question and set in motion plans for economic reform while

1. W.W.M. R125-46. Dugdale to Rockingham, 8th April 1782.

2. For example, R109-13/14/16; R108-15/18/40.

3. W.W.M. R108-15.

4. W.W.M. R108-18.

5. W.W.M. R108-40.

6. For example, W.W.M. R109-13; R108-53; R108-64 and R108-56.

7. W.W.M. R130-8. Rockingham to George III, undated but 13th May 1782.

suffering from his 'old complaint'. He was still fully in control of his Wentworth estates and of his offices of Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum. His death marked the end of an era for south Yorkshire. Earl Fitzwilliam was never so well-liked as Rockingham and never had the wholehearted support of the people in the way the marquis had. In 1807 it cost Fitzwilliam some £250,000 to get his son Lord Milton elected to parliament for Yorkshire. The marquis had never had such difficulties or expenses in having his candidates returned. It may be that the Marquis of Rockingham was more accepted because he was born a Yorkshireman and was proud of it - Fitzwilliam was an 'outsider'. Rockingham was approachable, amenable and concerned about his neighbourhood, doing all he could to help any organisation or person if it was in his power. His liberal outlook caused diverse groups to support him, from which he could only gain and no doubt he kept an eye open for political advantage. However, he would probably not have kept friends and allies as he did if he had only looked for political support. There seems little doubt that he was liked for himself and was supported because of his beliefs as well as for who he was, what he could give or the status he had.

Rockingham's involvement in the affairs concerning the neighbourhood of Wentworth was extensive and was not necessarily linked to his official duties in the county. His enthusiasm for racing did much for the sport even though it was totally unconnected with his official life. Doubtless the opportunity of meeting a wealthy and important personage attracted some people to the various Yorkshire race-meetings but enjoyment of a well-supported event may have been more of an attraction.

The marquis' personal attitude towards non-Anglicans did much to further the cause of religious toleration and it is perhaps to be expected that those groups would support him. Merchants and manufacturers

received help at his hands for economic reasons important to the county and he may have formed some of his group's policies from conditions in Yorkshire. The development of canals and turnpikes, which were needed to improve trade and communications, benefited from his interest: furthermore, the marquis himself stood to benefit financially from the projects because he would be able to use the new facilities.

Rockingham's intervention in the affairs of Doncaster are more difficult to explain. Doncaster was the only corporate borough near Wentworth and Wentworth was part of the Doncaster Archdiocese so there may have been some connection between the two. Obviously it was in the marquis' interest to ensure that he could influence the Corporation and use it as a means of patronage but Doncaster seems to have been relatively independent of Rockingham. The Commission of Sewers was a different matter. The marquis could exert his authority as Lord Lieutenant there and - since his following gave him a majority - could use the Commission as a source of patronage.

In his capacities as the owner of advowsons, as Lord Lieutenant and as Prime Minister he was able to find positions for others; and furthermore that function was expected of him. His friends reached prominent positions in the county as a result of their relationship: but then, most of them were already influential in their own small neighbourhood, which was how they made his acquaintance. They were the bigger fish in local ponds who were appointed as representatives to express their local needs.

Rockingham did much the same as was expected of any man in his social position and perhaps rather more than some who were not particularly interested in country and county affairs. The range of concerns with which he was faced highlights his value to Yorkshire. He was accessible to people of all social levels, not just to the landed few,

and tried to act in the best interests of all. The next chapter will look at four particular incidents with which he had to deal in his official capacity as Lord Lieutenant and to examine his reactions on different occasions.

CHAPTER 4

THE LORD LIEUTENANT

Every Lord Lieutenant was appointed by the king and was usually a great nobleman and a member of the Privy Council. He commanded the local militia of his county and appointed other county officers. He was the representative and agent of central government in the provinces and was expected to deal with civil disorders largely on his own initiative through using the militia. He was also head of the magistracy. Having seen that Rockingham took an active interest in his own neighbourhood as both a private and public person we must consider the extent of his involvement in broader issues as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding. The episodes to be examined are those of food riots, recruiting and the Militia Act of 1757, coining and clipping in Halifax and the threat of an attack on Hull. In each case the marquis was called upon to act effectively in order to avert a crisis, and on each occasion he responded quickly and positively.

The Food Riots of 1756 and 1766

The food riots of 1756 were amongst the most severe of the eighteenth century. The riots were the result of disastrous weather conditions early in the year, which were followed by appalling harvests. Wheat prices rose on average from 4s. 6d. per bushel to over 8s. within the space of a few weeks.¹ The initial outbreak of rioting took place in Staffordshire and Warwickshire and soon spread, occurring in Sheffield within a week.² The predominant features of these riots were those of price-setting and raids on mills, retailers and grain dealers. These actions were intended forcibly to reduce the price of grain to a 'fair' one or to force grain to be brought to market.

1. J.N. Caple in A. Charlesworth (ed.), An Atlas of Rural Protest 1548-1900 (London, Croom Helm, 1983), p. 88.

2. Ibid., p. 86.

Food riots tended to be a 'highly complex form of direct popular action, disciplined and with clear objectives'. They were triggered off by high prices and malpractices among dealers or by hunger. However, they operated within the popular consensus as to what were - or were not - legitimate practices in marketing, milling and baking.¹

The riots in Sheffield occurred on 24th August 1756. The causes were similar to those elsewhere: a shortage of grain and high prices. The riots were the worst ever remembered in the town and were particularly violent. Running battles took place in the streets between the 'town' party who wore white cockades, and the rioters,² and the disturbances lasted four days. The town was thrown into confusion and the Trustees' records note the sending of messages to Wentworth Woodhouse and elsewhere for assistance. The mob 'carried all before them ... breathing nothing but fury and destruction'.³ On Thursday 26th August the mob attacked the Pond Mill but other than removing the slates from one side did little damage 'considering the quantity of corn in the mill, not taking ... above two loads'.⁴ They also threatened to pull down the factor's house and set fire to the town.⁵

The Trustees successfully enlisted Rockingham's help. He rode to Sheffield on 27th August and commissioned ten new constables. He had informed Lord Barrington, the Secretary-at-War, of his intention of going to the town to exert his influence and authority, and hoped to quell the riots without the use of troops even though Cholmondeley's Regiment was then in Leicester, and other troops under Colonel Harvey

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1. E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crown in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971), 78.
 2. Public Advertiser, 1st September 1756.
 3. R.E. Leader, Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century (Sheffield, Sheffield Independent Press, 1901), p. 59. He is quoting a letter written on 28th August 1745 but (as usual) does not give his source.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Public Advertiser, 1st September 1756.

were in Nottingham. All were ready to move at short notice. Rockingham organized 'a very good scheme ... by raising a company of stout, able men ... armed with bludgeons, guns and bayonets'. They 'knocked down' as many of the rioters as they could and patrolled the streets. The ringleaders of the riots were seized where ever they were, either in the streets or in bed.¹

On 28th August the prisoners were taken to Wentworth Woodhouse for trial.² Rockingham was assisted by Justice Battie [who happened to be his agent at Ecclesall] and Sir Rowland Winn. The writer of the article in the Public Advertiser hoped that 'their punishment will deter others from daring to make Parties and Dissentions in the Town'.

Lord Barrington had made contingency plans for the regular army to deal with riot situations but found the forces at his disposal in England depleted since regular troops had been sent to America. Furthermore, he was unable to act quickly in an emergency because 'official channels' had to be used and these were frequently clogged by red tape. Barrington was supposed to inform the Secretary of State [Lord Holderness in 1756] of his proposed actions, await his approval then pass on instructions to the regiments concerned. By the time the army had arrived at the scene of the riot the damage had usually been done and the rioters had gone home.³ However, these channels of procedure for the regular army were new in 1756 and few Lords Lieutenant or even government officials for that matter were aware of them. This explains why Rockingham appears to have short-circuited the system in 1756: he was probably oblivious to the new regulations - or he used his influence to

1. Leader, Sheffield, p. 59.

2. Thirty according to Leader's source, thirty-five according to the Public Advertiser.

3. T. Hayter, The Army & the Crowd in mid-Georgian England (London, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978), p. 47.

get things moving more quickly than would otherwise have been possible.

Barrington was obviously impressed by the marquis' personal action in Sheffield. He believed that Rockingham's intervention was 'becoming yourself and your situation ... tho' at the hazard of your Person'. He thanked him for his exertions but offered the assistance of Colonel Harvey's troops from Nottingham should the riots still be continuing. All Rockingham had to do was contact Harvey. Barrington had not sent in the troops without the marquis' request, 'that you might have the whole merit and your County the intire [sic] advantage of your Example in having reduced a dangerous riot without the Intervention of Military Force'.¹

A most peculiar end to this event, however, was the subsequent actions of the Trustees of Sheffield. They had spent a substantial amount of money on patrols in the streets, on constables, on sending to the Marquis of Rockingham. They had bought corn for the relief of the poor at a time when corn was dear and trade was bad. 'Oatmeal is 11½d. a peck and Wheat has been sold for 19s. a load. The Townsmen have contracted for Two Hundred Load. ... They will begin to Sell at Three o' Clock this Afternoon'.² They then spent £18. 13s. 3¼d. on prosecuting the thirty or thirty-five men who were arrested. The men were convicted and sent to York Castle. A few days later the Trustees paid Justice Battie and James Witham £43. 14s. 6d. in expenses for obtaining the discharge of the rioters whom they had had committed. This seems like the familiar tactic of tempering terror with mercy. Unlike Barrington, the Trustees would have had to live with the consequences of serious prosecutions for riot, but the actions of the Trustees would not have suited

1. W.W.M. R1-79. Barrington to Rockingham, 31st August 1756.

2. Public Advertiser, 1st September 1756.

his Majesty who was 'greatly pleased' with what the marquis had done. 'Nothing more remains but to make proper examples of the Rioters who are now in custody and take proper precautions for the future'.¹

Rockingham was the only example of a Lord Lieutenant using civil authority to suppress the riots. Every other Lord Lieutenant had asked for the assistance of regular troops. Barrington hoped that 'the success you have had and the credit you have acquired will make your example follow'd by others'.² The marquis also appears to have been very keen to re-establish the Posse Comitatus as 'the most Efficient Remedy for the present disturbances, & the most likely prevention Measure for future ones' and wondered 'whether it might not give that Power & Respect to the civil Authority which at present is so much wanted'.³ It was also a very 'Whig' line, precluding the need for a standing army with all the inherent expenses, barracks, uniforms, supplies and so on.

Rockingham took the opportunity at Doncaster Races to ask several gentlemen what they thought of reviving the Posse Comitatus. They were keen on the idea so Rockingham drew up a plan of procedure. The High Sheriff would issue orders for the Posse to be held in readiness in the West Riding while the gentry asked 'the upper sort of farmers' in the parishes 'in a friendly manner - their assistance and attendance - in case of any Riots - in their neighbourhood'. He also wanted handbills to be distributed advising against riots and warning men to be prepared for attack. He suggested that some rioters or those inciting others to riot might have been 'Tools of the French & Jacobite Faction'.⁴

What Rockingham did not want was to set up an association of

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1. W.W.M. R1-80. Barrington to Rockingham, 6th September 1756.
 2. Ibid.
 3. W.W.M. R1-77b. Rockingham to (Lord Mansfield?) undated.
 4. Ibid.

gentlemen alone because that 'would only Tend to foment a division among them and the Lower Sort of people - who are already too much inclined - to resist their Superiors'.¹ He believed that the riots in Sheffield had been less severe than those in the North and East Ridings because some 'small precautions were taken early ... by the uniting of the Considerable Persons of the Town', and he thought that the behaviour of the Sheffield Trustees was an excellent example to quote as being 'worthy [of] the imitation of other Towns'.²

Rockingham's personal intervention in the Sheffield riots of 1756 and his deep dislike of using regular soldiers to suppress riots probably prevented much bloodshed. Troops almost by definition were more likely to kill or injure opponents than a local militia or Posse Comitatus. They were also less likely to be concerned about any damage which was caused in the fray. The marquis gained a great deal of prestige from his actions and leadership at both local and national level and he was held up as an example to other Lords Lieutenant. Holderness, the Secretary of State, was less impressed. He had not been informed as he should have, and he [as Lord Lieutenant of the East Riding] had been unable to fulfil his rôle as Lord Lieutenant because he was in London.

Besides being instrumental in quelling the food riots, Rockingham tried to assist those who were worst affected by the high food prices, particularly on his own estates. He contributed money to the relief of the poor but apparently not enough because in March 1757 his steward at Ecclesall offered to increase the marquis' existing contribution by a further ten guineas.³ Although no reply exists there is no reason to believe that the suggestion was rejected.

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1. W.W.M. R1-77a. Rockingham to (Newcastle?) draft. Undated.
 2. W.W.M. R145-9. Rockingham to Mr. Place. Undated.
 3. W.W.M. R184. William Battie to Rockingham. 2nd March 1757.

In January 1757 Doncaster Corporation had also given ten guineas towards the relief of the poor and had asked 'such Members of the Corporation as think proper' should try to raise a subscription for further relief, to be 'laid out in Corn'.¹ The actions of the marquis, the Corporation and other agencies seem to have prevented serious food riots from breaking out locally in 1757 but by then the new Militia Act had provided a further grievance.²

In June 1765 the second Marquis of Rockingham became First Lord of the Treasury. He inherited from Grenville a very difficult situation with regard to the American colonies which were apparently in the throes of rebellion against English rule. To add to his problems, the Americans had imposed a trade boycott of English goods which was beginning to hit industry, trade and commerce. Furthermore, a post-war depression followed the Peace of Paris in 1763. Rockingham's new position was most unenviable. 1765 also saw increased wheat prices, although the outlook for 1766 was better since the summer of 1765 had been dry and the harvest plentiful.³ The likelihood of grain engrossing consequently increased and exports of wheat rose. At the end of the year a noticeable rise in the price of wheat had occurred. Samuel Lister of Horton, along with some leading manufacturers, feared the total exhaustion of supplies and even higher prices. He wrote to the marquis asking for an export ban on wheat until the economic situation had improved.⁴

Lister's request was only just in advance of the troubles. A series of food riots broke out in January and February 1766 and there was much unrest in the north of England. The country was suffering from

1. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 3, p. 835. 17th January 1757.

2. See below pp. 185-197: The Militia Riots of 1757.

3. Stratton, Agricultural Records, pp. 80-81.

4. W.W.M. R1-538. Samuel Lister to Rockingham, 7th December 1765.

a severe economic slump and additional problems were caused by cattle murrain, crop failure and high foreign demand for grain.¹ Rockingham, who had first-hand experience of the riots ten years earlier promptly had grain supplies sent up from southern England to alleviate the distress in the north. In February he was 'remarkably provident' in imposing a six-month ban on grain exports to Europe, where a famine was raging, thus making more grain available for domestic consumption.² The repeal of the Stamp Act in February 1766 also helped to improve the economic situation in the manufacturing north since the colonial non-importation agreement was promptly lifted and trade began to return to its more usual pattern. The result of Rockingham's policy was to cheapen food and this helped the sales of the manufacturers. It also added the 'grain lobby' to the increasingly long list of Rockingham's supporters.

Unfortunately, the marquis' embargo on corn exports expired on 26th August 1766 and corn factors began sending grain overseas. There had been epidemics of disease among sheep and cattle in England and a late frost in spring had damaged the seedlings. Severe flooding followed prolonged rains in July and the wheat was coarse and lightweight;³ in July Chatham's government ordered a day of prayer for the rain to stop.⁴ Perhaps their prayers were answered: August was dry, but enough damage had been done for further riots to sweep the country in that month. Yorkshire, however, seems to have been relatively peaceful. The militia and Posse Comitatus were on readiness to deal with any disturbances and Rockingham was again the leading politician and figurehead of the county.

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1. D.E. Williams in A. Charlesworth (ed.), Atlas of Rural Protest, pp. 88-89.
 2. W.J. Shelton, English Hunger and Industrial Disorders (London, McMillan Press Ltd., 1973), p. 27.
 3. D.E. Williams in A. Charlesworth (ed.), Atlas of Rural Protest, p. 89.
 4. W.J. Shelton, English Hunger, p. 32.

He was the hero of the manufacturers and was cast as the ill-used saviour of England by his friends and supporters because of his peremptory dismissal from office.

Recruiting and the Militia Act of 1757

The ancient idea of a Posse Comitatus - civilians on readiness to aid the High Sheriff in keeping law and order whenever necessary - proved to be invaluable in 1757 when a further series of riots erupted, caused by the implementation of the new Militia Act as well as by high food prices. Without Rockingham's forethought and drive, 1757 could conceivably have been a disaster in Yorkshire.

When the second Marquis of Rockingham was only fifteen years old he had been a colonel in the Yorkshire Militia raised by his father to defend the county against the Jacobites who had begun to march towards London. Rockingham's interest in military affairs had continued and after he succeeded to the marquise he became responsible as Lord Lieutenant for maintaining law and order and calling out the militia in times of necessity.

Initially the 1745 Jacobite rising was remarkably successful and it became obvious that the militia was in a state of decay. Men such as Lord Malton and his friends formed their own regiments of volunteers but after the crisis was over agitation began in parliament for the reform and reconstruction of an effective militia which could be used in cases of riot or other civil disorders.¹

In 1756 Britain was once again at war with France. The Duke of Newcastle proved unable to deal with the situation and by the middle of the year something of a crisis had been reached. There were several

1. J.R. Western, The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century (London, Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1965), pp. 104-105.

reasons for this: there was a strong possibility of an invasion by the French; Hessian and Hanoverian troops had been hired to supplement the British army and a series of military disasters had culminated in the loss of Minorca. The landed classes were discontented with the progress of the war and indecisiveness of the government while co-incidentally the lower orders were giving vent to their feelings by sporadic rioting against the high-price of food and the new militia proposals.

The most important issue for many people in 1756-57 was the need for an effective militia to protect England from invasion and from the necessity of having to employ Hessian mercenaries. The government understandably preferred to raise regiments of regular troops rather than to rely on a haphazard militia which was controlled by amateurs. However, in 1756 the fear of invasion was so intense that Rockingham, Savile and other landowners in Yorkshire began to recruit a volunteer militia at their own expense for the defence of the county. Both Rockingham and Savile saw the militia as a utilitarian measure: it was a good way of allowing large numbers of men to serve their country. Neither of them saw their opposition to the proposal of making the militia bill perpetual as an instrument of faction.¹ They preferred a five or seven year extension of the Act because as Rockingham said, the purposes of the militia were

the defence of the kingdom from our foreign enemies and to have that defence composed of men, not immediately dependent upon the Crown. ... if unqualified persons were permitted to serve, merely as mercenaries, for the sake of pay and rank; if substitutes were continued from time to time ... [he] saw no difference between a militia and a standing army [and] was inclined to give preference to the latter, because they very seldom troubled

1. Western, English Militia, p. 185.

themselves with parties or politics'.¹

The new Militia Act was passed in May 1756. It called for a total force of sixty thousand men to be raised and each county was expected to levy a proportion of the total, determined by the size of the population.² The West Riding of Yorkshire was expected to enlist 1,240 men; the North Riding, 720; the East Riding 400;³ the levy was to be made by taking a census of all the able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and sixty, deciding on the proportion to be enlisted from each parish and then by drawing lots. The unlucky ones were enlisted for three years after which time they were to be replaced in the same way. Savile opposed this method of enlistment because he felt that it was unfair, but on his suggestion a subscription was raised to help to equip the troops. The creation of a militia raised another problem. Men serving in the militia were exempt from regular service and it may well have been that many enlisted in the militia for this reason.⁴

As Lord Lieutenant, Rockingham was responsible for raising regular regiments which by 1756 were needed for the war, particularly in America. He appealed to Yorkshiremen to volunteer as soldiers especially for General Napier's Regiment of Foot. To give encouragement to would-be recruits he offered a guinea to every Yorkshireman who volunteered. At Hull and Doncaster certainly, and perhaps elsewhere, his offer was matched by the towns' Corporations. In March 1756 the Corporation of Doncaster resolved that 'there should be paid to every Yorkshireman inhabiting ... Doncaster, enlisting within the said Regiment within one month, the sum of one guinea over and above the enlisting money allowed

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1. Cobbett and Wright, Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803 (London, 1845), Vol.XXI, pp. 221-222.
 2. Western, English Militia, p. 129.
 3. Ibid., p. 450.
 4. Ibid., p. 189.

by Government and besides the guinea offered by the Marquis of Rockingham'.¹ Joseph Sill of Hull informed the marquis that he had put out advertisements regarding the extra payment for recruits 'so that your Lordship's good intentions will be known all over this part of the county',² and acknowledged the intentions of Hull Corporation to pay a further guinea to each recruit from within fifteen miles of the town.³

Even after the regiment had been commissioned, Rockingham and Savile maintained an interest in it. The marquis intended to pay a bounty of £5 to each man who completed the term of seven years' service but he had problems in tracing them. By 1763 the 51st foot [Brudenell's Regiment]⁷ had been sent to Ireland and its commanding officer had not sent a list of men who were able to apply for the bounty. Rockingham appears to have gone to a great deal of personal trouble to compile a list of men and where they lived, besides tracing those who had left the country.⁴ He found forty-nine eligible men - a cost to himself of £245 - and asked John Lee of Leeds, John Milnes of Wakefield, James Stovin of Doncaster, Captain Green of Halifax, John Roebuck of Sheffield, John Stephenson of Hull and Thomas Barstow of York to find the men, pay the £5 and then claim a reimbursement for himself.⁵ The cash was to be paid out by Mr. Fenton of Banktop, who was the marquis' steward at Wentworth.

Probably as a result of the marquis' generosity towards those who volunteered as regular soldiers in 1756 another matter was brought to his notice in November 1765. On 1st November a man called Hodgson wrote to Rockingham concerning the discharge of John Needham. The man had

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1. Doncaster Courtiers, Vol. 3, p. 825. 3rd March 1756.
 2. W.W.M. F49-2. Joseph Sill to Hull to Rockingham, 6th March 1756.
 3. W.W.M. F49-1. Public notice by Carleton Monckton, Town Clerk of Hull, 5th March 1756.
 4. W.W.M. R142-3.
 5. W.W.M. R142-1. Rockingham to "Sir" (probably John Stephenson of Hull) 1763.

served out his enlistment period and applied for his discharge, which had been refused. The regiment had been posted to Ireland and Needham had been obliged to go with it: the alternative was desertion, a capital offence.¹ Hodgson obviously expected Rockingham to take up the matter, perhaps because he could always be relied upon to see justice done to any man, but especially to Yorkshiremen. Unfortunately there is no record of exactly what the marquis did. It is likely that he got in touch with the regiment and/or Secretary at War, since Hodgson wrote to Rockingham again on 16th November expressing his thanks and saying he hoped that Needham would soon be back home after his discharge in Ireland.²

Even as late as 1779 the Marquis was acting as mediator between the troops in 'his' regiment and their officers. He received a letter on 24th September from 'Your Opressed [sic] Reg/imen/t I Could Wish to Sign my Name But I dare not But Nevertheless it is true', telling him a long, garbled tale about the payment or non-payment of soldiers for uniforms and shoes. The men were 'now a great Part of us Barefoot and has Not Received our half mounting nor Will our Captn. Wh. [?] advance one Single Penny ... and In Case we Should March we may go Barefoot'. Since the men were in 'no Doubt but you are and will remain our Guardian and friend' they 'Beg your assistance in writing [sic] our wrongs'.³

Once again there is the impression that the marquis was approachable by anyone seeking redress of grievance: this comes over very strongly. The men were reclothed and reshod soon after Rockingham received the letter and acted on it. Clearly, it was inadvisable for those in authority to ignore the requests of such an important magnate

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1. W.W.M. R143-3 and 5. S. Hodgson to Rockingham, 1st November 1764.
 2. W.W.M. R143-5. S. Hodgson to Rockingham, 16th November 1764.
 3. W.W.M. R12-8. Petition to Rockingham, 24th September 1779.

as Charles Watson-Wentworth, even if the higher authorities were the military.

While the regular army was out of the country local defence was under the auspices of the militia. This organization had many problems ranging from desertion to drunkenness and inefficiency to criminal activity. The men were taught arms drill, marching and evolutions; each regiment had its own rules and methods. For some militia officers the whole venture became a business deal. They received money from the government to buy all they needed to fit out the unit and many tried to make a profit if they could.¹ Equipment was supposed to last twelve years and officers were responsible for repairs, upkeep and transport. The allowances for clothing a private soldier in 1760 was £1. 10s. 0d. per man, which was 2s. short of the price of a uniform in the East Riding Militia. The marquis and his fellow officers made up the shortfall out of their own pockets.²

The officers of the militia regiments were appointed by the Lord Lieutenant so it is not surprising to find that the three West Riding regiments were under the command of friends of the marquis: Sir George Savile, Lord Downe and William Thornton. Savile became one of the M.P.s for Yorkshire in 1759, and Downe and Thornton represented Yorkshire and York respectively. Not only were they all friends of the young marquis but they were also political allies. They were under Rockingham's direction in the militia, as were the other officers.

All militia officers had to meet several conditions. They had to be landed gentlemen with sufficient spare time to train their troops; they had to be practising Anglicans to take the oath prescribed under

1. Western, English Militia, p. 341.

2. Ibid., pp. 241-341.

the Test Act. They also had to be able to qualify as deputy Lords Lieutenant.¹ Some 167 nobles and gentlemen fulfilled this last requirement,² but finding volunteers from among them to be militia officers proved to be somewhat difficult, and there was a perpetual shortage of such men. Many of those who did volunteer were unsatisfactory but were difficult to get rid of, and in 1760 one man accused Rockingham of failing to promote him to the rank of Colonel because he was a friend of Lord Holderness.³ Patronage was a double-edged sword, creating enemies as well as friends because there were never enough places to go round.

The summer of 1756 saw widespread disturbances in Yorkshire. The harvest of the previous year had been disappointing because of wet weather. There had been exceptionally heavy rain in northern England in September 1755 with the result that wheat prices rose from 33s. 10d. per quarter in 1755 to 45s. 3d. in 1756⁴. The summer of 1756 was said to be the wettest in living memory and similar conditions prevailed throughout Europe. Prices increased at an alarming rate and food riots broke out. As a palliative measure the government prohibited the export of grain temporarily, but this did not ease the difficulties being experienced in the provinces.

In Yorkshire, beside food riots there was also politically motivated discontent as a result of the recruiting activities of Rockingham and his friends. They had presumably been under the impression that the troops they encouraged to enlist in the regular army were for domestic service only - certainly this had not been denied by the government. Then, when it was too late to do anything about it, some Yorkshire vol-

1. Western, English Militia, p. 307.

2. W.W.M. List of Deputy Lords Lieutenant, 1757. In unnumbered bundle following R170/175.

3. Western, English Militia, p. 337.

4. Stratton, Agricultural Records, p. 78.

unteers were drafted into regular regiments and were shipped off to fight in America. This may well explain why Rockingham offered the £5 bounty in 1763. Sir George Savile was greatly disturbed to find that he had been duped into acting as a recruiting sergeant for the government. In a very long letter for him - some fourteen pages of it¹ - Savile complained to Rockingham about the use of the recruits in the regular army. He said that the gentry would not have so actively raised troops had they known what would happen. He had even encouraged his own tenants and servants to enlist, in the belief that their terms of service would be domestic. He was angry since the affair was likely to harm his credibility in the county. Rockingham was, of course, in the same predicament and was likely to lose more than his credibility since he was still building up his political following in Yorkshire.

The 1757 Militia Act required Lords Lieutenant to implement the ballot procedures for raising a militia but fears that they might be sent overseas had led to virtual insurrection.² There was a total collapse of magisterial authority in the East Riding and riots in York and the West Riding. Most men did not want to join the militia and the riots broke out when the parish constables began making the lists of those eligible for service, with the aim of destroying the lists.³ Though not the first county to be affected, Yorkshire was the worst hit.

Rockingham contacted Barrington and asked for a regiment of regular soldiers to be sent to Derby and for personal powers to move them into Yorkshire if necessary. There was a further motive, too. The regiment he asked for was the one he and Savile had raised in 1756. He thought that this would be useful in contradicting false reports of the

1. W.W.M. R1-81. Savile to Rockingham, 9th September 1756.
2. J.N. Caple in A. Charlesworth (ed.), Atlas of Rural Protest, p. 126.
3. Western, English Militia, p. 291.

hardships suffered by the Yorkshire regiment, some of which appeared as handbills posted around the county. One such bill reminded its readers of what had happened to Napier's Regiment and hinted that the militia might also end up overseas.¹ The writer appears to have had some Jacobite sympathies: he asked his countrymen to 'remember your legal and native King' and hoped that 'God may send us a speedy deliverance from Ruin and Slavery'.

In Sheffield the anti-militia riots were tied up with political and economic grievances. There was some talk of social levelling and the grinders objected to the use of 'French stones'; that is, imported mill stones. One mill in the town using these was destroyed. Rockingham suggested that a ban should be imposed on corn exports temporarily as a concession to the poor and hungry sections of the community.² However, the ballot lists were the root of the trouble. These supposedly had been drawn up, naming all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and sixty so that a ballot could be made by the magistrates, and the rioters understandably believed that the lists were in Rockingham's possession. Consequently they decided to march to Wentworth Woodhouse to take them from the marquis. Rockingham was warned of the likely arrival of the rioters. On 24th September 1757 he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle saying that he did not have the lists and 'am not the least uneasy about their coming for I am persuaded with the assistance of my own workmen and Neighbouring Farmers I shall be an over-match for any sudden Riot'.³ The marquis armed his servants and tenants and put them on alert in case of the arrival of 'the Mobb' [sic] which failed to

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1. W.W.M. R43-4. Letter found at the Angel signpost, Halifax on 21st September 1756. Addressed to 'My Dear Countrymen'.
 2. Western, English Militia, pp. 301-302.
 3. W.W.M. R1-105. Rockingham to Newcastle, 24th September 1757.

materialise. Newcastle put this down to 'Your Lordship's Great Spirit, and Declaration of Resisting the mob, if they came to Wentworth [which] intimidated them so much that they not only laid aside their Intention of coming to your House, but also did the same with regard to Sir Rowland Wynn's [sic] and others'.¹

Rockingham was not content simply to defend his own interests. He wanted a 'plan for the Security and Quiet of the West Riding &c'.² He wanted an example made of the ringleaders to put a stop to the riots because 'it is not any particular Grievance which occasions their rising'. In fact he was wrong about there being no reason for the riots. The balloting of eligible men into the militia was resented and there was a great fear of being sent overseas. This was not allayed even when sixteen gentlemen from Doncaster volunteered to serve in the militia to show that they believed the militia was a useful instrument, and that they were convinced that it would not be send abroad. Furthermore, there were cases of men being impressed by the navy for service abroad. For press gangs to get so far inland was unusual. Such incidents must have frightened the people of Yorkshire and justified their fears about the militia. Besides the militia issue, high food prices had depressed the manufacturers' markets in Sheffield. If food took up most of a man's earnings, there was little left for buying other products. This applied to all Sheffield's domestic markets of course, and the war had adversely affected overseas sales too. Rockingham was usually more sympathetic to the causes of distress than he was on this occasion, and it is possible that he had not yet learned enough about the 'common people' to understand why they resorted to violence when they felt they

1. W.W.M. F43-1. Newcastle to Rockingham, 27th September 1757.
2. W.W.M. R1-105. Rockingham to Newcastle, 24th September 1757.

had a grievance against authority.

The Marquis of Rockingham continued to press for a local militia to be formed to suppress the riots and to comply with the Act. His resolution was praised by George II, and several elder statesmen such as Hardwicke and Mansfield thought that he had made the right decision. The troops in Derby would have needed the help of nobles, gentry and J.P.s to do their job had they been sent for, and Rockingham had ensured the availability of this aid. He was so successful that James Stovin of Doncaster was able to 'turn recruiting officer' in the town and persuaded many of his 'most substantial ... neighbours' to join 'themselves voluntarily to serve in the Militia for this place'. The required number of sixteen was soon met and Stovin was convinced that 'if the Militia Scheme should take place we could raise as many more, on the least hint from your Lordship that it should be proper and agreeable to your Lordship'.¹

Rockingham's idea of using the civil authority to control the riots was used throughout the West Riding and in the city of York, although troops were on hand if the civil authorities could not handle the situation. Stephen Croft had been faced by five hundred armed men who were carrying clubs and some guns, and who demanded that the only militia which should be set up was the old-style militia: that is, propertied men only, rather than conscripts. Croft handled the situation in a novel way. He gave them money so that they could go and 'drink the King's health'.² The men went away peacefully. In Leeds some 153 men were taken prisoner following the riots there. Troops were kept out of the town while the Assizes were in session and the Posse Comitatus was used to keep order. Only six men were sentenced to death

1. W.W.M. R43-2. James Stovin to Rockingham, 13th October 1757.
2. W.W.M. R43-5. Stephen Croft to Rockingham, undated.

and the rest were found 'not guilty' because juries were unwilling to convict men of crimes which carried the death penalty when they were believed to have legitimate grievances.¹

Plans to recruit men into the militia proceeded throughout 1757 and eventually three regiments were formed. The North Riding militia was given its first issue of arms in July 1759, the day after it was embodied for service; the three West Riding battalions got their weapons in August and were embodied the next month; the East Riding was armed in December 1759 and was called for service in January 1760.² In October 1759, just one month after they had been commissioned, two of the West Riding battalions were ordered to Beverley and Hull by Barrington, who feared a French invasion of the east coast. The order was late in reaching Rockingham because it was sent through regular army channels. The marquis complained to Newcastle about 'official channels' because he wanted to lead his own men and wanted wide discretionary powers as the Brigadier-General of the West Riding militia. He felt very strongly that he bore the responsibility for the defence of Yorkshire and personally directed the regiments throughout the war.

Sir George Savile made use of the marquis' extensive powers shortly after his arrival in Hull with one of the battalions. Savile reported that all the pointed cartridges had been made up ready for use but he only had between six and seven hundred musket balls left and about a thousand more for firing practise. He did not think that this was enough, and he was dissatisfied with arrangements for stores in Hull. Mr. Shearman did not think that he should let Savile have anything and Sir George wanted an order 'from the Board' for everything he needed.

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1. W.W.M. R43-6. Jeremiah Dixon to Rockingham, 22nd April 1758.
 2. Western, English Militia, pp. 447-448.
 3. W.W.M. R49-5. Sir George Savile to Rockingham, 17th November 1759.

Savile was preparing for the aftermath of an invasion. He had been to the seamen's hospital and found that it was not full: he wanted to use the spare rooms for his sick soldiers. He also had his eye on 'somewhere else should it be needed' but that building needed furnishing. Although he was empowered to hire equipment, Savile refused to; he also said he could not afford to buy it outright. The order 'from the Board' asked for beds and bedding, kettles, pots and pans; cutlery and plates, fire-place furniture, chairs and stools, besides bandages, dressings and medicines.¹ It is perhaps some measure of Savile's confidence and Rockingham's ability that the order was approved and the second hospital was opened. The expected invasion did not occur and all the preparations were for nothing although no doubt many of the officers felt that they had served King and Country, and the need for a local defence force may well have been impressed on others.

The Yorkshire Militia was among the first to be up to full complement and ready for service in the north. The militias of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire were not commissioned until as late as April 1778, for example.²

The Act asked for a total force of 32,000 men and the target was long unachieved. It is surprising, therefore, to find the Yorkshire quota of 2,360 being met within two years of the passing of the Act,³ especially since Rockingham chose not to levy men. Instead he encouraged volunteers by personal example, influence and cash inducements: he was remarkably successful.

He and his colleagues were equally successful in imposing their views concerning the militia on extremists of both sides. Some politi-

1. W.W.M. R49-5. Sir George Savile to Rockingham, 17th November 1759.
2. Western, English Militia, p. 158.
3. Ibid.

cians wanted the militia scrapped altogether, others wanted it to be a permanent feature with men serving in perpetuity. Rockingham and Sir George Savile led the campaign to maintain a militia but with a maximum service of five years. Both men had been involved with the militia and Posse Comitatus since 1745 and had had much experience in recruiting and training men. They were also influential in political and military activities in Yorkshire. As major landowners they had a great deal of influence in the county and Rockingham had close links with the court and government. Their prominence in all of these areas gave them much weight and they were able to have their ideas included as part of the 1762 Militia Act. Savile produced a pamphlet, An Argument Concerning the Militia, in which he attacked the ballot as a method of recruiting, and limited service to five years.¹ Fortunately this Act was given the royal assent before the 'Massacre of the Pelhamite Innocents' and before George III stripped the marquis of all his offices in the county.² Even so, a number of militia officers were prepared to resign their commissions rather than serve under any other Lord Lieutenant.³

Rockingham was not long in involving himself in local affairs, however. He had his estates to keep him occupied when he was not attending the House of Lords, and in 1769 he became involved in an incident in Halifax concerning counterfeiting and clipping of coins which had been known to the government but, until the marquis' intervention, had been ignored.

Coining and Clipping in Halifax

During the mid-eighteenth century England had problems with the

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1. Western, English Militia, p. 187.
 2. The King dismissed Rockingham from all offices he held in Yorkshire on 23rd December 1762.
 3. For example W.W.M. R1-344. James Lister to Rockingham, 1st January 1763.

currency of the realm. There was a shortage of small change and such coins as existed were underweight.¹ The difficulties were circumvented by the use of foreign and counterfeit coin as tender. Those who suffered most from the lack of English specie were manufacturers, tradesmen and farmers particularly since bullion prices were well in excess of the Mint price for gold. By the late 1760s minted coin was at its poorest condition: recirculated guineas were often 5s. 4d. deficient in gold.²

By 1765 a whole industry had developed in the Halifax region of Yorkshire in coining and clipping. The two processes went together and supplied the heavy demand for cash. The rise of coining and clipping was linked with the depression of the cloth industry following the Stamp Act³ but the coins were so badly underweight that in 1769 the manufacturers complained, even though they previously had been happy to accept the counterfeits.

By July 1769, counterfeit 36s. pieces were common. These were actually counterfeits of the Portugese half-dobra piece. The real coins would have come to England through the substantial woollen trade with Portugal. Although they were not legal tender they would have been accepted by merchants since coinage was based on a weight system. Merchants - if they were prudent - would carry balance scales on which to weigh coin to make sure they got the true value.

Filers found their activity relatively easy since coins were made of beaten silver or gold and filing small quantities of metal from the edges was commonplace. It was also virtually unnoticeable. However, clippers were not so circumspect. On occasion they would remove up to

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1. This problem was equally acute in Ireland and America.
 2. J. Styles in J. Brewer & J. Styles (eds.), An Ungovernable People: the English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, (London, Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 172-180.
 3. Ibid., p. 186.

15% of a coin [in today's currency, about 2mm from all round a 5p piece] which was an amount unlikely to escape the keen eyes of merchants. The clippers would then debase the metal and either coin for themselves or sell the metal to coiners. Since the coiners made foreign specie the chance of arrest was slight unless they overstepped the bounds of reason and made a surfeit of coins. This seems to have happened in Halifax: so many half-dobras were made that it became obvious that gangs of clippers and coiners were at work.

Although counterfeit coins had an intrinsic bullion value the acts of coining, clipping, diminishing coin, owning coining dies or owning clipping scissors [which were made in Sheffield] were capital offences. However, prosecutions were difficult to obtain, because the offences came under the jurisdiction of the Solicitor of the Mint who was allowed to claim for prosecutions only in retrospect: he received a salary of sixty pounds per annum and could not afford to take legal action regularly.¹

The activities of the Halifax coiners came to Rockingham's attention through indirect channels. In October 1767 a letter was sent from Hamburg by William Hutchinson to Michael Wainhouse in Halifax informing him that a man called Greenwood had been arrested, charged and found guilty of clipping coin in the city. Hutchinson thought that Greenwood would probably be publicly whipped, but more importantly he had 'confessed who learnt him in the art of clipping in your neighbourhood, and who there were concerned with him: their names and places of abode'. The information concerning the Halifax men had been passed on to Mr. Woodford who was the English resident in Hamburg and he had informed the English government. Hutchinson expected that 'those People will have been taken up by Special Messengers from London before now' and he was very surprised

1. J. Styles in J. Brewer & J. Styles (eds.), An Ungovernable People, p. 181.

that Greenwood's friends should have even thought of setting up Greenwood as a coin-clipper in Hamburg.¹

Although the English government had been told about the Halifax clippers, it had done nothing at the time and the reports were merely shelved. The practices of both clipping coin and counterfeiting continued in the West Riding. Finally an official enquiry was set up in 1769 after the direct intervention of the Marquis of Rockingham. The government was told that 'a gang of villains near Hallifax [~~sic~~] have for some years past made a practice of diminishing the coin, and of late years of coining Portugal Pieces'.² The official enquiry followed numerous complaints and reports from the West Riding to the Solicitor of the Mint and the Secretary of State over the previous two years, during which time no action had been taken. The debasing of coin worried West Riding merchants: the value of coin had been reduced by some 20% and the practice of clipping and filing coin 'infested' the area.³ Merchants were having difficulty in making payments simply because specie was not equal to its face value. So much concern was generated that two Halifax merchants privately employed James Crabtree and William Hailey to track down the gangs. One of the merchants, James Lister of Shibden Hall, was also a Justice of the Peace who had been appointed by Rockingham. However, Lister and his colleague Stanhope both died at about the same time and soon afterwards it seemed likely that the men they had employed to find the gangs would be arrested for coining and clipping. Fortunately Rockingham was able to prevent the arrest. He had been told of the plan

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1. H. Ling-Roth, The Yorkshire Coiners 1767-1783 (Halifax, F. King and Sons, Ltd., 1906), p. 8. Quoted from documents in Halifax Records Office.
 2. Lord Weymouth to Rockingham, 14th November 1769. Domestic Entry Book, George III, Vol. 25, p. 222. Cited in Long Roth, Yorkshire Coiners, p. 15.
 3. Leeds Intelligencer, 27th June 1769.

by Samuel Lister and John Hustler, and realised that if either Crabtree or Hailey was taken then they would probably be hunted down by the gangs later, if they were not hanged on the Assize Court's orders.¹

Crabtree and Hailey did their job well. In July 1768 Joseph Stell was found guilty of coining and was sentenced to death: the sentence was carried out at York in August 1769.² In March 1769 a gang of ten suspected coiners were arrested near Halifax,³ but the problem had become so critical by September 1769 that the government appointed a Mr. Deighton as Supervisor of the Excise in Halifax. He was fairly successful in his attempts to find the culprits. Seven or eight of the gang were captured and committed to York Castle, a good many more left Halifax and about a hundred were informed against as either coiners, clippers or accomplices. The Leeds Intelligencer of 17th October 1769 carried a report of the capture of 'King' David Hartley, the ring-leader of the clipped coin traffic in Halifax, who was arrested on the evidence of James Broadhead, a coiner who possibly was employed by Deighton as a spy.⁴ The rest of the gang, 'suspecting what was likely to be their Fate, repeatedly vowed revenge against Mr. Dighton [sic] and waylaid him on the 9th [of November 1769] and shot him dead, near his own house'.⁵

Rockingham knew of the problems in Halifax in October 1769. Some leading tradesmen had become alarmed at the activities of the coiners and had demanded that the army should be called in to catch the culprits. However, Sir George Savile wrote to Rockingham saying that calling in

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1. Ling Roth, Yorkshire Coiners, pp. 8-9.
 2. Ibid., 9th August 1769.
 3. Leeds Mercury, 14th March 1769.
 4. Leeds Intelligencer, 17th October 1769.
 5. Lord Weymouth to Rockingham, 14th November 1769. Domestic Entry Book of George III, Vol. 25, p. 222. Cited in Ling Roth, Yorkshire Coiners, p. 15.

troops would be useless; that the outcome of such an action would be only 'more bastards and no fewer coiners'.¹ The marquis also opposed the use of troops for such purposes, believing that local involvement of the gentry was a better way of dealing with local problems. As over the food riots he took the Whig view and opposed the idea of a standing army and its use as a means of enforcing the law.

The news of Deighton's murder was sent to Lord Weymouth who, on the direct orders of the king, offered a reward of £100 for information leading to the apprehension of the murderers. A pardon was offered to all those involved except the one who fired the shot. Weymouth was also instructed to inform Rockingham of his actions since as Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum for the West Riding of Yorkshire he was directly responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Weymouth did not doubt that the marquis would 'take such steps as you shall think most likely to put a stop to a practice so very dangerous to a trading town, and of course that you will exert yourself in such measures as will bring the guilty to condign punishment'² thus restoring security to the West Riding, where some people were so alarmed at the events than many spoke of leaving the area.

A meeting was held in Bradford on 23rd November which was attended by men from Leeds, Halifax and Bradford. They discussed the best way of stopping the coining and clipping and decided that, since they estimated the gang's strength at about three hundred, the army would be the best resort. However, Lister the J.P. had just died so no prosecutions could take place even if the guilty were caught. John Royds of Halifax was chosen to write to Rockingham asking him to appoint

1. W.W.M. R1-1249. Savile to Rockingham, October 1769.

2. Lord Weymouth to Rockingham, cited Ling Roth, Yorkshire Coiners, p.15.

another J.P. and to call in the military.¹ Royds stated that Deighton had been killed by a gang of four men who had confessed to the crime after their arrest. The four men- James Broadbent, Robert Thomas, Matthew Normanton and William Fowles - were taken from Halifax to Leeds on 22nd November and thence to York Castle on 23rd. Broadbent had turned King's Evidence and accused Thomas of firing the shot which had killed Deighton.² This reinforces the suggestion that Broadbent was working for Deighton as an informer on the other coiners and clippers. He eventually was pardoned and left Yorkshire because his life was probably in danger.

Rockingham's reaction to the letter was to go to Halifax. He felt that his presence might encourage others to act if nothing else, and so frighten off the coiners and clippers. He expressly disapproved of sending for the military except in the case of extreme necessity and suggested the Watch and Ward and citizens' militia would be better alternatives. The use of these agencies had already proved their worth in Sheffield during the riots of 1756, 1757 and 1766 and were less likely to create havoc in their own neighbourhood than regular soldiers would. He also advised that someone from the Mint should be in Halifax to prosecute the criminals.³

A proclamation was issued on 25th November, listing the names of seven men who had been accused of coining and clipping, all of whom had absconded. All came from the parish of Halifax and five of them were weavers. On the following day Rockingham sent out a circular letter to all the Justices of the Peace living in or around Halifax, Bradford,

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1. W.W.M. R11-1. John Royds to Rockingham, 24th November 1769.
 2. Leeds Mercury, 28th November 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R11-2. Rockingham to Royds, 25th November 1769.

Wakefield and Leeds calling them to a meeting in Halifax on 27th November. Rockingham stressed that 'the dangerous and villainous practice of clipping and coining ... requires in every consideration [that] the utmost attention should be shewn [sic] in order to detect the guilty, and to put a stop to a practice so ruinous and so detrimental to Trade and Credit, and so injurious to the public in general'. He summoned men from neighbouring areas because he believed that coining, clipping and debasing of coin was being carried on outside Halifax. He also wanted gentlemen eligible to serve as J.P.s to attend so that 'some of them might be inclined to act if it was only for a few months, during the present situation'. If that hope failed to materialise, then there was always the chance that the 'very appearance of many considerable Gentlemen, concurring in the Proceedings of those who do Act, would have a ... very good effect'.¹

The meeting at the Talbot Inn, Halifax, was attended by 42 gentlemen.² Of these, nine were deputy Lords Lieutenant and two - William Radcliffe and Benjamin Ferrand - were captains in the West Riding Militia³ and so were already known to Rockingham who chaired the meeting. After much discussion four resolutions were passed. The first approved of the arrest of the coiners and Deighton's murderers; the second requested that all J.P.s should exert themselves and asked that the gentry should help the J.P.s. The third resolution arranged for a subscription

1. W.W.M. R11-5. 26th November 1769.

2. Leeds Mercury, 28th November 1769. They were: Viscount Irwin; Sir Lionel Pilkington; Sir James Ibbetson; John Smyth; Henry Wickham; Richard Wilson; Peregrine Wentworth; Rev. Leigh; Rev. Charlesworth; John Caygill; William Crowle; Charles Swain; Booth Sharp; Benjamin Ferrand; John Cookson; John Milnes; John Royds; William Radcliffe; Richard Fenton; Samuel Harper; Charles Wood; Richard Wainhouse; John Blayds; John Woolmer; Thomas Woolrick; John Buck; Thomas Hardcastle; Rev. Nelson; John Royds Jn.; James Weatherhead; Michael Wainhouse; John Edwards; William Prescott; Thomas Ramsden; William Pollard; James Howarth; Samuel Waterhouse; William Buck; Thomas Sayer; John Eagle; Robert Parker; Richard Mawhood; and Christopher Rawson.

3. W.W.M. R1-222. List of Officers in the West Riding Militia.

to be established from which rewards could be paid and the final one asked for a royal pension for Deighton's widow. Mrs. Deighton and her five children had been maintained by public generosity since the death of her husband: she had no money and no means of earning any. The Marquis of Rockingham gave her £50 out of his own pocket when he arrived in Halifax and on being told that Mrs. Deighton was penniless, recommended to Lord Weymouth that she be given a pension of £50 p.a. for life and £200 so that she could have the four youngest children apprenticed. The recommendation was approved and the money was sent to Mrs. Deighton.

After his return from Halifax Rockingham wrote a strongly critical letter to Lord Weymouth¹ giving a detailed account of the meeting and its results. Most of the gentlemen to whom circular letters were sent had turned up at the meeting, he said, and they had been given the 'proper instructions ... to recommend to them the utmost diligence and activity'. The marquis bluntly informed Weymouth that many reports on the subject of coining and clipping in Halifax, which had been rife for a number of years, had been ignored by both the Solicitor of the Mint and the Secretary of State's office. Furthermore, the report from the English resident in Hamburg, Mr. Woodford, had also been shelved without action being taken.

It had transpired that Greenwood had returned to England after his flogging in Hamburg. Rockingham suggested that he and any known friends and/or accomplices should be arrested and questioned. He did foresee problems, though, for the Solicitor of the Mint had told the marquis that his salary 'did not allow him to carry on prosecutions'. Rather than have the men escape, Rockingham proposed that the Solicitor or another lawyer should be sent to the West Riding 'to aid and advise

1. W.W.M. R11-9. Rockingham to Weymouth, 1st December 1769.

in the Examination of suspected Persons [so that] the Business would be carried on with great efficacy'. Rockingham also very sensibly advised that 'it would also be very useful if some persons from the Mint were sent [to Halifax], as in searching Houses &c. they might see Traces of Clipping and Coining, which might escape the Notice of Persons unaccustomed in that employment'.¹

It was the Marquis of Rockingham who took on the responsibility of keeping Lord Weymouth informed of events in Halifax since central Government seemed to be totally unaware of what was going on. Government agents wanted to arrest Crabtree and Hailey: the two men were only safe after the marquis confirmed that they were employed to catch the coiners. Had he not stepped in, the consequences for the two men could have been fatal either at the hands of the York hangman or vengeful coiners. Rockingham was the one to tell Weymouth that the coining and clipping gang numbered some two hundred men working from four shops in eight or ten gangs, and also to inform the Mint that guineas in Yorkshire had been devalued by 3s. 4d. - that is, by 15%. The letter, endorsed 'Read by the King',² was acted upon by Lord Weymouth and the Solicitor of the Mint, both of whom were, no doubt, galvanized into action as a result of Rockingham's activities.

The Treasury was unable to find Mr. Woodford's letter about Greenwood which had been written in 1767 but was able to act on Rockingham's advice once his letter had been forwarded to the Treasury by Weymouth. On 7th December, Grey Cooper assured Weymouth that the Solicitor of the Mint and one of his colleagues were to be sent to Halifax, thus carrying out the marquis' suggestion. The king was delighted with Rockingham's

1. W.W.M. R11-9. Rockingham to Weymouth, 1st December 1769.
2. Ibid.

approach to the problem and fully approved of his methods, to the extent that all the marquis' recommendations were carried out.¹

By 9th December Mr. Chamberlayne, a Solicitor to the Mint, and a Moneyer of the Mint had been sent to Halifax and then to York so that those accused of counterfeiting and clipping could be tried at the York Assizes. For himself, Rockingham was more than pleased with his visit to Halifax. He was 'exceeding glad' that he had paid a visit to the town 'as it has given All That Neighbourhood much Satisfaction, & I hope my going will have been of Use'.² He believed that he had 'succeeded very well, as what I have done and am doing is pleasing and satisfactory to all that part of the Country'.³

As Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum he had probably exceeded the bounds of duty. Under normal circumstances he would have not been so actively involved but it is perhaps an indication of his character that he felt it necessary to give personal support both to the merchants and Justices of the Peace by being present. The fact that he called the meeting is quite unusual: it would have been sufficient for him to issue orders and not get involved. He obviously felt that a direct approach would be more valuable particularly since he was so well-liked in the West Riding after the repeal of the Stamp Act which had helped to revive the failing trade to America. Many of the gentlemen who attended Rockingham's meeting in Halifax had, in fact, signed one or other of the Addresses of thanks for the repeal of the Act.⁴

On 14th December 1769 Mr. Chamberlayne issued a Proclamation

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1. W.W.M. R11-18. Weymouth to Rockingham, 5th December 1769.
 2. PwF 9023. Rockingham to Portland, 5th December 1769.
 3. Rockingham to Burke, 9th December 1769. Burke Correspondence 2, 116.
 4. For example Richard Wilson, John Caygill, John Royds (Senior and Junior), Richard Fenton, Samuel Harper, John Blayds, John Woolmer and James Weatherhead all signed the Halifax address.

offering a free pardon to any man who informed on two or more coiners and clippers. He announced that the towns of Halifax, Leeds and Bradford had offered a reward of ten guineas over and above the official reward for every person convicted. The reward seemed to be attractive. By 17th December there were about thirty suspected coiners and clippers in York goal while Daniel Greenwood and John Cockroft had been arrested and were on their way to York.¹

The Leeds Mercury continued to publish the names of the men arrested on similar suspicion: John Bates, Jonas Tillotson, Thomas Wilson and Thomas Westerman. Joseph Hanson, a deputy constable in Halifax was arrested for coining and clipping, but managed to escape from custody. A reward of twenty guineas was put out for his capture. Cockroft confessed to being one of a gang of five involved in clipping and filing gold coin 'and also of coining Moidores² and Thirteen and Sixpenny pieces'.³ His accomplices were duly arrested and gradually the gangs were brought to justice. The whole incident appears to have been concluded by the end of 1769. Rockingham's influential part in the successful end of the counterfeiting was expressed by Jeremiah Dixon of Gledhow.

Great thanks are due to Your Lordship for your very kind attention to the welfare of the publick /sic/ in general, and to that of the trading part of the West Riding in particular, by interesting yourself so warmly, & by the great trouble your Lordship has taken in endeavouring to put a stop to the villainous practice of clipping and coining in the neighbourhood of Halifax which had arisen to so flagrant a height.⁴

As a bonus for the marquis eight gentlemen decided to qualify themselves to act as Commissioners of the Peace as a result of Rockingham's circular letter and his speech in Halifax. Three of them

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1. Leeds Mercury, 19th December 1769.
 2. Moidores were Portugese gold coins, used as specie in England.
 3. W.W.M. R11-3. Royds to Rockingham, 20th December 1769.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1255. Dixon to Rockingham, 26th December 1769.

- Lord Irwin, Sir George Armytage and John Milnes - were already friends of Rockingham, while four of the other five do not seem to have belonged to his circle of acquaintances at all.¹

It is not surprising to find the Marquis of Rockingham taking such a personal interest in the affairs of Halifax since the town was part of the West Riding woollen region. Many of the inhabitants relied almost totally on the woollen trade for their livelihood and they had already suffered badly after the end of the Seven Years' War and during the Stamp Act crisis. Coining and clipping was yet another blow to the economy of west Yorkshire. At this time the amount of woollens being exported was falling and merchants could not afford to be paid in de-based coin, particularly when trade was poor and prices were high. The cost of wheat per quarter had increased from 47s. 4d. in 1767 to 53s. 9d. in 1768.² This sharp rise in wheat automatically raised bread prices and reduced the amount of money available for other goods. As a result, unemployment and distress increased.

Rockingham was concerned about the coining and clipping in Halifax for several reasons. First, it was having an adverse effect on the trade and credit of the area and so was hitting the merchants and manufacturers who gave him so much support. Second, it was depressing an area which was already distressed: the last food riots had occurred only three years earlier and violence was close to the surface. With only the militia and local law-keeping bodies easily available, it was difficult to quell disturbances. Finally, law-breaking on any scale was the marquis' direct responsibility. Brazen coining and clipping had to be stopped

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1. Leeds Mercury, 19th December 1769. The other four were Richard Wilson the Recorder of Leeds, John Caygill, Mr. Louch and Mr. Horsfall. The latter two did not attend the meeting in Halifax.
 2. Stratton, Agricultural Records, p. 81.

before it spread throughout the whole region.

It was only after Rockingham became directly involved in the matter that the government took any action. All the correspondence and information which had been sent to London had been quietly forgotten: by the time Weymouth decided to act, the gangs had been working unhindered for at least two years and in fact Rockingham had been told of their activities about a month before Weymouth contacted him.

As Lord Lieutenant, the marquis was able to act as the link between central and local government. He was also able to tell Weymouth, extremely forcibly, that London had been very remiss over the issue - something which local bodies would have been unable to do. It is interesting to see that the government acted upon all Rockingham's suggestions immediately. Before the marquis' intervention, the Solicitor of the Mint said he could not afford to prosecute the criminals but soon changed his mind after Rockingham had upbraided Lord Weymouth.¹ Within a week of the letter Chamberlayne was on his way to Halifax.

Clearly the Marquis of Rockingham was an important link in the chain of government, able to get things moving when others had failed. His personal interest and the interests of his friends doubtless contributed to his concern: many of his political allies had estates in the West Riding and their rents would be affected by the debasement of the coinage, for example. However, the marquis probably took a more active part in solving the problem than was actually necessary. He volunteered to visit Halifax and decided himself to call a meeting of the freemen. The numbers of men who responded at such short notice gives some indication of the seriousness of the problem and of Rockingham's standing in the county.

1. W.W.M. R11-9 and R11-20.

Without the Marquis of Rockingham's intervention and mediation it is quite possible that the government would have continued to ignore coining and clipping in the West Riding. After all, the matter had been successfully ignored for the previous two years and Yorkshire was far enough away from London to be forgotten whenever it suited the authorities. Fortunately the most powerful man in the county was conscious of his local responsibilities and was prepared to act accordingly.

The Attack of John Paul Jones on Hull in 1779

In the eighteenth century, Hull was the only port of any consequence on the Humber estuary. The estuary was the outlet for the rivers Don, Ouse and Trent, which formed part of one of the major communications routes in the country. Hull provided an outlet for goods to America, the Baltic and Europe and was the centre for imports from the Baltic. Goods were sent to Hull from Sheffield and other parts of Yorkshire, and from Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and the west midlands [Birmingham and the Potteries]. The importance of Hull as a trade centre had been enhanced by the development of the Aire-Calder Navigation and the improvements in the Don, both of which allowed an increase of traffic to the port.¹

Trinity House at Hull controlled the collection of customs dues and was responsible for the welfare of seamen and maritime trade in the town. It provided men to pilot shipping entering and leaving the Humber; it maintained marker buoys which showed safe channels; and it was responsible for a number of almshouses for mariners and their dependents.² Trinity House was organized as a guild under the Wardens, Elder Brethren,

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1. Arthur Young, Northern Tour 1, 175-176.
 2. A.S. Harvey, The Trinity House of Kingston upon Hull (Hull, Trinity House, undated). This pamphlet is produced by Trinity House, and I am grateful for their help in providing this information.

Assistants and Younger Brethren who made up the Board. Two Wardens were elected annually on Trinity Monday and they had considerable influence in Hull. Several of them later became mayors of the town.

So far as local government was concerned, Hull was a burghess borough, oligarchic and corrupt. The corporation usually supported whichever government had power, although the Rockinghamites dubbed them 'Tory'. Any M.P. for Hull needed the support of either the powerful merchants or the ruling group. The parliamentary seats were expensive to win and of uncertain tenure. In 1767 Rockingham refused to try to influence the elections in Hull, saying that he was bound 'to take no steps whatever in relation to Candidates at Hull, but entirely to make it my object to be guided by the Inclination of many & respectable persons ... who are & have been our kind and valuable Friends'.¹

Rockingham had a great deal of influence in Hull where he was personally very popular. The office of High Steward of Hull had been revived in 1766 and had been bestowed on the marquis after the repeal of the Stamp Act. The office of High Steward dated back to 1663 and the corporation was empowered to nominate a candidate for the post, which had been vacant for many years. On 17th March 1766 the corporation asked for Rockingham to be made High Steward and the request was granted by George III on 7th April.²

There seems to have been a conflict of long standing between Trinity House and Hull corporation. In 1756, for example, there was a concerted effort by merchants, traders, leading townsmen and the Wardens to have an extra jetty built. The attempt was blocked by the corpora-

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1. G. Jackson, 'The Economic Development of Hull in the Eighteenth Century' (University of Hull Ph.D. thesis, 1960), p. 56. I am grateful to Dr. Jackson for permission to quote from his thesis.
 2. W.W.M. F49-6. Royal appointment of Rockingham as High Steward of Hull, signed by Grafton, 7th April 1766.

tion until pressure was brought to bear by the Commissioners of Customs in London. They became involved because smuggling was easy in Hull: of all the English ports, it was the only one to be exempt from the landing and shipping of goods from a legal quay. This was because of the lack of available space due to Hull's geographical position. In 1767 the corporation applied for part of the royal lands on the site of the garrison to enlarge the harbour. The request was turned down because they failed to specify the building of a legal quay [which they did not want]. Eventually they met the requirement and in 1774 received a grant of £15,000 from the Customs Office for their extensions, which were opened in 1778. The Dock Bill of 1774 was helped through parliament by Rockingham whose assistance was duly acknowledged by the Mayor and corporation.¹

By the 1770s the Marquis of Rockingham was well known to Hull's corporation and to Trinity House. Politically he had many supporters there and one M.P. was almost always a Rockinghamite. The repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766 had called forth an Address from seventy Hull gentlemen,² seven of whom Rockingham thought were of 'the most principal Interest in the Trinity House and Corporation of Hull'.³ When Hull's seamen went on strike in 1768⁴ the information was passed on to the marquis by William Hammond, a man who was not only a supporter of Rockingham but also carried much weight in Hull corporation and Trinity House. He was the first President of the Hull Dock Company [1785] and

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1. W.W.M. R1-1493, Hull Corporation to Rockingham, 14th June 1774 and R1-1494, Mayor P. Bell of Hull to Rockingham, 2nd July 1774.
 2. W.W.M. R59-32. Address from Hull, 20th August 1766.
 3. W.W.M. R12-54.
 4. Shelton, English Hunger Riots, pp. 187-8. Hull's seamen were not the only ones on strike in 1768. By early May all ships in the Thames were at a standstill; ships in the Tyne and Wear ports of North and South Shields, Newcastle and Sunderland were idle.

was Warden of Trinity House in 1779.¹ The original letter had been sent to the Right Honourable Thomas Harley, Lord Mayor of Hull, but Hammond wanted help quickly and he apparently believed that Rockingham was more likely to do something than Harley was.² The sailors had brought all Hull's shipping to a halt and had caused much unemployment and distress since many in Hull owed their livelihoods to trade and the river. Hammond estimated that there were between six and seven thousand seamen in Hull at the time and believed that the next step was probably going to be a full-scale riot. He asked for some temporary expedient from parliament to solve the problem, suggesting that if all else failed, armed men and vessels might be needed to open the river.

Rockingham tackled the problem in his usual thorough manner. His notes³ set out the seamen's demands for more pay, which were far from unreasonable. They wanted an extra 12s. per month for voyages 'In the Beltique' [sic] and an extra 10s. a month for voyages to the Straits, the West Indies and America. For shorter journeys they asked £5 per voyage to Norway, an increase of £2; and on coal trips to London they asked for 15s. extra, giving a new total of £2. 10s. 0d. The strike was a success for the sailors. Rockingham felt that the pay claim was realistic and the corporation and Trinity House could not afford to waste time in settling the demands. Troops were not called in; that was against all of Rockingham's principles concerning the use of civil rather than military authority, although other seamen's strikes also ended peacefully and successfully.

Rockingham received goods for himself through the port of Hull and shipped goods out from there. In 1769 Thomas Williamson, 'the most

1. A.S. Harvey, Trinity House, pp. 31 and 24.

2. W.W.M. F49-20. William Hammond to Rockingham, 13th May 1768.

3. W.W.M. F49-22.

Powerful Interest in Hull',¹ took the liberty of sending Rockingham 'by one of Messrs. Walkers Vessels to Rotherham, three China Geese and Two horned Owles [sic], the latter were lately brought from Sweden'.²

Rockingham tried to supply his London homes with coal from his Wentworth estates sent via Hull, although the experiment proved expensive.

Hull was hit by the American non-importation agreements in 1765 and 1768-69 and again when the war against America began in 1775. The extension of the conflict to include France in 1778 merely increased Hull's problems. Then in September 1779 William Hammond wrote to Rockingham informing him that John Paul Jones, the American privateer, had attacked some coal ships at Newcastle-on-Tyne and was heading down the east coast towards Hull. The corporation had decided that the citizens should defend themselves but had agreed that 'there was not in the whole place a single Gun safe to fire'.³

On his way down the east coast Jones attacked another fleet of colliers off Burlington and drove them back into harbour.⁴ Jones' ships were 'seen hovering all the day S.E. 3 leagues from Flambro' Head'.⁵ Hammond was concerned that there were no warships on the east coast, particularly since Hull was expecting about a hundred laden ships from the Baltic under a very weak escort, and 'which fleet from their time of Sailing must be very near the Coast'.⁶ Trinity House had sent seamen to Patrington, Hornsea and other places on the east coast to keep watch for enemy ships entering the Humber. They also gave orders for marker buoys to be lifted in case Jones approached the estuary. Also on 21st

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1. W.W.M. R12-54.
 2. W.W.M. R176-19. Williamson to Rockingham, 13th September 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R12-3. William Hammond to Rockingham, 21st September 1779.
 4. W.W.M. R12-58a. Transactions of the French Squadron in the Neighbourhood of Burlington, 20th-23rd September 1779.
 5. W.W.M. R12-58a.
 6. W.W.M. R12-3.

September a meeting of Hull's corporation had decided to notify the Admiralty of the danger of an attack and the town's lack of defences. They agreed to ask for artillery and gun carriages and working small-arms, and to ask the Secretary-at-War for permission to establish a two thousand strong militia. They also voted to clear the rubbish from the fort known as the artillery ground, but vetoed a suggestion of setting up a subscription to pay for their decisions to be carried out.¹ The following day Alderman Pool and William Hammond were asked to go to the Lords of the Admiralty to tell them in person of the state of affairs in Hull.

By 22nd September the danger of attack seemed to be imminent. Jones' squadron consisted of 'one Capital Ship, four frigates /sic/ and a lugger'.² Hammond had not left from London immediately and made sure that the marquis was kept up-to-date with the drama which was being played off the east coast. He informed Rockingham that the enemy was tacking across the Humber estuary and 'by their actions seem's inclinable /sic/ to proceed into the Humber when the Tide might admit'. Hammond had realized that Jones could just wait in the mouth of the Humber and 'capture such ships as may fall in their way', while the people of Hull, who were paying dearly for a garrison which was powerless because of the useless weapons they had, would 'have to trust too /sic/ the blunders of our Enemies - which we trust will keep pace with our own'.³

Meanwhile, on the evening of 23rd September the East Country Fleet had been engaged by the enemy. The cannonade began at 9 p.m. and continued for two hours. The English fleet had not seen, or had ignored,

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1. W.W.M. R12-4. Minutes of the Meeting in Hull, 21st September 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R12-5. Hammond to Rockingham, 23rd September 1779.
 3. Ibid.

the signals from Bridlington warning it of the size of the French fleet; at 9 a.m. on 24th September Jones' ships were again seen off Flamborough Head but this time they were accompanied by the Serapis and the Countess of Scarborough, which had been captured on the previous evening. 'The Serapis had lost her main mast, bowsprit end and Mizzen topmast and otherways shattered. The Countess' masts were standing but seemed repairing rigging ... The French supposed to be one ship of fifty guns, two [ships] from thirty to forty [guns] one scow supposed eighteen [guns] and two cutters'.¹

Rockingham was already in Hull when these events took place. Hammond's letter had reached him at Wentworth very quickly and the marquis decided to go to Hull immediately. Lady Rockingham wrote to Burke telling him of the marquis' journey 'as your astonishment would be more than equal to the Event, if you read it first in the Newspapers; probably with very edifying comments'.² From the marchioness' comments, Rockingham was aware of the interpretations which would be put on his journey: 'His going, call'd Officious, his not going negligent'. Either way, the marquis would be criticized but he went anyway because 'as Admiral of the Coasts, [he] thought he might as well step over there and see a little of the state of things'.³ He had received two letters describing the poor defences of Hull and the state of near panic in the town, but Rockingham had no intention of staying long in Hull. He had left Wentworth on the Thursday morning but 'My Lord means to be very alertly back again by the Monday [i.e. 27th] at Doncaster, where the Meeting of the Races begins on tuesday [sic']'.⁴

John Paul Jones had already entered the Humber on the flood tide

1. W.W.M. R12-58a.

2. Lady Rockingham to Burke, 23rd September 1779. Burke Correspondence 4, 128.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

of 23rd September with the help of two pilots whom he had captured. While there he had sunk fifteen ships off the Holderness coast.¹ According to Rockingham's notes² Jones had seven ships altogether, carrying a total fire power of 186 guns, although obviously the cutter's guns would be much smaller than those of the frigates'. Charles Pool and William Hammond had told their story to the Admiralty and had been promised a total of nineteen ships to defend the east coast, with a combined firepower of over 250 guns. Four of them were copper-sheathed frigates, the fastest ships the navy had.³

On 24th September a public meeting was called in Hull and Rockingham made them an omnium gatherum speech rather confused, but my chief object was to persuade them - that Government had neglected them and perhaps that they themselves had been too flattering and too courtly in their late Addresses'.⁴ His visit therefore was partly a political manoeuvre. He did not miss many opportunities to oppose North's policy towards America, or promote his own ideas. Having made his political point, the marquis 'offered to erect at his own Expense a Battery of Six Eighteen pounders near Marfleet provided Government will grant leave for it and the Corporation of Hull be willing to provide at their own expence a sufficient number of Seamen to work it'.⁵ The batteries were to be erected immediately on the artillery ground, and to be completed by 9 p.m. on 25th September, using twenty eighteen-pounders taken from Captain Gildert's ship. These guns had been cast in Rotherham by Samuel Walker for the Ordnance and were on their way to the arsenal at Woolwich.

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1. W.W.M. R12-6. Hammond to Rockingham, 24th September 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R12-7.
 3. W.W.M. R12-9. Charles Pool to the Mayor of Hull, 24th September 1779.
 4. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 24th September 1779. Burke Correspondence 4, 129.
 5. W.W.M. R12-4. Minutes of the Meeting in Hull, 24th September 1779.

Gildert was not very pleased at his cargo being commandeered, and the meeting indemnified him of any blame. The meeting also voted to provide 'Spunges [sic], Ramrods and other necessary things' for those cannon. The Office of Ordnance had also agreed to replace the dangerous cannon and unusable small arms, and would send the replacements 'next week'.¹ Given the appalling condition of many roads and the difficulties likely to be experienced in transporting heavy artillery by road - obviously the guns could not be sent by sea because of the danger of their being captured by Jones - the chances of their arriving in time was remote.

Rockingham's presence in Hull prodded the corporation into action. The mere fact that he rode up from Wentworth and spoke to the public meeting would have brought home to the citizens the seriousness of the situation, and his offer to pay for some defence of the town would have enhanced his standing in Hull. He wasted no time in fulfilling his promise. As soon as the king had given his permission for the marquis to 'make a Present of some Artillery for the defence of the Town and Port of Hull' Rockingham had ordered six eighteen-pounders from Samuel Walker which were to be delivered within three weeks.² Rockingham then discussed the placement of the batteries and judging from his letter, he knew what he was talking about. He thought that the batteries at the fort and artillery ground were inadequate because the town, which had a population of about thirty thousand, could be demolished from ships positioned in the Humber. He suggested that new batteries should be erected at Paulls and Marfleet; this could be done cheaply since a fort would only be needed at Paulls. Rockingham believed that Hull was

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1. W.W.M. R12-13. Office of Ordnance to Mr. Codd, Deputy Town Clerk of Hull, 25th September 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R12-19. Rockingham to the Wardens of Trinity House, October 1779.

was important for its own sake and also because it was a great east coast port 'for Exportation of the Commerce and Manufactures of Yorkshire, derbyshire /sic/ & now becoming of more & more consequence to Many Branches of the Commerce & Manufactures of Lancashire. The Trade to the Baltic is now almost all that is left /to England/'.¹

On 27th and 28th September when he was back at Wentworth, the Marquis of Rockingham wrote two long letters, one to Lord Amherst at the Admiralty and the other to Lord Weymouth, the Secretary of State. In the first he took personal responsibility for Captain Gildert's cargo of cannon being removed from his ship, explaining that although Hull's garrison nominally had fifty-four guns, 'from the State of the Cannon and Carriages are in they could avail very, very little indeed to the defence of the Town'. He had ordered the gun carriages to be made, and was pleased that his deadline would be met. When the news arrived on Saturday 25th September that Jones had left the Hull coast, it 'rather occasioned a slackness in the alertness' but he hoped that the batteries at the artillery ground and the fort would be completed by 28th or 29th September.²

The letter to Weymouth stated very clearly why the Marquis of Rockingham took upon himself the responsibility for making sure that Hull was defended adequately when in fact he had no obligation to do so. The office of Admiral of the Coasts had no power or duty attached to it, but Rockingham had accepted the post in the reign of George II 'to prevent it falling into Hands who might trouble and incommode many Gentlemen on the coast, by reviving old, obsolete Claims of Rights in regard to Wrecks...&c. &c.' He also knew that the office of High Steward of Hull was merely nominal, 'yet the very Imagination that such High Offices

1. W.W.M. R12-19.

2. W.W.M. R1-1850. Rockingham to Amherst, 27th September 1779.

did contain power appeared to me to give a sort of weight to me which might possibly be of some service'.¹

John Paul Jones' departure from the coasts of Hull proved to be the turning point of the corporation's activities. By 9th October their main concern was that of 'getting rid of every expense, [so] the Cannon were reembarked, the Carpenter who made the Gun Carriages [sic] sent for, & order'd to take them again'.² The people believed that the river would give them sufficient protection in spite of the fact that Rockingham had said that a 60-gun ship 'even at low Water' could 'lay ... within less than four hundred yards of the town [and] in Paul Jones' squadron, the largest Vessel was a fortygun-ship, so that whatever force he had could have come up'.³ Harvey was worried that a 30-gun frigate would be able to sail up river, burn the town 'and in it's [sic] present defenceless state ... return without any danger'.⁴

The Mayor of Hull, Mr. Scott, also wrote to the marquis on 9th October telling him that the corporation had decided to refuse the marquis' offer of the six cannon. The initial agreement, made two weeks earlier, was for Rockingham to pay for the cannon and the corporation to pay for their manning. Judging from Harvey's comments, it would seem likely that the corporation refused the cannon so that they would not have to foot the bill for their crews once the threat of attack was over. William Hammond of Trinity House was quick to advise the marquis that the artillery ground was Crown property and therefore not the concern of Hull's corporation. He suggested that Weymouth should be asked to require the corporation to put the artillery ground into good defensive

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1. W.W.M. R1-1851. Rockingham to Weymouth, 28th September 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R12-23. Col. F. Harvey (of the Yorkshire Militia) to Rockingham, 9th October 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1851. Rockingham to Weymouth, 28th September 1779.
 4. W.W.M. R12-23. Harvey to Rockingham, 9th October 1779.

order. They would have been obliged to comply, and Rockingham's cannon could be used for the purpose. Hammond hoped that the marquis would contact Weymouth, since a peer of the realm would have more influence with the Secretary of State than would a mere Elder Brother of Trinity House.¹

Rockingham reacted typically. He wrote to Mayor Scott saying that he was not prepared to give up lightly his object of helping a defenceless town and virtually insisted that the corporation should accept the guns.² He also wrote to an Alderman Joseph Sykes of West Ella near Hull, a 'powerful Interest' in the town, asking for Sykes' support.³

Rockingham felt that since his offer was accepted by a general meeting of the freeholders, corporation, Trinity House and neighbouring gentry connected with Hull, that it was only right that the offer should be rejected by a similar assembly.⁴ Rockingham also refused to write to Weymouth because he believed it would be hard to explain that Hull had rejected the cannon after the king had approved of the idea. But, he continued, he was used to being reproached for trying to help England.⁵ There was no need for Rockingham to tell Weymouth of Hull corporation's decision: the Mayor had written to the Secretary of State on 9th October saying that they had refused Rockingham's offer 'as they have that confidence in Government as to rest their security and defence entirely on their attention'.⁶ The marquis was only informed of this after 22nd November when Richard Bell of Welton Grange found a copy of the letter and passed on its contents. Rockingham had already cancelled the order he had given to Walker. The only conclusion he could draw from

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1. W.W.M. R12-26. William Hammond to Rockingham, 12th October 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R12-31. Rockingham to Mayor Scott, 16th October 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R12-54.
 4. W.W.M. R12-46. Rockingham to Alderman Sykes, 16th October 1779.
 5. W.W.M. R12-35. Rockingham to Hammond, 17th October 1779.
 6. W.W.M. R12-50. Mr. Bell of Welton Grange to Rockingham, 22nd November 1779.

Mayor Scott's letter of 9th October was 'that it was to convey to Me that no friendly aid from me was deem'd necessary, or perhaps deem'd adviseable to accept'.¹

The corporation had received new ordnance from the government, however, in the shape of eight 18-pounders, eight 9-pounders and four 3-pounders, each with new gun carriages. They had been mounted in the fort and replaced those unserviceable guns which Rockingham had condemned. The town had no more guns than it had had before. The only defence which Hull had by the end of 1779 were the guns which would be mounted on the town's parapets facing the Humber - except that the parapets needed repairing and increasing to a thickness of twelve feet at a cost of £1,500, and that work was not to be started until the spring of 1780. There were twenty 3-pounder cannon in Hull which belonged to the fort but they pointed into the centre of the town. They were 'only useful for salutes, unless they were employed to knock our Warehouses about our Ears'.²

Because of the pro-government faction in Hull's corporation and the dislike of many to pay more than they thought necessary, Hull was as poorly defended at the end of 1779 as it had been during the crisis, despite all the efforts of Rockingham, who had been willing to pay for defending the town out of his own pocket. He had also gone to a great deal of personal trouble to justify his actions to the government and the king. It is surprising that he continued to take an active interest in the town's affairs after he had been almost overtly insulted by the corporation.

An odd incident concerning the local press occurred during the period of the crisis. The Leeds Intelligencer of 12th October printed

1. W.W.M. R12-49. Rockingham to Bell, 14th November 1779.

2. W.W.M. R12-50. Bell to Rockingham, 22nd November 1779.

the following item: 'We hear from Hull, that a few days ago, a certain most noble Marquis, together with his very amiable companion, E----d B----ke, Esq; narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by a furious mob at that place; who actually pursued them for some miles after they had got out at a back part of the town'.¹ The paragraph was quoted by the Morning Post on 15th October and by the Leeds Chronicle shortly afterwards. John Lee informed the marchioness of the 'very scandalous and false Account of Lord Rockingham's Reception at Hull' saying how irrational and absurd the report was, and that he had no difficulty in rejecting the whole story.² Rockingham seems to have been quite amused by the account. He told Burke that he was 'joyn'd [sic] with me in a false and scandalous Paragraph of news in the Leeds Intelligencer; I had taken Captain Buck [of Doncaster] with me to Hull, so that a similarity of sound and an Initial Letter were the only ground of foundation whereon the Imitator ... had raised his whole superstructure'.³ He was apparently gratified to know that 'the Trinity House ... resented it warmly and publickly': a resolution by the Trinity House Brethren had appeared in the St. James' Chronicle in the 21st-23rd October issue, repudiating the account. Even the corporation '(Wherein there is a mixture of cautious Government Friends) express'd anger'. They had sent a 'private letter of Wrath, to the Leeds Printer' asking who was the author of the lies. The corporation had further instructed Alderman Richard Bell to write to the marquis to tell him that an order had been sent by Hull's corporation to Leeds' Town Clerk demanding to know who the writer was, so that he could be prosecuted.⁴ Rockingham was content

1. Leeds Intelligencer, 12th October 1779

2. W.W.M. R140-24. John Lee to Lady Rockingham, 28th October 1779.

3. Rockingham to Burke, 3rd November 1779. Burke Correspondence 4, 160.

4. W.W.M. R12-41. Bell to Rockingham, 19th October 1779.

to let the matter rest, once denials had appeared in the Leeds Intelligencer and St. James' Chronicle. Even so, it is strange that such an article should have appeared at all since Rockingham had been so well received in the town and had gone beyond the bounds of his duty to help the citizens. One can only assume that one of his opponents was responsible for the 'news'.

The defence of Hull continued to be a problem and was a major concern for Trinity House. The Brethren tried to persuade the corporation to act in December 1780, with little success. The corporation discussed the best sites for batteries but created none. Once Rockingham became Prime Minister in 1782 he again attempted to help the town. He sent for a map of the Humber estuary and asked for batteries to be placed at Paulls and Marfleet, where the river was narrow enough to be defended by shore emplacements. His request was a repeat of the plans he had laid in 1779. He had made many enquiries into the range and uses of the ordnance he wanted and had asked the Duke of Richmond to undertake a feasibility study. The result was a long letter from Richmond to Rockingham which discussed the plan.¹ Richmond agreed with the marquis that Paulls and Marfleet were the best sites. Lord Rockingham died before anything constructive could be done, and Hull's defences were unimproved. The effective end of the American war in 1781 removed the threat of attack, which was probably fortunate since Hull was not keen to recruit men into the militia and no gentlemen had volunteered as officers. Once again the corporation put cost above security.² They were only prepared to put militia recruits on half-pay for ten months of the year and exercise them for one week during the summer, which fell far short of the provisions of the 1762 Militia Act. By 1782 the Act

1. W.W.M. R1-2076. Richmond to Rockingham, 11th May 1782.

2. W.W.M. R108-4. Joseph Williamson to Rockingham, 17th June 1782.

had become almost a dead letter in the East Riding.

In each of these four episodes the Marquis of Rockingham showed himself to be willing to act first and ask permission afterwards - a sure mark of a man who knew exactly how the government operated. By the time the news had reached London it was too late for Rockingham's orders to be countermanded: the most that could be done was to censure the marquis. On each occasion however, his actions were approved of both by the king and cabinet. His value in a crisis was appreciated in Yorkshire and London alike. He, more than anyone else, seems to have been able to hold the affections of Yorkshiresmen through his concern for their safety and welfare at a time when the county felt neglected by central government. His rôle as Lord Lieutenant gave him direct access to parliament, although his extensive personal connections probably had more effect. He was able to, and did, short-circuit 'the system' when he felt it necessary. These are all traits of a person who had a genuine concern about his local responsibilities.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROCKINGHAM CONNECTION

The political stability of the first half of the eighteenth century was based largely upon the acquiescence of the king to the idea of a single-party government and on patronage. In 1761 the number of placemen and those linked to government through patronage was at its highest ever: two hundred and sixty men could be counted in this category.¹ These were men who gained financially and in other ways from supporting the government but after the accession of George III, with his anti-party views, their security was doubtful.

The Duke of Newcastle had maintained power via a web of patronage which he ceased to control after his fall from office. All he was left with was a group of men on whom he could rely because they were indebted to him for a parliamentary seat or from personal loyalty. The Marquis of Rockingham fell into this latter group but he also had a group of supporters who eventually formed the basis of the Rockingham Whigs.

The political disasters of 1762 left the elderly Duke of Newcastle exhausted and ineffective. His resignation from office marked the end of thirty-eight years' public service but he proved unequal to the task of leading an opposition in parliament. In November 1762 the Duke of Devonshire was dismissed from office by the king: seventeen friends of Newcastle resigned in protest and the 'Massacre of the Pelhamite Innocents' began. Rockingham was one of the men to resign: he gave up his post of Lord of the Bedchamber and almost immediately was removed from his county positions too. As a result, many men whom he had appointed to local office resigned rather than serve any other Lord Lieutenant. He had already built up such a substantial following in Yorkshire that any affront to Rockingham was seen personally by other important persons in the county.

The Newcastle Whigs in parliament were leaderless after 1762 and the 'Young Whigs', who had decided on a systematic opposition, found themselves

1. John Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.5.

heavily defeated again and again in divisions. They looked for an effective leader at the same time that Newcastle was looking for help. Both the 'Young Whigs' and the old duke turned to Lord Rockingham. As has been seen, Newcastle had taken upon himself the political tuition of the marquis and had treated the young man as a son, although Rockingham had demonstrated his independence of Newcastle in the elections of 1753 and 1758. Consequently, Rockingham began to advise the duke and had the confidence of the 'Old Corps' of Newcastle's party in spite of his youth. The 'Young Whigs' shared the marquis' youth and his suspicions of Bute, and many, such as Grafton and the Cavendishes, were also the sons of the 'Old Corps' Whigs: they had almost grown up together. The Marquis of Rockingham was thus in the fortunate position of being able to attract supporters from both ends of the spectrum of parliamentary Whiggery and to broaden the base of the party. He also won the confidence of men like William Dowdeswell, a Tory who later became leader of the Rockinghamites in the Commons, and the 'independent', Sir George Savile, who was a life-long friend of the marquis. He also had the support of Trinity House, Hull, and the Whig Club in York.

Rockingham's brand of Whiggery differed from that of the Duke of Newcastle. The duke was essentially a court and treasury politician whereas Rockingham was far more interested in local matters and brought to parliamentary affairs what may be termed 'country' opinion. Apart from the disastrous 1753 Yorkshire election, the marquis never failed to have one of his candidates elected in the county and his personal following included men from all ranks of society, whether enfranchised or not. His influence spread throughout the county and the size of the party grew. In 1754 the Duke of Newcastle could count on M.P.s from only fifteen Yorkshire constituencies; in 1768 Rockingham controlled twenty-six. Furthermore, the Marquis of Rockingham's leadership of a national party meant that local opinion could be brought to bear in parliament,

particularly since he was so concerned with the impact of national policies at local level. Merchant opposition to the Stamp Act and Coercive Acts was orchestrated by Rockinghamite supporters, and the Yorkshire Association set up by Wyvill in 1779 largely was restrained from excessive radicalism by Rockinghamites. Rockingham's ascendancy over the 'Old Corps' brought new influences in to the political arena.

His appeal to such varied groups as Dissenters, Catholics, merchants, manufacturers and landed gentry is difficult to pin-point. Although he was extremely wealthy, powerful and a source of local patronage, there must have been something else which made men follow him to the extent that they did. In the end, the only explanation is that he was admired and well-liked. Men followed Rockingham and were prepared to give him active support which they had not given to Newcastle. This may have been partly due to the marquis' interest in country politics and to the fact that he was a Yorkshireman. He was also much younger and more active, with known views and principles which appealed to a wider section of society.

In the eighteenth century 'public opinion' was, almost by tradition, ignored. Parliament listened to the politically important landed classes but took little heed of the bulk of the population which was unfranchised, unlanded and therefore unimportant. Of all the areas in England, two were particularly troublesome to the various governments: Middlesex and Yorkshire. Middlesex was far more radical than Yorkshire and by comparison, the latter was lethargic. However, one reason for the apparent lack of radicalism in the county was the almost total control of Lord Rockingham. Because he had such wide support, he was able to lead the consensus of opinion which was generally moderate, and if he felt that elements which were too radical were gaining control, he used his connections to squash them.

Public opinion became increasingly important in national politics.

Political awareness shifted down the social scale and one of the major contributions of Rockingham was to organise the growing demands for reform. Yorkshiremen were conservative by nature, but they saw the expulsion of Wilkes from parliament as a dangerous parliamentary innovation and signed, in large numbers, the Rockinghamite petition for a dissolution of parliament. Wyvill's Yorkshire Association was a moderate organisation demanding the reform of a corrupt government. It is significant that so many of the marquis' followers joined the movement because through them, Rockingham was to a great extent able to direct the Association despite Wyvill's objections.

The Marquis of Rockingham was conscious of the needs of Yorkshire manufacturing and trade and was aware of the growing industrial areas which were unrepresented. He listened to the grievances of his friends and associates and echoed their views in parliament, making Yorkshiremen feel that at last their opinions counted for something in the affairs of the nation. There is little wonder, then, that he had such a large following in the county.

Rockingham's resignation in 1762 marked the end of any direct opportunities he might have had to bestow governmental patronage. His years in opposition meant that he had no means of acquiring access to the allegiance of office holders. In spite of this, he was able to hold together a party, albeit reduced in size, throughout the next twenty years. His supporters could not expect to be given government appointments or pensions: all they could look forward to were long years in opposition. Clearly there must have been some reason why the Rockingham party continued to exist.

The term 'connection' is used not only in Sir Lewis Namier's sense of 'patronage' or 'influence'¹ in this chapter, but is used also

1. Sir Lewis Namier, Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III (London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2nd ed., 1975), passim.

to describe the relationships and alliances within the Rockinghamite group. Many of the members of the group were Yorkshire-based but others had no apparent link with the party. The Marquis' access to minor patronage in Yorkshire has already been investigated: this chapter will concentrate on the followers of Rockingham in parliament and will attempt to discover why these men were Rockinghamites if there was no overt personal advantage for them, apart from a parliamentary seat.

A great deal of research into the origins and structure of the Rockinghamite party has been undertaken¹ and the size of the party is relatively easy to establish, but there has been remarkably little work done on the connections between the followers of Rockingham and the marquis. The reasons for Rockingham's political leadership of one of the biggest groups in parliament, besides his prominence in Yorkshire, are summarily dismissed by White:

Hereditary wealth and prestige gave him great influence with the country gentlemen of Yorkshire, although his estates extended also to many broad acres in Northamptonshire and Ireland. To these advantages he brought decent morals and a blameless mediocrity of intellect... Fortune, friendship, family tradition, the reflected glory of men of genius and talent among his followers: all served to hoist him to an elevation in the politics of his time which his own abilities scarcely could have brought him to attain. 2

This simplistic view of Rockingham's abilities and influence reduces the man to a shadow in comparison with his followers whereas in reality the marquis actually headed his own party. He was far from being a mere figurehead.

As in any eighteenth-century political group, there were numerous

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1. Sir Lewis Namier, Structure of Politics; John Brooke, King George III; Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1754-1790, 3 vols. (London, H.M.S.O., 1964); Romney Sedgwick, History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1715-1754, 2 vols. (London, H.M.S.O., 1970); Frank O'Gorman, The Rise of Party, for example.
 2. R.J. White, The Age of George III, pp. 97-98.

family links within the Rockingham party and the inner circle of peers had the common connection of status, wealth and a vested interest in maintaining the aristocratic leadership of England. Even so, there were some independent gentlemen numbered among the Rockinghamites who were not linked to the marquis through family relationships or political dependence. They supported him from conviction and not from necessity.

The 'inner circle' of peers who almost invariably followed Rockingham's lead in parliament were the Dukes of Portland, Newcastle, Richmond and Devonshire and the Earls of Scarborough, Bessborough, Fitzwilliam and Effingham. Their names are to be found on most of the Dissident motions tabled in the House of Lords throughout their time in opposition and they were closely involved in the formulation of party policy.¹ The Duke of Newcastle was undoubtedly the elder statesman of the group, being almost forty years older than Rockingham, and he saw himself as their mentor and guardian. However, after the 'Massacre of the Pelhamite Innocents' Newcastle lost much of his influence to Rockingham. To some extent this may be explained by the youthfulness of the other peers. The Earl of Bessborough was twenty-six years older than Rockingham but all the others were the marquis' junior and presumably saw him as a more natural leader than the elderly Duke of Newcastle.²

Newcastle had been one of the first Marquis of Rockingham's personal friends besides being a political ally. The two men had been at Cambridge together and by 1750 had known each other for over forty years.³ Newcastle tried to influence the second marquis' political behaviour almost from the start but soon discovered that Rockingham had

1. For example, W.W.M. R5; Cobbett and Wright, Parliamentary History, XVIII, 455-461 and 1369.

2. Portland, Richmond, Devonshire, Scarborough, Fitzwilliam and Effingham. They ranged from 6 to 18 years younger than the marquis.

3. W.W.M. M2-551.

a mind of his own. In the 1753 Yorkshire election Rockingham supported his friend Sir George Savile for the county seat against Newcastle's nominee but although Savile stepped down in the face of strong opposition the marquis had made it clear that he intended to tread his own political path rather than follow in his father's footsteps.

The Duke of Newcastle's influence over the younger members of the Newcastle Whigs declined after 1762. The younger men wanted action against Bute and established an opposition club based at Wildman's. Among the members were supporters of Newcastle: George Onslow, his nephew; Pelham, his cousin; the Cavendishes - the sons of the Duke of Devonshire who was a close friend of Newcastle. Furthermore, it was the younger men who resigned their offices as a mark of support for Newcastle after his dismissal. The leaders of the counties - men like Rockingham and Devonshire - were responsible for local government and their loss affected the administration of justice and local law and order considerably. Rockingham received letters from a number of J.P.s proffering their resignations after his dismissal from office, although he tried to persuade them to change their minds since he was fearful of the breakdown of law and order. Rockingham gained much credit from his actions and gradually took over Newcastle's rôle as leader of this Whig group.

Newcastle felt himself being isolated from the mainstream of his party and complained frequently that he was not kept informed of events or political decisions except at second-hand.¹ His followers gravitated

1. For example, W.W.M. R1-551. Newcastle to Rockingham, 1st January 1766. 'I mentioned the necessity of coming to some Resolutions upon /the American question/ ... I have since heard, that ... there was a meeting at Your Lordship's house'. R1-687. Newcastle to Rockingham, 31st August 1766: 'I hear you had a conversation with the Duke of Grafton and Mr. Conway before you left town'.

towards the young marquis, whom Newcastle continued to advise even though his ideas were frequently ignored by Rockingham. The patronage at his disposal was slight once he had been removed from the Treasury. He held the boroughs of Aldborough and Boroughbridge in North Yorkshire and had influence over seats in Newark, East Retford, Nottingham, Lewes and at Cambridge University. The men who held these seats until Newcastle's death in 1768 were placemen for the Rockingham faction.

Aldborough was a scot and lot borough where the Duke of Newcastle nominated one M.P.¹ The other seat was under the patronage of the Wilkinson family who managed the borough for the Duke. From 1758 to 1768 the Newcastle seat was held by Nathaniel Cholmley of Howsham and Whitby.² Cholmley was the grandson of Sir John Wentworth of North Elmsall and Brodsworth and was a distant relation of the Marquis of Rockingham. He married Catherine the sister of Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory. Sir Rowland, one of the first Marquis of Rockingham's friends and political allies, held large estates in Yorkshire. Cholmley therefore was doubly qualified for a parliamentary seat since his credentials were impeccable. Cholmley moved to represent Boroughbridge in 1768, a seat he held until 1774. He failed to be re-elected in that year because he supported the idea of shorter parliaments, a concept opposed by the Rockinghamites. Cholmley's second wife was Henrietta Catherine Croft, the daughter of Stephen Croft of Stillingfleet.³ Croft was a firm supporter of Rockingham, a member of the Rockingham Club in York throughout its existence and an influential figure in Yorkshire politics.⁴ Consequently Cholmley maintained his ties with the Rockinghamites even after

1. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 433-434.

2. Ibid., 2, 212-213.

3. Ibid., 1, 433-434.

4. W.W.M. R95; R1-351; R125-50. Lists of members of the Rockingham Club for 1754, 1763 and 1782 respectively.

his departure from parliament.

From 1768 until 1774 Aldborough was represented by Aubrey Beauclerk. He had been counted among Rockingham's supporters since 1766, which is possibly why he was removed from Grafton's seat at Thetford in the 1768 election. Although he was never among the inner circle of Rockinghamites he was related to both the Bessborough and Devonshire families through his marriage to Lady Catherine Ponsonby, the daughter of the Earl of Bessborough. The Duke of Devonshire was Lady Catherine's uncle.¹ After 1774 the new Duke of Newcastle - who was never a Rockinghamite - apportioned patronage to his own friends, and the seat ceased to be held by Rockingham's friends.

The burgh borough of Boroughbridge followed the same pattern of representation.² In 1750 its M.P. was Lewis Watson. He was the grandson of the first Earl of Rockingham and was therefore a distant relation of the second marquis, besides being one of his oldest friends.³ He married the niece of the Duke of Newcastle. He was educated at Westminster School where he was a contemporary of Rockingham, whom he accompanied on the Grand Tour. In 1746 Watson succeeded to the lands of his cousin Thomas, third Earl of Rockingham, although the title was not passed on. He was created Baron Sondes in 1760 and continued to support the Rockingham group in the House of Lords.

The Duke of Newcastle was Lord of the Manor of Newark where he shared his influence with the Suttons who were members of the family of the Duke of Rutland.⁴ Newark was never a 'safe' seat for Newcastle although usually one M.P. was his candidate. Job Charlton, who held one

1. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 71.
2. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 433-434.
3. Ibid., 3, 612.
4. Romney Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 300.

of the Newark seats from 1741 until 1761, was Newcastle's manager there,¹ and John Shelley, who sat for the constituency between 1768 and 1774, was the Duke's nephew.² The Duke leased the manor to his heir, Lord Lincoln, in 1761 and consequently lost much of his influence over the elections there. The M.P. from 1761 to 1768, Thomas Thoroton, was Lincoln's candidate, as was Henry Clinton, who held the seat from 1774. Neither were supporters of Rockingham.³

At East Retford John White sat as the Newcastle nominee from 1733 to 1768 when he chose not to stand for re-election: he was seventy years old.⁴ White was a great friend of Newcastle and Rockingham, and at one point Burke considered dedicating Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents to White, who opposed the taxation of America. White classed himself as an independent gentleman but loyally followed Newcastle and Rockingham in their opposition to government policies. He urged Rockingham not to unite with other opposition groups but to stand on his own principles even though Newcastle wanted an alliance with Pitt.⁵

Nottingham was lost to Newcastle between 1747 and 1761 because of opposition by the Corporation, which nominated Lord Howe. However, in 1761 John Plumptre was returned as Newcastle's candidate and sat until 1774.⁶ Plumptre's wife was related to the Finch family, as was Rockingham, whose mother was one of the very large Finch family.⁷ In 1774 both seats went to the Tories: Lord Charles Edward Bentinck of the Portland family failed to be elected. In 1778 Abel Smith replaced Sir Charles Sedley. Smith was a banker in Nottingham who supported first

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1. Romney Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 543.
 2. Ibid., p. 420.
 3. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 354.
 4. Ibid., 3, 630-631.
 5. Ibid.
 6. Ibid., p. 304.
 7. Ibid., and 2, 118.

Newcastle and then Rockingham but had stood down in Nottingham in 1747 in an attempt to avoid splitting the Whig vote. Nottingham was an unpredictable constituency having some two thousand freemen as electors, many of whom were small manufacturers.¹

Lewes in Sussex was a scot and lot borough where both M.P.s were nominated by Newcastle,² usually blood relations such as Thomas Pelham and Sir John Shelley.³ Sir Francis Poole, who sat from 1743 until 1763, was related by marriage to the Duke, and Thomas Sergison, M.P. for Lewes from 1747 to 1766 was Newcastle's agent in the borough.⁴ Newcastle also found a seat for William Plumer at Lewes between 1763 and 1768 on the recommendation of the Duke of Devonshire.⁵ All these men voted with the Newcastle-Rockingham group consistently.

The Hon. Edward Finch represented Cambridge University continuously from 1727 until 1768.⁶ He was the fifth son of Daniel Finch, second Earl of Nottingham, and was the brother-in-law of the first Marquis of Rockingham. He was, therefore, the second marquis' uncle. The other member for Cambridge University was Thomas Townshend, the brother of Charles who instigated the American Import Duties Act in 1767. Thomas' wife died in 1739 and her bereft husband took no further active part in politics although he held the university seat from 1727 to 1774.⁷

All of these men, except Townshend, had close ties with either the Duke of Newcastle or his young friends. The Duke employed White and Sergison as his managers; Shelley, Poole and Pelham were related to him; Cholmley, Watson, Plumptre and Finch were relatives of Rockingham;

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 355.
 2. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 336.
 3. Ibid., 2, 333-334 and 419-420.
 4. Ibid., 1, 360-361 and 416-417.
 5. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 303.
 6. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 32.
 7. Ibid., p. 474.

Beauclerk was related to both the Devonshires and the Bessboroughs. It is fairly obvious that placemen would be chosen for their loyalty to their patron and this was accepted practice in the eighteenth century, but the extent of family relationships and intermarriage is quite remarkable.

The Devonshire family spread its influence even more widely than the Duke of Newcastle; but there were more of them. The first Marquis of Rockingham was a close friend of the second and third Dukes of Devonshire and the second marquis was of the same age as the third duke's family. The two family homes were only about twenty miles apart and within easy travelling distance. The fourth duke inherited his title in 1751 at the age of thirty-one. He vacated his seat for Derbyshire on his elevation to the peerage, a seat he had held since his coming of age ten years before. He had served as a staunch Pelhamite during that time.¹ His wife, Lady Charlotte Boyle, was the heiress of Lord Burlington and she inherited her father's estates in Yorkshire which included Bolton Abbey, the hereditary Constablership of Knaresborough, and lands in Derbyshire and Ireland, which gave the duke and marquis a further common interest since both held lands in Yorkshire and Ireland.² His brothers all sat as Rockinghamite M.P.s once they were old enough to enter parliament. Lord George Augustus Cavendish represented Weymouth and Melcombe Regis from 1751 to 1754 on the recommendation of Henry Pelham [Newcastle's cousin].³ In 1754 he moved to the Derbyshire seat which was controlled by the Devonshires and remained there as one of the M.P.s until his death in 1794. Lord George Augustus conformed to the family point of view in parliament and joined the Rockinghamite opposition in 1762.³

1. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 538-539.

2. Ibid.

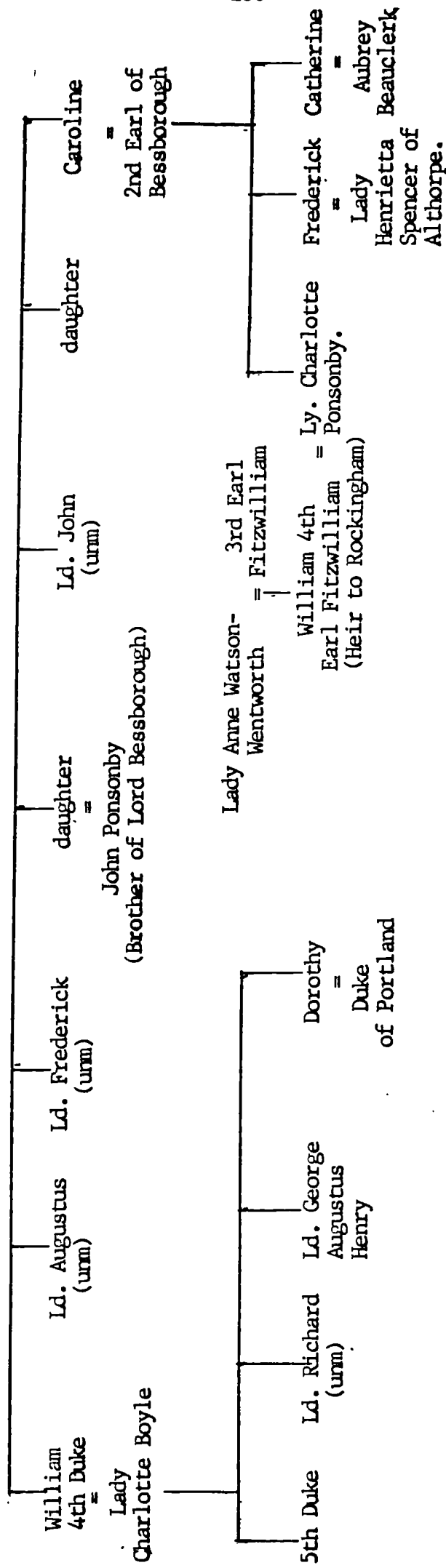
3. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 201.

Lord Frederick Cavendish represented Derbyshire from 1751 to 1754. When he vacated the seat to move into the Derby constituency his place was taken by his elder brother. He represented Derby until 1780 when he retired from active politics.¹ The youngest son of the third Duke of Devonshire was Lord John Cavendish. He was just two years younger than the second Marquis of Rockingham and was one of his closest friends. Lord John became M.P. for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis in 1754 when Lord George Augustus left the constituency. He remained as its M.P. until 1761 when he moved north to represent Knaresborough which had come into the Cavendish sphere of influence through the fourth duke's marriage to Lady Charlotte Boyle. In 1768 Lord John stood for the York constituency with Rockingham's support. He was elected and remained one of the city's M.P.s until 1784.² Thus the sons of the third Duke of Devonshire were all M.P.s and could be guaranteed to vote with the Rockinghams in parliament. The two sons of the fifth duke - Richard and George Augustus Henry - followed the same political persuasion as their uncles.³

The females of the Cavendish family were the ones who forged the links between the aristocratic leaders of the Rockingham Whigs, although it is improbable that it was a deliberate political ploy. The result was that the several families became almost inextricable. Lady Elizabeth Cavendish, the daughter of the second duke, married Sir Thomas Lowther of Holker Hall and Marske.⁴ This meant that Lowther was the uncle of the third duke's children. Of the third duke's three daughters, two married into the Ponsonby family. Lady Caroline Cavendish married William, the second Earl of Bessborough, while her sister married

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1. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 200-201.
 2. Ibid., 2, 203-205.
 3. Ibid., pp. 200-205.
 4. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 227-228.

WILLIAM CAVENDISH
3rd DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE



THE CAVENDISH CONNECTION

Bessborough's younger brother, John Ponsonby.¹ Lady Charlotte Ponsonby, the daughter of the second Earl of Bessborough, married William, the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam.² He was the nephew and heir of Rockingham: his mother was the Lady Anne Watson-Wentworth. Furthermore, the third Earl of Bessborough married the niece of the fifth Duke of Devonshire.³

Politically, the men of the Cavendish family were firm Rockinghamites; it was the ladies who held the families together. They were inter-related with the leading families of England: the Fitzwilliams, Bessboroughs, Lowthers, Rockinghams. There was also a connection with the Viscounts of Shannon through Lady Charlotte Boyle, who was a relation of the Shannons.

To confuse things even more, Sir William Lowther of Swillington, Yorkshire, was a cousin of Sir Thomas Lowther: Sir William was related indirectly to the Rockingham family through his marriage to Catherine Ramsden. She was the daughter of Sir William Ramsden and sister to Sir John.⁴ This Sir John was Lady Rockingham's step-father. He was also the nephew of the second Viscount Lonsdale and grandson of the first Viscount Weymouth.⁵ This meant that the Lowther connection with the Devonshires was extended to the Lonsdale, Ramsden and Weymouth families - all of whom were related, however tenuously, to the Marquis of Rockingham.

The Bessborough connection with the Rockingham Whigs has largely been dealt with in the foregoing account of the Cavendish family. A further link with the Marquis of Rockingham was that Bessborough owned some land in Rotherham, close to Wentworth Woodhouse. He was one of the

1. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 360.
2. J. Foster, Pedigrees. Fitzwilliam pedigree.
3. Ibid.
4. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 228.
5. Ibid., p. 378.

Newcastle Whigs who resigned in 1762, although his motive was probably one of solidarity with his brother-in-law the Duke of Devonshire, who was dismissed from office. Lady Bessborough - that is Lady Caroline Cavendish - was the aunt of the Duchess of Portland: in 1766 Lady Dorothy Cavendish, who was the daughter of the fourth Duke of Devonshire, married William Henry Bentinck, third Duke of Portland.¹

Portland was the grandson of the Countess of Oxford and the brother-in-law of Viscount Weymouth of Longleat. He had estates in Nottinghamshire, Northumberland, Cumberland, Cheshire and Hampshire; of all his properties he preferred Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, where he spent much of his leisure. Welbeck was in close proximity to the homes of his friends. Portland was related to the family of the Duke of Newcastle: his grandfather was John Holles. He was also related to the Earls of Tyrone. In 1761 he became M.P. for Weobley in Hertfordshire, a burgh borough which belonged to Lord Weymouth. However, just a month later, he was elevated to the peerage on the death of his father, and spent much of the rest of his political life in opposition to the government as a staunch Rockinghamite.²

Portland's ancestors, the Bentincks, had come to England with William III and were understandably upholders of the Glorious Revolution since they had profited greatly from the overthrow of the Stuarts. The third duke aligned himself with the Newcastle Whigs but probably felt more comfortable with Rockingham and the other young Whigs since they were much of an age. Portland and Rockingham spent a lot of time in

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1. A.S. Turberville, A History of Welbeck Abbey and its Owners, 2 vols. (London, Faber & Faber Ltd., 1939), 2, 51-2.
 2. Ibid.

each other's company¹ although on many occasions there were others of their group present. On 29th January 1768 Rockingham invited Portland to dine at Grosvenor Square. The invitation had also been extended to Bessborough, Richmond 'and 3 or 4 more'.² In March 1770 the marquis hoped to see Portland at Chatsworth on 18th where they were to meet the Cavendish clan.³

Portland became the titular head of the Rockinghamite Whigs on the death of the marquis. He held office as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in Rockingham's second ministry but because of his liberal ideas for the country he was unpopular with George III. Portland wanted Ireland to have legislative independence and tried to liberalise British policy for that country. Consequently he was removed at the earliest possible opportunity. He then held office as nominal First Lord in the Fox-North coalition on 1783,⁴ but his real political influence was during Rockingham's lifetime when he was able to advise on policy. He was also able to influence the elections at several parliamentary constituencies: in 1765 his electioneering won Wigan for the Rockinghamites⁵ and in 1768 he put up candidates against those of Sir William Lowther in Carlisle and Cumberland and won both; Rye was represented by John Albert Bentinck from 1761 until 1768.⁶ Furthermore, Sir Conyers Darcy, M.P. for Yorkshire from 1747 to 1758 was Portland's great-uncle.

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1. PwF 8976. 19th December 1764: Portland had been at Wentworth between 2nd and 19th December. PwF 8977. Rockingham was to ride to Welbeck on 29th or 30th December. Other visits between the two men are mentioned in PwF 8978, 8985, 8988, 8990, 8991, 8992, 8994, 8996, 8997, 8998, 9001, 9035. On 24th June 1775 (PwF 9094) Portland was robbed of £20 and a gold watch on his way home to Welbeck from Wentworth.
 2. PwF 9001. Rockingham to Portland, 29th January 1768.
 3. PwF 9032. Rockingham to Portland, March 1770.
 4. Turberville, History of Welbeck, 2, 176 and 183-4.
 5. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 320-321.
 6. Ibid., pp. 245-246 and 242-245.

The third Earl Fitzwilliam came from a traditionally Whig family which had a major interest in Peterborough.¹ The original peerage was Irish although the family held estates at Milton in Northamptonshire which were quite close to the Rockingham lands at Higham Ferrers. The third earl married Lady Anne Watson-Wentworth, the eldest daughter of the first Marquis of Rockingham. Through his father-in-law's influence he applied successfully for an English earldom.² He died in 1756 and was succeeded by his eight year old son, William, who was a supporter of Rockingham in the House of Lords when he came of age to take his seat. Rockingham acted as a substitute father to the young man as he was eighteen years his senior. No doubt the marquis wanted to ensure that his nephew would be a suitable heir to the Wentworth lands since it was unlikely that he would have a family of his own. In 1770 the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam married Lady Charlotte Ponsonby, so relating the Bessborough, Cavendish, Fitzwilliam and Watson-Wentworth families in one fell swoop.³

One of Rockingham's oldest friends was Sir George Savile of Rufford Abbey in Nottinghamshire and of Thornhill in West Yorkshire. The two men were at school together and both served in the same regiment of the Yorkshire Volunteers in 1745-46. Sir George's father was a distant relation of the first Marquis of Rockingham and both men were Whigs.⁴ Sir George became M.P. for Yorkshire in spite of non-residence in the county in 1759 and held the seat until 1783. He prided himself on his independence and consistently refused office. He kept himself aloof from gatherings of the Rockingham Whigs although he was in the marquis'

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1. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 294.
 2. Ibid., 2, 38.
 3. Foster, Pedigrees. Fitzwilliam pedigree.
 4. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 409.

confidence and worked strenuously to promote party policies such as the repeal of the Stamp Act and Catholic Relief. He, like the marquis, believed that the American rebellion was justified but they disagreed over the petition of the Yorkshire Association because Savile approved of shorter parliaments and Rockingham did not.¹

Savile's two sisters helped to strengthen the Rockingham party through their marriages. The elder, Arabella, married John Thornhalgh of Shireoaks. Thornhalgh, M.P. for Nottinghamshire between 1747 and 1774 was a consistent supporter of Newcastle and Rockingham. His daughter, Mary Arabella, was the first wife of Francis Ferand Foljambe of Aldwarke, Rotherham.² Savile's other sister, Barbara, married Richard Lumley, the fourth Earl of Scarborough.³ Lumley's sister married Peter, Earl Ludlow in 1753.⁴ Ludlow represented Huntingdonshire between 1768 and 1796 and was strongly connected with the Rockingham party with whom he always voted. Ludlow got his Irish peerage in 1760 through the good offices of Newcastle, who had been inundated with such demands from Lady Scarborough. The Scarboroughs' Yorkshire estate of Sandbeck was close to Rufford as well as to all the estates belonging to the Rockinghamite peers and the earl was duly drawn into the group. His daughter - another Mary Arabella - was the second wife of Francis Ferand Foljambe.⁵ Foljambe was an active member of the Yorkshire Association and was chosen as Savile's successor as M.P. for Yorkshire. He was supported by the Association and by Lord Fitzwilliam: he held the seat from 1st January to 25th March 1784.⁶

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 405-409.
 2. Ibid., 3, 524 and 2, 446.
 3. Ibid., 3, 62-63.
 4. Ibid., 3, 62.
 5. Ibid., 2, 446.
 6. Ibid.

Two parliamentary seats which were represented by Rockinghamites as a result of the Savile-Scarborough connection were Lincoln and Huntingdonshire. Lincoln was held by George Augustus Lumley-Saunders, the eldest son of the fourth earl and Lady Barbara Savile, from 1774 to 1780. He won the seat through his father's interest in the city and with the support of Lord Monson.¹ Monson was related to the second Marquis of Rockingham by his marriage to the marquis' cousin,² and his son Lewis Watson [Lord Sondes] was one of the marquis' oldest friends. Lewis Watson sat for Boroughbridge for a short time³ and his son, the Hon. Lewis Thomas Watson, represented Hedon from 1776 until 1780 through Rockingham's influence with Sir Charles Saunders, who represented Hedon from 1754 until his death in 1775.⁴ Peter Ludlow held the other seat brought into Rockingham's sphere through the Earl of Scarborough.

Sir Charles Saunders entered politics under the patronage of Lord George Anson, with whom he had circumnavigated the world. They were accompanied on the voyage by Augustus Keppel, Sir Piercy Brett and Peter Denis, all of whom were later to become Rockinghamite M.P.s. Saunders and Keppel were both friends of Samuel Cornish, another naval officer, whom they recommended to the Duke of Newcastle as deserving a parliamentary seat. Cornish was brought into parliament for New Shoreham in 1765 and supported Rockingham until he died in 1770.⁵ Anson married one of the daughters of Philip Yorke, the first Earl of Hardwicke, who was a life-long friend of the Duke of Newcastle. Another of Hardwicke's daughters married Sir Gilbert Heathcote. Heathcote had been offered Aldborough free of charge by Newcastle in 1756 but had refused it: the

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 62-63.
 2. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 265.
 3. Ibid., p. 524.
 4. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 612.
 5. Ibid., 2, 254.

reason for the offer was possibly because his uncle was John White, the duke's close friend.¹ Heathcote finally chose to stand for Shaftesbury, which cost him £2,000 for the single parliament of 1761-1768² throughout which time he supported Rockingham's policies. Hardwicke's sons - Philip, Charles, Joseph and John - were all M.P.s when their father died in 1764. Of these, Charles became Attorney-General in Rockingham's first ministry and John represented Rockingham's borough of Higham Ferrers from 1753 to 1768. Rockingham described Saunders as one of the friends without whom he would take no step; certainly he was a faithful follower of the marquis even though he served under Chatham until Lord Edgcumbe's dismissal in December 1766. Saunders was an early member of Wildman's Club and therefore an early supporter of the concept of an organized opposition to government.

Augustus Keppel was the second son of the Earl of Albemarle and the grandson of the first Duke of Richmond. By profession he was a sailor and rose to the rank of Admiral.³ His brother had served as Cumberland's Aide-de-Camp at Dettingen, Fontenoy and Culloden and the family was favoured by Cumberland.⁴ Augustus Keppel was M.P. for Chichester between 1755 and 1761, for New Windsor from 1761 until 1780, being elected initially on Cumberland's interest, and for Surrey from 1780 to 1782. Cumberland was a friend of Rockingham and paid several visits to the homes of the Rockinghamite peers.⁵ He was responsible for Rockingham becoming First Lord of the Treasury in 1765. A descendant

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 603 and 3, 630-634.

2. Ibid., 2, 603.

3. Ibid., 3, 7.

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. Cumberland visited Chatsworth and Wentworth in 1763, for example, (W.W.M. R1-376) where he met the Cavendishes, Rockingham, Albemarle, Grafton, Sir Charles Saunders and Bessborough. Invitations were also sent to the Duke of Bridgewater and Lord Gower.

of the third Earl of Albemarle wrote the Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries,¹ giving a favourable account of the marquis and his friends. In June 1777 North's government ordered Keppel to take his squadron to Ushant. He complained that his force was insufficient to hold the French fleet but he had been ignored. When the two fleets met, Keppel had been unable to defeat the enemy and returned in good order. He was later accused by Sir Hugh Palliser, a 'government man', of cowardice and was brought to court martial proceedings. In 1779 he was found not guilty of negligence and cowardice; indeed, Palliser was shown to have been guilty of disobeying Keppel's orders and it was proved that he was in no position to judge Keppel's actions from his own ship. Rockingham was so delighted with the outcome that he had 'Keppel's Column' built at Scholes Coppice on his estates.² There was also a campaign in the Commons against North's failure to support Keppel, who became a focus of the Rockinghamite criticism of the conduct of the war. The whole incident was of more political than military significance, since demonstrations in London for Keppel made him a cause célèbre, similar to Wilkes ten years earlier.

It also illustrates two further points: that the Admiralty was not in touch with the realities of war at sea, otherwise Keppel would not have been sent with a fleet too small for the job; and that Lord North was prepared to go to almost any lengths to discredit the Rockinghamite opposition.

The other two men who accompanied Anson on his voyage became Members of Parliament in 1754. Sir Piercy Brett represented Queenborough until 1774³ and Peter Denis sat for Hedon until 1768: that constituency

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1. Earl of Albemarle, Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and His Contemporaries, 2 vols. (London, Richard Bentley, 1852).
 2. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 9-10.
 3. Ibid., p. 115.

thus had two Rockinghamite M.P.s who were old friends and both had been nominated by Anson.¹ Queenborough, Kent, was classed as an Admiralty borough, which accounts for Brett's election, but it was not a Rockinghamite seat after it was vacated by Brett.²

Thomas Howard, the third Earl of Effingham, owned most of Rotherham and leased lands to Samuel Walker the iron-master and to Beatson-Clark the glass manufacturers. He had an army commission which he resigned in 1775 rather than fight in America against a cause which he believed was just. News of his action was published immediately afterwards and he was publicly thanked by the Livery of London and the Citizens of Dublin, Newcastle and Southwark. He gained a great deal of praise and credit for his resignation. He had even built a folly on his lands in honour of the colonists which he called Boston Castle because no tea was ever drunk there. He was made Treasurer of the Household in Rockingham's second ministry and Pitt the Younger appointed him Governor of Jamaica.

The third Earl of Effingham was the son of Thomas Howard and Elizabeth Beckford. She was the daughter of Peter Beckford of Jamaica and the sister of William.³ The family was wealthy from its plantations in the colony. William was Lord Mayor of London twice, and helped to organise the anti-Stamp Act petitions sent to Rockingham from the merchants and manufacturers, and supported the marquis' opposition to the government's American policy. Albemarle summed up Beckford as being 'a spouter of liberty to the citizens of London [although] he proved a hard task-master to his ill-fed slaves in Jamaica'.⁴

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 317-138.

2. *Ibid.*, 1, 314.

3. William Beckford's political activities are dealt with in, for example, G. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), p. 4, *passim*.

4. Albemarle, *Memoirs*, 2, 171.

Elizabeth Beckford married Sir George Howard in 1776.¹ He was related to her first husband and was also a military man. He had fought with Cumberland at Fontenoy and Culloden and then took his place as M.P. for Lostwithiel [1761-1766] and Stamford [1768-1796]. During the period 1766-1768 he was Governor of Minorca. Sir George's first wife was Lady Lucy Wentworth, the co-heiress of William Earl of Strafford, who was yet another distant relation of Rockingham.²

Sir Conyers Darcy was also married into the Howard family. He was a member of one of the leading families in North Yorkshire and was one of the county's M.P.s from 1741 until his death in 1758, when his place was taken by Sir George Savile.³ The grandson of the second Earl of Holderness, he married the widow of the sixth Baron Effingham. Darcy was a friend of the first Marquis of Rockingham and a supporter of the Duke of Newcastle, and was a deputy Lord Lieutenant for the West Riding in 1757.⁴ His first wife, whom he married in 1714, was Mary Bentinck, the daughter of the first Duke of Portland.⁵

The second Yorkshire seat was held from 1734 to 1750 by Sir Miles Stapleton. Stapleton was a wealthy country gentleman from Myton in Yorkshire and seems to have been completely independent.⁶ A Whig converted from the Tories, he was given a commissionership of the customs in 1749 which automatically removed him from parliament. His successor as M.P. for Yorkshire was Henry Pleydell Dawnay, Viscount Downe, whom he nominated.

Downe was also of a Tory family but Pelham referred Stapleton's

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 645.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 604.
 4. W.W.M. Unnumbered bundle following R170/175. List of Deputy Lords Lieutenant.
 5. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 604.
 6. Ibid., 2, 442.

recommendation to the first Marquis of Rockingham. Rockingham decided that Downe would be invaluable to the Yorkshire Whigs as a promising young man with a great fortune. Lord Irwin of Temple Newsam agreed with the marquis that Downe should be nominated by a Yorkshire meeting and he was returned unopposed.¹

It was against Darcy and Downe that the second Marquis of Rockingham attempted to show his political independence of Newcastle at the 1753 election. This could be one explanation as to why Downe decided in 1755 to try to be elected as a member of Doncaster's corporation in opposition to Rockingham's interest in the town. Downe died in 1760 and was succeeded by his brother Sir John Playdell Dawnay. He was M.P. for Cirencester from 1754 until 1768 when he moved to Rockingham's borough of Malton which he represented until 1774. Then he was removed in favour of Edmund Burke, who chose to sit for Bristol instead.² Since the seat at Malton was vacant the marquis gave it to William Weddell.³

Weddell had been elected for Hull in 1766 but was not reelected in 1774: the electors disliked him and believed that he was lazy. This was a blow to both Rockingham and Savile, who had recommended Weddell for the seat. The marquis felt obliged to find his relation another seat and Malton conveniently needed an M.P. The family link between the two men was rather tenuous. Weddell had married Elizabeth Ramsden, the half-sister of Lady Rockingham.⁴ The marriage also related Weddell to Viscount Irwin since Elizabeth's brother John had married one of Charles Ingram's daughters.⁵

Sir John Ramsden of Byram and Longley Hall was Lady Rockingham's

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1. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 606-607.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 617-618.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Ibid., p. 378.

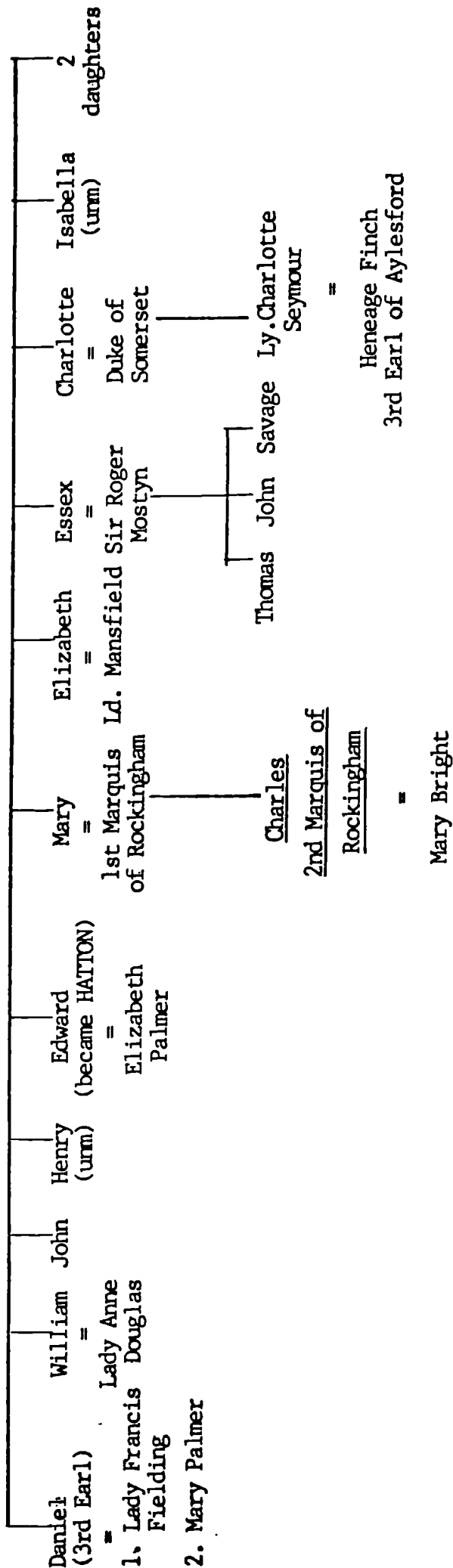
step-father. He represented Appleby in Westmorland from 1727 until 1754 as the nominee of his uncle the third Viscount Lonsdale. His sister had married Sir William Lowther of Swillington Yorkshire and so Ramsden was related directly and indirectly to the aristocratic Rockinghamites.¹ He was a friend of the first Marquis of Rockingham and was one of the gentlemen who advocated the establishment of the Yorkshire Volunteers in 1745 along with Sir Conyers Darcy, Viscount Irwin and Lord Malton.

Another gentleman who attended their meetings was Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory, the father-in-law of Nathaniel Cholmley; and so he too was related to the Rockingham family through marriage. Sir Rowland was an influential landowner and was a Commissioner of the Peace for the North Riding on the 1761 list and a Deputy Lord Lieutenant for the West Riding on the 1757 list.² He was one of the founder members of the Rockingham Club in York³ and presumably gave the young marquis much good and useful advice.

Rockingham's mother was Lady Mary Finch, the daughter of Daniel, second Earl of Nottingham and seventh Earl of Winchelsea. She was one of twelve surviving children and her family made heavy claims on both Marquises of Rockingham. Her eldest brother Daniel succeeded to the earldoms in 1730⁴ and gave the Rockinghamites his support in the House of Lords. The second brother, Edward married Elizabeth Palmer and represented Cambridge University on the Duke of Newcastle's interest from 1727 to 1768.⁵ Henry Finch remained a bachelor and was given the parliamentary seat of Malton by both Rockinghams: he represented the borough

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1. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 378.
 2. W.W.M. Unnumbered bundle following R170/175.
 3. W.W.M. R95. List of members of the Rockingham Club for 1754.
 4. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 30-31.
 5. Ibid., p. 32.

Daniel Finch 2nd Earl
of Nottingham



THE FAMILY OF DANIEL FINCH, SECOND EARL

OF NOTTINGHAM

from 1724 until his death in 1761.¹ John married an actress. He sat for Higham Ferrers between 1724 and 1741. In that year he moved to become M.P. for Rutland, which was dominated by the Finches. He held the seat only until the next general election and never stood for parliament again.² The youngest son, William, married Lady Anne Douglas, the daughter of the Duke of Queensberry and Dover. He was M.P. for Cocker-mouth between 1727 and 1754 on the influence of his brother-in-law the Duke of Somerset. He then moved to Bewdley in Worcestershire, which he held until 1761.³ Of the sisters of the first Lady Rockingham, Charlotte married the Duke of Somerset; Elizabeth married William Murray, who was later created Lord Mansfield, having represented Boroughbridge on his friend the Duke of Newcastle's interest from 1742 until he gained his peerage in 1756.⁴ Essex married Sir Roger Mostyn;⁵ Mary herself married the first Marquis of Rockingham; Isabella remained single and was the favourite aunt of the second Marquis of Rockingham - Lady Bell.

Sir Brook Bridges, M.P. for Kent from 1763 to 1774 was also closely related to the Finches. He gravitated to the Rockingham group taking with him his son-in-law John Plumptre.⁶ Another relation of the Finches [and so the Marquis of Rockingham] was Savile Finch, M.P. for Maidstone from 1757 to 1761 and then at Malton from 1761 until 1780. The family ties with Rockingham were somewhat remote: their respective grandfathers were brothers.⁷ Savile Finch lived at Thrybergh, a village some eight miles away from Wentworth. He was the son of an Elizabeth Savile of Methley and possibly was related directly to Sir George Savile,⁸

1. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 33-34.

2. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

5. Ibid., p. 279.

6. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 118.

7. Ibid., 2, 424-425 and Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 30-36.

8. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 425.

besides being a cousin of the third Earl of Aylesford.

Lord Aylesford had the power to nominate one M.P. at Maidstone¹ and in 1768 recommended Robert Gregory as his candidate. Gregory was an Irish friend of Burke who had made his fortune in Bengal as a free merchant.² Rockingham liked him and supported his nomination. Gregory advised the group on East India affairs since he was a director of the East India Company, and consistently voted with the Rockinghams in parliament.³

Sir Roger Mostyn was the uncle of Charles Watson-Wentworth; he was also one of his godfathers, the other similarly an uncle, the Duke of Somerset. Mostyn was the leader of the Tories in Flintshire, although he followed his father-in-law the Earl of Nottingham into the ranks of the Whigs. Of Mostyn's three sons who entered parliament, Thomas sat for Flintshire;⁴ John sat for Malton through the influence of his uncle and cousin the Marquises of Rockingham;⁵ and Savage sat for Weobley on the influence of Lord Weymouth,⁶ who was related to the Ramsdens of Byram and Longley Hall. Thomas Mostyn's son Roger inherited all the properties of the family since he was the only surviving male relation. He became Sir Roger and sat as the Rockinghamite M.P. for Flintshire from 1758 until 1796.⁷

Charles Lennox the third Duke of Richmond had horse-racing as a common interest with the second Marquis of Rockingham, who was six years his senior. His home was at Goodwood. Richmond was at odds with Newcastle, Bessborough, Winchelsea and Albemarle although he was a

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 313.
 2. Ibid., 2, 536-537.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 280.
 5. Ibid., p. 279.
 6. Ibid., p. 280.
 7. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 178.

supporter of Rockingham and by 1770 he was considered to be one of the foremost Rockingham Whigs. His father had been a Newcastle Whig so the family trend was maintained.¹ Richmond was one of Albemarle's cousins and was the uncle of Charles James Fox: one of Richmond's sisters married Henry Fox [Lord Holland]. A second sister married Thomas Conolly, the speaker of the Irish House of Commons, and a third married the Duke of Leinster.² Conolly's mother was Lady Anne Wentworth, daughter of Thomas Earl of Strafford who was an ancestor of Rockingham. Both Leinster and Conolly wanted greater economic freedom for Ireland, believing that a relaxation of the Navigation Acts was necessary for Irish prosperity. They openly accused the English parliament of ill-treating its Irish subjects: in 1778 the Duke of Leinster gave £100 for the relief of American prisoners of war held in Ireland which was frowned upon by George III and his government. The ideas of these men were promoted by Richmond among the Rockinghamites, who developed a policy for Ireland different from any other in existence.

Richmond's brother, Lord George Henry Lennox, sat in parliament on the family interest in Chichester [1761-1767] and Sussex [1767-1790] and followed Richmond's political affiliations. Lennox always voted with the Rockinghams, as may be expected.³ Richmond may have been responsible for the emergence of Charles James Fox in the Rockingham ranks. Fox ingratiated himself with the northern peers and his friendship with Burke enhanced his position.

Lord Ralph Verney was the son of the second Viscount Fermanagh. He inherited a large estate in Buckinghamshire and control over both parliamentary seats in Wendover. He bought property and thus an interest

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1. A.G. Olsen, The Radical Duke (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 30.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 35-36.

in Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire, and was a peripheral member of the Rockingham group. He occupied one of the Wendover seats from 1753 until 1761, while the other went to a relation, John Calvert.¹ In 1765 Verney was persuaded to let Edmund Burke take one of the Wendover seats so that he could sit in the Commons: Burke remained at Wendover until 1774² when he moved to Bristol on his own popularity. By 1780 his views on the American problem had made him persona non grata in Bristol. He was left without a parliamentary seat so his employer, the Marquis of Rockingham, persuaded Savile Finch to vacate his seat in Malton so that Burke could take it. Verney let Burke's brother William occupy the seat he controlled at Great Bedwyn from 1766 until 1774,³ while Richard Cavendish - who married a cousin of the Duke of Devonshire - sat for Wendover between 1761 and 1768. None of these men to whom Verney gave constituencies were related to him and since he almost bankrupted himself one must assume that there was no venality involved. The only other explanation for his actions is that he was a confirmed Rockinghamite who wanted to increase the party's size in the Commons.

The Armytage family of Barnsley and Kirklees played an important part in the early political career of the second Marquis of Rockingham. Sir Samuel Armytage was a contemporary of the first marquis and was High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1740 at the time when the first marquis was Lord Lieutenant.⁴ Armytage's two elder sons both sat as M.P.s for York: Sir John for less than a year; Sir George from 1761 to 1768. The second Marquis of Rockingham's influence was largely responsible for both gentlemen being elected, but their families were related. Sir George

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 580-582.
 2. Ibid., 2, 145-153.
 3. Ibid., 3, 153-158.
 4. Foster, Pedigrees, Armytage pedigree.

had married Anna Maria Wentworth, the daughter of Godfrey Wentworth of Hickleton and Woolley.¹ Wentworth lived in close proximity to Wentworth Woodhouse and they shared the same ancestor - the Earl of Strafford. Godfrey Wentworth had been the Tory M.P. for York from 1741 until 1747 but did not stand again. His rôle was taken over by his sons-in-law. Armytage's daughters married into the Rockinghamite group too. Rachel married James Farrer of Barnborough Grange² and Mary married the Reverend Francis Hall who was rector of Tankersley, one of Rockingham's advowsons.³

Sir George Armytage retired from national politics in 1768 but continued to support his kinsman in Yorkshire. He organised the county's petition of 1769 and was responsible for its presentation to George III.⁴ He also chaired the County Meeting of 1770 regarding the Wilkesite petitioning movement. Armytage was the owner of coalmines on his Barnsley and Kirklees estates and he, like Rockingham, spent a lot of time developing these resources. They both undertook the construction of canals to ease transportation difficulties although Sir George's canal was part of the Hebble-Calder Navigation whereas Rockingham had to link a separate spur canal into the Don Navigation - a much bigger project: but then, Rockingham was wealthier than Sir George.⁵ Armytage was probably a Deputy Lord Lieutenant for the West Riding. His name does not appear on the 1757 list⁶ but that of Sir John does, with a note in Rockingham's hand saying that he was dead. Sir George inherited his brother's baronetcy and estates: presumably he also took his place as a Deputy Lord Lieutenant.

Most of the Wentworths of Yorkshire were related to the Watson-

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1. Foster, Pedigrees. Armytage pedigree.
 2. Ibid.
 3. W.W.M. R2A-31. List of Rockingham's advowsons.
 4. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 27-28.
 5. Ibid.
 6. W.W.M. Unnumbered bundle following R170/175.

Wentworths of Wentworth Woodhouse, albeit on occasion very slightly. However, the family link was usually enough to help them to achieve some status in the county. Even those who married relations of the Wentworths were helped. Hugh Wentworth was a distant cousin who chose a military career. In 1745 he was in command of the garrison in Fort Augustus but left the army to become the first Marquis of Rockingham's steward on his Irish estates after the marquis dismissed the Rev. Dr. Griffith in 1748 for fiddling the books.¹ Hugh Wentworth was close to the second marquis and spent his holidays at Wentworth where he had his own room.²

Peregrine Wentworth was not only related to the Marquis of Rockingham but was also the cousin of Godfrey Wentworth of Woolley and Hickleton. His grandfather was Sir Michael Wentworth of Woolley. Perry's mother was Anne Sill, the daughter of James Sill, a mercer of Wakefield.³ This sort of relationship helped the second marquis to make contact with cloth manufacturers and merchants in the West Riding: Peregrine Wentworth, for example, was influential along with the Milnes family in organising the Wakefield address to Rockingham in 1766. He too was a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding⁴ and Registrar for the county. He married the daughter of Sir Beilby Thompson, whose mother was related to the Lowther family.⁵

Sir Beilby Thompson [Jnr.]⁷ - that is, the brother-in-law of Perry Wentworth - sat as M.P. for Hedon from 1768 until 1780 on Rockingham's influence. He then moved to Thirsk following an arrangement with Sir Thomas Frankland. Thompson was Mayor of Hedon in 1777. In parliament he voted with the Rockinghamites if he was present, but his attendance

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1. W.W.M. M2.
 2. W.W.M. A1204. Inventory of Household goods, 1782. One of the rooms listed is 'Mr. Wentworth's Room'.
 3. Foster, Pedigrees. Pedigree of the Wentworths of Woolley.
 4. W.W.M. Unnumbered bundle following R170/175.
 5. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 524.

was spasmodic: he preferred to spend his time at home in Yorkshire.¹

Sir Ralph Milbanke of Halnaby in Yorkshire sat as M.P. for Scarborough from 1754 to 1761 on the Duke of Newcastle's interest and then for Richmond from 1761 until 1768.² He was High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1763 and a Commissioner of the Peace for the North Riding on the 1761 lists.³ His half-sister Bridget, the grand-daughter of Lord Conyers, married Sir Butler Cavendish Wentworth of North Elmsall. Milbanke had five siblings: one brother, John, married Lady Mary Watson-Wentworth [Rockingham's sister]. In turn their son Ralph married the daughter of Thomas, Viscount Wentworth, a distant cousin.⁴

Northallerton was a burgage borough where the M.P.s were nominated by the two families who controlled the two hundred burgages between them.⁵ The head of the Peirse family sat as M.P. for the borough from 1722 until 1754, when he retired at the age of 62; his son was a minor so both seats were occupied by members of the Lascelles family, who had bought out the Smelt family in 1745. In 1774 Henry Peirse came of age and took his place as the family's M.P. He came to parliament on his own interest but was soon part of the Rockingham connection:⁶ In 1777 he married the daughter of Lord John Monson.⁷

Given that nepotism was rife in the eighteenth-century political life, it comes as no surprise that Members of Parliament were rather less independent than they appear to be superficially. Sir Thomas Cave, who represented Leicestershire between 1741 and 1747 and again from 1762

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 524.
 2. Foster, Pedigrees. Milbanke pedigree.
 3. W.W.M. Unnumbered bundle following R170/175.
 4. Foster, Pedigrees. Milbanke pedigree.
 5. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 361.
 6. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 436.
 7. Ibid., 3, 153.

to 1774, was the brother-in-law of Lord Verney;¹ Frederick Montagu, who was M.P. for Northampton [1759-1768] and Higham Ferrers [1768-90], was the second cousin of Lord Halifax and was related by marriage to Lord Dartmouth.² Dartmouth was in turn related to Rockingham through Daniel Finch.³ George Spencer was the brother-in-law of the fifth Duke of Devonshire and succeeded his father to become Earl Spencer of Althorp in 1783.⁴ Charles Townshend was the son of Viscount Townshend and was the nephew of the Duke of Newcastle, as was his cousin 'young Tommy' Townshend.⁵ Robert Walsingham, M.P. for Fowey from 1761 to 1768 and then for Knaresborough from 1768 until 1780, was connected to the Devonshires through his sister's marriage to the fourth duke; he was also the son of Lord Burlington and was related to the Earls of Shannon.⁶ Thomas Anson was the brother of George Anson and so was related to the Yorkes through his sister-in-law who was a Yorke. Sir William Beauchamp-Proctor was also married to one of the Yorke sisters: this linked him with the Ansons and the Hardwickes.⁷

Another distant cousin of Rockingham was Sir John Wentworth the governor of New Hampshire. He, like Rockingham, opposed the 'new policy' for America and attempted to prevent the passage of the Stamp Act and later worked for its repeal. One of the colonial agents for New Hampshire was Barlow Trecothick, who had lived for over twenty years in the colonies.⁸ Trecothick organised merchant opposition to the Stamp Act in England and worked closely with Sir John Wentworth, who at that time

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 200.

2. Ibid., 3, 153.

3. Ibid., p. 29.

4. Ibid., pp. 459-460.

5. Ibid., pp. 554-556.

6. Ibid., pp. 603-605.

7. Ibid., 2, 70-71.

8. Ibid., 3, 557-560.

was living at Wentworth Woodhouse and Grosvenor Square with the Rockinghams. In 1765 Trecothick refused Newcastle's offer of the New Shoreham constituency and became M.P. for London in 1768 through his own popularity. Trecothick always spoke for and voted with the opposition and vociferously supported the Rockingham policy for America. In 1770 he married the sister of Sir William Meredith, M.P. for Wigan [1754-1761] and Liverpool [1761-1780].¹ Another agent for New Hampshire was John Thomlinson, M.P. for Steyning between 1761 and 1767. His father was a West India merchant and a partner of the Hanburys and George Colebrook and Barlow Trecothick. Thomlinson had also won contracts from Newcastle's government to supply the army in America.² John Thomlinson was a member of Wildman's Club and was a consistent member of the Rockingham group in parliament.

Meredith was a member of Wildman's Club even though he was reputedly a Jacobite and Tory in his early parliamentary days. By 1764 he had entered into an understanding with the Duke of Portland, who had an interest in the constituency. The American crisis bound Meredith firmly to the Rockingham party since his mercantile constituency was suffering hardship. He was keen to form an organised opposition party but since he was never part of the inner circle of Rockinghamites he had little influence on the group.³

The West India group in the Commons was very powerful and the members proved useful to the Rockinghamites in pushing through the repeal of the Stamp Act. Richard Pennant, the son of a Liverpool merchant, was M.P. for Petersfield from 1761 to 1767 and then for Liverpool from 1767 until 1780, sharing the constituency with Meredith. Pennant opposed all the American measures put to parliament except those of the Rockinghamites

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 557-560.

2. Ibid., pp. 322-323.

3. Ibid., pp. 130-132.

but more importantly he was a cousin of the Beckfords, Dawkins' and Morants.¹ These were all West India merchants and Beckford was a leading citizen of London: he was made an alderman in 1752, was sheriff 1755-1756, Mayor 1762-1763 and again in 1769-1770. He sat as M.P. for London from 1754-1770. He was able to use his status to help Trecothick organise merchant opposition to the Stamp Act and influenced other West India traders to join the protests.² Charles Barrow was another West India merchant. He had been born in St. Kitts and was a friend of William Dowdeswell. He had been brought into the Rockinghamite connection as early as 1751 when he became M.P. for Gloucester, a seat he held until his death in 1789.³

Rockingham's spokesman in the Commons was William Dowdeswell of Pull Court in Worcestershire. He was a trusted member of the inner circle of Rockinghamites who in 1767 advised the peers that if they were unable to form a broad-bottomed coalition they should stay out of office.⁴ He seems to have been truly independent of family links with his chosen party: one of the few Rockinghamites who were members from pure conviction. He married the daughter of Sir William Codrington of Gloucestershire, who was equally unconnected with the Rockingham group.⁵ However, the second Sir William - Dowdeswell's brother-in-law - did become M.P. for Tewkesbury in 1761 as a result of Dowdeswell's influence and he voted regularly with the Rockinghamites in any divisions in the House.⁶

The two Wilkinson brothers, Andrew and Charles, were the sons of the Yorkshire estate agent of the Duke of Newcastle, and between them they represented Aldborough from 1735 until 1777 with a break only from

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 262.
 2. Ibid., 2, 75-78.
 3. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
 4. Ibid., p. 334.
 5. Ibid., pp. 333-335.
 6. Ibid., pp. 231-232.

1765 to 1768.¹ Andrew Wilkinson's father-in-law, William Jessop, was the legal adviser to the duke and had represented Aldborough for the duke until Jessop died in 1734. Jessop was the son of Barbara Eyre, one of the Catholic Eyre family of Derbyshire, although he was obviously not a practising Catholic himself.² Andrew Wilkinson replaced his father at Aldborough.

John Dodd the M.P. for Reading from 1755 to 1782 was another Rockingham supporter in the Commons, as was William Windham the M.P. for Helston between 1766 and 1768. Neither had any direct ties with the leadership of the party but both knew the right people. Dodd was the son-in-law of Henry St. Leger³ who was related to Anthony St. Leger the horse-racing friend of the Marquis of Rockingham and after whom the famous Doncaster race was named. Windham was the sub-governor to the Duke of Cumberland in 1731 and later became comptroller of the duke's household until 1765 when the duke died at the early age of 44. Windham possibly met young Charles Wason-Wentworth in Carlisle in 1746: he was almost certain to have been aware of Cumberland's regard for him. Windham's first seat of Aldburgh [Suffolk] came to him through Newcastle's influence; perhaps it is not surprising then that Windham transferred his loyalties from the old duke to Rockingham.⁴

Sir Anthony Abdy was a lawyer and was employed as legal adviser by Lord Thanet and as Lord Burlington's legal agent. Burlington's daughter married the fourth Duke of Devonshire, who took control of Burlington's borough of Knaresborough. It was this constituency for which Abdy was M.P. between 1763 and 1775. Abdy voted with the Cavendishes and was

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 640-641.
 2. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 179. Catholics were prevented from holding office by the Williamite penal laws.
 3. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 326-327.
 4. Ibid., 3, 648.

always classed as a Rockinghamite.¹ As a trained lawyer, it was he who advised the marquis that the 1769 petitions should ask only for the removal of ministers and the dissolution of parliament. The plan was adopted in the Yorkshire petition which was used as a model by other petitioning counties.

Another ostensibly independent Member of Parliament was George Adams who sat for Saltash [1761-68] and Lichfield [1770-89].² However, his uncles were Thomas and George Anson: the latter was married to one of Lord Hardwicke's daughters, and so understandably Adams was classed as a Rockinghamite. He owed his place at Saltash to his uncle, who was First Lord of the Admiralty and so had control over the seats in the Admiralty borough.³ In 1763 Adams married the daughter of George Venables Vernon and the Hon. Mary Howard, daughter of Lord Howard of Effingham. His seat at Lichfield had been held by his uncle Thomas Anson, who vacated it in 1770 in his nephew's favour. Adams changed his name to Anson in 1773 when he inherited Thomas Anson's lands.

James West was a supporter first of Newcastle and then of Rockingham from conviction, for he faithfully followed their political lead for over thirty years and was poorly treated in return for his services. He was a lawyer and antiquarian, recommended to Walpole as likely to be of use.⁴ He became Pelham's secretary in 1743 and transferred his attachment to Newcastle when Pelham died. West resigned with Newcastle in 1756 and 1762.⁵ Newcastle used West's experience but took the man somewhat for granted. Rockingham virtually refused to find a position for West even though he had followed him in and out of office as he had followed the Pelhams. Even West's seat at Boroughbridge cost him dearly: he agreed

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 1-2.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

3. Ibid., 1, 239-240.

4. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 2, 529-530.

5. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 624-626.

to pay Offley's expenses at East Retford in return for Boroughbridge in the 1768 election but East Retford was contested and the expenses were high. West was justifiably grieved to see that Offley - a non-party man - was rated more highly than himself.¹ West made himself responsible for the parliamentary attendance of his son-in-law Andrew Archer and Archer's brother-in-law Lord Winterton, both of whom were classed as Rockinghamites. West was rarely consulted or even considered by the leaders of Rockingham's group and he gave them more than he received. He was, in fact, one of the few truly independent members of Rockingham's followers.

Another independent follower of Rockingham was James Adair. He too was a lawyer and made his reputation defending the publishers of the Junius letters. He also condemned the dismissal of an officer for voting against the government, in 1764.² The officer concerned could have been Henry Seymour Conway who was a Rockinghamite even though he stayed in office under Chatham and Grafton.³ Adair was returned for Cockermonth by Sir James Lowther in 1775 and supported the Rockinghamites throughout that parliament. In 1780 he was not asked to stand again and Cockermonth went to Lowther's steward and agent, John Baynes Garforth.⁴

Henry Belasyse had been educated at Eton where he had been a close friend of the young fourth Earl Fitzwilliam. The Fitzwilliams controlled one seat in the constituency of Peterborough which had been represented between 1747 and 1768 by Sir Matthew Lamb. Lamb was the legal adviser to the Fitzwilliams and was the fourth earl's guardian during his minority. Lamb's daughter married Henry Belasyse; when Lamb died in 1768 the Dowager Lady Fitzwilliam [née Lady Anne Watson-Wentworth, Rockingham's

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 624-626.

2. Ibid., 2, 6.

3. Ibid., pp. 244-247.

4. Ibid., p. 69.

sister⁷ offered the seat to Belasyse free of expense. He voted consistently with the Rockinghams during their opposition to North's American legislation but after his elevation to the House of Lords in 1774 he voted with the administration and supported the war against America. He raised a regiment of militia for home defence in Yorkshire in 1779: he was Lord Lieutenant of the North Riding from 1779 until his death in 1802. Belasyse's father was the first Earl Fauconberg of Newburgh Hall, Yorkshire. Thomas Belasyse came from an old Roman Catholic family who had held an earldom. The title had become extinct on the death of Charles Belasyse, a priest,¹ but a junior branch of the family was given the title of Viscount. Thomas was the fourth viscount but he conformed in 1733. His daughter Mary married Thomas Eyre of Hassop, another of the Eyres of Derbyshire, a long-established Catholic family. In 1756 Belasyse was created first Earl Fauconberg and was made a member of George II's Privy Council. His son Henry was brought up an Anglican although he turned to the Roman Church before his death in 1774.² Fauconberg was a Commissioner of the Peace for the North Riding in 1761 and was a colleague of Rockingham both in Yorkshire and the House of Lords.³

Another Rockinghamite peer with Roman Catholic connections was Willoughby Bertie, fourth Earl of Abingdon. His mother and all his seven sisters were Catholics, three of whom married into Catholic families.⁴ Abingdon, as the eldest son, was baptised and brought up as an Anglican, as were his sons. During the '45 Jacobite Rebellion Abingdon refused to join the defence volunteers,⁵ but he supported the American policies of Rockingham in the House of Lords and signed several Dissentient motions

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1. Rev. John Kirk, Biographies of English Catholics in the Eighteenth Century (Tonbridge Wells, Burns & Oates, 1909), p. 16.
 2. Ibid., p. 16.
 3. W.W.M. Unnumbered bundle following R170/175.
 4. Kirk, Biographies of Catholics, p. 23.
 5. Sedgwick, House of Commons, 1, 460.

put by Rockingham.¹ It is possible that the Fauconberg and Abingdon connection was influential in the decision of the Rockinghamites to introduce the 1778 Bill for Catholic Relief since these men had an interest in the cause.

Other Rockinghamite M.P.s with either a family link or a tie of patronage to the party's peers were Beaumont Hotham, one of Portland's schoolfriends and his legal adviser; Joseph, John and George Damer, who were related to the Fitzwilliams; George Byng, who was indirectly related to the Duke of Richmond;² David Hartley, a close friend of Sir George Savile; and Thomas Dundas, who married Lady Charlotte Fitzwilliam.

All these inter-connections make the Rockinghamites look like a large-scale family party. Of the list of ninety-seven M.P.s whom Rockingham classed as 'pro',³ some fifty of them were linked to one or other of the party's peers.⁴ Gavin Sturgess estimated the size of the party in 1767 as being about seventy-six:⁵ on his list there are forty-

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1. For example W.W.M. R5, against the Prohibitory Act, and Cobbett & Wright, Parliamentary History, XVIII, 1369, against the King's Speech, 1776.
 2. Byng married the sister of Thomas Conolly who had married Richmond's daughter. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2, 167-168.
 3. W.W.M. R10-19b. Undated list in Rockingham's hand but it must relate to the period 1768-1770 because George Byng, Robert Clayton, Charles Cornwall and Richard Coxe first took their seats in 1768 and F. W. Osbaldeston ceased to be M.P. in 1770, for example.
 4. They are: George Adams; Sir Anthony Abdy; Charles Barrow; Aubrey Beauclerk; Henry Belasyse; Henry Crabb Boulton; Edmund and William Burke; George Byng; Ld. Edward Bentinck; Lords George, Frederick and John Cavendish; Nathaniel Cholmley; Sir William Codrington; Sir George Colebrooke; Sir Samuel Cornish; Thomas Conolly; John, the Hon. John and George Damer; Ld. Downe; William Dowdeswell; Savile Finch; Robert Gregory; John Hewett (Thornhalgh); Beaumont Hotham; Gen. Howard; Gen. and Adm. Keppel; Earl Ludlow; Sir William Meredith; Frederick Montagu; James Murray; F.W. Osbaldeston; Richard Pennant; Sir George Savile; Sir Charles Saunders; Belby Thompson; Barlow Trecothick; Ld. Verney; Robert Boyle Walsingham; William Weddell; James West; John Yorke; Sir Brooke Bridges; Sir Roger Mostyn; John Offley; William Plumer; John Plumptre.
 5. Gavin Sturgess, 'The Rockingham Whigs 1768-1774' (University of Manchester M.A. thesis, 1970), pp. 209-211.

eight men directly linked to the peers. On Dr. O'Gorman's list of fifty-four Rockinghamite M.P.s on the eve of the 1768 election, forty-four can be accounted for as 'close friends or relations' of the leadership.¹ Dr. O'Gorman also lists nineteen men returned to parliament in 1768 as 'independents' who nonetheless supported Rockingham. However, thirteen of these were connected with the party's leadership as has already been discussed above. These thirteen were Thomas Anson, Charles Barrow, Sir William Codrington, Sir George Colebrooke, William Dowdeswell, Matthew Fetherstonehaugh, James Hewitt (Thornhalgh), William Plumer, John Plumptre, James Murray, Thomas Hay, Beilby Thompson and Earl Ludlow. The remaining six - William A'Court, Harbord Harbord, James Scawen, Robert Clayton, Richard Hipplesley Coxe and Edward Astley do appear to have been totally independent.² Even in 1774 when the party was probably at its smallest, twenty-seven of the forty members were in that category of 'directly connected'.

The peers of the Rockingham party lived within a few miles of each other in the provinces as the map [overleaf] shows; and between them they owned much of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The only ones who failed to fit this pattern were the Duke of Richmond, whose estates were at Goodwood in Sussex and who rarely went north, and Fitzwilliam, who was a regular visitor to Wentworth Woodhouse.

During the period of Rockingham's marquissate 102 different men represented the various Yorkshire constituencies,³ of whom fifty-seven were Yorkshiremen or who held lands in the county. The county seat and Northallerton never had an outsider as their representatives and York's only outsider was Lord John Cavendish. Likewise, Richmond only had one

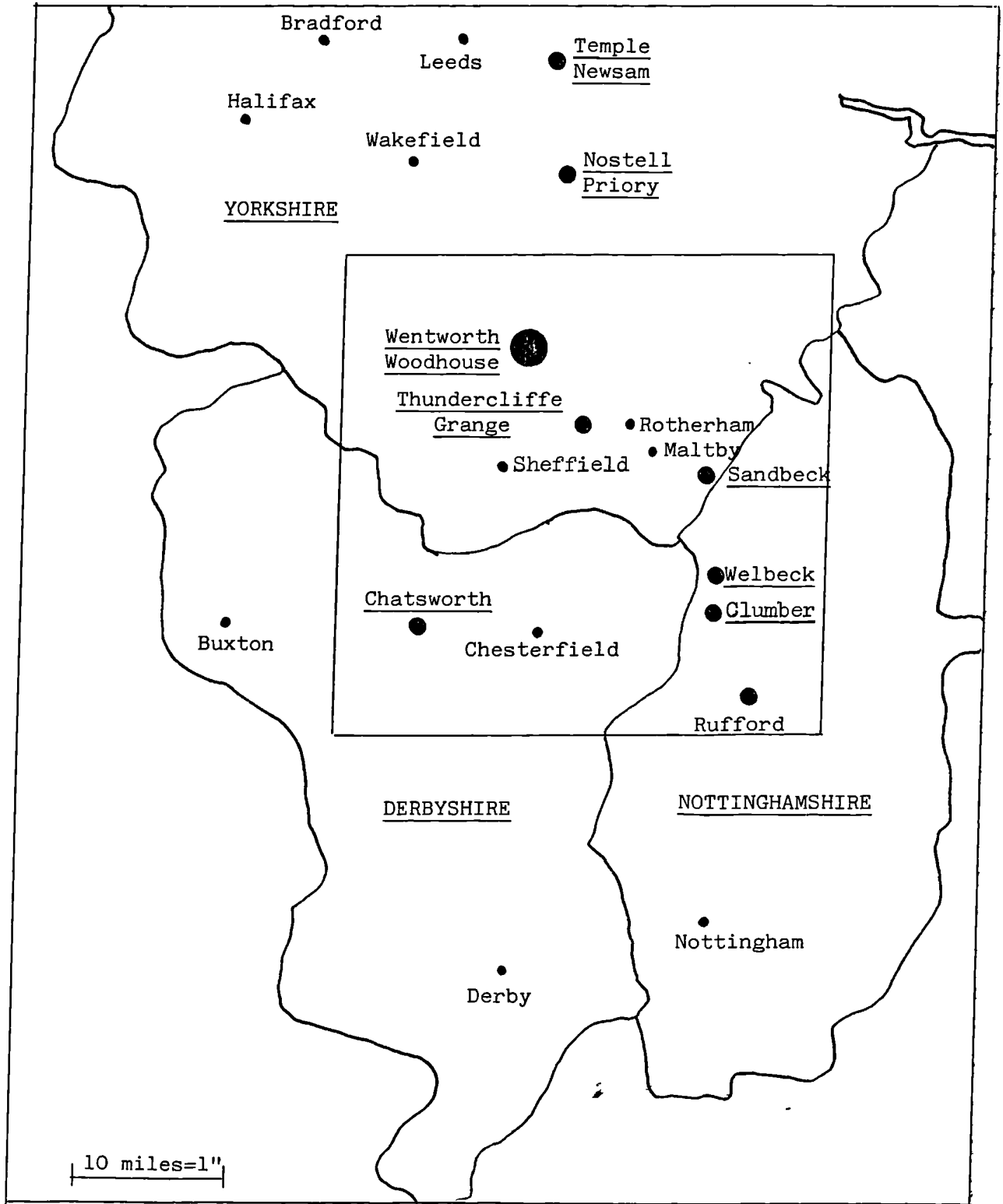
1. Frank O'Gorman, Rise of Party, p. 565.

2. Ibid., p. 227.

3. See Appendix 3.

COUNTY SEATS OF THE ROCKINGHAM

PARTY LEADERSHIP



KEY

- Towns
- Country Residences of the Rockinghamite Leaders

outsider; Alexander Wedderburn who became the Solicitor-General. Other constituencies which tended to stick to Yorkshiremen were Ripon, Thirsk and Hull. They also had one southerner each as M.P. during the period 1750-1782, while Aldborough and Boroughbridge were at the other extreme. Aldborough had thirteen M.P.s in the same period of whom only three were from the county; Boroughbridge had fourteen M.P.s with just two from Yorkshire. Four of Pontefract's nine M.P.s were Yorkshiremen and only two of Hedon's six M.P.s were natives of the county, while half of Beverley's eight and Malton's six M.P.s were local men. Twenty-six of the fifty-seven Yorkshiremen who at some point between 1750 and 1782 sat as an M.P. in the county are listed as Commissioners of the Peace for the North Riding and twenty-one were Deputy Lords Lieutenant for the West Riding. Some, of course, appear on both lists.¹ Furthermore, fifty-five of those 102 M.P.s were related to, or were dependent upon, the leadership of the party in some way.

Dr. O'Gorman has summed up Burke's status within the Rockinghamite party. Burke's entry into politics at the time of the Stamp Act crisis was fortuitous for him and it was perhaps only a coincidence that he opposed the Act; he was too new a member of the Rockingham group to be able to express their attitude to the legislation.² Even his appointment as the marquis' private secretary was accidental. The Duke of Newcastle recommended Royer for the job but the marquis preferred the recommendation of Burke from Lord John Cavendish and his friend William Fitzherbert. Rockingham paid more attention to the opinions of William Dowdeswell than to those of Burke, and Burke acted as the mouthpiece of the party, putting into words the opinions of his masters rather than

1. See Appendix 3.

2. O'Gorman, Rise of Party, pp. 258-262.

imposing his ideas on them. It is questionable how much of Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents was Burke's own work and how much of it was merely the setting down of Rockingham's own ideas. The party had already developed its suspicious attitude towards Bute and the concept of the 'Minister behind the Curtain' before Burke joined them. As early as 1762 the Duke of Devonshire told the marquis that 'the time is come for us to be very watchful that these people to secure their power should not endanger our excellent constitution'.¹ Burke's distrust of Chatham was not new to the group either. In 1764 the Duke of Newcastle recommended that they should 'act as We should think proper, without any previous Consultation, or Connection with Mr. Pitt ... for then you will be at Liberty, according to Mr. Pitt's conduct, to proceed with Him, or without Him, as we shall think proper at the Time'.² This opinion was shared by Bessborough, the Cavendishes, Lord Albemarle and the Duke of Cumberland, although Newcastle suggested that the marquis should discuss the idea with Sir George Savile, who had much influence in the Commons because of his independence.

Towards the end of 1769 Burke had submitted his manuscript of Thoughts to Rockingham. It was common for drafts of documents to be circulated among the leaders for discussion and this work was no exception. Rockingham told Burke that he knew 'from the Conversations I have had with Several - that the Idea totally corresponds, as much with their Present Sentiments, as it does with all their Past Conduct'.³ However, the marquis was dissatisfied with the manuscript. A month later, in a letter to Portland, he commented that 'some Alterations will be necessary, & I fear Some delay in publishing will be unavoidable'. The letter makes

1. W.W.M. R1-341. Devonshire to Rockingham, 29th December 1762.
2. W.W.M. R1-439. Newcastle to Rockingham, 14th November 1764.
3. W.W.M. R1-1245. Rockingham to Burke, 4th November 1769.

it clear that the sentiments expressed in Thoughts were those which had been held for many years by the Rockinghams and consequently were ideas which Burke must have absorbed from them rather than vice versa. Savile had advised caution to prevent offending would-be followers but Rockingham had no time for luke-warm 'occasional Conformists to good Principles'. He was all for completing the alterations and publishing because 'I think the Bute Party &c - know our Principles & have felt them for some years - the Publick [sic] in general have never as yet had a fair State of our Principles laid before them - In my opinion They will like Them'.¹

Rockingham's chief advisers were the other peers in the party mainly because they lived close to Wentworth Woodhouse when parliament was not sitting. Letters were notoriously unreliable as a method of communication unless they were sent by personal servants. It was not unknown for letters to be opened by the postmasters and to be delayed in their delivery. The Dean of York preferred to reserve his private thoughts until he saw the marquis 'as I believe our letters are inspected at the Post Office',² and Rockingham found it necessary to attempt some check on whether a letter was delivered immediately: 'I have wrote ... so freely that possibly if it were peeped into at the post office it might be delayed a little. I shall send it by tomorrow's Fly, and I hope you will receive it on Friday night'.³

The Marquis of Rockingham has been criticized for his lack of political ability and his lethargy; for 'preferring the turf to town, enjoying the leisurely management of his estates and the occasional incursion into a borough'.⁴ Charles James Fox commented that he had stayed at Chatsworth with 'very pleasant and very aimiable people: but

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1. PwF 9023. Rockingham to Portland, 5th December 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R136-18. John Fountayne to Rockingham, 22nd December 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1553. Rockingham to Pemberton Milnes, February 1775.
 4. O'Gorman, Rise of Party, p. 118.

altogether as unfit to storm a citadel, as they would be proper for the defence of it',¹ while Burke was even more scathing about his masters:

Ill success, ill health, minds too delicate for the rough and toilsome business of our time, a want of stimulus of ambition, a degeneracy of the Nation, which they are not lofty enough to despise, nor skilful enough to cure, have, all together, I am afraid contributed very much to weaken the spring of Characters whose fault it never was to be too electrick and too firmly braced. 2

Burke had earlier written to Fox, probably in reply to Fox's letter of 8th September, that the whole idea of a plan of action over America was 'absolutely impracticable' and that 'some faults in the constitution of those whom we most love and trust are among the causes of this impracticability'. Burke did not want them to be cured of these faults because they were closely tied up with 'honest disinterested intentions, plentiful fortunes, assured rank and quiet homes' - things which Burke lacked. He thought that great activity could never be expected from the peers 'unless some horrible calamity is just over their heads; unless they suffer from gross personal insults from power' and he did not blame them, because they were 'not repaid in fame, for what they sacrifice in Interest or repose'. Burke was far more loyal to the marquis than Fox was and he refused to have his idol denigrated.

When I consider of what discordant, and particularly of what fleeting materials the opposition has been all along composed, and at the same time review what Lord Rockingham has done, with that and with his own shatter'd constitution, for these last twelve years, ... I am rather surprized that he had done so much and persever's /sic/ so long than that he has felt now and then some cold fits and that he grows languid and desponding at last. 3

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1. Fox to Burke, 8th September 1777. Cited in N.C. Phillips, 'Edmund Burke and the County Movement 1779-1780' English Historical Review, LXXVI (April 1961), p. 255.
 2. Ibid., p. 255. Burke to William Baker, 12th October 1777.
 3. Burke to Fox, 8th October 1777. Burke Correspondence 3, 381.

Rockingham's entry into national politics was due to his keen sense of duty. Cumberland informed the king in 1765 that 'the Marquis of Rockingham, who from private reasons and inclinations prefers a private life ... when he saw the shyness of our friends, ... shook off his natural dislike and was ready to kiss the King's hand in whatever shape was most for the service in general'. Cumberland flattered himself that his friendship with the marquis played a significant part in Rockingham's decision to accept office in 1765, since he noted the 'distressed situation my friends had left me in, from their fears of stirring hand or foot without Mr. Pitt at their head'.¹

Rockingham had already decided to act on his principles rather than as a result of bargaining to obtain office. He intended to go to the House of Lords 'as often as I think it worth while', to consider every question on its merits and to 'come out of the House as free as I entered it'.² He maintained this attitude throughout his career in parliament. In 1767 he stated that his two principles were resisting Bute's power and opposing the current policy towards America. He intended to stick to these principles 'howsoever the Adherence ... may retard or even dissappoint [sic] Success',³ and if he was ever forced to abandon these principles, 'I should sink under the Anxieties of my own Mind, & should therefore wish ... that I might withdraw from Politicks [sic] - & enjoy Private Life & Private Friendship, the quietest & the Happiest State of Life'.⁴ He always left Wentworth unwillingly because he did prefer the quiet life on his estates but equally he felt obliged to obey the call of duty. In spite of everything, the marquis believed

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1. Cited in R.S.J. Hoffman, The Marquis, p. 72.
 2. For example W.W.M. R1-1350. Richmond to Rockingham, 12th February 1771 and Burke to Rockingham 7th and 10th January 1773. Burke Correspondence, 2, 408-411.
 3. W.W.M. R1-440. Rockingham to Pitt, November 1764.
 4. PwF 8991. Rockingham to Portland, 17th September 1767.

that he had a rôle to fulfil in the government of England even if it was one of continued opposition. His correspondence makes it quite clear that only he could hold the party together:¹ perhaps one of his greater talents was his ability to act as the focus of ideas and to mould a party from numerous individuals through a defined policy, unlike Pitt who preferred 'measures to men' but failed to bind his followers together.

One of the ways in which Rockingham held his followers was by having 'party meetings' either in London or at one of the country houses. One such meeting was planned for 30th October 1768 to discuss the Middlesex election affair.² Dowdeswell, Burke, Savile, Meredith, Portland, Abdy and Charles Yorke had been contacted and they each were expected to contact others. The following year Dowdeswell reminded the marquis to write to his friends to remind them of the meeting to be held at the Thatched House tavern³ for both commoners and peers, on the day prior to the opening of parliament. The meeting attracted eighty-two friends⁴ which made the marquis' efforts worth while. Still, there were some notable persons missing from the meeting - men like Richmond, Portland, Devonshire, Rockingham himself and Bessborough, besides such commoners as Nathaniel Cholmley, Savile Finch and Sir Roger Mostyn.

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1. PwF 8991. Rockingham to Portland, 17th September 1767.
 2. PwF 9011. Rockingham to Portland, 5th October 1768.
 3. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 16th December 1769. Dowdeswell Papers.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1769. They were: Abdy; Astley; Allen; Aubrey; Barré; Bertie; E. and W. Burke; Byng; Baker; Barrow; Beauclerk; Clayton; H. Cavendish; Coke; Colebrooke; Codrington; Cornwall; Calcraft; R. Clive; Crosby; J., G., and T. Damer; Dowdeswell; Dempster; Foley; Fletcher; Fitzmaurice; Fuller; R. Fletcher; Gregory; Goddard; Glynn; H. Grenville; Hobart; Hotham; Hamilton; Hampden; Irwin; A. Keppel; Gen. Keppel; Mills; Mawbey; Meredith; Major; Montagu; Musgrave; Martin; Molesworth; J. Pitt; Phipps; Rushout; Saunders; Savile; Standish; Sawbridge; Smith; Scawen; Seymour; Strachey; Scudamore; T. and J. Townshend; Trecothick; Tempest; Vincent; Wedderburn; Walsingham; Weddell; Wheatley; Lords Belasyse; J., G., and F. Cavendish; Clive Downe; Ludlow; Sackville and Verney.

While Dowdeswell was encouraging Rockingham to contact his friends Burke was suggesting that the marquis' presence would swell the numbers at the meeting since 'your absence will be reason enough for many persons to linger [at home] and hang back ... so that if your Lordship has not changed your mind on this particular, I absolutely despair of a full meeting at the Thatched House'.¹ A meeting of so many friends was quite considerable, when one considers that the marquis put his following at only ninety seven in 1769.²

In 1770 Lady Rockingham became seriously ill with jaundice and seemed unlikely to recover. Under the circumstances and given that the marquis disliked being separated from his wife anyway, he went to join her in Bath. This left the party without its leader, although Richmond stepped into the position and coped as best he could. Richmond found it necessary to inform the marquis of everything he did and to seek Rockingham's approval for the decisions made. Richmond justified these meetings by saying that 'otherwise in Your absence no Business could be done & opposition must break'.³ By early 1771 the number of Rockinghamites had shrunk but Richmond was confident 'that since we had been glean'd of some rotting Limbs we were sound all over & I believed nothing could not detach a Man from us. That reduced as we are, we were still the most numerous corps in either House of Parliament & in the Nation, indeed we were the only Party now left'.⁴ Richmond had called thirty men to his London home to discuss their attitude towards the Falklands crisis. Twenty-three had turned up and they unanimously agreed 'in damming [sic] the Peace ... but in not starting any thing that would tend to break

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1. Burke to Rockingham, 18th December 1769. Burke Correspondence, 2, 122.
 2. W.W.M. R10-19b. List of M.P.s.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1358. Richmond to Rockingham, 12th February 1771.
 4. Ibid.

it'.¹ He was delighted to report that Lord North was 'much surprised to find opposition so numerous in the two Houses ... for they thought the late desertions & absences had reduced us to nothing'.² In a division on that day the Rockinghams produced an opposition of forty in the Lords and 107 in the Commons on the Falklands question, to their satisfaction.

It became clear that the party continued to decline while the marquis was absent. In 1772 Richmond informed Rockingham that Sir William Meredith had divided against them. 'Pray let such of our friends as chuse [sic] to follow his Standard, go. We have long lost all hopes from Numbers. Character alone must support us'.³ Later that year, Richmond was losing hope of maintaining the party for much longer. He credited Burke with 'keeping us to gather [sic] ... The Marquis manages us better than any Man can, but he will never make us what we ought to be'.⁴

Perhaps the most significant documentation concerning Rockingham's leadership of the party and his ability to act as a binding agent is a letter from Burke to the marquis in January 1773 when supporters were somewhat thin on the ground and opposition to North was in shreds. One may grant that Burke was in the marquis' employment, and it could be argued that he was a sycophant; it may even be that Burke was attempting to jolt Rockingham out of his apathy by flattery. Nevertheless, Burke reiterated the feeling current in the party that without Rockingham the party would cease to exist. He felt that it was in 'great danger of dissolution. Nothing can prevent it, ... but the speedy and careful application of your Lordship's own peculiar, persuasive and concillatory [sic] manner, in talking over publick Business and leading them into a

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1. W.W.M. R1-1358. Richmond to Rockingham, 12th February 1771.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1363. Richmond to Rockingham, 16th February 1771.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1397. Richmond to Rockingham, 15th March 1772.
 4. Richmond to Burke, 15th November 1772. Burke Correspondence, 2, 371.

a proper line of Conduct'.¹ Burke hoped that Rockingham's presence would

bring things again into order. Nobody but yourself can do it. We fall into confusion the moment you turn your back; and though you have the hapiness [sic] of many friends of very great ability and industry, and of unshakeable fidelity to the Cause, nobody but yourself has the means of rightly managing the different Characters and reconciling the different Interests that make up the Corps of opposition. 2

Rockingham's influence in parliament was a shadow of the influence he had in Yorkshire. As has already been discussed above, he had direct links with over half the M.P.s who represented Yorkshire constituencies but the voters had to be prepared to elect his nominees in most cases. Rockingham had many followers in the county who looked to him as their natural leader.³ Through these men he was able to organize the petition of 1769 and to keep a fairly tight hold on Wyvill's Yorkshire Association of 1779. He was also kept closely in touch with economic developments in the county, especially when there were recessions which occurred during the several crises connected with America.

The extent of family relationships within the Rockingham group's membership is far greater than hitherto has been suspected, particularly among those who were believed to be 'independent gentlemen'. Family groups were not uncommon. The Temple-Pitt-Grenville group is but one example. The Bedfords are another. What is striking about the Rockinghams is the scale of inter-relationships which might be called nepotism on a grand scale but which may also be seen as an intelligent use of patronage and influence on the part of the leaders. The peers would only call on those men whom they believed had the same political

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1. Burke to Rockingham, 7th and 10th January, 1773. Burke Correspondence 2, 408-411.
 2. Ibid.,
 3. For example Halifax in 1769 and Hull in 1779.

beliefs as themselves to represent the various constituencies. Once elected, an M.P. was virtually independent until the next election. It is noticeable that some M.P.s were not returned if they failed to live up to expectations. Namier's judgement that 'English history, and especially English parliamentary history, is made by families rather than by individuals'¹ appears to be borne out where the Rockinghams were concerned. It is certainly not surprising that the marquis had such a strong influence in the county when one considers that family connections entered almost every geographical and economic area of Yorkshire.

However, once these family connections in the party are extracted, there is still a substantial number of men left who may be classed as consistent Rockinghamites and who had no ulterior motive to support them: they must presumably have been followers from conviction. On Rockingham's list of 1769² almost half of those men named cannot be classed as 'family'. Likewise, on Sturgess' list twenty-eight are apparently independent³. It must be considered therefore, that the Rockinghams had a policy - or at least an attitude to politics - which others found sufficiently attractive to follow.

For Rockingham the principles of 'Crown, Church and Constitution' were of paramount importance: the restriction of royal power, religious toleration while maintaining the protestant ascendancy; and for parliament to control the government of England. He believed in the right of the aristocracy to dominate politics although he supported freedom of speech for M.P.s and the right of voters to free elections. This was made clear in 1764 and 1768-69 over the Wilkes affair and the Middlesex election. He refused to seek alliances with other groups for the mere

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1. L.B. Namier, England in the Age of the American Revolution (London, Macmillan & Co., 1930), p.22.
 2. W.W.M. R10-19b.
 3. Sturgess, 'Rockingham Whigs', pp. 209-211.

sake of attaining power, always maintaining his independence. He would accept others into his connection on his terms but seems never even to have considered being absorbed by others on their terms. The marquis treated each issue on its merits using fixed principles as his guideline. This gave his approach a great deal of consistency throughout his political career and enabled others to follow him. His connection knew and approved of Rockingham's ideology, which gave the party a cohesion lacking in other groups.

The Marquis of Rockingham led a varied group of men who had similar attitudes and aims. He was the leader in the fullest sense: the widely held belief that he could only bask in the reflected glory of men such as Burke is far from the truth. Rockingham made a habit of consulting his friends on matters of policy before any decision was reached but he invariably made the final decision on the party's actions and attitudes.

There can be little doubt that the Marquis of Rockingham's inherited wealth and status gave him many advantages but without personal appeal these would have meant little. To be able to handle a political party, to make decisions and to deal with a variety of local issues all at the same time belies the judgement that the marquis lacked intelligence. Besides holding together a group in London and a following in Yorkshire he even found time to conduct scientific experiments and to oversee the minutiae of estate management. He might have relied heavily on his supporters for information, advice and reassurance but they were probably more reliant on him for decisions and leadership. In the absence of a large civil service and reliable sources of information the only realistic method of collecting information on which to formulate a policy was the way in which Rockingham tackled the problem. The fact that he was prepared to sacrifice his personal inclination towards a private life says

something about his character. That he continued to deny himself the style of life he would have preferred should receive more credit than has been given. It cannot have been easy for a sick, shy man to spend so much of his life on public show, fighting for what he saw as right.

CHAPTER 6

ROCKINGHAM AND YORKSHIRE POLITICS

It has been seen in the previous chapter that many of Rockingham's supporters in parliament came from or held lands in Yorkshire and that the county was the centre of Rockingham's political influence. The marquis' various official appointments in the county and the fact that he had grown up there meant that by 1750 he had already made his mark in Yorkshire and he was expected to follow in his father's footsteps as a Whig politician. He inherited some of his father's political influence but he seems to have been a popular young man both with those of his contemporaries and also his seniors who shared his political beliefs.

Rockingham always prided himself on being a consistent adherent to the Whig principles of 'Crown, Church and Constitution', as did his friends. In fact few Rockinghamites had any real right to claim descent from the 1688 Revolution. As Foord points out:

Rockingham [was] a descendant of Strafford; Conway, a descendant of Sir Edward Seymour; Winchelsea, a descendant of Nottingham; Dartmouth, great-grandson of James II's trusted admiral; Dowdeswell, member of a traditionally Tory family; and Richmond and Grafton, descendants of Charles II's bastards. A more correct ancestry could be attributed to the party members who had inherited the Dutch blood of Bentinck and Keppel. ... In fairness to the Rockinghamites it should be remembered that Grafton, Seymour, Nottingham and Dartmouth turned against James II in 1688. 1

However slight his claim to be a true Whig, the first marquis had brought up his surviving son as a Whig and Rockingham was thoroughly immersed in those principles. In his final letter, the first marquis told his son that 'I, and all men, expect from you, a strong attachment to your King and Country, not to be shook by ambition, or awed by Frowns, but with or without the Smiles of any Minister, to Fear God, and Honour the King'.² He went on to give Rockingham some very sound advice which the young man apparently took to heart:

1. A.S. Foord, His Majesty's Opposition, 1714-1830 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 312.
2. W.W.M. R200-4.

If you meet Disappointment in any political affair, Resent it not, so as to trouble the pears /sic/ of your Country, all men value their own Consequence too highly, and are apt to think, that to neglect them, is to neglect the Commonwealth, the Name of Patriot in its true light, is a Glorious Name, But I have lived to see it so abused by ambitious and avaritious /sic/ men so debased, as really to fall into a Name of Reproach. From such Reproach and Infamy guard yourself.

This letter was given to Rockingham on his return from the Grand Tour but before he came of age on 13th May 1750. The first marquis died in December 1750 before his son returned from Europe: his arrival at Wentworth Woodhouse was marked by a coming-of-age party to which some ten thousand guests were invited. It was also a major political event to announce Rockingham's succession to the leadership of the Yorkshire Whigs.¹

It has already been stated that the marquis was the greatest landowner in Yorkshire and that he had much influence in the county. Perhaps what hitherto has not been established is the extent of his influence on Yorkshire's politics, and the reasons for this. It will also be necessary to place the marquis' ideas on reform in the context of eighteenth-century political thought.

Three main strands of opinion on reform may be identified in the period following 1760. The economical reformers wanted only to limit crown influence over parliament and aimed to do this by reducing government patronage in the House of Commons. A second group - also moderates - sought a redistribution of some seats, shorter parliaments and some slight extension of the franchise: generally, this group wanted more county M.P.s The third group were the true radicals. They demanded universal manhood suffrage, annual parliaments and a secret ballot and were moving

1. Leeds Mercury, 21st May 1751.

towards the idea of a 'natural rights' entitlement for all to participate in politics.

Rockingham and his followers may be put in the first category of 'economical reformers', although the marquis did acknowledge the need for the larger industrial towns to have some parliamentary representation and he would have accepted triennial parliaments had the necessity arisen. Christopher Wyvill's County Association fell into the second group and were seen by Rockingham as being more extreme in their views than he was prepared to be himself. The third group was composed of men like Cartwright and Wilkes and were beyond the pale so far as Rockingham was concerned.¹

Lord Rockingham firmly believed in the rights of the aristocracy to rule England and he was never a democrat in any sense of the term. However, he was conscious of the rise of wider sets of opinions: those of merchants and manufacturers for example, on whose efforts the prosperity of Yorkshire was becoming more dependent. He was prepared to listen to the views of others, to assess their importance and then to act on them if the occasion so demanded.

The marquis had little practical experience of political life in Yorkshire when he succeeded to his titles but it was not long before he became involved in the county's elections. Rockingham's first real foray into politics came in 1753 with the general election.² The marquis was a member of the Court and Treasury group; he was one of George II's Lords of the Bedchamber and an adherent of the Duke of Newcastle, who was a Secretary of State and brother of the First Lord of the Treasury,

1. Rudé, Wilkes and Liberty, pp. 178 and 185-6.

2. Much of this account of the 1753 Yorkshire Election is based on C. Collyer 'The Rockinghams & Yorkshire Politics 1742-1751', Publications of the Thoresby Society XLI, Thoresby Miscellany XII (1954), pp. 252-282.

Henry Pelham. In spite of this, Rockingham decided to flex his political muscle by challenging the Pelhams' supremacy in Yorkshire. He nominated his friend Sir George Savile as one of the county's M.P.s against Viscount Downe and Sir Conyers Darcy. Darcy was seventy years old and could count on Newcastle's support in the forthcoming election. Henry Playdell Dawnay, third Viscount Downe, was one of the Prince of Wales' Lords of the Bed-chamber and another political ally of Newcastle besides being a close friend of the Pelhams.

Yorkshire, however, was one of the most open counties in England so far as elections were concerned. It was by far the largest constituency and its independence was much greater than any other county. There were about twenty thousand electors of whom perhaps half came from the West Riding.¹ As the leading nobleman, Rockingham was able to influence many West Riding electors but he needed the support of the independent gentlemen and woollen manufacturers. Savile had great estates in the Halifax, Dewsbury and Lupsett areas of the West Riding and his father had sat as county M.P. in the parliament of 1727-34 with the first Marquis of Rockingham. Between them, Savile and young Rockingham were able to exert a great deal of pressure on the West Riding landowners, merchants and manufacturers. It is uncertain where the idea of nominating Savile originally came from but once the plan was set in motion they both entered the campaign with a determination which became characteristic of both men. Unfortunately for these political novices the great interests of the North and East Ridings closed ranks against them with the backing of Newcastle and the government. The Duke of Northumberland, Viscount

1. Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 427.

Irwin, Lords Galway and Carlisle supported Newcastle's candidates; the Turners of the North Riding opposed Rockingham's candidate purely because Savile was his nomination and several others refused to take sides in the power struggle. Newcastle himself was in an awkward predicament. As a member of the administration he could not afford to allow Rockingham's candidate to stand against his own nominees; as Rockingham's political tutor he could not afford to upset the marquis. He hoped that Savile would have the sense to withdraw from the contest and save everyone a lot of effort and money. Even the king was concerned about the outcome of the Yorkshire election and feared that it would cause an internal division of the Whigs.¹

In July 1753 Darcy's supporters persuaded the High Sheriff to summon a county meeting. Conveniently it coincided with race week and was therefore almost assured of a large attendance. Over one hundred and fifty men were present, including great landowners, gentry and clergy. The North and East Riding faction proposed that Darcy and Downe should continue to represent Yorkshire and it was obvious that the government was also against Savile's nomination. Savile had written to Newcastle on 22nd June asking for his support but Newcastle prevaricated and Savile deduced that the administration was against him.

Perhaps Rockingham's biggest mistake was in speaking on behalf of Savile. It was not acceptable for a peer to speak at elections on behalf of the proposed nominees since the commoners resented noblemen meddling in Commons elections. His speech was in fact well-considered. He stressed the support for Savile in the West Riding, Savile's desirability as a candidate, and his youth. Savile was only twenty-seven whereas

1. Namier & Brooke; House of Commons, 1, 428.

Darcy was seventy. Downe was the same age as Savile and the two could give stability in the county for many years to come. By drawing attention to the ages of the nominees, Rockingham drew more than enough attention to his own twenty-three years. His elders probably objected to this callow youth attempting to either force his own nominees on them - or even worse - force a contest.

Despite the efforts of Rockingham and Savile the county meeting chose the standing members as the candidates with a resounding majority. The government had done its job well: the great landowners and gentry had been persuaded to attend the meeting and vote for the interests of Darcy and Downe. Savile received only thirty-five of the 150 votes cast and agreed to withdraw. Darcy's friends offered a solution to the threat of contested elections by agreeing to support Savile as the candidate at the next vacancy in the county. Rockingham was doubtless disappointed with the outcome of the proceedings but he followed the advice of his late father and of his uncle, William Murray the Solicitor-General: 'If you meet Disappointment in any political affair, Resent it not'.¹ Murray advised the marquis to get out of the Yorkshire fiasco with as much grace as he could muster, besides pointing out where he had made his mistakes. Rockingham learned his lesson well. He never failed to have one of his candidates returned after 1753. All he had to do was bide his time until his political experience matched his power, influence and popularity.

In November 1753 Rockingham was back in the thick of electioneering, this time in the city of York. As in the case of Yorkshire, York was renowned for its political independence. The city was a freeman borough with some 2,500 electors making it one of the biggest borough constituen-

1. W.W.M. R200-4.

cies in England.¹ It had been represented by a joint Whig-Tory interest in the persons of William Thornton and Robert Lane but in 1753 Thornton had expressed his intention not to stand again.² He 'was desirous to serve a Friend' of Rockingham's, however, and hinted to John Fountayne, the Dean of York, that 'Sir George Savile would be ... Very Acceptable to his Friends in this Place'.³ Fountayne believed that Savile would be most acceptable to the city until such time as he could represent the county 'and make way for some other Friend of Your Lordship to be chose for the City'. Rockingham already had some considerable weight in York. A Whig club which already existed there had been renamed the Rockingham Club earlier in the year with the marquis as President. It was the nucleus of the marquis' influence in the city and boasted many leading gentry as members.⁴

Savile declined the offer of a seat in York, preferring to maintain his independence and wait for the more prestigious county seat. Rockingham therefore nominated one of his distant cousins, Frederick Wentworth. Thornton was asked to sound out some of his 'principal Friends' tactfully to see if Wentworth could gain enough support. The York Whigs were self-assured enough to attempt to influence both seats but depended more on others' dislike of Lane than on any real support for themselves.

Thornton had obviously not been very secretive or tactful in his attempts to rally support for Wentworth. As early as 22nd November James Forrester wrote to the marquis soliciting his nomination of a Mr. Sheffield, one of Forrester's neighbours, for the York Seat. Forrester was the

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 441.

2. Ibid., p. 442.

3. W.W.M. F31-1. John Fountayne to Rockingham, 12th November 1753.

4. The role of the Rockingham Club is dealt with in more detail at the end of this chapter in a separate section.

Lord Mayor of York and seems to have know Rockingham well¹ although he was not a member of the Rockingham Club. Other names were put forward as possible candidates. Lord Downe said his brother, John Pleydell Dawnay, had been invited to stand by the city of York,² although Fountayne denied all knowledge of such an invitation, and Sir William St. Quintin of Scampston informed Rockingham that he had hoped to bring in his own son for York when Thornton said he was not standing again. However, St. Quintin bowed to the marquis' nominee.³

Fountayne in fact had heard of John Dawnay's nomination. In an undated post-script he informed Rockingham that Dawnay had been 'named by S----l today, some say he was invited to join Mr. Lane'. Fountayne also urged Rockingham to go to York as it 'was expected'.⁴ He suspected that Dawnay's nomination came from

a certain Reverend person here [who] had been playing a false game in order to recommend himself to Mr. Pelham & both I & others who know him & his way of acting do verily believe that no one person here made the offer to L/or/d Downe's bro/the/r but himself & that thro' Mr. Pelham ... Mr. Place had a Letter of good Authority from London ... Mentioning that Mr. P. had been wrote to, to recommend a Member to this City. That no one sent such an offer but himself is I think past doubt. 5

From this letter it seems that Fountayne was accusing Thomas Place of attempting to cause a contest. Place was Rockingham's agent in the city but was disliked by both Whigs and Tories. The only reason they had anything at all to do with him was because he was Rockingham's agent. In December, William Thornton informed the marquis that Place had ruined

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1. A possibility is that he was the same James Forrester who had been Rockingham's tutor during his Grand Tour.
 2. W.W.M. R35-4. Lord Downe to Dean Fountayne, 23rd November 1753.
 3. W.W.M. F35-20. Sir William St. Quintin to Rockingham, 27th November 1753.
 4. W.W.M. F35-9. Fountayne to Rockingham. Undated post-script, but probably 24th November 1753.
 5. W.W.M. F35-6. Fountayne to Rockingham, 25th November 1753.

the Rockingham Club and had damaged the marquis' interest in the city out of pique. Place hated the city corporation because they refused to appoint him as Recorder for the city.¹ He soon ceased to be Rockingham's agent as well.

The corporation asked Lane to join a Tory for the election and it was also rumoured that Henry Duncombe had offered Lane £100 to seek election to prevent the marquis from attempting to win both seats for his interest. In fact, although the York Whigs wanted to try for both, Rockingham was content to settle for one seat. He had been badly shaken by the result of the county election and was determined not to push his luck in the city. His nominee, Wentworth, was not a popular man in York and needed the personal backing of Rockingham to win the votes he needed. Consequently, Rockingham's friends urged the marquis to go to York besides soliciting the interest of men like Sir Rowland Winn and Sir William Milner. Dean Fountayne was working hard for Rockingham: he wrote letters to local landowners and gave dinners at the deanery for them to strengthen the marquis' following.

Unfortunately, Wentworth was not shaping up as a good candidate. He did not spend freely on hospitality and was disliked by many electors. His father did not appear to be prepared to give Frederick the cash needed since as he had told his York tailor, "there will be no opposition". This is a very different Language from saying that if there is one he will spare no Money to support his Son, & therefore I wish Y^{or} L^{ord}-shi^p will instruct him how to write to York in a strain more Suitable for the Times or else not to write at all'.² Wentworth then decided to refuse the nomination, leaving Rockingham in the difficult situation

1. W.W.M. F35-8. Thornton to Rockingham, December 1753.

2. W.W.M. F35-8. Fountayne to Rockingham, 28th November 1753.

of having either to support Dawnay or find another candidate of his own. Fountayne recommended that Sir John Armytage should be Rockingham's new candidate on the grounds that Wentworth had not been 'so acceptable to the City as you could have wished him to be ... for Y/ōu/r L/ōr/dships Recommendation is as far as we can judge the sine qua non as it has been the constant question does Lord Rockingham Recommend?'¹ He also advised that Armytage's acceptance must be beyond doubt before he was publicly named. Rockingham could not afford to be made to look inept a third time within the space of a few months.

Rockingham's personal influence was so great in York that it was clear by 30th November that 'it w/ōul/d not be possible to get a nomination of Sir J/ōhn/ Armytage previous to a direct Recommendation from y/ōu/r L/ōr/dship'.² Consequently, the Rockinghamites in York had called a meeting at the George in Coney Street at 7 p.m. that day. In the meantime, a Mr. Murray had gone to Wentworth Woodhouse to ask for Rockingham's support for himself. Murray was unsuccessful because the candidature had been already settled on Sir John Armytage. Rockingham's friends were able to save face for the marquis at their meeting by making out that Rockingham was bowing to the electors' wishes. They gave out

That L/ōr/d R/ōckingham/ had once prevail'd upon Mr. W/ēntworth/ to stand, but having been informed that a Report had been industriously propagated (tho' but by a few) as if his L/ōr/dship had attempted to force a person upon the City, He had consented that Mr. W/ēntworth/ shall decline. But if his Friends of the Whig interest will call a General Meeting, & at that meeting desire L/ōr/d R/ōckingham/ to nominate another person, His Lordship had one in his Eye at the time he named Mr. W/ēntworth/ who he believes will be much more agreeable to Them, & who he will at their Request Name & support, as finding Mr. W/ēntworth/ indifferent to the Thing and that He is not so Acceptable to his L/ōrd/dships Friends as he once hoped to have found him. 3

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1. W.W.M. F35-10. Fountayne to Rockingham, 29th November 1753.
 2. W.W.M. F35-11. Fountayne to Rockingham, 30th November 1753.
 - x 3. W.W.M. F35-11/2. Fountayne to Rockingham, 30th November 1753.

Some 118 men, of whom sixty-seven were shown to be members of the Rockingham Club in June 1754, signed the petition asking Rockingham to recommend a 'proper person' as one of their M.P.s¹ Even at such an early stage in the marquis' political career his popularity was strong enough to be able to tilt the balance in elections in a city where he had no direct control.

Fountayne then prepared the way for Rockingham's nomination of his friend Sir John Armytage. Godfrey Wentworth of Hickleton, Sir George Armytage's father-in-law, was sorry that Frederick Wentworth [a distant cousin] had declined the seat, but gave Sir John his wholehearted support and Rockingham set about providing entertainments to whip up support for Sir John.² The bill he received from Mr. Standish, a member of the Rockingham Club who arranged the marquis' public ball at the Assembly Rooms in York, makes interesting reading if only to wonder what state the guests were in at the end of the evening.

	£
Cold entertainment & for Breakage of Glasses &c.	40- 0-0
40 Gallons of white wine in a Neagus's	18- 0-0
2½ dozen of Champagne	11- 5-0
2 dozen of Burgundy	7- 4-0
4½ dozen of Claret	13-10-0
4 dozen of Fronteniack	8- 8-0
1 dozen of Arack in Punch	4-16-0
4 dozen of Red Port	4-16-0
4 dozen and 1 bottle of Red Hock	12- 5-0
7 bottles of Rum and 2 bottles of Brandy made into Punch	2- 5-0
6 dozen of Madiera	10-16-0
2 bottles of Bristol Water	2-0
2 dozen of Mountain	2- 8-0
The constables at the Doors	2-10-0

£138- 5-0 3

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1. W.W.M. F35-12. Names of those at the meeting, and W.W.M. R1-351, list of the members of the Rockingham Club, January 1754.
 2. Sir John Armytage was nominated in 1753 and was returned unopposed in 1754, not Sir George Armytage, as Collyer states, ('The Rockinghams and Yorkshire Politics', p. 369). Sir John died in 1758 while serving in the army during the Seven Years War. Sir George was M.P. for York from 1761 to 1768 when he retired from Parliament at the age of 34.
 3. W.W.M. E242-10.

He also paid £4. 4s. 0d. for 'Musick' at the ball¹ and £20. 7s. 5d. for candles, including 78 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of wax candles.² Besides that, his own personal expenses were quite high. Mary Bell's bill for his accommodation at the Ball came to £17. 6s. 0d. Of that, tea accounted for £2. 8s. 0d. and chocolate for £6. 14s. 0d. Most of the rest was spent on cakes and biscuits.³ The marquis had seemingly not outgrown his childhood liking for sweets. The bill for stabling his horses for six nights came to £10. 13s. 6d.⁴ and his servants' meals bill totalled £4. 6s. 2d. for a week.⁵ Postage cost him £3. 14s. 9d.⁶ On top of that he spent a further £500 on ensuring that Sir John received the support he needed from possible rivals. The whole campaign cost the marquis around £800, even though it was uncontested, but the outcome indicates that Rockingham was becoming adept at using his position to the best advantage. He was also wealthy enough to be able to campaign in style. The total cost was £1,800. Dean Fountayne had expected it to cost £2,000 but Sir John Armytage still thought the expense was too great. Fountayne acidly commented that the expense 'was much greater than necessary, but [it was] made so in a great measure by himself [i.e. Sir John] and some of his Friends'.⁷ However, the campaign was not without incident. On 7th December Lane's and Sir John's parties met during a canvass. 'A Skirmish ensued in which some blood was drawn and many Bruises given'.⁸ The Lord Mayor tried to stop the riot but Peregrine Wentworth - yet another of Rockingham's relations - grabbed Forrester and shook him:

1. W.W.M. E242-8.

2. W.W.M. E242-4.

3. W.W.M. E252-2.

4. W.W.M. E252-9.

5. W.W.M. E242-7.

6.. W.W.M. E242-3.

7. W.W.M. F35-13. Fountayne to Rockingham, 12th December 1753.

8. W.W.M. F35-15. London Evening Post, 8th December 1753.

not the sort of thing one normally did to the Lord Mayor of York. Forrester was unsuccessful in his efforts but little damage was done in the fracas.

Rockingham had made a favourable impression on the citizens of York. Lord Mayor Forrester was pleased to allow Rockingham to name the next Coroner for the West Riding and the citizens gave £50 towards the cost of the stand which Rockingham as a turf enthusiast and member of the Jockey Club was having built on the Knavesmire. The Dowager Marchioness was delighted with her son's success.

So extraordinary a compliment from the City of York to the House of Wentworth was one of the last things in the World that I sh^{ou}ld have imagined c^{ou}ld have happen'd in my day's [sic] & to be sure you have taken care to convince the World that it is no Puff but a real truth w^{hi}ch the greatest Infidel cannot doubt of. ... Friends you have enough but be your own Friend & if you must have Enemies they may shew their Teeth but they will not be able to bite. 1

He had certainly made enemies of Lords Downe, Irwin and Holderness, who attempted to gain power in Rockingham's stronghold of south Yorkshire and the West Riding, but he was able to resist the encroachments of Downe at Doncaster and to secure the election of his own candidate for bailiff of sewers against those of Irwin and Holderness.

High politics in Yorkshire remained settled only for three years. Sir John Armytage was killed in action in 1758 and Rockingham supported William Thornton as candidate for the vacancy. Thornton preferred to remain independent of Rockingham's direct influence as he disliked the growing popularity of the marquis and the effect it was having in the West Riding. Lane attempted to secure the seat for his son and so a contest began. Instead of it being a fight between persons it developed into 'the Hottest party Event which has been long fought - The

1. W.W.M. F35-23. Dowager Marchioness to Rockingham, 6th December 1753.

Whigs - both Gentlemen and Citizens are in Good Earnest & Votes are sent in from all Parts of this & Neighbouring Countries - by both sides - in Great Abundance'.¹ Rockingham would have preferred Sir George Armytage rather than Thornton but agreement was reached where Thornton should sit as Member for York until the general election and then make way for Sir George.²

The poll began on Wednesday 29th November and 'the Enemy Mob - beat ours & were Masters of the Town Thursday and Friday - the 1st day of the Poll - We had Two Battles - both Victories. Yesterday [i.e. Saturday 2nd December] we were drub'd - I hope on Monday That we shall set it Right'.³ The Rockinghamites did set it right. A total of 688 votes were cast at the election. Votes came from as far afield as Blackburn [Lancashire], Boroughbridge, Morpeth, Malton and Scarborough. The Malton contingent consisted of eighteen electors; only one voted for Lane, but then Malton was one of Rockingham's pocket boroughs. The five electors from Rotherham, Wentworth and Wath all voted for Thornton and he finally won by 442 votes to 246.⁴ The poll ended successfully on 7th December: it had cost Rockingham almost £12,000 of his own money to swing the result in his favour. He could not afford to lose, because it would have reflected badly on his status in the city. The bill for 'Treats, Entertainments and other Incidental Charges' came to £8,388. 8s. 7½d. and 'additional expenses' totalled a further £947. 13s. 9½d.⁵ The subscription which was raised only brought in £2,978 to which Thornton contributed £1,000 and Sir George Armytage £500. Rockingham was no doubt

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1. W.W.M. R172-14. Rockingham to James Postlethwaite, 3rd December 1758.
 2. Collyer, 'Rockingham & Yorkshire Politics', p. 375 has thoroughly muddled Sir John and Sir George Armytage. He states that Thornton became M.P. in 1758 because of Sir George's death. In fact, Sir George did not die until 1783.
 3. W.W.M. R172-14.
 4. W.W.M. E219. List of Outvoters.
 5. W.W.M. E219.

finding out that elections could be very expensive.

Sir Conyers Darcy died in December 1758, which produced yet another by-election, this time for Yorkshire. It seemed that Savile was almost assured of the seat until Charles Turner of Kirk Leatham offered himself as a candidate. As a North Riding man he should have been able to count on the support of many electors from his own neighbourhood but Savile's popularity, Rockingham's influence and the agreement of 1753 ensured that his attempt was a failure. Savile was elected unchallenged on 3rd January 1759 and remained as one of the county's M.P.s until 1783 when he retired.

Turner got another chance to try for Yorkshire in 1761. Lord Downe died in 1760 leaving one seat vacant and the general election of the following year gave Turner the opportunity to stand 'on independent principles'. The fact that he was backed by Lords Holderness and Huntingdon belied his independence, unless he meant he was not a Rockinghamite and thus hoped to secure the votes of those who objected to the marquis' pre-eminence in local politics. Edwin Lascelles of Harewood also stood as a candidate and it was soon clear that Rockingham would have to intervene on behalf of either Turner or Lascelles if he were to keep a hold on the election. Savile had declared his intention to support whichever man was most favoured by his friends and so extricated himself from the situation very neatly without losing any votes. Rockingham had already discovered in 1753 that he could not dictate to the Yorkshire electorate and had to be careful not to lay himself open to accusations of nominating county M.P.s. Fortunately, Lascelles' influence in the West Riding was almost total and Turner had the disadvantage of his patrons speaking for him: this was one of the mistakes Rockingham had made in 1753 when he had spoken for Sir George Savile. The marquis was able to point out just how 'independent' Turner was. Then Savile chose to back Lascelles

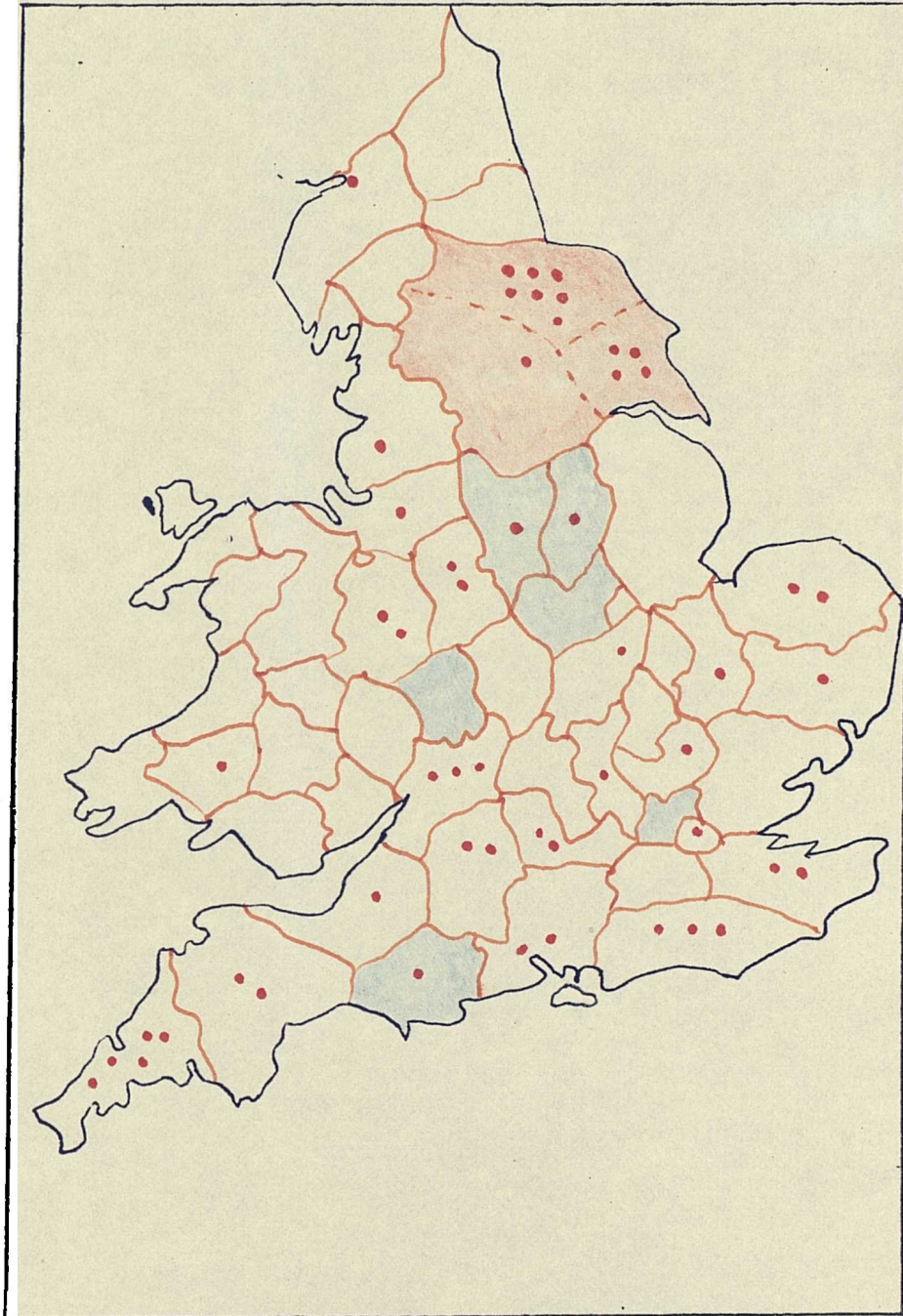
as his joint candidate and Turner's fate was sealed. He withdrew and Yorkshire had two Rockinghamite M.P.s.¹

There were fifty-three contested elections in 1761 as opposed to the sixty-two of 1754. The Duke of Newcastle was unable to manage the election because George III had specifically ordered that no Treasury money should be made available to him. Still, there was no organized opposition in parliament and no political issue to divide the electorate. England was still involved in the Seven Years War and it seemed likely that the administration would continue in office. After the 1761 election Rockingham could call some sixty-two M.P.s his supporters.² The map [overleaf] shows the spread of their constituencies: the concentration of Rockinghamite power was in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire as may be expected since that was the area controlled by the Rockingham, Devonshire, Savile, Portland, Newcastle and Scarborough families, to pick out only a few of the great landowners in that part of England.




It was becoming obvious by the end of 1761 that the young king wanted to remove his grandfather's politicians from office and replace them with a government in which he felt he could put his trust. Although

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1. Namier & Brooke, *House of Commons*, 1, 429.
 2. *Ibid.*, 1, 2 and 3. They were W. A'Court; P. A'Court Ashe; G. Adams; T. Anson; Hon. A. Archer; Sir G. Armytage; Sir W. Baker; C. Barrow; Sir W. Beauchamp-Proctor; A. Beauclerk; J. A. Bentinck; Sir P. Brett; Sir T. Cave; Lord F. Cavendish; Lords G.A. and J. Cavendish; R. Cavendish; A. Champion; N. Cholmley; Sir W. Codrington; W. Coke; Hon. S.H. Conway; H. Curwen; Hon. J. Dawnay; G. Dempster; P. Denis; E. Dering; J. Dodd; W. Dowdeswell; Sir M. Featherstonehaugh; S. Finch; T. Frankland; Sir G. Heathcote; G. Howard; G. Jennings; Hon. A. Keppel; D. Lascelles; Edward Lascelles; Edwin Lascelles; P. Legh; Lord G.H. Lennox; J. Major; J. Mawbey; Sir W. Meredith; R. Milles; F. Montagu; Sir R. Mostyn; J. Offley; R. Pennant; J. Plumptre; Sir C. Saunders; Sir G. Savile; J. Thomlinson; J. Thornhalgh; Hon. T. Townshend; T. (Tommy) Townshend; G. Tufnell; R. Verney; Hon. R. Walsingham; J. West; J. White and A. Wilkinson.

CONSTITUENCIES HELD BY ROCKINGHAMITES
AFTER 1761 GENERAL ELECTION



KEY

-  Borough Seat (Showing County, not constituency).
-  One County Seat
-  Two County Seats

Newcastle had managed the Commons for a good many years he was unable to cope with the situation in 1761. He had as colleagues Pitt and Bute: Pitt wanted to exact stringent terms for a peace with France and was becoming belligerent towards Spain. Newcastle sided with Bute and Pitt resigned. Then Bute and the king decided to overturn Newcastle's foreign policy by withdrawing British troops from Europe and ending the subsidy to Prussia. Newcastle felt obliged to resign and began to oppose the moderate peace terms with France. He was joined in this by Rockingham and the young Whig faction which identified with the marquis. Certainly the feeling in Yorkshire was against the peace and Rockingham responded energetically. In November 1762 he resigned his position as Lord of the Bedchamber in protest at Newcastle's enforced resignation and Devonshire's dismissal from office. On 23rd December the king's retribution arrived. Lord Halifax wrote

The King has commanded me to acquaint your Lordship That His Majesty has no further Occasion for Your Service as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of the County of York, - of the City of York, and the County of the same City; - as Custos Rotulorum for the North and West Ridings in the County of York; for the City of York and County of the same City and Ainsty ... of York; - and, as Vice-Admiral of the County of York, City of York and County of the same City. - I am sorry that it falls to my share to write to Your Lordship upon such an Occasion, being with Great Truth and Respect ... Your Lordship's Most Obedient, Humble Servant. 1

Stripped of his offices, Rockingham had no further Court position to recommend him to sycophants. One indication of how much personal following he had and from which sectors of society may be gained by examining the letters he received early in the new year. On 1st January James Lister of Shibden Hall, a woollen cloth manufacturer and merchant who had received his commission in the Yorkshire militia from Rockingham,

1. W.W.M. R1-336. Lord Halifax to Rockingham, 23rd December 1762.

wrote that he intended to resign it. He did not want to serve any other Lord Lieutenant particularly since the marquis had been so summarily dismissed.¹ On 8th January the Rev. James Wilkinson, Vicar of Sheffield, told Rockingham that he was having second thoughts about accepting the post of J.P. which he had been offered by the marquis. So were Osborne of Ravenfield, a wealthy ironmaster and merchant, Samuel Shore, another Sheffield ironmaster with interests in hardware and general merchandise; and Joseph Harrison of Bawtry, who later became Collector of Customs in Boston, Massachusetts.² Rockingham replied that they should all go ahead and qualify as J.P.s but thanked them warmly for their display of zeal.³ Other letters expressing concern over the king's action came from Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory⁴ and Sir George Armytage of Barnsley and Kirklees,⁵ both of whom were friends of Rockingham; from Stephen Croft⁶ and Mr. Place of York,⁷ both of whom knew the marquis but were not yet attached to him; from two anonymous correspondents in York;⁸ from William Thornton, Rockingham's choice of M.P. for York in 1758;⁹ from James Farrer of Barnborough, Armytage's brother-in-law;¹⁰ from Edwin Lascelles¹¹ and also from the Rockingham Club,¹² which was probably to be expected, and from Jeremiah Dixon, a Leeds clothier and merchant.¹³

The young marquis was gathering a core of firm supporters and friends

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1. W.W.M. R1-344. Lister to Rockingham, 1st January 1763.
 2. W.W.M. R1-135.
 3. W.W.M. R1-136.
 4. W.W.M. R1-346.
 5. W.W.M. R1-348.
 6. W.W.M. R1-347.
 7. W.W.M. R1-352.
 8. W.W.M. R1-353.
 9. W.W.M. R1-349.
 10. W.W.M. R1-357.
 11. W.W.M. R1-358.
 12. W.W.M. R1-351.
 13. W.W.M. R1-360.

around himself who differed from his father's following. This partly reflected his inherited status in the county but also indicated the changing sociology of the north of England. The merchants and manufacturers of Yorkshire were becoming politically active and gravitated to the young man who seemed to personify a changing attitude towards public opinion. Rockingham sought out these people and was aware of their needs and opinions. They were the people on whom he relied for his local support and whom he appointed to minor offices in the county. Furthermore, they were becoming more politically aware in their own right. The York Chronicle and Leeds Mercury had sales around the two thousand mark and covered wide areas of the county,¹ bringing political ideas to a larger section of the population. Improvement in the postal service and faster road-travel had the same effect² and Rockingham was aware of these developments which he harnessed for his own purposes. He did not force his opinions on others but organized their opinions into concentrated efforts for change, or protest, or demands for reform. The marquis' idea of 'reform' was to reduce the power of the crown and to make government more 'economical'. He had no concept of 'democracy' in the true sense of the term but did believe that wealth other than only land should be represented in Parliament especially the larger manufacturing towns, and his attitude towards toleration for non-Anglicans was enlightened. He could count landowners, merchants, manufacturers, Dissenters, Anglicans, Catholics, nobles, gentry and commoners among his friends.

On 28th March 1763 the Mayor and corporation of York announced the peace settlement negotiated with France. Afterwards a dinner was held by the Court faction at which it was proposed that a loyal Address be

1. Brewer, Party Ideology, pp. 144 and 146.
2. Ibid., pp. 158-159.

sent to the king complimenting him on the peace. The county was soon split into Court and country [i.e. Rockinghamite] factions because the marquis made it an open secret that he opposed such an Address. He did nothing to quash it personally: he was ill at Wentworth and in any case did not wish to offend the king or show 'personal pique and resentment'. He merely passed the word to his friends. The would-be Addressers found it hard work to get signatures and eventually had to wait for the summer Assizes in York where they hoped to get an Address from the Grand Jury. Only nineteen men turned up for the preliminary meeting prior to the Assizes and of those only four were unconnected with Rockingham.¹ In the event, no Address was adopted since only three men favoured the idea. The victory of Rockingham was unexpected but reinforced the fact that he was the political focus of the county. Furthermore, his influence had spread outside Yorkshire. The Cavendishes followed his lead and managed to smother attempts for an Address in Derbyshire; Portland and Savile actively and successfully discouraged the idea in Nottinghamshire; Newcastle was able to report similar successes in Sussex and Surrey.

The joy of the Rockinghamite peers was completed on 26th July when the Duke of Cumberland paid a visit to the Duke of Devonshire at Chats-

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1. W.W.M. R1-337. P. Place to Rockingham after 18th July 1763 gives the names of those who attended the preliminary meeting of the Assize.
W.W.M. R1-351 is a list of the members of the Rockingham Club in 1754.
W.W.M. Un-numbered bundle following R170-R175 gives a list of Commissioners of the Peace for the North Riding appointed by Rockingham in 1761 and also a list of Deputy Lords-Lieutenant he appointed in 1757. By comparing the lists the breakdown is as follows:
Rockingham Club members: Sir George Cayley; Thomas Barstowe; Peregrine Wentworth; Edwin Lascelles; Ralph Bell.
Deputy Lords-Lieutenant: William Gossipp; Thomas Arthington; Peregrine Wentworth.
Commissioners of the Peace: Sir Digby Legard; Thomas Robinson; John Dealtry; Ralph Bell; Gregory Elseley; Simon Butterwick; John Dalton; Timothy Foord.
Apparently unattached to Rockingham: Roger Talbot, Giles Earle; Thomas Hassell; Matthew Boynton.

worth and a great gathering of the young Whigs took place. Among the guests were Lords Rockingham, Bessborough, Portland, Grafton, Albemarle and Mansfield, Sir Charles Saunders and Admiral Keppel. It was a social event but the royal duke's visit to the home of a leading Whig and opposition peer who was out of favour with the king, and Cumberland's subsequent stay at Wentworth, was political dynamite. It ensured that the young Whigs would stay out of favour for as long as George III could manage without them, but it also brought Rockingham much prestige in Yorkshire.

The 1761 parliament was the last until 1832 to run the full seven years. Since the 1761 general election Rockingham had gained a great deal of support from and influence among the merchants and manufacturers because of his sympathetic attitude towards them. He proved invaluable to them during the Stamp Act crisis and as Prime Minister was responsible for repealing that piece of legislation besides passing other, more positive laws which helped to put at least a temporary end to the colonial troubles.

The Liverpool by-election of 1767 illustrates the popularity of the Rockinghamites after their American Legislation of 1766. The two M.P.s for the town were the Rockinghamite Sir William Meredith and Sir Ellis Cunliffe, a local merchant. Cunliffe died in October 1767 and Meredith, who had managed to get his friends to adopt Richard Pennant to stand with him on a joint interest in the forthcoming general election, helped Pennant's 1767 campaign. Pennant was returned unopposed after a bloody canvass even though Sir William Meredith declared that he would have polled 1,600 of the possible 2,000 votes if it had come to an election. Mr. Gildart, his opponent, withdrew from the contest when the final attempt failed.

Three nights ago they hired a mob, & armed the fellows with Sticks full of nails taken out of old ships; and they did a great deal of mischief; but our Carpenters

collected about Midnight and beat them in a fair pitched Battle. The same efforts were made on the two following nights; but our party having established a Superiority, & the Success they expected from this last Effort of raising a mob, failing, Gildart declined. 1

Again Rockingham was well supported by merchants and traders, particularly those involved in the American trade. His legislation had probably saved many of them from bankruptcy. In his Six months Tour Through the North of England, Young stated that Grenville's legislation 'gave a blow to the commerce of this town, which she has not recovered; so that they have since been, and are now, much upon the decline; a great number of ships are laid by in the harbour, and a general languor spread over their whole trade'.²

Following the Currency and Sugar Acts of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765, the amount of shipping in and out of Liverpool had fallen dramatically. After the repeal of the Stamp Act and the modification of the Sugar Act by Rockingham and also because of a great demand for British goods in America, trade picked up in 1767. Rockingham's ministry got the credit for this and the town became a Rockinghamite stronghold under its M.P.s Sir William Meredith and Richard Pennant.

In the 1768 general election the Marquis of Rockingham was able to extend his influence even further. In the Yorkshire constituencies there were only three contested elections: at Hull, Pontefract and Scarborough. In each of these a Rockinghamite took one seat. Of the thirty M.P.s returned for the county, twenty-six were either committed Rockinghamites or usually voted with the group. This figure compares favourably with a total of fifteen Rockinghamites returned in 1754 and

1. W.W.M. R1-894. Meredith to Rockingham, 2nd December 1767.
2. Arthur Young, Northern Tour, 3, 220.

twenty-two in 1761.¹

In Hull Rockingham had a great deal of influence and popularity. The citizens had resurrected the office of High Steward and had chosen the marquis to fill the office in 1766. He also had strong links with Trinity House there. The contest was between Lord Robert Manners, William Weddell and Captain Thomas Lee. Manners was the eighth son of John, Duke of Rutland, and supported every government except that of Rockingham for the thirty-five years he sat in Parliament. He first became M.P. for Hull in 1757 and survived five contested elections. Weddell was married to Lady Rockingham's half-sister and so had a claim of kinship on the marquis. He had first been returned unopposed at Hull in 1766 on the recommendation of Sir George Savile and Rockingham but grew panicky in 1768 when he heard that the seat was to be contested. Hull had a freeman electorate of 1,200 men and was consequently difficult to control: it was never a safe constituency for the marquis and was always expensive. Of Captain Lee little can be discovered except that he was in the Royal Navy. He disappeared from parliamentary politics after his attempt on Hull.

In November 1767 Rockingham was to rouse his followers to support Weddell's nomination. Weddell had already contacted Savile, the Duke of Grafton and Sir Charles Saunders to solicit their aid.² Rockingham replied that he had already seen Lee, who had been asked to stand at the election. Rockingham preferred to remain neutral, 'but intirely to make it my object to be guided by the Inclinations of the many respectable & considerable Persons in Hull, who are & have been our kind & valuable Friends'.³ Personally, he would have liked to see either no contest or

1. Namier & Brooke, *House of Commons*, 1, 427-445.

2. W.W.M. F49-8. Weddell to Rockingham, 29th November 1767.

3. W.W.M. F49-12. Rockingham to Weddell, 1st December 1767.

that two Rockinghamites should stand, but given the nature of Hull's electorate the marquis would be happy to have one of his protégés returned.

One of Weddell's means of raising electors' support was to attempt to bring work to the city. He hoped, for instance, to persuade General Honeywood to provide contracts for Benjamin Blaydes, a shipbuilder there. He also hoped that the 'idol of Yorkshire' - Sir George Savile - would pay a visit to the constituency because Lee was well supported by the 'Plebeans' and Manners had not yet arrived in the town. Weddell expected problems when he did arrive. The customs men's votes were an unknown quantity. 'They talk of orders to the Customs men but I have not yet heard that they are carried'.¹ If the customs men were ordered not to vote for Weddell then he could well be defeated since the customs' vote was influential in the town. This may have been one reason why Rockingham wanted to dis-franchise the Revenue Service in later years although the main object was to limit government influence in elections. The first attempt that was made to do this was on 12th February 1769 when a motion was put to the House of Commons

for leave to bring in a Bill for better securing the Freedom of Elections of Members to serve in Parliament by disabling certain Officers employed in the Collection and management of His Majesty's Revenues from giving their votes at such Elections. 2

The motion was defeated 263 votes against to 188 votes in favour. Still, Trinity House was loyal to the Marquis of Rockingham and the votes from there went to Weddell. By 7th December Rockingham was assured that 'almost every Person was happy to Enlist under Your Lordship's Standard',³ and that there was a remarkable lack of mobs, to everyone's relief.

1. W.W.M. F49-14. Weddell to Rockingham, 4th December 1767.
2. W.W.M. F136-58. Motion to the Committee of the Whole House, 12th February 1769.
3. W.W.M. F49-16. William Hammond to Rockingham, 7th December 1767.

The election was finally decided on 18th March 1768 and the result was very satisfying for the marquis. Weddell came top of the poll with 774 votes, Manners next with 545 and Lee last with 308.¹

The two Yorkshire seats were unopposed and Savile and Edwin Lascelles resumed their seats. In York things were rather more difficult. Sir George Armytage had already told Rockingham that he intended to retire at the end of the 1761 parliament so the marquis had begun to look for another candidate. His choice fell on Charles Turner of Kirk Leatham: the man who had withdrawn from the 1758 election because of Rockingham's and Savile's support of Lascelles. Turner was a Whig, however, and became Rockingham's choice for the vacant seat. Turner refused to join the Rockingham Club because he preferred to remain independent of the marquis' political line. He also refused to let Rockingham share the election expenses. The choice of Turner and his independence proved to be an astute move by Rockingham: no-one could accuse Turner of being his dependent, and those who were not followers of the marquis were able to vote for him.

The new candidate had some rather strange ideas about electioneering. Lord John Cavendish, who was in the city to help Turner, complained to Rockingham that 'the Vulgars begin to be rather discontented for want of drink & Charles' manner & conversation does not mend the matter. He yesterday objected to taking any steps towards treating the town, after the Election was over, & wanted to give all his money to some publick /sic/ work'. One wonders what the Rockinghamites did or said to Turner that evening but it is almost possible to hear Lord John's sigh of relief as he concluded 'but he is come to Rights this morning'.²

1. W.W.M. F49-19. William Hammond to Rockingham, 18th March 1768.
2. W.W.M. R1-1000. Lord John Cavendish to Rockingham, March 1768.

At a meeting at the Guildhall on 12th March, Turner and Lane received their formal nominations and looked likely to be returned unopposed. On 14th March, Lane announced that he would not stand after all, because of ill-health. Lord John Cavendish had gone to Lancaster to try for a seat there, but had been defeated by a fierce opposition. He had then gone to Wentworth and was with Rockingham when the news of Lane's withdrawal arrived. In spite of the lateness of the hour Rockingham set off for York and by 11 p.m. he was in the city. He called his friends together early next day so that they could propose Lord John for the second seat. He had such a personal following in the city, thanks to his generosity and good nature, that they accepted willingly. Rockingham kept his control over York until his death. Both Turner and Lord John were returned unopposed.

Rockingham's personal impact on York's politics came from his ability to remain in the background and follow the sense of the people rather than in attempting to lead them. He was generous to York in a disinterested way - that is, he gave because he wanted to, not for what he could gain by it. He claimed no rights in the city and was grateful for the citizens' good-will. He spent freely there and was well rewarded. In 1768 he gave the Corporation £100 towards 'the Intended Improvement of one of Our Streets' and had given 'Generous Assistance in several other Instances, for promoting the Improvement and Advantage of this City'.¹ He took numerous friends to the city during the races and stayed there himself: many citizens had a lot to thank him for in the way of trade and increased business. Perhaps much the same could be said of other constituencies' preference for Rockinghamite candidates. The marquis certainly influenced far more parliamentary seats than he had a 'right'

1. W.W.M. R1-1014. Resolution of York Corporation to Rockingham, 18th March 1768.

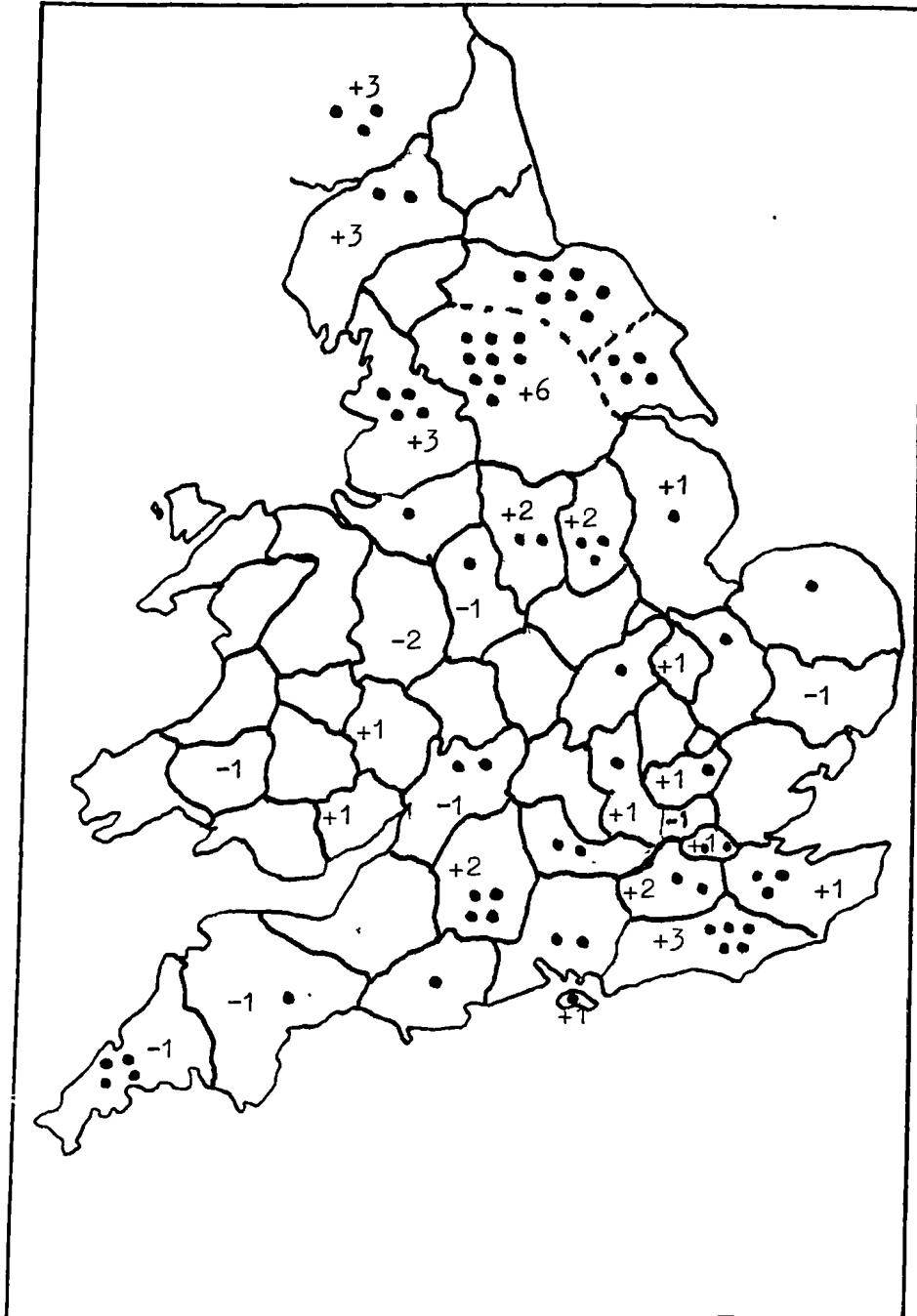
to. The only directly controlled constituencies he owned were Malton and Higham Ferrers.

After the 1768 general election Rockingham could count on the support of eighty-nine M.P.s. Of these, twenty-six were from the Yorkshire constituencies and either he or his friends had exerted their considerable interest to get another seventeen Rockinghamites returned.¹ The remainder were Rockinghamites by conviction and voted with the party on its policies. The map overleaf shows how far his influence had spread.






The 1768 general election saw not only what was perhaps the peak of Rockingham's political following in parliament - his years out of office sorted out his true friends from the others - but also the fiasco of the Middlesex election. Wilkes had returned from France in February 1768 and stood as a candidate in the city of London on 25th March. He came bottom of the poll, but was able to move on to Middlesex where he topped the poll on 28th March some 470 votes clear of his nearest rival, George Cooke. In April the king decided that 'The expulsion of Mr. Wilkes appears to be very essential and must be affected'.² In February 1769 the House of Commons voted by 219 to 137 to expel him. Wilkes stood for re-election on 16th February and won; he was again expelled and was declared incapable of being re-elected. He stood again on 13th April, this time against Henry Lawes Luttrell and William Whittaker. Wilkes won 1,143 votes as against Luttrell's 296 but on 15th April 1769 the Commons declared Luttrell to be elected.

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2 & 3 passim They were; Sir Edward Astley (Norfolk); Peter Ludlow (Huntingdonshire); Robert Gregory (Maidstone); Frederick Montagu (Higham Ferrers, from Northampton); George Byng and Beaumont Hotham (Wigan); Henry Curwen and Henry Fletcher (Cumberland, Curwen from Carlisle); Edward Bentinck (from Lewes to Carlisle); George Musgrave (Carlisle); Thomas Fenwick (Westmorland); Booth Grey (Leicester); Barlow Trecothick (London); Thomas Connolly and William Keppel (Chichester); Lord George Lennox and Thomas Pelham (Sussex, Lennox from Chichester).
 2. Ibid., 1, 333.

SEATS HELD BY ROCKINGHAMITES AFTER
THE 1768 GENERAL ELECTION



KEY

-  Borough Seat - one M.P. (showing county not constituency).
-  One county seat.
-  Two county seats.
-  + Seats gained since 1761.
-  - Seats lost since 1761.

Rockingham had already been involved with Wilkes back in 1764 after Grenville had issued a general warrant for the arrest of all those involved with the North Briton. Although he did not like Wilkes as a person, the marquis did oppose Grenville's arbitrary action of seizing Wilkes' private papers and he backed Savile's and Meredith's motion for an enquiry over the affair. In the debates over general warrants the government was almost overwhelmed by the attacks led by Meredith, Savile, Tommy Townshend, Charles and John Yorke, Lords John, George and Frederick Cavendish, Legge, Dowdeswell and Conway. The motion condemning general warrants failed by only fourteen votes. As a 'true Whig' Rockingham abhorred the illegal and unconstitutional way in which Wilkes had been deprived of his seat - or rather, the way in which the electors were deprived of their chosen representative.¹

In May 1769, the Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights decided to circularize England requesting petitions asking for the dismissal of Grafton's ministry. The same month seventy-two M.P.s signed a document condemning the Commons' action. It said that the signatories 'do from my soul detest and abjure as unconstitutional and illegal that damnable and heretical doctrine and Position, that a resolution of the House of Commons can make, alter, suspend, abrogate and annihilate The Law of the Land'.² Most of those who signed it were Rockinghamite Whigs since that was the 'official' line which had been decided on. Meredith and Dowdeswell had each produced a pamphlet objecting to Wilkes' expulsion and the majority of Rockinghamites followed their lead with the wholehearted backing of the marquis.

The parliamentary session ended on 9th May 1769 after which the

1. G. Rudé, Wilkes and Liberty, pp. 178 and 185-6.

2. W.W.M. R81-190.

petitioning movement began in earnest. The initial moves were slow and many of the early petitions were produced in the counties as a result of the activities of Rockinghamites such as Burke and Sir Cecil Wray. Rockingham and his followers were involved in the movement from its inception, co-operating with but moderating the views of the city radicals with whom they had little sympathy. The Rockinghamites never supported extreme views and had no truck with the concept of democracy or 'liberty' such as Wilkes was seen to stand for. Because Rockingham and his followers were strong in the counties, the petitioning movement tended to gravitate away from London. Although Yorkshire was late in organizing a petition, Rockingham became the indirect organizer once he had decided that a petition was necessary. He decided not to ask for the dismissal of the government, however, since he felt that this would revive royal powers and increase the king's opportunity to impose a despotism on England.

In June the Livery of London managed to force a petition to the Crown against the unseating of Wilkes, and also a meeting of the Surrey freeholders decided to petition on the matter. There was some feeling in Yorkshire that a petition should be organized but Rockingham was cool towards the idea because he disliked petitions.¹ As a result of his and Savile's opposition little was done in Yorkshire and the activities of the movement slowed down. In July Burke was very influential in getting the Buckinghamshire petition moving but Sir Cecil Wray was unable to persuade a Lincolnshire county meeting to approve a petition. Wray was a member of the S.S.B.R. and consistently voted with the Rockinghamites. By 1774 he had joined the ranks of the Rockinghamites. At the end of

1. Rockingham to Burke, 29th June 1769. Burke Correspondence 2, 36.

July 1769 Burke was able to report to Rockingham that county meetings had been called in Cornwall, Wiltshire, and Worcestershire for the purpose of approving and organizing petitions. Essex, Northamptonshire and Norfolk had refused to petition. He commented that all eyes looked to Yorkshire,¹ probably hoping to prod Rockingham into more positive action. Dowdeswell also believed that Yorkshire should set an example to other counties by petitioning:² all that had been done in the county was the adopting of an address of thanks by the High Sheriff and Grand Jury on 14th July to Savile and Lord John Cavendish for defending the rights of the Middlesex electors. Even Rockingham felt that that was inadequate but wanted any petition from Yorkshire to do credit to the county. He knew how great a problem it would be to get 20,000 freeholders to sign a petition and preferred to do nothing rather than make do with a half-hearted effort.

York races began on 21st August. As always the marquis was there and so was able to have lengthy discussions with the leading gentry about the question of petitioning.³ The result of the discussions was that forty leading gentlemen of Yorkshire asked the High Sheriff to summon a county meeting for 27th September. The late date was so that there would be enough time for all those who were eligible to make plans to attend and also to allow Rockingham and his friends to prepare their line of approach.

Rockingham clearly wanted to remain in the background of the Yorkshire petitioning movement. It was at his suggestion that the gentry asked for the county meeting which he refused to sanction as Lord Liéu-

1. Burke to Rockingham, 30th July 1769. Burke Correspondence 2, 50-51.
2. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 5th August 1769. Dowdeswell Papers.
3. W.W.M. R1-1221. Rockingham to Burke, 4th September 1769.

tenant to avoid being accused of trying to influence the freeholders. He also arranged that the Yorkshire petition 'should be respectful, but with that decent Firmness which Men acting on right Principles may very properly assume. The Zeal and Loyalty of the County should not be forgot'.¹ The marquis gave instructions to Jerom Dring, his York agent, to advertise the meeting in the Leeds and Sheffield papers,² which were duly carried out although Rockingham was still trying to decide whether or not to attend the meeting himself. Sir Anthony Abdy, M.P. for Knaresborough, thought that Rockingham ought to be there: if he was absent, some gentlemen might think he was 'too cool'. He also suggested that there were two ways of proceeding. One was for the county to instruct its M.P.s to press for the removal of the government, the other was to petition parliament against Wilkes' expulsion. Abdy also thought that Rockingham should encourage his supporters in Nottinghamshire, Cumberland, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire to call county meetings to organize petition.³ Dowdeswell opposed the idea of the instructing of M.P.s by the electors⁴ as did Rockingham. Consequently the marquis drew up a draft petition for Yorkshire which was revised by Dowdeswell and was eventually presented to parliament by Sir George Armytage.

One indication of the importance of the Rockinghamites may be seen in a comment made by Abdy. In a letter to Rockingham⁵ he noted that the government dreaded petitions to the Crown more than anything else and was therefore making the most of the lack of petitions from Yorkshire and Derbyshire by saying that those counties - and thus Rockingham and the Cavendishes - must disapprove of petitioning. Abdy concluded that it

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1. W.W.M. R1-1231. Rockingham to Stephen Croft, 20th September 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R10-3. Jerom Dring to Rockingham, 1st September 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R10-5. Sir Anthony Abdy to Rockingham. Undated copy.
 4. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 5th September 1769. Dowdeswell Papers.
 5. Abdy to Rockingham, 10th September 1769. Burke Correspondence, 2, 75. This is possibly the original of R10-5. above.

was Yorkshire's clear duty to the Constitution to petition in order to refute the government's allegations.

Jerom Dring feared that there were many freeholders in Yorkshire who were 'indifferent to the principles of liberty &c' and believed that it would be a good idea if there was 'not only a Petition, but Instructions to the Members [of Parliament], & Resolutions of the Meeting ready. That whichever is determined on may be at Hand to be Produc'd'.¹ If that was done, then the signatures of most of those at the meeting could be obtained before they went home.

Albemarle advised Rockingham that

it is highly necessary for you to be active in this Matter. All the County's [sic] of England are waiting the Event of the Yorkshire meeting, & the Ministers are in dread of the Consequence of it - a Strong petition taking notice of some other unjustifiable proceedings of Administration besides the Middlesex election I think would become the County of York, I will not pretend to say what part of the Misconduct of Administration should be censured. I am sure there is great choice, & if it was possible to include every irregular proceeding without offering any thing new, I should be glad ... to see it come first from Yorkshire. 2

Rockingham had decided not to attend the meeting after all, so that the gentry would think that the petition was their own act. He had also decided that the petition should ask for the dissolution of parliament, only, since that was the one thing on which all his friends could agree.³ It was essential that the extremists should be kept under control so that their views would not drive away the more moderate freeholders. Dowdeswell was no doubt thinking of Rockingham when he said that the leaders of the petitioning movement in Yorkshire should decide on their united policy since they were 'old Politicians, and know the advantages

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1. W.W.M. R1-1225. Jerom Dring to Rockingham, 12th September 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1227. Earl of Albemarle to Rockingham, 16th September 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1230. Rockingham to Dowdeswell, 20th September 1769.

of keeping a minority together, & pressing those matters only in which We can All join in the debate within, & the cry without'.¹ To ensure that the moderate approach would prevail, Rockingham told Stephen Croft to arrange for William Danby to be the chairman of the meeting and also asked him to persuade Sir Fletcher Norton, Sir William Strickland and Messrs. Jolliffe and Horsefield to attend. He would also have liked to have seen as many freeholders as possible from York to attend.² Once the petition to the Crown was prepared and his followers primed Rockingham was able to relax a little and await events.

It was obvious that some of the great men of Yorkshire would oppose petitioning but the feeling generally was strongly in favour of the idea. Dring reported that Lords Irwin and Carlisle and Messrs. Egerton and St. Quintin dared not speak openly against the petition.³ The meeting held on 27th September was attended by over eight hundred electors and great emphasis was put on the 'great weight of property' which was represented. Rockingham's friends were 'the Constituent part of the Meeting; no Torys or Papists could influence there'.⁴ The high point was when Sir George Savile and Alexander Wedderburn addressed the meeting. Savile spoke persuasively against the meeting giving instructions to its M.P.s. He said that neither he nor Lascelles could do any more than they had already done and that the only thing left for the electors was to petition the Crown for the dissolution of parliament. When the question was put for a petition the motion was carried almost unanimously.⁵ Only Mr. Osborne of Ravenfield was brave enough openly to oppose it. Twenty-five copies of the petition were made, to be circulated through

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1. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 20th September 1769. Dowdeswell Papers.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1231. Rockingham to Croft, 20th September 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R10-7. Dring to Rockingham, 25th September 1769.
 4. W.W.M. R10-8. Dring to Rockingham, 8th October 1769.
 5. W.W.M. R10-9. Dixon to Rockingham, 7th October 1769.

the county for the signatures of those who had not attended the meeting. Dring thought that there would be problems in collecting all the signatures and getting it presented 'for what is every Body's Business, being also No Body's'.¹ Jeremiah Dixon of Leeds realized that the petition needed to be handed from house to house and thought that a committee should have been appointed at the county meeting to organize the circulation.² Only six hundred men had signed the petition by 9th October and Dring decided that the much looked-for Yorkshire petition would end up being a laughing stock. Even Savile had not signed, and Dring wanted more time to gather support. Finally twenty-five gentlemen were named for taking the document to London but first they collected more names in their own districts.³ All these gentlemen were committed supporters of the Marquis of Rockingham and took their petitions from door to door asking for signatures,⁴ which when presented, had about 1,200 names appended to it.⁵

After Yorkshire had finally moved for a petition other counties followed. Portland and Lowther worked together in Cumberland, Sir Anthony Abdy did sterling work in Essex and the Cavendishes undertook a petition in Derbyshire. By the end of 1769, eighteen counties and thirteen cities had petitioned for the dissolution of parliament and over a quarter of the total electorate for the country had signed them. The influence of the Rockinghamites was most felt in the counties, especially in the north where Rockingham's personal impact was the

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1. W.W.M. R10-9. Dring to Rockingham, 8th October 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R10-9. Dixon to Rockingham, 7th October 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R10-14. They were: Sir James Ibbetson; Sir George Armytage; Sir Digby Legard; Sir Marmaduke Wyvill; Sir William Anderson; Messrs. Danby; Hall-Stevenson; Pennyman; Dixon; Harvey; Milnes; Shore; Wedderburn; Peregrine Wentworth; Smith of Newland; Jolliffe; Ferrand; Wilson of Leeds; Croft; Dodsworth; Farrer; Lee; John Grimston and Robert Grimston.
 4. W.W.M. R10-13. Dring to Rockingham, 29th November 1769.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1235.

greatest. The Yorkshire petition worried the government which had 'employ'd every Means to represent It as the act of a small number of factious People ... & It is very confidently Asserted that the Petition will not be Presented'.¹

The petitions all met with the same fate. They were totally ignored. The progress of the Yorkshire petitioning movement did not end with the presentation of the petition, however. Rockingham's direction of the movement might have been covert but nevertheless he continued to press for redress of grievance through his key men in the county. In January 1770 Dowdeswell had introduced a motion to the Commons asking for a Committee to be set up to inquire into the actions of the House over Wilkes' expulsion.² This was followed by a similar motion introduced into the Lords by Rockingham on 2nd February.³ In his speech, Rockingham said that the petitions had been presented because the petitioners felt it was their duty to tell the king how 'severely we thought the Rights of all the Freeholders of Great Britain had been struck at' and because they felt that his Majesty would do something about the situation. Then the marquis fell back on the traditional scapegoat: the king had not acted and 'we cannot nor will not attribute it to any other Cause, Than that his Majesty, Great and Good as he is, is misled by Evil Councillors'.⁴ By August 1770 it had been made clear to the marquis that some Yorkshiremen wanted further action to follow up the petition of the previous year, such as a remonstrance to the Crown. The High Sheriff refused to call a county meeting for 26th August but during race week at York an unofficial meeting was held. Opinion was generally for moderation in the

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1. W.W.M. R1-125I. Wedderburn to Rockingham, 9th December 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1277.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1278.
 4. W.W.M. R81-219. Heads of Speech, Rockingham's hand, undated.

expression of grievances: of the eighteen at the meeting only four stuck out for a remonstrance.

The intention therefore is - to do something which may shew the adherence here to the former measure, and the scheme now is - to thank the members of the County &c for their conduct, to reccomend [sic] and inforce their perseverance to take every means of redressing the grievance and to watch and guard the Constitution against the dangers it is under from evil ministers and evil councillors. 1

The only concrete result of the county meeting of 1770 was the letter from the freeholders to Savile and Lascelles thanking them for their work in parliament, which was patently the work of Rockingham. The same phrase 'evil councillors' is found in the letter, a draft of which is in Rockingham's writing,² which criticizes the government's lack of regard for 'the most Sacred Right of the Subject - the Honour of the Crown - The Great Commercial Interest of this Country; nor even the Safety of the Realm'. The radical elements of the county were suppressed and Rockingham's own views were upheld by the meeting.

The 1774 general election took place almost a year before it was due and caught most politicians by surprise, including Rockingham. The election followed the Coercive Acts which had completely divided the opposition in parliament. The Rockinghamites opposed the Acts because they wanted to see a policy of conciliation with America whereas most of the other groups supported North's measures. American affairs were made an election issue in only ten constituencies and even then the opposition candidates had to make it an issue.³ The Rockingham party had no leadership when the dissolution was announced. The marquis was at Wentworth

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1. Rockingham to Burke, 5th September 1770. Burke Correspondence, 2, 152.
 2. W.W.M. R140-2.
 3. They were: Middlesex (Wilkes); Bristol (Burke); London (Sawbridge); Westminster (Stanhope); Worcester (Rous and Bearcroft); Southwark (Lee); Newcastle-on-Tyne (Delaval); Great Yarmouth (Beckford and Saunders); Cambridge (Byde and Meek); and Milborne Port (Luttrell).

suffering once again from his 'old Complaint'¹ and so was unable to go to York to meet his supporters. Dowdeswell was also ill, apparently suffering from tuberculosis. He was ordered abroad and went to Nice where he died in February 1775. Savile expressed his intention of not standing for re-election but was persuaded to do so by Rockingham. The normally 'safe' Rockinghamite seat of York was contested by Martin Hawke who came from an old Yorkshire family and appeared to be a strong threat, especially since Charles Turner's conduct again gave cause for concern.² The election was held up twice because of rioting and 'the disinclination against Charles is very great. He was mobbed in the Street as he went home'.³ Rockingham was confident that his candidate would carry the day. The only thing he feared was that the dislike of Turner

will be so great that Mr. Hawke will be led by it to persist & which will occasion much Trouble & Confusion ... I don't think Mr. Hawke can succeed - the Recorder & the old Remains of the Bingley and Tory Interest would not find their Account in supporting Mr. Hawke. Destroying Charles Turner would not be a downright attack upon my Interest in York & it is that only which they fear & abhor. 4

Rockingham had won over York corporation to his side and only about five hundred of the 2,500 freeholders were totally opposed to Rockingham and what he stood for. The 1774 election was the only contested one in the city during the whole political career of Rockingham, which shows the strength of goodwill of the people there, besides the extent of his influence.

After the general election there were seventy-seven M.P.s on whom

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1. W.W.M. R1-1511. Rockingham to Lord John Cavendish, 6th October 1774.
 2. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 443 quote Turner refusing to 'treat the town' at this election, but R1-100 shows this letter to have been written in March 1768.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1512.. Lord John Cavendish to Rockingham, before 6th October 1774.

the marquis could count as his followers¹ and Sturges suggests that to these a further twenty-three independents could be added since they consistently voted with the opposition.² This suggests that by the outbreak of the American War Rockingham's party in the Commons was about a hundred strong and as the conflict began to go wrong for Britain so his support grew. During the period 1745-1780, Yorkshire was undoubtedly 'Rockingham country'. Although contested elections were few anyway, there were virtually none in Yorkshire because Rockingham's influence and popularity was so widespread. The chart overleaf shows the incidence of contested elections in the county during the period.³ By comparison, Wiltshire [with almost the same number of constituencies] had more contested elections over the same period. In 1754 there were four; in 1761 four; in 1768 four; in 1774 three; and in 1780 four.⁴ It is noticeable that at the 1784 general election two years after the death of the marquis that six contests took place in Yorkshire. Apparently the Earl Fitzwilliam, an outsider, had far less influence than his uncle: Knaresborough; for

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2 and 3. They were: A. Abdy; W. A'Court; J. Adair; G. Adams; E. Astley; W. Barker; C. Barrow; A. Beauclerk; J. Bullock; E. Burke; W. Burke; G. Byng; Lords F, G, G.A. and J. Cavendish; R. Cavendish; N. Cholmley; R. Clayton; W. Codrington; W. Coke; H. Conway; C. Cornwall; R. Cox; J. Damer; E. Dering; J. Dodd; C. Dundas; S. Finch; H. Fletcher; C. J. Fox; T. Frankland Sn; T. Frankland Jn; R. Gregory; J. Hanbury; T. Hay; B. Hotham; G. Howard; W. Hussey; G. Johnstone; A. Keppel; W. Keppel; D. Lascelles; E. Lascelles; G. Lennox; P. Ludlow; G. Lumley-Saunders; C. Manners; J. Mawbey; W. Meredith; R. Milles; F. Montague; R. Mostyn; J. Murray; R. Pennant; J. Pennyman; W. Plumer; T. Powys; J. Radcliffe; C. Saunders; G. Savile; J. Scudamore; C. Sedley; T. Skipwith; H. Stuart; B. Thompson; T. Townshend; G. Tufnell; C. Turner; R. Verney; R. Walsingham; W. Weddell; J. West; C. Wilkinson; and C. Wray.
 2. Sturges, 'Rockingham Whigs', p. 210-211. They were G. Dempster; H. Harbord; T. Scawen; E. Bentinck; H. Bridgeman; B. Grey; T. Connolly; E. Foley; T. Foley Sn.; T. Foley Jn; S. Salt; G. Anson; T. Coventry; C. Davers; D. Hartley; J. Luther; T. Lister; J. Martin; J. Muger; W. Pulteney; G. Venneck; F. Standert.
 3. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 514-519.
 4. John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973) pp. 278-289.

	1754	1761	1768	1774	1780	1784	Contested By- Elections
Yorkshire							
Aldborough							
Beverley	X			X		X	1772
Boroughbridge							
Hedon	X				X		1776
Hull	X		X	X	X	X	
Knaresborough						X	
Malton							
Northallerton							
Pontefract			X	X		X	Dec.1768
Richmond							
Ripon							
Scarborough			X			X	1770
Thirsk							
York				X		X	1758
TOTAL	3	0	3	4	2	6	

instance, had never been contested in Rockingham's day, and York had been threatened only twice in thirty years, as had Pontefract and Scarborough. Contested elections were almost the norm in Hull.

Elections were expensive and troublesome affairs in the eighteenth century, likely to be accompanied by riots, drunkenness - the electors having been 'treated' by the candidates - and brawls between candidates' supporters. If possible, contested elections were to be avoided at all costs and one way of doing that was to undertake a pre-poll canvass. If a potential candidate clearly had little chance of success it was usually cheaper and less trouble for him to retire before forcing a poll. However, many landed gentry wished to win the final accolade of prestige by becoming an M.P., and in Yorkshire there were boroughs which might offer that opportunity, particularly if the aspirant was a local man. Contests in these boroughs were often local power-struggles in which Rockingham chose not to get involved since he had little to gain and much to lose.

In the period 1754 to 1782 there were only twelve contested elections in Yorkshire boroughs out of a possible seventy-two. There were also five by-elections. The 1761 general election saw no contests in the county, while in 1774 four were held. All but three of the elections took place in boroughs where there was no predominant interest: the exception was Hedon. In 1754 two local men stood as candidates there and lost heavily; the 1776 by-election was the result of the death of the predominant interest-holder, Sir Charles Saunders; and in 1780 Richard Thompson, son of the Rockinghamite Beilby Thompson, stood unsuccessfully against two Administration candidates. Rockingham had abandoned the expensive and unsafe seat in 1776 when his supporter, Beilby Thompson, began to build up an interest of his own there.

Beverley, Hull, Pontefract and Scarborough were the scenes of the other contested elections. Rockingham made no attempt to intervene at either Beverley or Pontefract because both were unsafe and the marquis

rarely ventured into unknown territory. A similar situation occurred in Scarborough in 1768 when John Major stood against George Manners and F.W. Osbaldeston at the request of the corporation. Although asked to do so, Rockingham declined to support Major although he was defeated by only two votes. Had Rockingham had the courage to give Major his support, he might well have had yet another M.P. in parliament.

Hull was uncontested only once, in 1761. Elections there were usually the result of a power-struggle between Trinity House, the corporation, government interests and the freemen. Local men who opposed greater influence - Henry Maister, Thomas Lee and Thomas Shirley - invariably came bottom of the poll, and William Wilberforce had to spend some £9,000 to ensure success in 1780. Rockingham and Savile were able to use their personal prestige to secure the elections of Weddell and Hartley but candidates had to pay heavily for the electors' votes. It would seem that local merchants were not rich enough to bribe the electorate.

The 1774 election in York indicates that a definite anti-Rockingham element existed in the city, and also that Charles Turner was not an especially popular choice of candidate even though he had been a York M.P. since 1768. Martin Hawke's attempt on the city resulted in him winning 747 votes of which 537 were anti-Rockingham votes rather than votes for Hawke. However, the marquis had the support of most of York corporation and Hawke withdrew on the fifth day of the poll.¹

Apart from the 1768 Scarborough election, none of the polls was particularly close although the mere fact of an election being held does illustrate that there were some boroughs over which no-one had control and that there were some boroughs into which the marquis would not venture. The only 'uncertain' town into which he made incursions was Hull, where he had the support of Trinity House and at least some of the corporation. It is noticeable, though, that the most 'free' boroughs generally escaped

1. Namier and Brooke, The House of Commons, 1, 443.

his attentions, possibly because they would have been expensive - although that was unlikely to worry such a wealthy man - or more probably because he rarely fought any election if he stood any chance of not winning.

The 1780 general election was fought against the background of Christopher Wyvill's Yorkshire Association. The Rockinghamites had consistently opposed the war against America and as it became increasingly more expensive and Britain suffered defeats, so public opinion began to turn against North's government and its conduct of the war. 1779 was a year of crisis for Britain: a combined Franco-Spanish invasion seemed likely since both countries had declared war on Britain; the British navy was over-extended in trying to defend a world-wide empire with a reduced navy because of George Grenville's cut-backs of 1764; Ireland appeared to be on the verge of revolt and the Irish Volunteers were beginning their agitation against British rule in a country which was the traditional 'back-door' to England; trade was disrupted and markets were lost, which reduced government revenue considerably besides creating widespread unemployment in the manufacturing districts; and - to pay for the war - taxation was high and rising.

In November 1779 Wyvill, General George Cary, William Chaloner and Lieutenant-General John Hale decided to call a county meeting to raise support for political reform and government economy. Since these were the platforms of the Rockinghamites, Wyvill hoped to capture the strong following of the marquis but at the same time to avoid being identified with any political faction. He also needed to keep Rockingham informed of what was going on besides attracting non-Rockinghamites. Wyvill sent out a circular letter on 26th November to those he thought might favour a county meeting, particularly to 'Gentlemen of respectable character and weight of property' to ask them to request the High Sheriff for a

county meeting.¹ When the Sheriff refused, Wyvill placed an advertisement in the newspapers. The initial response was poor. Stephen Croft asked for Rockingham's advice on what to do² and it was not until Sir Robert Hildyard, a large landowner in the East Riding, and Pemberton Milnes of Wakefield approved, that the movement gained impetus. Wyvill asked Milnes for his support,³ probably realizing that if he could persuade Milnes to join he would probably bring with him the woollen manufacturers of the West Riding and - since he was a known and staunch Rockinghamite - many of the marquis' followers.

The stated aim of the Association was to 'petition the House of Commons to appoint a Committee to enquire into the State of the Civil List, in order that all exorbitant Salaries, sinecure places and unmerited pensions may be reduced and abolished'.⁴ Wyvill also wanted his Association to elect only those candidates who supported the petition. Wyvill's advertisement was well received in the county. A copy was sent to every 'Individual Gentleman in the County [and] pains has not been wanting to make the calling of the Meeting more Weighty and Respectable as though it would have a good Effect'.⁵ Wyvill wanted to keep J.P.s and peers away from the meeting and Stephen Croft believed that Rockingham should consider whether his presence would be a help or a hindrance. He very cleverly suggested that if the marquis stayed away 'it would Certainly take away that Jealousy of its Originating & being carried on Your Lordship's Plan & solely by your Lords' Friends'.⁶

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1. W.W.M. R140-27. Wyvill's circular letter.
 2. W.W.M. R136-1. Croft to Rockingham, 28th November 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1868. Wyvill to Milnes, 5th December 1779.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1868.
 5. W.W.M. R136-6. Croft to Rockingham, 10th December 1779.
 6. Ibid.

Rockingham was not wholeheartedly in support of Wyvill's aims. They were too radical for him. He may have been a reformer, but he was an aristocrat who believed in the rule of landed men. He agreed with the intention of calling for a reduction of Crown influence, but wished that 'speculative propositions might be avoided. Short Parliaments, or more county members, or diffusing the right of voting to every individual, are at best but crude propositions whereof at best no man can well ascertain what the effects may be'.¹ However, the Association was likely to carry out Rockingham's ideas, whatever Wyvill might think. By 13th December there were fifty-six signatories of the advertisement calling for a county meeting at 10 a.m. on 30th December and most of them were Rockinghamites. Croft had also personally written to fifty-four others including Lords Egremont, Rutland, Richmond, Bridgewater, Montagu, Strafford and Fitzwilliam, Sir George Savile and all the Cavendish family.² Croft agreed with Rockingham that the proposals should be kept simple and concise but was worried about Wyvill, who proposed to raise many thorny questions.

Rockingham had decided to be absent from the meeting, which Croft thought was appropriate, but he suggested that the marquis should write a letter of excuse to one of the more considerable people involved, as a good opening to the affair. But the one thing which Rockingham and Wyvill had hoped to avoid happened: 'Your L^ordshi^p cant /sic/ conceive how Jealous people are & our Enemies say it is the Trumpit /sic/ of Rebellion from the Mandate of Grosvenor Square'.³

Between Rockingham's decision not to attend and Croft's approval

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1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 1, 430. Rockingham to Croft, 12th December 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R136-8. Croft to Rockingham, 13th December 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R136-11. Croft to Rockingham, 16th December 1779.

of the decision, Wyvill had scuttled his own plans. To keep Rockingham informed he had sent him a copy of the circular letter which was addressed to the 'Nobility, Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders of the County of York'.¹ Rockingham 'immediately determined, that it was incumbent upon me to be present if I could, & I was equally clear ... that Every Nobleman, Gentleman, Clergy or Freeholder who could attend should be present on so solemn & so interesting an occasion'.² He also admitted that he had wanted to see a county meeting for some time and was going to attend only as one summoned by Wyvill's letter. As a Yorkshireman he felt 'a Pride, that the County of York will stand foremost, in shewing anxious Sollicitude [sic] for the Welfare, freedom & Happiness of this Country'.³

The first circular letter which Rockingham received⁴ was signed by ninety-four of the leading gentlemen of Yorkshire and twenty-seven clergy. At least forty of them were committed Rockinghamites. The final total of signatures was 209 of whom a third were clergymen. They were encouraged by Dean Fountaynè's support of the plan and because Wyvill had hinted at asking for greater toleration of the more liberal Anglican clergy, reflecting his own latitudinarian views.

Rockingham had every intention of attempting to control the more radical ideas which seemed likely to creep into Wyvill's Association. He therefore asked John Lee, a lawyer friend, to draw up a series of resolutions for the meeting. The draft which Lee sent to Rockingham on 23rd December was intended as a preliminary effort to be discussed and worked on.⁵ The seven resolutions stuck rigidly to the Rockinghamite

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1. W.W.M. R136-15.
 2. W.W.M. R136-12. Rockingham to Croft. After 16th December 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1871. Rockingham to an unnamed correspondent, 18th December 1779.
 4. W.W.M. R136-15.
 5. W.W.M. R136-19. Lee to Rockingham, 23rd December 1779.

line of the mismanagement and neglect of North's government, of national distress, public debt and a call for a public enquiry into the state of the nation. They also resolved to petition the House of Lords and House of Commons and to set up a committee of noblemen and gentlemen with powers to call another County meeting.¹ Copies of these resolutions, a draft petition and a letter written by the marquis were sent to Dean Fountayne and Jerom Dring by Stephen Croft so that they could be present at the meeting ostensibly independent of Rockingham. Croft hoped 'to get it Establish'd without any One knowing it Ever came from y/ou/r Lordship'.² Unfortunately, Wyvill decided that Dring's petition from Lee was too long and wanted all discussions postponed until 30th. In any case, Wyvill wanted only to petition the Commons and probably voice the joint opinion of the North Riding gentry. He took with him a petition from there which Frederick Montagu understood to be 'short, temperate and firm. The present Idea is that at the previous Dinner on Wednesday [i.e. 29th December] where you must take care to attend, the two Petitions will be talk'd over & then & must be fix'd, which is to be offered to the general meeting on Thursday'.³

Prior to the county meeting Croft had been busy drawing up a list of queries concerning the procedure to adopt. The originals are among Rockingham's papers but the queries were actually answered by Burke. At least, the handwriting is Burke's although it is possible that Rockingham dictated to him.⁴ It was these documents which outlined the Rockinghamite proposals to demand not only cheaper government and a reduction of Crown influence but also to petition both Lords and Commons. It was suggested

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1. W.W.M. R136-20. Resolutions drawn up by Lee.
 2. W.W.M. R136-21. Croft to Rockingham, 26th December 1779.
 3. W.W.M. R136-28. Frederick Montagu to Rockingham, 28th December 1779.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1875. Queries from Croft, and answers. Also R136-22.
Croft: Queries on the intended meeting at York.

that all those at the meeting should sign the petition which then ought to be circulated throughout the county to obtain other names, as had happened in 1770.

The meeting was held in the York Assembly Rooms, which were crowded beyond the organizers' wildest dreams. Mr. Chaloner was chosen as chairman but it was Wyvill who announced that the idea of a county meeting came from a few independent gentlemen of the North Riding who were free of any party influence. He denied that Rockingham had anything to do with it. Nathaniel Cholmley opened the discussion by telling the assembled freeholders that they were wasting their time because their petition would be ignored anyway: a somewhat negative way to begin a meeting. Cholmley had married the daughter of Mr. Smelt, the once-governor of the Prince of Wales. Smelt was in receipt of a state pension but was brave enough to stand up in York and tell the assembly that their petition was illegal and misguided. He told them that the king could do no wrong and that the Whigs were subverting the Glorious Revolution, and had been responsible for perfecting parliamentary corruption and ineptitude. He even offered to give up his pension so that he too could speak as an independent gentleman. Rockingham's comment was that he 'made us some of the most extraordinary Speeches (recommending Confidence in the King) that I ever heard'.¹ Charles Turner and Sir George Savile spoke of the numerous pensions and ministerial influence. Both stressed that the 'evil councillors' were being criticized, not the king. Rockingham was delighted to find that 'the Meeting was exceedingly respectable ... and those who are & who have ever been my Friends in fact composed the Great Bulk of the Meeting'.² Wyvill had arrived in

1. W.W.M. R140-32. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 31st December 1779.
2. W.W.M. R140-38. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 2nd January 1780.

York 'with a Plan of Proceeding - & a Petition &c ready prepared, & from any part of Which, it was a matter of no small difficulty to get the least departure'. Rockingham soon realized that Wyvill wanted to keep the marquis' 'interference' out of sight. Many at the meeting wanted some resolution or Address to the Crown for ending the American War, especially Pemberton Milnes, the Rev. Zouch and all the marquis' Wakefield friends. However, that proposal was dropped on Rockingham's advice in order to maintain unanimity. It was still a divisive issue. Although the marquis was upon the whole well pleased with the discussions, he still thought that the Lords should have been petitioned as well as the Commons. The peers at Wyvill's meeting felt themselves unable to sign the Yorkshire petition 'without wishing Arguments ag/āins/7t us - when we proceed on L/ōr/7d Shelburne's Motion in the H/ōuse/7 of L/ōr/7ds on the 8th February.¹ It was arranged that Chaloner should write a letter of thanks to the peers who attended the meeting so that they in turn could send an answer 'in which we may express in very decisive terms, our high approbation of the main principle of the petition'.² This idea was in fact Rockingham's own wish and so he allowed Wyvill to have his own way not because the marquis was unable to prevent him but because

The True Fact is, My Determination not to interrupt Unanimity among Those - who have at least got Hold of one Right and Essential Measure for reform /which/ made me most exceedingly inclined to Acquiesce in Every Thing, which I thought could be omitted or Postponed without manifest danger of Harm ensuing. 3

Those present at the meeting, who owned landed property to the value of over £800,000 p.a.⁴ - more than all the M.P.s put together - unanimously carried Wyvill's petition and resolutions and then set about electing

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1. W.W.M. R140-32. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 31st December 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R140-38. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 2nd January 1780.
 3. Rockingham to Burke, 13th January 1780. Burke Correspondence, 4, 192.
 4. Ibid.

a committee of sixty-one. On one copy of the resolution the Marquis of Rockingham numbered his supporters.¹ Thirty-eight of the committee of sixty-one were Rockinghamites and of the twenty-four peers and M.P.s who attended the meeting, eighteen were his followers.²

It was decided that twenty copies of the petition were to be circulated in the county and two in York itself. Only 'men of substance' were to be sought out for signatures. Furthermore, the committee of sixty-one was to meet fortnightly beginning on 14th January 1780 to keep an eye on the progress of the petition. The lesson of 1769 had been well-learned.

Rockingham had enjoyed his stay in York. He had written to the marchioness on 31st December telling her that he had 'dined and supped & between those periods was obliged to go to the Assembly': this was at two in the morning.³ Unfortunately he was unable to remember whether or not he had finished writing the letter before he posted it. He had written it when he 'could scarce either stand or Sit ... my Stomach was both drunk and Sick'.⁴ Since the letter to her ladyship had been finished one can only assume that the other letter which Rockingham had sent to the Duke of Bolton had been sent unfinished. Rockingham sent his wife a number of printed copies of the petition with detailed instructions of where to forward them. Three were to go to the Duke of Richmond and three to Burke. Tommy Townshend, John Bourke, Dr. Brocklesby, General Honeywood and Lady Charlotte Wentworth were to have two each; six were to go to both the Duke of Portland and George Byng while Lords Abingdon, Craven and Courtenay received one each. The others Lady Rockingham

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1. Cobbett and Wright History of Parliament, XX, 1376. Sir George Savile.
 2. W.W.M. R136-33.
 3. W.W.M. R140-32.
 4. W.W.M. R140-38.

could send to whomever she thought should have copies.¹ The marquis was using his position and contacts to publicise the events in York and was able to raise national support on a scale which Wyvill could not match.

On January 7th 1780 the Middlesex county meeting adopted the Yorkshire petition and Hertfordshire, Essex, Westminster and Surrey followed suit in the same month. Stephen Croft was able to tell the marquis 'that the Electrick /sic/ fire seems to have caught so many as Cheshire, Surry, Essex, Hampshire, Cumberland &c'. Unfortunately, 'the signing does not go on so rapidly as could wish here for have only 250 names' from around Stillington, a small village about twelve miles north of York. 'How it goes in other parts cant /sic/ say but am told at Leeds are almost totally against it & call it Rockingham faction'.² It had apparently been given out publicly that the petition was the work of the marquis and a letter had appeared in Lloyd's Evening Post signed 'A Gentleman', actually naming Rockingham as the instigator.³ If anything, a report like that should have ensured more signatures rather than less in view of the considerable following which Rockingham had in the county.

The Association's committee meeting of 14th January was adjourned because the quorum of twenty-seven was not met, but half of those who turned up were Rockinghamites. They decided to call another meeting for 21st January and wrote to the absent committee-men. At the second meeting the committee drew up a circular letter which was an undertaking not to vote for any candidate at the general election who had not agreed to support cheaper government, the demand for an extra hundred county M.P.s

1. W.W.M. R140-38.

2. W.W.M. R136-38. Croft to Rockingham, 10th January 1780.

3. Ibid.

and shorter parliaments. The thirty committee-men signed the letter; it is surprising to find sixteen Rockinghamites' names there¹ since Rockingham had expressed his doubts about 'tests' for would-be candidates, and felt that the idea of shorter parliaments should be abandoned until its advocates could decide on how short 'short' was. The marquis believed that triennial parliaments could possibly be acceptable although he totally rejected the proposal for annual elections. He also opposed the idea of more equal representation until some plan of redistribution had been worked out, but he admitted that some rotten boroughs could be reformed. In a long letter, of which only an undesignated copy exists,² the marquis discussed the possible alternatives for seat redistribution. His initial thoughts were that rotten boroughs could be abolished without compensation or perhaps with compensation to make abolition easier. The surplus seats could be redistributed in one or more of three ways: by giving additional county M.P.s to the counties where rotten boroughs had been abolished; or by giving the seats to neighbouring areas; or by giving them to the new industrial and manufacturing towns. The marquis seems to have been keenly aware of the lack of representation for the growing West Riding towns. For instance, Sheffield township had a population of 20,000 and the parish of Sheffield a population of 32,000 in 1775, almost double the numbers of 1750;³ towns such as Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford had experienced similar growth. On the other hand there were tiny places like Aldborough where ostensibly fifty voters returned two M.P.s. However the Duke of Newcastle nominated the representatives. While favour-

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1. W.W.M. R140-54. Circular Letter, 21st January 1780. They were: T. Robinson; St. A. Warde; W. Strickland; H. Duncombe; F.F. Foljambe; R. Marriott; P. Wentworth; J. Dring; S. Croft; S. Croft Jn.; J. Smith; J. Dalton; M. St. Quintin; W. Milner; J. Carr and H. Thompson.
 2. W.W.M. R140-62.
 3. G.I.H. Lloyd, The Cutlery Trades (London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 151.

ing some redistribution of seats, Rockingham was definitely opposed to universal manhood suffrage. He believed that the best solution to the problem would be to get rid of corruption. Once that had been done the rest would follow.

The effect of the action in Yorkshire was to create national interest in the question of political reform. During 1780, twenty-six counties petitioned the Commons on the question¹ and Wyvill went to London to co-ordinate the activities of the various Associations, leaving affairs in Yorkshire in the hands of the committee which, as had been shown, was largely composed of Rockinghamites.

In Yorkshire, twenty-two copies of the petition were finally distributed to various parts of the county. Each was put under the charge of a named gentleman whose duty was to collect as many signatures as he could before 3rd February. They sent in returns of the number of signatures at regular intervals and by the end of January some 6,800 names had been collected.² The most productive areas were Sheffield, Tickhill and Strafford [976], Claro [850], Skyrack [550] and Barkstone Ash [490]. The final total of signatures was 8,705. Very few had 'made their mark', indicating that most subscribers were at least literate enough to sign their name. Only one Catholic had the temerity to put his name on the petition.³

The Yorkshire petition was taken to London on 14th February and Savile presented it to the Commons on 8th. Three days later Burke presented his Bill for Economical Reform to the House and used the petitions

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1. W.W.M. R136-50. They were: Bedfordshire; Berkshire; Buckinghamshire; Cambridgeshire; Cheshire; Cumberland; Derbyshire; Devon; Dorset; Essex; Gloucestershire; Hertfordshire; Huntingdonshire; Kent; Middlesex; Norfolk; Northamptonshire; Northumberland; Nottinghamshire; Somerset; Hampshire; Suffolk; Surrey; Sussex; Wiltshire and Yorkshire.
 2. W.W.M. R100-7.
 3. W.W.M. R140-58. Croft to Rockingham, 6th February 1780.

to back up his motion. On the same day, Rockingham spoke in the Lords in a debate into public expenditure. In it he stressed the respectability of the Yorkshire Association together with its moderation and legitimacy. The plans for reform or even enquiries into reform were rejected by both Houses. Yorkshire then moved on to its next line of attack.

The second county meeting was held on 28th March at which it was proposed to demand shorter parliaments. Rockingham's followers had already been informed that the marquis was 'by no means an adherer to the idea of a necessity of Parliamēts being Septennial',¹ but that he wanted to see the length of them sufficient for an elected member to take his seat. In the days of contested elections it could take a year to sort out the final decision. Rockingham was opposing annual elections without actually saying so. Rockingham was unable to attend the meeting personally but emphasised to Croft the necessity of 'adhering to plain & direct Objects'. The meeting lacked the strong Rockinghamite contingent which had been present in December 1779 and consequently more radical decisions could be made. The majority of Rockinghamites who were there refused to sign the undertaking.

The form of Association asked for economical reform, an extension of the franchise, a hundred extra county seats in the Commons, triennial parliaments and the election of only M.P.s who had agreed to the foregoing points.² These resolutions were passed unanimously by the meeting on 28th March³ although Savile refused to sign. While he approved of the principles of economical reform he objected to the other clauses. Savile was supported by Walter Spencer-Stanhope of Cannon Hall near Barnsley. Stanhope was a Rockinghamite and M.P. for Carlisle. His family had

1. W.W.M. R1-1882. Rockingham to Croft, 23rd March 1780.
2. W.W.M. R136-45. Resolutions of the committee meeting, 25th March 1780.
3. W.W.M. R136-46. Croft to Rockingham, 28th March 1780.

interests in most of the iron-smelting and forging concerns in south Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire besides in cloth-manufacturing in Leeds. He therefore had similar political and economic interests to Rockingham besides being part of the same social round. Lord John Cavendish also refused to sign, principally because of the clause demanding a hundred extra county M.P.s. He too was aware of the need for the representation of industrial towns, whereas the North Riding gentry would appear to have been completely out of touch with the changing sociology of the West Riding and south Yorkshire. Samuel Tooker [or Tucker] of Moorgate, Rotherham, opposed the growth of aristocratic influence and wanted more than economical reform. This was clearly an attack on Rockingham, with whom Tooker had had several disagreements, particularly over turnpikes and the exchange of lands for Rockingham's canal. The marquis had invariably bested Tooker and he resented it. However, the meeting unanimously accepted the form of Association which effectively broke the link between it and the Rockinghamites, leaving Savile, Cavendish and Rockingham as perhaps the three most unpopular men in the county for a while.

Rockingham was soon informed that opinion was against him but instead of publicly defending himself and his followers he wrote a long letter to John Carr in York explaining why he opposed the Association and giving Carr permission to show the letter to whom he wished.¹ The marquis rightly pointed out that he had opposed the measures of government which he had thought corrupt and that he had tried to persuade others to his way of thinking. He opposed the new proposals because they would cause divisions and 'may destroy all chance of good being done'. He was also 'well-informed that very many considerable persons

1. W.W.M. R136-49. Rockingham to John Carr, 22nd May 1780.

in this County who were ready to concur and did concur in the fullest determination to curtail largely the influence of the Crown in Parl/iament - were by no means inclined to adopt Problematical Reforms as Experiments on the Constitution'. He advised Carr to tell the Rockinghamites in York to judge himself, Savile and Lord John Cavendish on the principles on which they acted. The marquis was convinced that he had never compromised his principles where the interests of England were concerned, and felt that he had been unjustly censured in Yorkshire.

Rockingham's objections to the proposals of the County Association were based on his own political judgement. He approved of the idea of triennial parliaments but was not sure that they should come before a reduction in the power of the Crown since that might 'only tend to the more speedy exhausting the Purses of those Candidates - who stand ag/ains/t the Ministerial Candidates'.¹ He also wondered how independent the extra hundred M.P.s would be: he feared that the Crown would gain, rather than lose, influence. He preferred to have doubts and do nothing than to adopt the propositions and 'perhaps plunge this Country into a dangerous Experiment'. He defended himself to the Yorkshire committee by pointing out how successfully the first petition had gathered national support but how he had been right in thinking that all would be 'blasted and dissipated, by ingenious, speculative Propositions, which at once sowed the Seed, & a plentiful Crop of disunion immediately arose, & has spread all over England'.²

While the would-be reformers were fighting among themselves, Lord North decided that the time had come for a general election. The news was sent to Rockingham on 17th August 1780 by the Duke of Portland who

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1. W.W.M. R140-76. Rockingham to Preston, 22nd May 1780.
 2. W.W.M. R136-52. Rockingham to the Yorkshire committee. Endorsed by Lady Rockingham 'I think wrote in May, June or July 1780'.

thought it might 'be material for You to know that ... Parliament would be dissolved immediately after the Prorogation ... so that some of the Elections will be over by or before the 9th of next month'.¹ The Rockinghamites, who were still deeply involved in the County Associations, were thrown into a panic especially since many of the leading Rockinghamite M.P.s had refused to sign the form of Association and could end up losing their seats as a result. Lord John Cavendish was undecided about standing in York if a serious opposition appeared, and Burke was rapidly becoming convinced that he ought not stand in Bristol where his popularity had worn thin. Fortunately a loophole was found for the non-subscribers to the form of Association. The actual wording was found to be that the signatory would not vote for a candidate 'Unless the candidate declares his attachment to the Plan of Reformation &c by signing the Association or in such other form as to each candidate seems most eligible'.² In view of this, most Rockinghamites could simply give verbal assurances and have no further difficulties. Even so, Lord John was determined not to be beaten by the Association. On Rockingham's advice he announced that he would not 'submit to be Catechised by Persons who are not ... Citizens of York'.³

It seemed as though Wyvill would attempt to have an Association member stand in York since he had an advertisement placed in the York Courant requesting the citizens to vote only for candidates who were pledged to parliamentary reform and announcing the imminent arrival of such a gentleman. Charles Turner had already agreed to follow the Association and Lord John was debating whether to stand or not. Rockingham refused to go to York but left the Rockingham Club to sort out the con-

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1. W.W.M. R139-4. Portland to Rockingham, 17th August 1780.
 2. W.W.M. R139-7. Robert Sinclair to Rockingham, 3rd September 1780.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1922. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 5th September 1780.

fusion. Eventually Turner and Lord John began their canvass, which was so favourable that the threatened opposition failed to transpire and the two were returned without contest. The Rockingham Club decided that 'as we have always found that public Balls have been always attended with excessive Rioting shall abolish it ... and tomorrow after the Election dine at the Tavern & Every Person to pay his own Expense'.¹

In Yorkshire things were not quite so simple. Edwin Lascelles had gone over to the side of the administration on the outbreak of the American War and Rockingham wanted to replace him with a more favourable candidate. When Henry Duncombe offered himself, he immediately received the marquis' approval. Duncombe was one of Rockingham's friends and was a member of the Association too. His adoption as a joint candidate with Savile ensured that Associators and Rockinghamites alike could vote for them both. A subscription was raised to fund their expenses and £13,680 was collected because Duncombe had admitted that he could not afford to fight a contest.²

Rockingham received letters from all over the country asking for advice on which candidates he supported, so that the writers would know which way to vote in order to elect the marquis' chosen man. Francis Hunt of York, Thomas Woodcock of Doncaster and Lawrence Dundas of Edinburgh were three such gentlemen, while Lords Egremont, Bolton, Ailesbury, Carmarthen, Downe, Bessborough and Rutland mustered their combined influence in favour of Savile and Duncombe.³ By 16th September Lascelles had decided that perhaps discretion was the better part of valour and withdrew from the election. The whole campaign on behalf of Savile and Duncombe cost only £1,043. 2s. 6d.⁴ which was taken from the subscription. The remainder was paid back to the donors. The 1780

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1. W.W.M. R139-10. Siddall to Rockingham, 10th September 1780.
 2. W.W.M. R139-44.
 3. W.W.M. R139-25/40/53/30/31/33/41/46/51/36.
 4. W.W.M. R1-1940. William Siddall to Rockingham, 5th December 1780.

Yorkshire election must have been one of the cheapest ever and that was largely due to the aristocratic influence mustered by Rockingham.

Before the withdrawal of Lascelles, canvasses had been undertaken throughout the county on behalf of the candidates. One such canvass return was sent to Benjamin Hall, Rockingham's estate manager at Wentworth Woodhouse, detailing the results from Wath, Swinton and Hooton Roberts. In those parts of south Yorkshire it was clearly a vote for Rockingham's interest rather than for the candidates but local issues also played an important part. The canvass was undertaken by John Kent and Mr. Rowlin /or perhaps Rawlin: the spelling throughout the document is phonetic/ and they met quite a lot of abuse during the course of their work. 'It is no good business, how we got huft¹ in regard of Your Game papers that is plastared up at Blacksmith shops at Wath & Swinton'. They suggested that 'is Lordship should look sharp and get as many Votes as he Posable can' by getting 'Mr. Fenton and is Clarks all at Work'. Kent assured Hall that 'Mr. Rowlin & self his at is Lordship Command what lyes in hour Power to do, in serving is Lordship Intrist'.² Mr. Kent obviously was not in fear of the marquis otherwise he would not have dared advise him to 'look sharp'. Of a possible forty-six electors, twenty promised their votes to Savile and Duncombe, sixteen were 'not at home', two would not promise anything, and the canvassers questioned the voting qualifications of six. The Rev. Harrison was not very well and Henry Kay Roper 'hused to be bought with money in hand'. Kent's comments on several of the electors make amusing reading besides giving an insight into the effects of local affairs. For example, Richard Gawtrees, farmer, 'promist is Vote to Hew' as did Mr. Finney. They thought that Thomas Fostard 'will give is Vote to Hus' while 'Mr. Watson, Doctor is

1. 'huft' or huffed: to be bullied or abused. The two men bore the brunt. of local discontent about the marquis' game notices.

2. W.W.M. R139-22. John Kent to Benjamin Hall, 13th September 1780.

Afruned [affronted?] about sum advertisment in regard of Game ses several more is the same'. John Mercer, farmer, 'promised hus is Vote but will have all is expenses paid'. Messrs. Mower and Bingley refused to promise anything - 'we think them a very pratty Pair, well hen pict, If worth bying they may be com'd at'. Watson was apparently more concerned with the new game restrictions than the election and Mercer was pre-occupied with having his expenses paid. Kent did not seem to think much at all of the two hen-pecked men. One assumes that this sort of canvass was the norm in Yorkshire, where things were very much left to agents who had to deal with local grievances. None of those canvassed ever mentioned the Association and none refused to vote for Rockingham's candidates, although the non-committal ones may well have been hostile.

The 1780 general election resulted in a decline in the numbers of Rockinghamite M.P.s to only sixty,¹ and also marked Rockingham's last real involvement in Yorkshire politics. He became Prime Minister for the second time in March 1782 and set about a programme of economical reform for which he had pressed for so long. He died on 1st July 1782 before any of his measures had been effected. Men like Shelburne and Pitt were left to follow where Rockingham had led, in their efforts to streamline government and introduce freer trade.

1. Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, 2 and 3. They were: W. A'Court; G. Adams; E. Astley; W. Baker; C. Barrow; H. Bridgeman; E. Burke; G. Byng; Lord G. A. Cavendish; Lord J. Cavendish; R. Cavendish; J. Clarke; R. Clayton; W. Codrington; E. Coke; T. Coke; H. Seymour; C. Cornwall; G. Damer; G. Dempster; E. Dering; J. Dodd; H. Duncombe; T. Dundas; H. Fletcher; C. J. Fox; T. Cascoigne; R. Gregory; J. Hanbury; C. Howard; G. Howard; W. Hussey; G. Johnstone; A. Keppel; W. Keppel; G. Lennox; P. Ludlow; J. Maitland; J. Mawbey; C. Meadows; F. Montagu; R. Mostyn; N. Newnham; J. Pennyman; W. Plumer; F. Ponsonby; T. Powys; J. Radcliffe; G. Savile; J. Scudamore; G. Skipwith; G. Spencer; H. Stuart; B. Thompson; J. Thorold; T. Townshend; C. Turner; R. Verney; W. Weddell and C. Wray.

THE ROCKINGHAM CLUB

A Whig club already existed in York when Rockingham succeeded to his father's titles but it was not renamed the Rockingham Club until December 1753. The event which provoked the renaming was the successful nomination of Sir John Armytage as Rockingham's York candidate in the forthcoming general election. Dean Fountayne wrote to the marquis saying that 'Place tells me that nothing will go down for the name of the Club but Rockingham'.¹ Rockingham was initially dubious about the title but eventually accepted the compliment gracefully. By June 3rd 1754 the club had at least 133 members² with Rockingham as its president although he rarely attended the monthly meetings. However, he was delighted that 'so many gentlemen of distinguished worth should Unite in a Club for the support of the Whig Interest' and he had 'Great Pride in being honoured with their Friendship from the favourable opinion they had conceived of my principles'.³ As a mark of his pleasure, Rockingham commissioned James Stuart to paint portraits of William III and George II 'to ornament the Two Rooms, where the monthly Meetings are held'.⁴ The club became the focal point for Rockingham's supporters in York and the centre of his interest in the city. Its members were always ready to promote both Whig and the marquis' interests since they saw them as synonymous, and they could be relied on to undertake the rôle of 'party workers' during election campaigns.

In November 1757 William Thornton objected to the name of the club on the grounds that it had created a cabal or faction within the ranks of the Whigs and threatened to withdraw from it. Rockingham was upset by the accusation and by Thornton's attitude. He was to be the marquis'

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1. W.W.M. F35-13. Dean Fountayne to Rockingham, 12th December 1753.
 2. W.W.M. R95.
 3. W.W.M. R1-67. Rockingham to Thomas Marfitt. April 1755.
 4. Ibid.

candidate in the by-elections caused by Sir John Armytage's death and his break with the Rockinghamites might have created a contest. Rockingham defended the name of the club saying that it had been established to promote not his personal interest but 'principles of true Loyalty to the King & affection to the Constitution'.¹ He stressed how bad it would look if Thornton resigned from a Whig club if he was to stand for election on Whig principles: his ability to persuade people and sooth their hurt feelings was again used with success, for Thornton remained in the Rockingham Club and won the seat.

Little documentation exists about the club and its activities, although it is clear that its members continually kept Rockingham informed about the political climate in York and passed on everything which they felt could be useful to him. The marquis treated all its members as friends whatever their station in life and was liked because of that. Whenever there was a suggestion that the club was unconstitutional because Rockingham was its president, the members would leap to its and his defence. 'Call it a Whig call it the Revolution Club & grey hairs would come smoaking from their reeky Corners to choose Lord Malton's Son their President and Support'.²

Rockingham was generous in his financial support. In October 1781 he paid £44. 1s. 0d. for an evening's entertainment for 177 members which included the suppers, drink, pipes and tobacco, music and transport home,³ besides helping to finance balls and decorating the club's rooms. Rockingham's letter, which accompanied £50 to pay the bill, shows that the club had given him support since its inception:

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1. W.W.M. R145-4. Rockingham to William Thornton, 24th November 1757.
 2. W.W.M. R1-199. P. Turner to Rockingham, 18th March 1768.
 3. W.W.M. R140-101. Thomas Hartley to Rockingham. Bill for an evenings entertainment, 10th October 1781.

the Good Citizens of York have long honoured me with their good Opinion & Regard, and of which I must confess, I am not a little proud, for when I reflect how early in my Life it begun, and how long and how uninterruptedly it has continued - It seems to Convey to me the most pleasing Testimony, that their Judgement, the Support of the principles & Lines of Conduct in Publick Life which were expected from me, have not appeared to them to have been neglected by Me, howsoever unavailing My Efforts may have been - for the Welfare of this County. 1

As may be expected the club undertook the canvass of York and Yorkshire during the 1781 election campaign and on Rockingham's appointment as Prime Minister in 1782 sent an Address signed by eighty-seven gentlemen congratulating him on his return to office after so long in opposition. They looked forward to seeing 'England Glorious and Respectable abroad, and a Scene of Plenty, Tranquility and Unanimity at Home'² under his leadership. Their hopes were not to be realized.

The size of the club is difficult to estimate since members were not necessarily present to sign letters of addresses sent to the marquis. It is odd to find Savile's name appearing only once, in 1754, because he maintained his membership until 1783. Others, such as Ralph Bell, Francis Pulleyn and Lionel Place were members in 1754 and 1782 so it is probably safe to assume that they were also members in 1763. Whole families were members, for example the Crofts and Terrys; and some of the wealthiest and most influential names in the county appear, such as George Montgomery-Metham, Sir William Milner, Temple Luttrell and John Carr the architect. Many were freeholders in York, known only because of their correspondence with Rockingham: men like Thomas Barstowe, Thomas Preston and William Siddall.

In January 1763, ninety-four members of the Club signed a letter to the marquis thanking him 'for that Steadiness and Uniformity of

1. W.W.M. R140-102. Rockingham to Hartley, 4th November 1781.
2. W.W.M. R125-50. Rockingham Club to Rockingham, 11th April 1782.

Conduct, that Distinguish'd Zeal, which had constantly animated Your Lordship (even from the early part of Life) for the public good, and the Support of our Happiness'.¹ This letter was composed at one of the monthly meetings and indicates that the club was well supported. Unfortunately it is impossible to discover how many members were absent from that particular meeting and hence the actual size of the membership. The letter was sent as soon as the news broke of the marquis' dismissal from all his offices held from the king. The club encompassed men from a whole range of social backgrounds who were eligible to vote, which is perhaps why it was so successful in promoting Rockingham's interest in the city.

Rockingham's influence on Yorkshire politics in the period 1750 to 1782 was well beyond that normally expected even of such a wealthy nobleman. He entered the political field actively at the age of twenty-three with all the advantages one could ever hope for: money, status, lands, titles. He did not, however, have an automatic following in the county. He did inherit the support of his father's allies, who represented the older sections of the political community, and he had made friends among the younger men but that did not constitute an unassailable position of pre-eminence.

As the link between the old nobility and gentry and the younger generation of Whigs, both noble and non-noble, Rockingham was able to represent a greater spectrum of opinion in his group. This in turn enabled him to formulate economic policies and principles which would help merchants and manufacturers. In parliamentary elections he was able to wield more influence in Yorkshire than his actual control of seats made possible. There were many electors who were prepared to sup-

1. W.W.M. R1-351.

port his candidates from regard for the marquis and his beliefs alone, but the 'party organization' was sufficiently well developed to enable Rockinghamite candidates to be successful.

Perhaps one of his greatest talents was his ability to take into account a wide range of views and then to produce a policy which was accepted, thus allowing the majority to follow the 'official' line while controlling the more extreme views by sheer force of personality. Because of this his support in the county continued to grow. Furthermore he obviously had the welfare of Yorkshire at heart and always did his best to further its interests wherever possible.

After his attempt to control the electorate in the 1753 county election the Marquis of Rockingham learned that the best way of leading Yorkshire voters was from behind: if he remained in the background and let his agents direct events, his candidates and ideas were likely to prevail. This applied to the petitioning movement and to the County Association as much as to elections.

Public opinion in Yorkshire was well developed during the life of the Marquis of Rockingham and he was instrumental in its growth. By listening to and following the sense of the county he was able to both direct and control movements which got out of hand elsewhere. Rockingham's talent for leadership was intertwined with his capacity for being able to keep himself out of the limelight. Had he tried overtly to lead Yorkshire opinion he might have found himself facing strong opposition, but he was able to direct conflicting and opposing interests by being self-effacing to a large extent, and by using his many and varied contacts in the county actually to organize operations.

The 1769 petitioning movement could easily have got out of control but by allowing the county to ask for some kind of action and then petitioning for moderate measures the marquis was able to restrain the more

extreme groups. The movement provided a good example of how public opinion could be mobilised for political advantage. It also gave valuable experience for the County Association set up by Christopher Wyvill a decade later. The mistakes of the earlier movement were not made again by the organizers, although the same result occurred.

The Yorkshire Association's origins went back into the late 1760s. The petitioning movement of 1769 provided a model, and the social and economic changes that were taking place in the county, especially the West Riding, gave a fertile breeding ground for discontent. Furthermore the Rockinghamites had shown that they approved of political reform. They had tried to introduce a bill to disfranchise revenue officers in 1769; they had directed and supported the petitions of 1769-70; some had even become involved with the S.S.B.R.; they had consistently opposed North's government from 1774 over the question of America and openly upheld the principles of the 'Glorious Revolution'. Yorkshire was the obvious place for an organized opposition to government. The major problem for Wyvill was the sheer size of the county and the number of freeholders, particularly since he lacked the following which Rockingham had.

Wyvill's Association was moderate enough in its demands, but more radical elements emerged during the campaign for reform. Rockingham's broad-based following enabled him to call on more support than Wyvill had, while the marquis remained well in the background. As a result the Association in Yorkshire remained much more moderate than elsewhere and the Plan of Association was virtually ignored by the county and constituency M.P.s.

The Marquis of Rockingham built up such a following in Yorkshire that, politically speaking, the whole county might as well have been a series of pocket boroughs. No-one before - or since - had such control over the county. His followers came from all ranks of society from

noblemen to artisans, from manufacturers to gentry. Any matter of importance was referred to him. His opinions were valued for their good sense and for reflecting the general consensus in Yorkshire, where his status was such that his opponents barely had a say in what might well be called 'Rockinghamshire'.

CHAPTER 7

ROCKINGHAM AND IRELAND

The foregoing chapters have been concerned with the Marquis of Rockingham in his home county and have shown that he was a man of wide and varied interests. As an English landowner he fits the picture of a progressive landlord; politically he proved to be keenly aware of the growth of public opinion. He was also aware of the importance of the manufacturers and merchants to the economy of England.

His painstaking accounting for almost every penny of his income and expenditure meant that he had close dealings with his Irish steward: half his income originated from his Irish estates. However, according to Mingay, the majority of English landlords were indifferent towards the detailed management of their Irish estates and abandoned their tenants to the 'extortion of agents and middlemen'.¹ Mingay believes that their attitude resulted from the view of Ireland as a subordinate colony or province and that English landlords assumed that they 'drew their revenues by right of conquest over an alien people'. Too few men in power cared about Ireland and so the country became 'the darkest chapter in the history of English landlords'.²

Rockingham was an absentee landlord who might easily have fallen into the category of the majority, but did not. He took a personal interest in the management of his Wicklow estates and showed exceptional concern for the condition of his tenants, especially the Catholics who were more usually the most wretched of the population. The marquis acted against the trend by letting Catholics take out leases on farms and took a keen interest in the economic condition of the country generally.

Lord Rockingham opposed the Irish Absentee Land Tax which was

1. Mingay, English Landed Society, p. 46.

2. Ibid., p. 47.

introduced by the Irish parliament in an effort to avert bankruptcy but he moved beyond that to try to help Ireland. He proposed a reform of the trade regulations even though they would have affected English manufactures - especially the Yorkshire woollen trade. It is also possible that, through his encouragement of the Volunteers, he unwittingly helped bring Ireland to the verge of revolt. The Volunteers provided the threat of force which backed up the parliamentary demands for reform.

Ireland had been subjected to a host of restrictive laws on her exports and manufactures as part of Britain's Navigation Laws. The result was a decline in industry and arable farming and an increase in the amount of pasture. Smuggling also increased. As inflation rose and poor harvests reduced a large section of the population to near-starvation so unrest grew. The attempt to increase revenue by taxing absentee landlords was defeated by the efforts of those absentees in both England and Ireland but it came at a time when America was on the verge of revolt.

The Americans had successfully resisted internal taxation in the shape of the Stamp Act and external taxation attempted by Townshend in 1767. Their trade boycotts had forced parliament to repeal both measures and at the end of 1773 the Boston Tea Party precipitated the crisis. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 saw not only the formal outbreak of hostilities between Britain and America but also a worsening of Anglo-Irish relations.

Many Irishmen were jealous of the stand made by the Americans because Ireland had suffered more ill-treatment and had greater complaints against Britain: but yet it was America which had revolted. There was adequate justification in Ireland for discontent, as Theresa O'Connor points out. The embargo on Irish provisions led to an increase in food prices; troops were removed from the country leaving Ireland almost defenceless; agricultural disturbances were frequent; press-gangs in the

sea-ports terrorised the people and disrupted merchant shipping: profiteering among merchants further increased prices.¹

By 1775 traders in Ireland were feeling the effects of America's non-importation and non-exportation agreements and so they opposed British policy towards America and petitioned for the restoration of colonial trade. In their aims they agreed with the Rockinghamites who attempted to gain Irish support. The main groups who opposed North were the traders who had been badly affected twice before and early on in the current conflict; the 'patriots' who wanted more autonomy for Ireland; and the northern Presbyterians who had much in common with the New Englanders.² The Irish who supported Lord North were those who held power - the 'ascendancy' classes such as members of the Episcopal Church and land-holding and office-holding persons. The Catholic population was 'too sunk in misery to care' although rich Catholics wanted the mitigation of the Williamite and subsequent penal laws.³

The similarity in the positions of America and Ireland was marked and there was some feeling in Ireland that if Britain defeated America over the right of taxation then Ireland would be next. Lord North had to face several difficulties with regard to Ireland: not least because he needed to withdraw the troops stationed there despite the assurances given in 1767 that a permanent establishment of twelve thousand men would be left in Ireland. Also, if American markets were lost, then Ireland needed to be made more prosperous so it could absorb more English manufactures. In 1775 the Newfoundland fisheries were opened to Irish

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1. T.M. O'Connor. 'The More Immediate Effects of the American Revolution in Ireland, 1775-1785' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1938), p. 112.
 2. Ibid., pp. 43 and 48.
 3. Ibid., p. 44.

shipping and the Irish were permitted to export equipment, including clothing, to troops of the Irish Establishment who were serving abroad. These measures marked a small change in the attitude towards Ireland but were insufficient for the Irish.

As early as 1775 - before the war officially had begun - there were petitions from Belfast and Dublin asking the king for peace because of the adverse effect of hostilities on Irish trade. In fact, once the 1776 embargo had been imposed, the Irish linen trade was brought almost to its knees because no flax seed could be imported from America,¹ nor barrel staves² for the barrels needed for the export of provisions. The 1776 embargo further forbade the Irish to export to any place other than Britain or colonies other than America. This effectively severed Ireland's trade with Europe and created widespread fears that the Irish economy could collapse altogether. In fact the demand for provisions by the army and navy created food shortages in Ireland and forced up prices so much that the poor were unable to buy and were again pushed to the verge of starvation, particularly around Cork where the America-bound ships provisioned for the trans-Atlantic voyage.

Rockingham made no secret of his views on the American problem and the Irish saw their position as similar to that of the colonists.³ Their trade was restricted, their currency was unstable, their economy was subordinated to England's needs. The marquis alleviated economic distress in England by his repeal of the Stamp Act; he attempted to solve the American question before - and after - it had degenerated into

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1. Public Records Office, Customs Ledgers 3, America 1696-1780. Flax seed was imported from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and North Carolina.
 2. Ibid. These were imported from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North and South Carolina and Connecticut.
 3. I.R. Christie, Wars and Revolutions (London, Edward Arnold, 1982), p. 130.

war. It is not surprising therefore to find him becoming involved in the Irish question long before many others had even realized that a problem existed. Furthermore, he was in an ideal position to know what was going on in Ireland even though he never set foot in the country. His steward and friend wrote regularly about the estates and national events; his tenants wrote to him about their distress; several of his personal friends visited Ireland or had relations there. Burke, of course, was Irish and had a whole clan of contacts there.

This chapter seeks to add another facet to the character of the Marquis of Rockingham and to place his more distant estates into the context of the whole. It would have been easy for him simply to collect the £20,000 p.a. from Wicklow without a second thought. Instead, he became involved in Irish politics, economics and defence.

The Wentworths owned an Irish estate of about 54,000 acres which was what remained after lands in Sligo had been sold to pay the debts of the second Earl of Strafford.¹ Most of the property was in County Wicklow but there were some other lands in County Kildare and County Wexford. None of these lands were sold off once they had become part of the Wentworth estates and they were inherited in due course by Charles, second Marquis of Rockingham. The Irish estates accounted for almost three-quarters of Rockingham's lands and brought in half his annual income.

In 1761 Rockingham showed a great deal of interest in the Irish election which followed the accession of George III. It was the first general election since 1727 because the length of parliaments was limited by the reign of the monarch. They became octennial events only in 1768.²

1. Melvyn Jones' research but at W.W.M. R221(c)-17 the marquis estimated his Irish estates at a total of 90,846 acres, 3 roods, 24 perches: almost twice as much. They agree on an Irish annual income of around £20,000

2. W.E.H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, 4 vols. (London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), 1, 196.

Rockingham believed that an M.P. should either live in or hold lands in the county he represented and so he did not care to support his kinsman Mr. Wentworth for the Wicklow seat.¹ The election was due to begin on 27th April 1761 and had four candidates. Wentworth stood down because he did not have the marquis' backing; Richard Whaley was disliked because he exerted 'undue influence' and Rockingham's two favoured candidates, Ralph Howard and Richard Wingfield were returned.² There were 1,156 votes cast. Nicholas Collins' vote was rejected because he was a 'papist' and several would-be candidates were also rejected because they were married to Catholics. In the same election John and Edward Stratford were returned for Baltinglass on Rockingham's interest. In 1775 the marquis nominated Mr. Stratford and Mr. Brabazon for the Wicklow seats and sought the support of Irish electors: Lord Carysfort promised that he and his friends would give their votes to Rockingham's nominees.³

Rockingham's interest in Irish affairs clearly extended beyond the income from his estates and influence over elections. He possessed a document called A View of the Penal Laws in Ireland, in the Affair of Religion written in an exercise book, which is undated and without a named author.⁴ The work is an extended account of the Williamite laws and the penalties liable under those laws. He was also concerned about the adverse effects of trade laws and the Navigation Acts on Ireland, the practice of rack-renting and the use of a standing army in the country.

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1. Rockingham to Charlemont, 1761. Cited in E.M. Johnston, Great Britain and Ireland 1760-1800 (Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd, 1963), pp. 300-301.
 2. W.W.M. E236.
 3. W.W.M. R221(a)-32. Carysfort to Rockingham, 11th August 1761.
 4. W.W.M. R103. The Document appears to be a fair copy of an original manuscript by Burke, perhaps in its early states. An unfinished manuscript with the same title was published in The Works and Correspondence of Edmund Burke (London, Francis and John Rivington, 1852), Vol. 6. pp. 3-39. Although the printed text is different from the manuscript it is obviously from the same source.

His agent and relation Hugh Wentworth was a valuable source of information which the Rockingham Whigs used in parliamentary debates.

The Wentworth estates were mainly in County Wicklow which was one of the richest areas of Ireland. The first Marquis of Rockingham had as his steward the Rev. Dr. Griffith until 1748. Griffith kept his accounts very badly and he appears to have been frequently in arrears with his payment of rents. To put not too fine a point on it, Griffith was fiddling the books by overcharging tenants and underpaying the marquis. The result was that by 13th October 1748 Griffith had been removed and was replaced by Hugh Wentworth.¹ A long legal battle against Griffith ensued for the retrieval of monies he owed to the estate. Soon after Wentworth took up residence in Wicklow and began to perform his duties, the rent returns almost doubled and were paid before the deadline instead of after, as Griffith had done. The first marquis commented that he had not been aware that Griffith was 'such a rogue'.²

The point to be made, of course, is that even the most conscientious landowner could appear to be a villain in the eyes of his tenants if his agent was rack-renting. This was painfully true for the Irish whose landlords were all too often absentees who never set foot on Irish soil and who only cared about receiving their rents. The first marquis' choice of Hugh Wentworth was a good one so far as his revenues were concerned, but Wentworth and the second marquis did not always see eye-to-eye on estate administration: Rockingham tended towards leniency on his tenants' behalf but Wentworth did not.

Ireland did not have its own Mint and so - like America - suffered a chronic shortage of specie. The copper coins: [1d, ½d and ¼d] were produced in England but gold and silver coin tended to be foreign. They

1. W.W.M. M2 - 484/485.

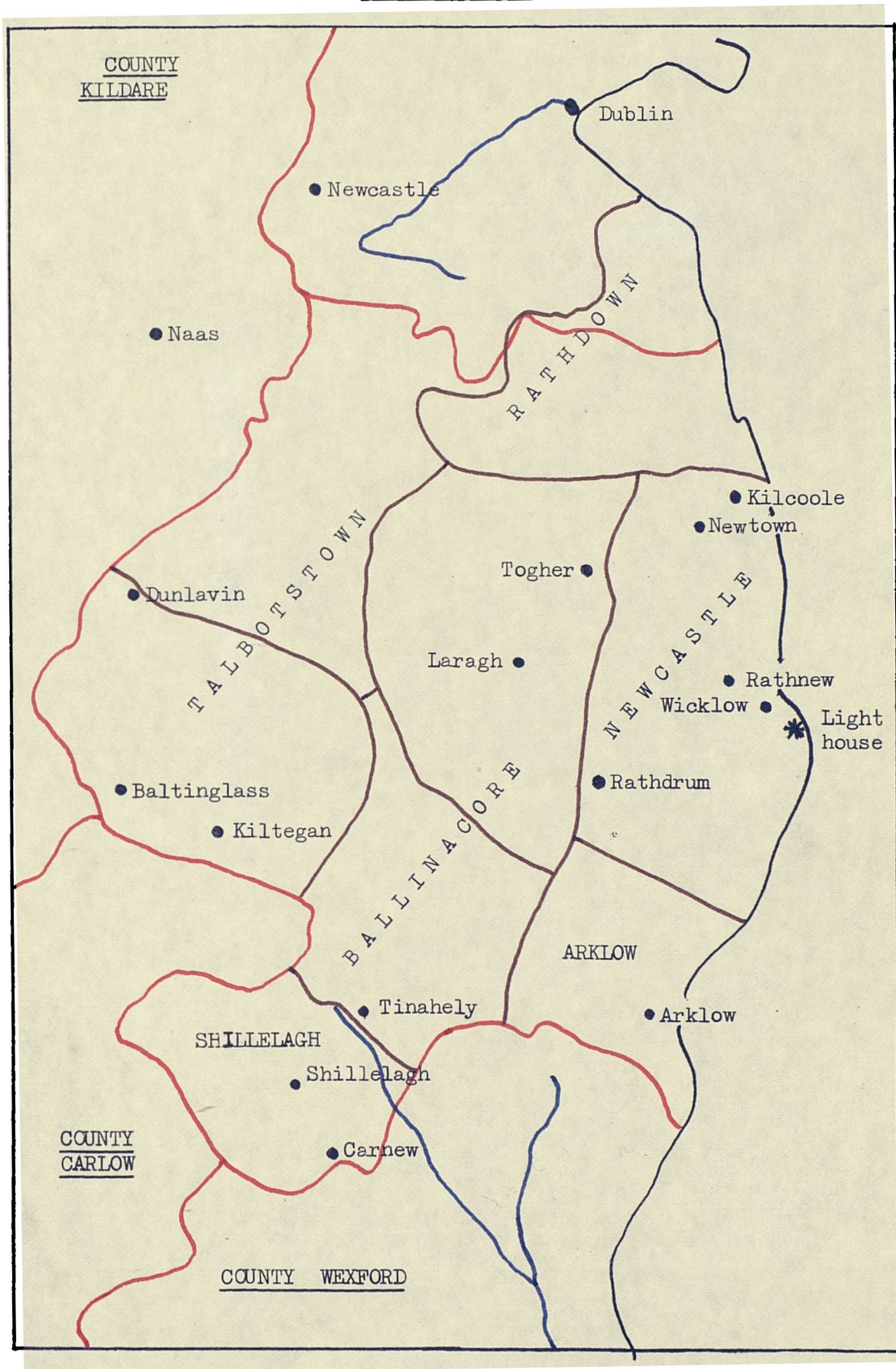
2. W.W.M. M2 - 485.

were used as currency but their value was set by proclamation. This created problems such as Rockingham was to face in Halifax in 1769. In May 1750 the first marquis told his son that he had no Irish rents. Payment had been prevented because there was some alteration being made 'on their Gold Coin, the Guineas being much lessned [sic] in their Value by Filing and what they call Sweating'.¹ The result is indicative of the importance of the Irish estates: Malton was told not to buy anything else, since his father was short of money.² Malton was in Italy on his Grand Tour at the time and was having difficulty in making his allowance last out. The first marquis was in such dire straits that he told Wentworth to accept diminished guineas. Wentworth was quick to say that he thought Rockingham was wrong but nevertheless paid £1,449. 9s. 9d. [English] to Nesbitt and Co. Wentworth thought the rest of the half-yearly rents would be fairly easy to collect.³ The Irish rents, as the English, were payable on Lady Day and Michaelmas although the cash was rarely paid to Nesbitt and Co., the marquis' bankers, on those days. For example, Wentworth made payments on 5th November 1761, 29th April and 2nd June 1762 totalling £8, 173. 12s. 5d.⁴ In an undated memorandum, Rockingham worked out the value of his Irish estates based on the rents they could bring. At 5s. per acre, the arable land would fetch £21,715 and the woods were worth £2,375.⁵ Wentworth was unable to collect all the rents biannually, apparently: even after three payments he was over £13,500 short.

The woodland was valuable because the peat soil of Ireland was not

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1. W.W.M. M2 - 538. Rockingham to Malton, 12th May 1750.
 2. Ibid., 23rd June 1750.
 3. W.W.M. R172-30. Wentworth to Rockingham, 28th June 1750.
 4. W.W.M. R1-210/237/252. Wentworth to Rockingham.
 5. W.W.M. R221(b)-17. He reckoned he owned 86,868 acres, 1 rood, 24 perches of arable land and 1,989 acres, 1 rood of woodland which he let at 15s. and 10s. per acre depending on the age of the wood.

COUNTY WICKLOW



conducive to the growth of trees. Wentworth was delighted to sell 155 acres of wood for £4,000. It had been valued at £1,027 [Irish].¹ Wentworth ensured that the woods were cut in succession and advised the marquis that they would be more lucrative if sold altogether instead of being split up into lots.

It seems that Rockingham and Wentworth were occasionally at odds regarding the value of the Irish estates. In February 1773 Wentworth stated that the land rents at Michaelmas 1771 were worth £13,955. 12s. 6½d. and the wood rents were worth £6,748. 0s. 3½d. This total falls short of Rockingham's figure [above] by over £1,000. For all his wealth Rockingham kept a careful account of his money right down to the last farthing.

Rockingham was pleased to be informed that copper deposits had been found on his Irish estates which seemed worthy of exploitation. Wentworth had sent a sample 'near as big as the nail of a Little finger - cost getting but 7 or 8 £ ... I have some hopes of Real advantage to be made by this discovery'.² The deposits were near Rathdrum, and were estimated to be worth twenty five pounds per ton. The miners 'offered to Raise at their own Cost six hundred Ton of Oar [sic] for one hundred pounds!'.³ There was also a derelict iron forge at Shillelagh which in 1774 cost Rockingham £100 in repairs. He must have felt that the outlay would be recouped, otherwise he would have been most unlikely to pay out the money.

Most of Rockingham's tenants were, in 1762, loyal Protestants, although Wentworth reported that some 'papists' were beginning to become

1. W.W.M. R176-9. Wentworth to Rockingham, 26th March 1763.
2. W.W.M. R172-10. Rockingham to James Postlethwaite, 30th July 1759.
3. W.W.M. R176. Wentworth to Rockingham, 15th October 1769.

'impertinent'.¹ In fact, some Catholics rented land on Rockingham's estates as sub-tenants of Protestants. Rockingham was angry that non-resident Protestant tenants should rack-rent Catholic undertenants and decided that 'it may be better for me and for the Estate, that the actual Resident Occupier should become in Future Tenant to me & not under-tenant to my Tenants'.² He was more concerned about the value of his lands than the religion of his tenants and felt that the actions of his Protestant tenants sub-letting to Catholics totally counteracted the 'restriction of not granting leases of my lands to any but Protestants, ... so the Restriction neither answers my advantage - or to the advantage of the Estate'.³

In November 1772 Solomon Scott wrote to the marquis expressing his surprise that Rockingham had leased his lands to papists. Scott warned that the Catholics would drive out Protestant tenants: he said that Catholic homes

may be build for £3 per Cabbin [sic] which commonly serves as Dwelling-house, Cowhouse & Pigsty, & is composed of the following Materials [sic] Vizt the Walls are Sods or Stone ... gathered in the fields which are rudely piled together without any sort of mortar - the Roof is small birch poles or sometimes only Sally Alder &c covered with Sods and sometimes with thatch. ... at one end is a fire place (but seldom any chimney) - at the other end the Pig the Children Cows etc take up their lodgeings [sic]. 4

Scott asked if this was the sort of person Rockingham wanted as a tenant: the last section of the letter is perhaps the most telling, thought. Scott wondered if Rockingham desired to see his Protestant tenants 'reduced to so much Wretchedness which they certainly would [be], were they to pay your Lordship the like prices for your Land such as Papists would

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1. W.W.M. R1-837. Wentworth to Rockingham, 29th April 1762.
 2. W.W.M. R221(c)-25. Undated draft letter by Rockingham.
 3. W.W.M. R221(c)-25.
 4. W.W.M. R221(c)-38. Solomon Scott to Rockingham, 3rd November 1772.

give'.¹ The inference here is that Rockingham himself was rack-renting his Catholic tenants to such an extent that they were forced to live in abysmal conditions in order to pay the rents. This does not reflect the concern he showed about papists being over-charged by his upper-tenants - unless he resented someone else getting money which he thought he should have. There is evidence to suggest that dreadful conditions were not the sole preserve of Catholics, however.

The whole of Rathdrum belonged to the Marquis of Rockingham and was ideally situated for trade. It was, according to Wentworth, one of the poorest towns in Ireland, largely because Dr. Griffith had let all the houses and lands for almost nothing. This made 'the people totally indolent, having but little rent to pay'.² Even the best 'cabin' in town, where Wentworth dined occasionally 'is propt up on every side to prevent it falling to the Ground'. Wentworth wanted permission to build a decent inn in Rathdrum to attract travellers between Cork, Wexford and Dublin to stay there.³

Even in good years many sub-tenants and tenants found it difficult to pay their rents which were often exorbitant. The practice of giving short leases discouraged land or house improvements for that would almost invariably increase the value of both and lead to increased rents which the poor could not afford. Years of bad harvests resulted in wide-spread distress and even starvation. Rockingham kept a tight hold on his Irish estates even though he never went there and ordered Wentworth to give longer and more secure leases than was usual. He made sure that his Catholic tenants - always the poorest - had provided securities be-

1. W.W.M. R221(c)-38. Solomon Scott to Rockingham, 3rd November 1772.
2. W.W.M. R176-5. Wentworth to Rockingham, 25th November 1769.
3. Ibid.

fore they were granted leases,¹ which was an unusual occurrence in itself. Few landlords gave leases to Catholics.

In the period 1776-1780 Rockingham received a large number of letters and petitions from his Irish tenants asking for a reduction in rents. Some complained of loss of markets, which was probably true since this was the period of the American War; others commented on the great cost of land improvements. The remarkable common denominator is that all the petitioners appealed directly to the marquis rather than going to Hugh Wentworth.²

In September 1776 Peter Flanagan wrote to Rockingham asking for a reduction in his rent of £90 p.a. for a holding of ninety-four acres in Ballyguila because he was having problems finding the cash. Flanagan offered to vacate the land as a result of his arrears but the marquis had the land and farm valued for himself and decided the rent was too high. Flanagan was given a £10 rebate and a £10 p.a. reduction.³ Later the same year Henry Higginbottom also asked for a reduction in rent on his lease. Wentworth had told the man to pay his rent on pain of eviction so Higginbottom wrote directly to Rockingham. The story is fairly typical. The land at Blaneroe was poor and the cost of manure, gravel and marl was high: he had paid £103 for manure alone; Higginbottom had made many improvements to his 150 acres which he had held since 1774. He had been given three years in which to make Blaneroe habitable: although he lived in Wexford, he had done all he could. He had not evicted the sitting tenants because that would have left them destitute, but they had absconded while owing him £70. On top of that, the market

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1. W.W.M. R221(f). List of land valuations, rents, tenants and their religion.
 2. W.W.M. R180b.
 3. W.W.M. R180(b)-11/12/13.

had collapsed and 'the koin /sic/ in Ireland has fell to knowthing /sic/ so that it is impossible for me to pay the rent the way I have been'.¹ His petition was favourably received, which was more than happened to Charles Tindall.

In 1778 Tindall wrote to Rockingham asking to be let off paying a half-year's rent of £139. 3s. 6d. His reason was that his sub-tenants were unable to pay him due to the collapse of markets following the French intervention in the American war. Rockingham granted the request and reduced the annual rent but Tindall went on to prosecute his tenants who had run off while still owing him their rents, which were exorbitant. The marquis demanded that Tindall should surrender his lease since he seemed to be incapable of looking after a big farm. Rockingham desired 'that the actual Occupant Tenant /sic/ should have a fair & good Bargain & be enabled to Live & to manage his land properly, & I do not mean that that Upper Tenant - should have such Bargain as to be enabled to Let off four fifths of their Farms, & received a large Profit Rent'.² The whole incident is somewhat reminiscent of the biblical parable of the dishonest servant.³

Another tenant who appealed direct to the marquis was David Paine of Tombrane.* His farm had been leased by his family for almost a hundred years and the lease was on the verge of expiry. The lands had been much improved in that time and Paine supported five people from the farm. He knew that Rockingham customarily preferred tenants in possession to new ones and therefore appealed to him for a new lease. Paine did this because he had found out that the nephew of his father's executor intended to apply for the farm.⁴ Paine got his lease. This is not to say that

1. W.W.M. R180-6. Higginbottom to Rockingham, November 1776.

2. W.W.M. R221(d). 1-16.

3. Matt. 18 vv. 21-35.

4. W.W.M. R180(b)-8. David Paine to Rockingham.

Rockingham always sided with his tenants. When Jeremiah Symes of Ballybeg reminded the marquis of a promise to extend his lease for two more lives, Rockingham caustically asked how much of the improvements had been undertaken by sub-tenants; and doubted that he had ever committed himself to such an extension of the lease.¹

The revenues which the Marquis of Rockingham obtained from Wicklow actually fell in value throughout the 1770s because of inflation in Ireland. The linen trade was reduced to nothing; merchants went bankrupt; banks crashed.² Everyone was affected in the same way - absentees and residents alike. In 1773 Rockingham was approached by the Excise Office in Dublin concerning rates of land purchase or rent so they might acquire land on Wicklow Head to build two lighthouses, to help shipping into the port. It is difficult to believe that Rockingham could be so desperate to make money, but he offered to build them at his own expense if they would make a profit for him. If not, then he offered the land to the Excise gratis. The Excise assured him that there was no intention of making a profit and that the land they wanted was barren, rocky and of small value. By 1778 they had bought the eight acres of land from the marquis' tenants and had built the lighthouses.³

The most important event in 1773 so far as Ireland was concerned was the proposed Absentee Land Tax. The new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Harcourt, found himself faced with a public debt of one million pounds in December 1772 and desperately needed new sources of revenue. During the summer of 1773 it was proposed that absentee landlords [i.e. those who spent more than half the year out of Ireland] should be taxed at two shillings in the pound on all landed property. North's ministry

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1. W.W.M. R180(b)-1/3. Symes to Rockingham, 5th April 1780 and Rockingham to Symes, 18th April 1780.
 2. W.W.M. R221(a)-11. Wentworth to Rockingham, 1st May 1773.
 3. W.W.M. R221(i)-6, 2. Correspondence between the Excise Office, Dublin and Rockingham, June 1773 to February 1778.

agreed to support the measure if the Irish parliament chose to propose it. Lord Hertford, the Lord Chamberlain and an Irish absentee, opposed the decision and warned Lord Bessborough who in turn told Rockingham of the plans. Rockingham went on to organise opposition to the idea: but then fifteen of the Rockinghamite group owned lands worth at least £85,000 p.a. in Ireland between them.¹

The marquis went to work, whipping up opposition to the proposed absentee land tax. His first task seems to have been to compile a list of all the absentee landlords, the value of their lands and their London addresses.² Unfortunately the land-values are incomplete: there is no income for Lord Milton or Lord Upper Ossory, for example. However, one can see why Blaquiere³ suggested an absentee land tax. Even Rockingham's incomplete list shows that absentees were taking £414,000 p.a. in rents out of Ireland.⁴ In 1798 Thomas Prior estimated that absentee rents in 1729 were worth £289,000 but rose by 62% in the following forty years to be worth £632,000 by 1769.⁵ The total amount of money sent to Britain was only about 12% of all the rents collected in Ireland. Even so, a 10% levy for the richer absentees would amount to a large slice of their income.⁶

Having listed the landowners the marquis went on to find out who

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1. W.W.M. R3-10. List of absentee landlords and the value of their lands.
 2. *Ibid.* and R3-9(a)
 3. Colonel Sir John Blaquiere (1732-1812). Chief Secretary to Lord Harcourt and an Irish M.P. from 1773. He surveyed the Irish financial system and produced a programme of economy, new taxes in Ireland and the proposal for the Absentee Land Tax.
 4. W.W.M. R3-10.
 5. Thomas Prior, A List of the Absentees of Ireland and an Estimate of the Yearly Value of their Incomes spent Abroad (London, 1798). There is a thesis by S. J. Fanning, 'Irish Absentee Landowners of 1773' (unpublished, University of California, 1952) which is unavailable in this country.
 6. For Rockingham £2,000; for Bessborough £900; for Devonshire £1,200; for Savile £150.

in the Irish parliament could be influenced by the absentees and their friends. The map [overleaf] shows which areas were subject to the influence of the English landlords. The Rockinghamites had a substantial amount of influence in the counties of Ireland: the Duke of Devonshire could influence 'Lord Shannon, Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Hall, Mr. Tonson, Sir Henry Cavendish, Mr. Prittie and almost all the county of Cork Members'. Lord Bessborough's connections were 'Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Flood, Mr. Langrish, & the County of Kilkenny Members. Mr. Burton of Carlow'. Rockingham himself could depend on 'Mr. Howard, Mr. Brabazon, Lord Charlemont, Mr. Nevill, Mr. Lebuerte, and other Members in the Countys [sic] of Wexford and Wicklow'.¹

On 20th September 1773 the marquis told Burke that he did not believe the Privy Council would dare to advise Lord North and the king to approve of the tax. Rockingham said he thought such a tax 'would be contrary to every principle of wise policy in this country, and that it would be a violation of the Liberty and freedom with which every man in this constitution has a right to the usufruct of his property'.² It seems that the party attitude of there being a conspiracy to subvert the constitution was used to defend Irish incomes.

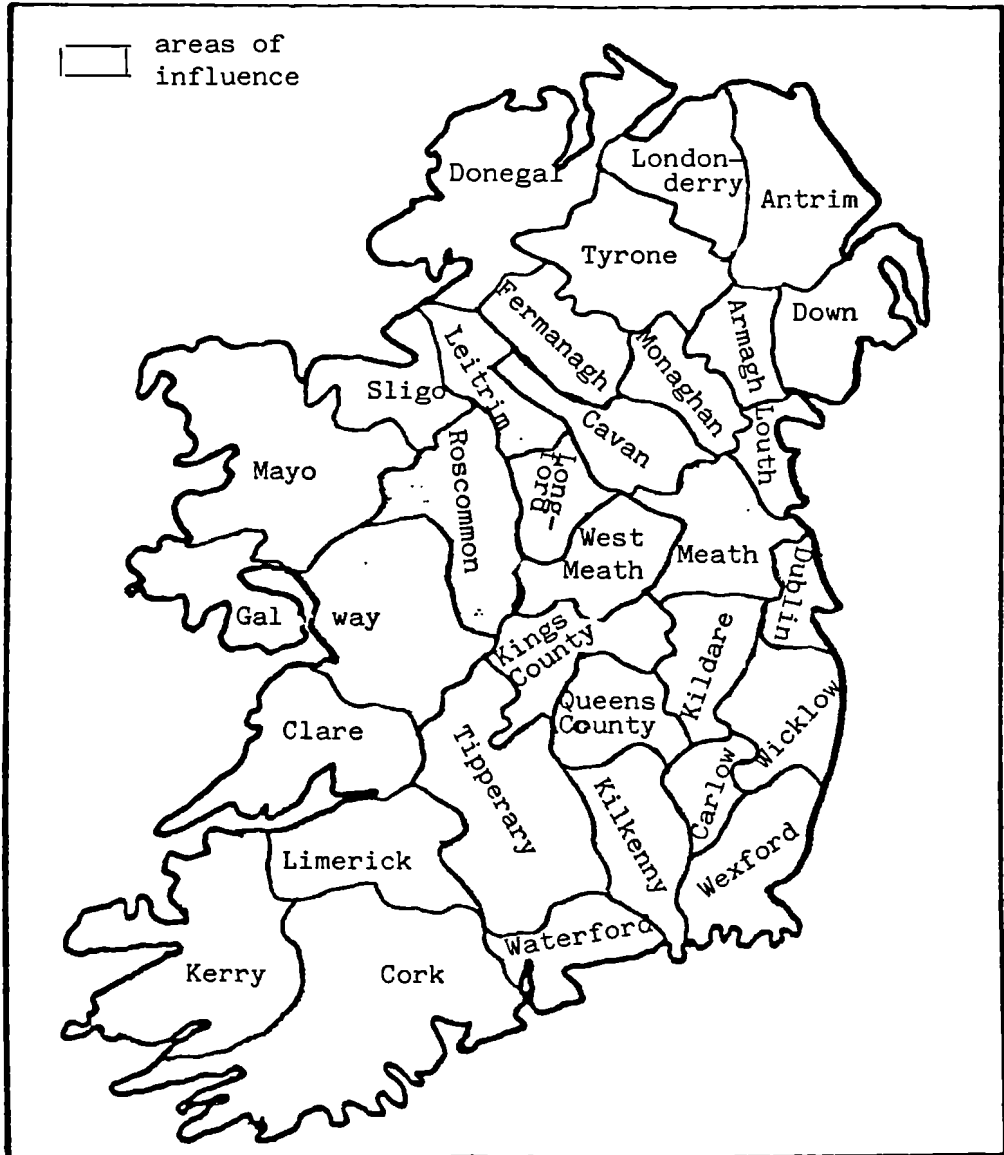
In any case, Rockingham was sufficiently roused to leave Wentworth for London so that he could organise the opposition more easily. He thought the 'Irish business is a very Serious one - & I think if it cannot be stopped, will be productive of Important Consequences'.³ Although he did not think the proposal would be approved he believed it would upset his plans to return to Wentworth quickly, and he felt obliged to ask his wife, in case it should pass, ' - would you like to pass some

1. W.W.M. R3-42.

2. Rockingham to Burke, 26th September 1773. Burke Correspondence, 2, 458-459.

3. W.W.M. R156-20. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 12th October 1773.

Counties in which Absentee Landlords had influence



years in a more quiet way than of late, by residing part of the Year in Ireland'.¹ Lady Rockingham was not keen on the idea: even though 'Living in quiet retirement with you is so much my passion that a desert would content me ... I should hope in our Old Age we might gradually obtain it without this new method of banishment for half the year to Ireland'.² The 'Irish business' even made Rockingham cut short his stay at Newmarket.³

The one thing which stands out in this whole incident is how it was not a party issue. The marquis did not want it to be solely a Rockinghamite opposition because it would have been too much like a factional issue. Rockingham received letters of support from such peers as Lords Hertford, Hillsborough, George Germain, Harrington, Weymouth, Shelburne, Ludlow, Chandos and Fortescue; Sir Lawrence Dundas and Welbore Ellis,⁴ but the letters to Lord North were signed only by Devonshire, Rockingham, Bessborough, Milton and Upper Ossory.⁵

Rockingham argued that the tax would reduce the value of property in Ireland and would eventually lead to the separation of the two countries. He thought that a greater revenue for Ireland was needed but not by taxing absentee landlords because they chose to live in England.⁶ Lord North intended to give government support to the Irish proposals - including the Absentee Land Tax - if it was thought that they would make Ireland solvent.⁷ Consequently the marquis got down to work. By October 28th he was 'deeply embarked in this Business & I must not neglect it, neither for my own Honour, not in Justice to the Many concerned,

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1. W.W.M. R156-20. Rockingham to Lady Rockingham, 12th October 1773.
 2. W.W.M. R168-240. Lady to Lord Rockingham, 17th October 1773.
 3. W.W.M. R156-21. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 16th October 1773.
 4. Sturgess, 'Rockingham Whigs, p. 159.
 5. W.W.M. R149-1; R1-1451.
 6. W.W.M. R3-1a. Joint letter to Lord North, 16th October 1773; R1-1455. Rockingham to Shelburne, undated.
 7. W.W.M. R3-4a and R149-5. North to Devonshire, 21st October 1773.

who are very ready to take & follow my opinions in the proceedings on this Matter'.¹ He employed eight clerks to write to all the absentee landlords giving an account of events. It took them four or five days² since there were some eighty-eight letters to be sent.³ They contained copies of the correspondence between the five peers and Lord North and a covering letter from Rockingham stating that if the government supported the Bill it was likely to pass before the end of November. He suggested that the absentee landlords should oppose the plan at every stage of its parliamentary process and proposed 'a General Meeting of those who are most immediately concerned ... in London about the Middle of November'.⁴

Edmund Burke objected strongly to the proposed tax, but he went no further than Rockingham and followed the same line of argument that such a tax struck at the supreme legislative power of parliament; that absentees were to be deprived of their rights under the constitution; that the tax would tend to separate the two countries. He believed that inheritance would be damaged but also feared that if the Irish parliament got away with their plan then it would set a precedent for other parts of the Empire - particularly America and the West Indies. He envisaged a situation where those who held lands in America, the West Indies and Ireland would pay taxes for non-residence in all three countries and spend a great deal of the year at sea travelling round to their properties.⁵

The Duke of Richmond opposed the tax because it was 'partial and unjust upon those individuals on whom it falls',⁶ but he did not blame

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1. W.W.M. R156-26. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 28th October 1773.
 2. W.W.M. R156-26. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 30th October 1773.
 3. W.W.M. R3-9a.
 4. W.W.M. R3-11a. Circular letter, 30th October 1773.
 5. Burke to Sir Charles Bingham, 20th October 1773. Burke Correspondence, 2, 474-481.
 6. W.W.M. R1-1460. Richmond to Rockingham, 31st October 1773.

the Irish for the attempt to recover 'some part of the Money which so regularly goes out of their Country, and which this country will not allow them the fair changes of Commerce to recover. This is in Fact a tax upon England to assist Ireland'.¹ Richmond believed that the Irish were 'in every Instance ... unjustly treated by this Country'.²

Lord George Germain did not believe the tax was unfair, in view of the condition of Ireland. His letter to Rockingham would appear to belie the opinion that the English nobility had no idea of what was going on in Ireland,³ but he preferred the idea of a general land tax such as the one levied in England even though the Irish feared that particular measure.

Rockingham's first circular letter and proposal for a general meeting resulted in a mixed bag of replies.⁴ Most respondents opposed the tax and twelve promised to attend the meeting.⁵ Eleven would not or could not attend.⁶ Lady Coningesby was too ill to be told of the

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1. W.W.M. R1-1460. Richmond to Rockingham, 31st October 1773.
 2. *Ibid.*
 3. W.W.M. R3-18. Lord George Germain to Rockingham, 2nd November 1773. 'The Resident Gentlemen, the Merchants, & the substantial House-keepers pay almost the whole charge of the Civil and Military Establishment of Ireland, many of them who have the largest property reside Constantly out of the Kingdom, & pay little or nothing to the support of its Establishment and their Tenants in General are not so Affluent as to Contribute by their Consumption in any Considerable degree to the encrease *[sic]* of the Revenue. The demands at present are so Great that the ordinary mode of supply will not suffice; the Customs & Excise will not bear much Addition unless you Tax more necessaries of Life which will reach the poor Tenants, and distress the Manufacturer; any fresh grievance, any real discouragement to industry will drive the Common people to despair'.
 4. W.W.M. R3-70 to 105. Various replies. The following information is taken from these replies.
 5. They were: Lords Ludlow, Donegall, Bertie, Digby and Courtenay; Sir Lawrence Dundas; Messrs. Fitzpatrick, Nedham, Stratford, Shirley, Southwell, Dodwell.
 6. They were: Lord Kingsborough and Mr. Fox (both minors); Lord Weymouth (could see no point in such a meeting); Lord Tormanston (did not know 'how prudent it might be in him to appear in opposition'. He was a Roman Catholic and was thus dependent on the government); Lord Dacre and Mr. Edmonstone (could not attend); Lord Portsmouth and Mr. Ellis (would not attend).

business; Lord Clare would have preferred another tax; the Duke of Chandos knew nothing about the proposals but said he would pay it. The other replies were non-committal.

Those who had influence over Irish M.P.s brought pressure to bear so that the proposals would be defeated in the Irish House of Commons. Lord Carysfort wrote that Irish peers and M.P.s were being instructed to oppose the Absentee Tax Bill¹ but Lord Upper Ossory reported that a Stamp Act had been proposed instead.² However, the tide of opinion in Ireland was turning against the idea of an Absentee Land Tax by early November although Lord Bellamont recommended that the marquis should take care how he opposed the Bill 'because the Subject affords an ample Field of unanswerable Objections and more particularly because Misrepresentation and universal Distress have rendered all Ranks and Conditions of Men in this Country eager for Innovation, no Matter on what Terms'.³

The second circular letter was produced by the marquis on 16th November.⁴ It is noticeable that the letter was drafted by Rockingham himself: the alterations were left to Burke.⁵ The meeting was to be postponed since many M.P.s in Ireland opposed the idea of the tax but Rockingham promised to keep everyone informed of any developments. Clearly the efforts to persuade absentee landowners to use their influence in Ireland had been most effective.

Rockingham was accused of factional opposition primarily because he appeared to be considering his own [substantial] interests. He ably defended himself in a letter to Sir William Mayne, but more importantly,

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1. W.W.M. R3-36. Lord Carysfort to Rockingham, Dublin, 10th November 1773.
 2. W.W.M. R3-35. Lord Upper Ossory to Rockingham, 10th November 1773.
 3. W.W.M. R3-41. Lord Bellamont to Lord Hertford, 7th November 1773.
 4. W.W.M. R3-45.
 5. Deduced from the various handwritings.

the letter may be seen as a policy statement by the marquis. He asserted that 'good Government consists in being Just and Equitable to All the Subjects of this Empire - Regulations of Trade may, for the good of the whole, lay partial Restraints, but where they do ... those Parts, which are affected become entitled to some Recompence. ... Where equal Indulgencies are not granted equal Burthens ought not to be Laid'. He determined on the repeal of the American Stamp Act 'upon the Validity of Those Arguments' because he 'deemed N: America did virtually contribute to the Revenue here, by being forced to take Manufactures &c &c so enable the Manufacturers here to pay the Taxes!'¹

By the end of November Rockingham was convinced that the government in England was at the root of the proposed absentee land tax and that Blaquiere was following orders from London.² He believed that Lord Hertford was being misled by Blaquiere and that Lord North was playing a double game by assuring absentee landowners that he did not want to see them taxed but simultaneously encouraging the Irish House to pass such a measure.³ Consequently the marquis sent off the second circular letter alerting the absentees to the situation.⁴ By 30th November he had heard that the Irish parliament had rejected the tax;⁵ he still sent out a third circular letter informing the recipients that the proposal had been defeated 120:106 but that an alternative proposal to tax all revenue sent out of Ireland had been made.⁶ On 3rd December the attempt to raise a revenue from absentee landlords was finally rejected

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1. W.W.M. R3-47. Rockingham to Sir William Mayne, 19th November 1773.
 2. W.W.M. R156-31. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 23rd November 1773.
 3. W.W.M. R156-32. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 25th November 1773.
 4. W.W.M. R156-33. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 27th November 1773.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1466.
 6. W.W.M. R3-63. Third circular letter and post-script. 1st and 2nd December 1773.

in Ireland and Rockingham found himself 'in high Favour with all Concerned in this Business, & in general with the Public for having been assisting [sic] in the defeat of This Project'.¹ That was not quite true. Beginning on 11th December 'Marius' in the Public Advertiser made savage attacks on the opponents of the tax and especially on Rockingham and his 'Irish Secretary'. They were compared unfavourably with Sir George Savile who owned land in County Tyrone but who had not signed the first circular letter. In fact Sir George did oppose the tax as bad, and unfair on absentees, but thought it was perhaps a good measure for Ireland.² He was prepared to sign a memorial or take any necessary steps to prevent the tax being approved, but never did so.

The whole affair lasted a matter of only ten weeks but during that time Rockingham was active continually, either writing letters, meeting various people or raising support in parliament. He was in London and away from his wife, which he hated. The opposition was almost a one-man show: the marquis was the organiser from start to finish. Obviously he did not want to pay another 10% tax on his income, although doubtlessly he could have afforded it.

In 1778 and 1779 France and Spain overtly joined America in the war against Britain. Ireland was exposed to invasion because of the reduced size of the army establishment there and as a result groups were formed for self-defence. The so-called Volunteers were similar to the English militia which had been set up after the 1757 Act. The Volunteers wore home-made uniforms which helped the Irish woollen industry and, although they were conservative in outlook and Protestant in religion, they probably did more to encourage the Irish parliament to demand changes than anything or anyone else. No Catholics were allowed to join the

1. W.W.M. R156-6. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 3rd December 1773.

2. W.W.M. R156-29. Lord to Lady Rockingham, 21st November 1773.

Associations because they were forbidden to carry arms. The Protestants were vastly outnumbered except in Ulster. A list of comparative figures of Protestants and Catholics made in 1732/3 shows the following pattern:¹

Province	Protestant Families	Catholic Families	Difference
Ulster	62,620	38,459	+ 24,161
Munster	13,337	109,409	- 96,072
Leinster	25,238	92,424	- 67,186
Connaught	4,299	44,133	- 39,834
TOTALS	105,494	284,425	-178,931

In Wicklow where Rockingham's lands were, Catholic families outnumbered Protestant families two to one.

The Volunteers were expected to provide their own uniforms which immediately ruled out all but the well-to-do, although subscriptions were raised to help the poorer Volunteers. From Wicklow the Volunteers wrote to Rockingham asking if they could have his permission to call themselves the 'Rockingham Volunteers'.² He politely declined the honour but paid £479, 19s. 2½d. to help provide them with weapons. In addition to this, eighty-one other subscribers raised £414, 2s. 9d. to help clothe some Volunteers: there was a total of 371 Volunteers of whom half needed financial help.³ On 12th July 1780 The Wicklow Volunteers were presented with their Colours at Rockingham's Irish seat of Malton, County Wicklow. Their motto was Mea Gloria Fides /Faith is my Glory/, the motto of Lord Rockingham.

1. A Liste of all the Catholic and Protestant Families in Ireland as it was taken in the years 1732 and 1733 on a report of the Chevalier's Son intending to land in that Kingdom. Ushaw College Archives. (Ba) Jacobite (Tyrrell) Papers 15.

2. W.W.M. R4-15.

3. Ibid.

So far as the marquis could see, one problem of the Wicklow Volunteers was going to be how they proposed to arm themselves since Irish troops used a lighter musket than the regular army. Rockingham undertook to apply to the government for a permit to purchase and export weapons, bayonets, cartridges and slings to Ireland at his own expense¹ and did not foresee any difficulties.² He also promised to head the subscription list for uniforms.

Also in 1778 a Catholic Relief Act was passed in England and in Ireland largely due to the efforts of the Rockinghamites. This allowed Catholics to join the regular army - to fight in America - but it also gave them the rights to hold some public offices, to lease land for 999 years and to have freedom of worship. The Irish Act was similar to Savile's Act for England and to some extent reflected the prevailing spirit of toleration.

The forming of the Volunteers in Ireland was instrumental in the eventual relaxation of the trade restrictions on Ireland because the Volunteers added muscle to the vocal demands made by merchants, M.P.s and the trade boycott associations. As early as 9th April 1778 Burke and Earl Nugent³ proposed a relaxation of trade restrictions for Ireland because of the war against America and the likely war against France but their plan was rejected by parliament.

Rockingham was made more aware of the distress in Ireland through information sent by his tenants and acquaintances. Henry Mitchell⁴

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1. Stw. P.12(a) 29 and 30. Undated memorandum by Rockingham. This compares the prices for a musket, bayonet, scabbard, cartridge box and belts produced by Thomas Smith of Sheffield and Thomas Richards of Birmingham. It may relate to this promise to arm the Wicklow Volunteers.
 2. W.W.M. R1-185(a). Rockingham to Abraham Symes, 4th October 1779.
 3. He had been Lord Clare and M.P. for Bristol until 1774.
 4. An estate employee in Wicklow.

reported that trade had almost ground to a halt because of the 'Extreme Distress this Kingdom now Suffers and likely to Continue in, The Drain of Cash, The Preparations for a French War, tho' almost Exhausted by that which has been Carried on, and Also the alarm of an Invasion Here'.¹ The High Sheriff and Grand Jury of County Wicklow sent a petition to George III via the marquis and from which he made notes, stating that the 'inferior tenantry' paid their rents and earned their living from making woollen cloth and by farming; but that the woollen business had been stopped 'and in consequence of which the fields and highways are filled with the wretched Inhabitants half naked and starving'.² The petitioners had thought that parliament would have been pleased to accept Burke's and Earl Nugent's proposals, under the circumstances, but 'your petitioners see with surprize and concern every beneficial measure rejected, ... that the K[ingdom] is by this means reduced to the utmost poverty & on the verge of inevitable bankruptcy'.³ The petition was signed by twenty-four men of whom fifteen also signed Wicklow's agreement of Association.⁴

Also in April 1778 parliament received petitions against concessions to Ireland from Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, London and cities in Somerset, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire: the same areas which had petitioned Rockingham for the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766 to alleviate their own distress. Their actions reduced the effect of 1778 Act to lessen the trade restrictions on Ireland and effectively killed the Bill to allow the Irish to import from the colonies direct.

The depression was acute in Dublin by the middle of 1778. There

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1. W.W.M. R221(a)-79. Mitchell to Rockingham, 27th April 1778.
 2. W.W.M. R4-9. Wicklow petition. Notes in Rockingham's handwriting.
 3. Ibid.
 4. W.W.M. R4-14a. Wicklow agreement of Association.

was much unemployment which created the risk of riot, and poverty was so widespread that Lord Lieutenant Buckinghamshire set up a subscription fund for the relief of poverty. Eleven principal donors gave either £100 or £105¹ and a total of £4,000 was raised very quickly. Eight of the principal donors did receive a joint income of over £82,000² and Conolly's wife had an Irish income of £3,000 p.a. Lords Meath and Nugent lived in Ireland.

The depression led to a financial collapse: in ten days in May 1778 two banks crashed and nineteen merchants went bankrupt. There was so little confidence in the Irish economy that the government there was unable to borrow. The Dublin relief fund was exhausted rapidly and there was an increasing concern 'not merely for the Distress of the poor but for the Peace of the City' which had been maintained for the previous five weeks only by the efforts of the Volunteer regiment there.³

In spite of all the information being sent to England, very little was done to help Ireland. One could argue that war with America and eventually world-wide was enough for the government to deal with; besides which there was much distress in England as a result of the wars. In any case the wheels of the eighteenth-century government ground but slowly and Ireland was far from the top of North's priorities.

On 19th January 1779 Lord Nugent spoke in the House of Lords about the condition of Ireland. He compared the want, famine and poverty of that country to the 'calamities of our people at Calcutta during the dreadful scarcity of provisions there', saying only that could compare with the situation of the Irish.⁴ Rockingham began to gather information

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1. They were Lords Buckinghamshire, Hertford, Rockingham, Hillsborough, Meath, Donegal, Nugent, Milton, Egremont and Devonshire and Thomas Conolly.
 2. W.W.M. R3-10.
 3. W.W.M. R221(a)-83. R. Woodward to Hugh Wentworth, 27th June 1778.
 4. Cobbett & Wright, History of Parliament, XX, 111-112.

to show how the Irish non-importation/non-exportation agreements were affecting English trade. One Yorkshire man was losing between £4,000 and £5,000 p.a. on the export of fine cloth to Ireland since all his orders had been cancelled: he had traded in Dublin for twenty-six years.¹ The marquis also established that English woollen cloth was kept cheaper than Irish woollen cloth because there were no duties on domestic cloth, and so competed unfairly. This was obviously the intention of the trade restriction but it had finally been realised that it had adverse effects on the Irish economy.² Lord Nugent also pointed out that a poverty-stricken Ireland affected England since the Irish were unable to buy English goods, and if nothing was done, Ireland would be lost.

In February the Dublin Evening Post reported that £2 million p.a. would be kept in Ireland if all English goods were boycotted. Lord Newhaven proposed trade concessions to Ireland to try to stem the flow of emigration to America: many Irish had gone to the colonies and were now part of Washington's army there fighting the English. The motion was supported by a combination of Whigs and Tories although the existence of twenty thousand armed Irish Volunteers probably encouraged the moves towards concessions. Rockingham spoke at length in the House of Lords on the Irish crisis and asked for papers to be put before the House on the increase of the civil establishment, the military establishment, hereditary revenues, the public debt and the state of trade.³ He noted from the replies that the increase in expenditure in Ireland from 1777 to 1779 was £77,566 and that on 25th March 1779 the Irish national debt was over

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1. W.W.M. R4-11. Undated note by Rockingham. The man came from Saddleworth.
 2. W.W.M. R4-2 and 5 (a). Undated note by Rockingham. In 1777, wool in Ireland sold at 18s. or 19s. per 14 lbs; wool in England sold at 18s. per 29 lbs. In 1778 wool in Ireland sold at 9s. or 10s. per 14 lbs; in England it sold at 15s. per 29 lbs.
 3. W.W.M. R4-18. Undated note in Rockingham's hand.

£1 million.¹

Almost concurrently the Irish County Associations began to pass resolutions boycotting imports from England. The first to move was Galway. They resolved that 'Whereas the Manufacturers and other Inhabitants of Manchester have most ungenerously and ungratefully opposed every effort made in the British Parliament for the Extension of the Trade and Manufactures of this Kingdom ... To prevent the Consumption of Manchester Manufactures in this Kingdom [and] should [this] prove fruitless, we will ... make our Non-Importation General'.² The idea was quickly copied by other counties.³ The people of Wicklow petitioned George III but sent a copy to Rockingham too.⁴ Their livelihood depended on woollen cloth and farming, both of which had been badly hit. They asked to be allowed to export grain and cloth abroad and claimed it would do little damage to English trade. The Cork Association decided on a seven-year ban on English clothing; Meath encouraged people to wear only Irish cloth; Monaghan, Roscommon and Mayo banned all English clothing as being the best way of encouraging domestic manufacture.⁵ The Dublin Association banned all goods and wares produced in Great Britain 'which can be produced or manufactured in this Kingdom till an enlightened policy, founded of Principles of Justice shall appear'.⁶

Rockingham was obviously perturbed by these events since he kept a book of newspaper cuttings and copies of petitions and addresses concerning the non-importation. He had seen it all before, of course, when he was Prime Minister, and he was astute enough to realise that Ireland could go the way of America if concessions were not made soon. It must

1. W.W.M. R81-40 and 41.

2. W.W.M. R4-20. Dublin Evening Post, 3rd April 1779.

3. Ibid. They were Cork, Meath, Mayo, Roscommon, Monaghan, Wicklow and Tyrone. Dublin followed suit on 16th April 1779.

4. W.W.M. R4-13b. Wicklow petition, 6th April 1779.

5. W.W.M. R4-9, 20, 21.

6. W.W.M. R4-7. Dublin Resolutions.

have been clear that the non-importation movement was rapidly gathering strength and covered a wide area, although most of Protestant Ulster did not participate because the linen industry was centred there, such as was left of it, and it depended largely on the English market for survival.

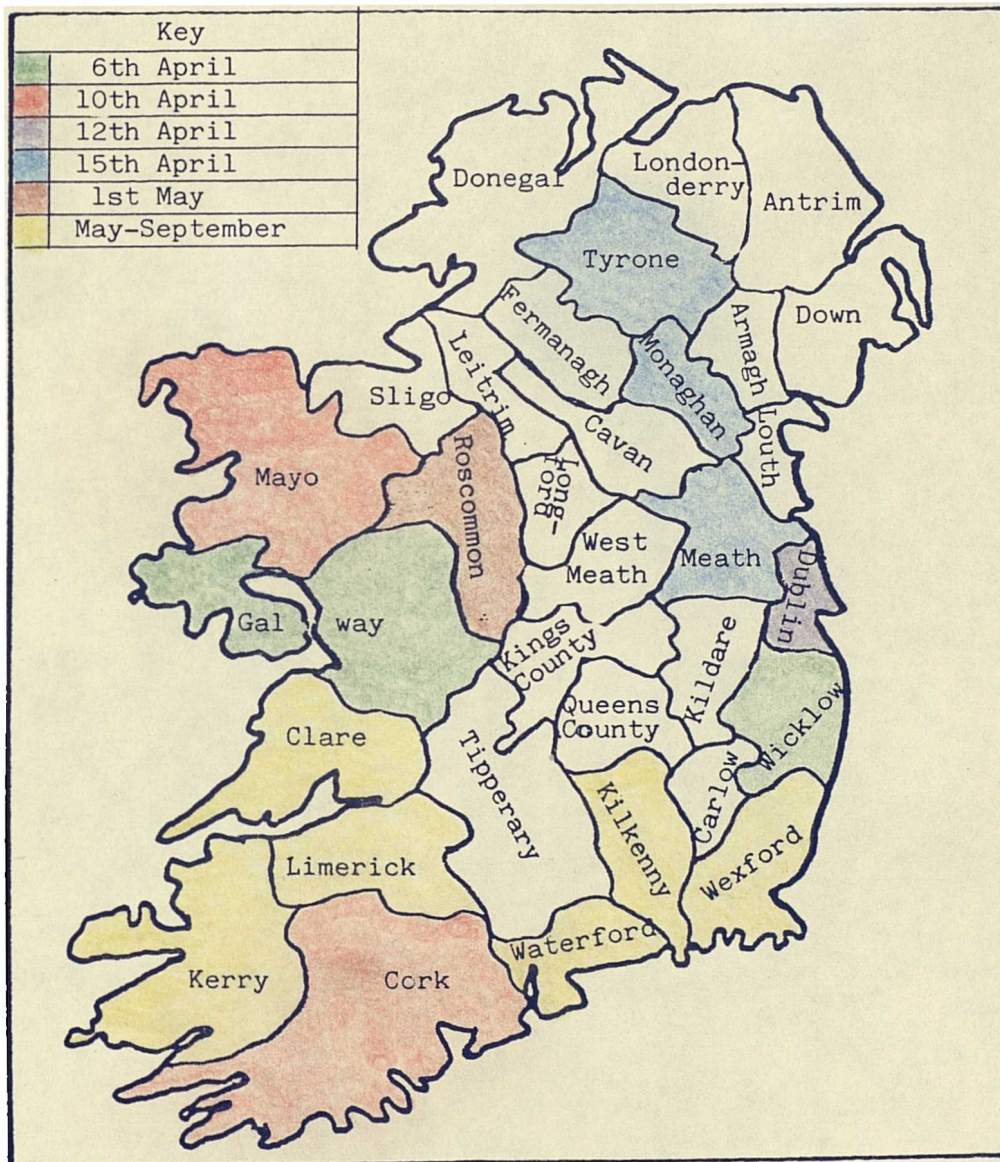
In the Irish parliament, Members were being urged to vote for the removal of trade restrictions and to enforce the demand by voting cash supplies for six months only. Because of the pressure of public opinion the Irish did vote for free trade and a short money Bill, with the encouragement and backing of the Volunteers and Associations. These actions alarmed the English mercantile interests and the government because both measures gave the Dublin parliament a great deal of independence. The government was in a difficult position: not to give way could create the danger of open rebellion but to grant free trade might lead to further demands. Lord North prevaricated.

Rockingham seems to have intended to raise the subject of Ireland as often as was necessary to produce results. However, he had no wish to encourage rebellion and was not prepared to accede to all the demands made in Ireland. For example, he opposed the Bill to allow bounties on Irish hemp on the grounds that English hemp was naturally cheaper. A Mr. Minchin of Wimpole Street sent figures to prove that Irish hemp was cheaper. Rockingham, in his usual manner, worked out Minchin's figures again. It transpired that on Minchin's figures, Irish hemp was cheaper, but he had not allowed for renting or fertilising the land.¹ In the event the marquis decided that it was cheaper to grow wheat than hemp in Ireland, and that wheat was more valuable.

The Marquis of Rockingham had also spent time finding out how the Yorkshire woollen industry would be affected if the Irish were allowed to export their own manufactured woollens. One reply, from Charles Clapham

1. W.W.M. R61-11/4 and 5. Minchin to Rockingham, 22nd April 1779 and Rockingham's reply.

The Non-Importation Agreements of 1779.



of Leeds, suggested that the Irish should be allowed to make and export woollens,¹ while the information he had already received from Saddleworth showed that the domestic trade was being hit by the Irish non-importation as well as by the consequences of the American war.

Edmund Burke was eager to see Irish trade made more free so he encouraged his employer to make a stand for the Irish in parliament. Just before the marquis' great speech in the Lords on the subject, Burke wrote to him in an attempt to guide his methods. Burke suggested that 'it would be better to insist on the reasonableness of forming a plan for a well considered freedom of Trade ... than to dwell on the danger of not making concessions'. Burke went on virtually to write the speech for Rockingham. 'You have but three points to establish, all very clear & simple'. These were the decay of Irish trade, the decline of the revenue and the discontent caused by losses from the American war.²

In fact Rockingham had already written his own speech which made Burke's efforts redundant. He had previously called for the papers on Ireland's expenditure and made excellent use of the information. He outlined the financial position of Ireland since 1760 and quoted import/export figures for a ten-year period to 1778. He used the information gleaned from Yorkshire manufacturers to show how the woollen trade to Ireland had declined, and went on to lash the government for its neglect of Ireland in both the economy and defence. He compared the grievances of the Irish to those of the Americans and proposed that the situation should be remedied before an even greater crisis erupted.³ His speech concluded with the Motion 'that this House, taking into Consideration

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1. W.W.M. R4-22a. Clapham to Rockingham, 10th May 1779.
 2. W.W.M. R4-1a. Burke to Rockingham, undated.
 3. W.W.M. R81-75. Heads of speech on Ireland, Undated.

the distressed and impoverished state of ... Ireland, and being of the opinion that it is consonant to justice and true policy, to remove the causes of discontent by a redress of grievances; ... doth think it highly expedient that this important business should no longer be neglected'.¹ He asked for all relevant information on the trade and manufactures of Ireland to be made available so that concessions could be more readily framed.

He then approached the king personally. He apologised for 'Intruding myself into your Closet' but wished to inform his Majesty about 'what is passing in Ireland & on the miserable State of that Country'.² The marquis knew that many petitions from America stating the colonists' grievances had been rejected by George III on the advice of his minister. The upshot had been the Declaration of Independence. Now the Irish were also sending resolutions and petitions, and Rockingham was aware that 'there may be Persons, who Suggest that Warmer even Violent Resolutions and Petitions should be treated de Haut en Bas - Indeed ... it has been the cause of much Mischief'.³ He informed the king that the Irish were suffering more hardship than any other subjects as a result of the loss of American trade but yet the government still demanded more from them in taxation. The opposition needed the king's support to gain concessions for Ireland and the marquis' approach to him possibly helped his aim.

The government was not going to accept opposition easily, however, Lord Camden replied to Rockingham by accusing the Irish of being ungrateful for the concessions already made and of entering into dangerous associations. He suggested that if the discontent 'should be permitted

1. Cobbett & Wright, History of Parliament, XX, 635-636.

2. W.W.M. R81-31/1. Rockingham to George III. Undated draft.

3. Ibid.

to increase [it] may take a deep root and endanger the safety of his Majesty's kingdoms already too far engaged in a Civil as well as a foreign war'.¹ Burke was 'quite amazed at the Motion Lord Camden [sic] has drawn. One would imagine, by the Style and manner, that he had found it in Lord Chatham's Portfolio'.² He thought that parliament should keep the appearance of grace and dignity in making concessions as well as looking into the causes of discontent in Ireland, instead of making concessions because of the threat of violence.

Rockingham's reply to Camden's motion was to point out that it was 'not necessary to accuse ourselves of our folly' in creating grievances in Ireland.³ He objected to the Association being labelled 'dangerous' and asked for redress of grievance for Ireland. Once again he requested the Irish trade papers to be laid before the House so they would be there when legislation was formulated.

Nothing was done. Admittedly, North had other things to deal with in the summer of 1779, such as the growing activity of the Protestant Association, the discontent of the country gentlemen which culminated in the founding of the Yorkshire and then the County Associations, the economic distress being felt throughout England as a result of the war and finally the effects of the war itself: in the loss of trade and the fear of invasion - high taxation and few victories.

Eventually Rockingham gathered his information together for a scathing attack on Lord North. He produced a catalogue of detail proving that Ireland was in a desperate situation⁴ - but since his rents were being paid, he had no personal axe to grind - and that it was having

1. W.W.M. R4-11c. Camden's motion. Undated.
2. W.W.M. R4-1a. Burke to Rockingham, Undated.
3. W.W.M. R81-199. Undated.
4. W.W.M. R81-132. Undated memo. Rockingham's hand.

an adverse effect on England: 'N.B. The stop of the Narrow Cloth of Saddleworth¹ and ended with a motion 'That it is highly criminal for the Relief of the Kingdom of Ireland in consequence of the Address of this House dated the 11th day of May and of His Majesty's most gracious answer'. He accused North of allowing the discontent in Ireland to grow so much as to 'endanger a dissolution of the Constitutional connection ... and create new Embarrassments to the public councils by division and diffidence when ... unanimity [is] essential to the preservation of what is left of the British Empire'.²

By 1779 Rockingham was advocating that Britain should acknowledge the independence of America and bring the war to as favourable a conclusion as possible so that trade and commerce could return to more normal channels. He had opposed the war from the beginning and could see the pattern beginning again, this time in Ireland. As he had done his utmost to conciliate America, so he did likewise for Ireland.

The concessions finally came in December 1779. North proposed to allow the free export of wool, woollens and glass from Ireland and to open up more empire trade to the Irish. The catch was that Irish duties had to be raised to the same level as those of England. The proposals became law on 23rd December and North's government received the praise although the Rockinghamites had done most of the work. Charles James Fox reminded the Duke of Leinster that 'Ireland ought not to forget that Lord Rockingham was the first person who stirred the affairs of Ireland here, and at a time when we were not forced to it in the matter we are now'.³

Burke believed that the government intended to destroy the reputa-

1. W.W.M. R81-132. Undated memo. Rockingham's hand.
2. W.W.M. R97-19. Motion to the House of Lords. Undated.
3. C. J. Fox to Leinster, December 1779. Charlemont Papers.

tion of the Rockinghamites because they were brave enough to remind the government of its duty towards Ireland.¹

They caused it to be industriously circulated through the Nation that the distresses of Ireland were of a nature hard to be traced to their true source; that they had been monstrously magnified; and that in particular the official reports from Ireland had given the lye /sic/ to Lord Rockingham's representations. And attributing the origins of the Irish proceedings wholly to us; they asserted that everything done in Parliament upon the Subject with a view of stirring up Rebellion ... For the Ministers proceeded in your Affairs just as they did with regard to those of America. 2

In January 1780 the Irish were allowed to trade with British colonies in Africa and the Americas and in March 1780 further concessions were made. The prohibition on the export of gold and silver from England to Ireland was repealed which gave Ireland a viable currency; the Irish were allowed to import hops which encouraged their almost dead brewing industry; and the Turkey Company was opened to Irish trade. The East India Company remained closed to Ireland as did the re-export to England of colonial goods.

The concessions, wrung from Britain by the economic situation and the threat of violence, failed to satisfy the growing nationalism of the Irish. The Volunteers improved their organisation and pressed for constitutional reform. In April 1780 Grattan attempted an Irish Declaration of Independence which was defeated by the supporters of the British connection. However, the attempt did prove that Stephen Croft's warning to Rockingham in January 1780 that 'the Irish won't sit down long quiet they will Endeavour to secure something Certain & then they will try for something more' was accurate.³

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1. W.W.M. R140-35. Burke to some unnamed person in Ireland. 1st January 1780.
 2. W.W.M. R140-35.
 3. W.W.M. R136-38. Stephen Croft to Rockingham, 10th January 1780.

The next real concessions to Ireland came in 1782 under Rockingham who gave the constitutional reforms desired by the 'patriots'. He repealed the 1719 Declaratory Act for Ireland just as he repealed his own American Declaratory Act, and changed Poyning's Law so that the Irish parliament became almost independent since 'Heads of Bills' no longer had to go through Westminster. The perpetual Irish Mutiny Act was changed so that it more closely resembled that of England and needed annual renewal. The tenure of judges was changed from 'at pleasure' to 'on good behaviour' which gave the legal system rather more independence. The power to alter Irish bills was taken from the Viceroy and Privy Council: they retained only the right of veto. Finally, the summoning of an Irish parliament was no longer under the influence of Westminster since it needed only a licence from the king.

Rockingham died before his measures became fully operational and before the Patriots became overt in their aim of independence. The marquis expended a great deal of energy on the Irish question, seeking to alleviate the distress being experienced there through both practical and parliamentary methods. Burke probably assisted Rockingham as he also wanted to help his native country through peaceful, legal methods. As always, the Marquis of Rockingham sought information on which to base his arguments and showed that he had a great capacity for absorbing details. He was concerned for the people of Ireland more than for the maintenance of empire although he probably had no wish to see the Irish repeat the Americans' action.

It seems clear that the interest which Rockingham showed in his estates and tenants and the economic conditions of the time did not only apply to his English lands but extended to Ireland which was generally a much-neglected part of Britain. There was no need for the marquis to become so involved in the management of his Wicklow estates: he employed

a steward to deal with that. Neither did he need to become involved in the economics of the country during the American War. The only time in his marquisate when his personal affairs demanded his attention was in 1773 after the proposal for an Absentee Land Tax.

It is possible that he saw all his property, including his Irish lands and tenants, as his personal concern. The level of his interest was greater than that of many magnates and just as he sought to develop the mineral resources at Wentworth he did likewise at Rathdrum. That created some employment; the coppicing of his woodland created more. In giving long leases and security of tenure the marquis encouraged farm improvements, and by opposing the rack-renting of Catholic under-tenants he demonstrated his attitude towards toleration and his basic humanity.

Perhaps the trade concessions which he advocated were intended to strengthen Anglo-Irish ties and to keep Ireland loyal in a time of crisis but he was one of the few peers to stand up and be counted over the Irish question and he did more for the Irish economy in a few months than many others did in years. The problems of Ireland were part of the imperial crisis of the 1770s and just as the marquis led the way over Ireland, so he and his followers stood alone over the American question.

CHAPTER 8

ROCKINGHAM, YORKSHIRE AND THE

AMERICAN QUESTION

One of the major themes in English politics during Lord Rockingham's marquisate was the American question. That he had an undoubted and long-standing interest in America may be judged from the sheer volume of material on the subject to be found in his papers.¹ This interest was undoubtedly shaped in part by his social, political and economic involvement in Yorkshire, an area which was adversely affected by the colonial troubles. His friends soon felt the economic effects of the post-war slump of 1763 and were also victims of the American non-importation agreements of 1765 and 1768. This is not to say that Rockingham's interest was purely selfish or even only limited to helping his friends. Had that been the case he would probably have supported the war against America between 1776 and 1782 since the woollen and metal industries flourished in that period, thanks to government contracts. Yorkshire was deeply involved in trade to America and the two areas most concerned were the West Riding and south Yorkshire. Both were much influenced by the marquis and equally had the most influence on him. There are grounds for believing that Rockingham's relatively sympathetic attitude towards America was sustained by this local influence.

The marquis was certainly very well informed of events and attitudes both in America and England via a complex network of political allies, friends, merchants, manufacturers and the inevitable sycophants. Consequently he and his followers were at least as well informed as any other group in Parliament and possibly more so. Once he had formed what was essentially a sympathetic policy towards America he consistently followed it. By 1782 he was openly acknowledging America's de facto independence and was trying to find a way of ending the war. Privately

1. W.W.M., many of the R1 series, and also R5/22/23/24/27/28/42/49/61/63/65/81/127/152/156/176.

he had realized that the war was lost as early as 1778.¹ The Rockinghamites wanted to reconcile the colonies to British rule rather than coerce them, and they were in the minority in their opposition to the colonial policies of the several governments and most M.P.s for this very reason.

Rockingham's policy was neither theoretic nor altruistic. He wanted to maintain the colonial status of America because it brought benefits to Britain and more particularly to Yorkshire.

Rockingham's first political knowledge of American affairs probably came with the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1756. The war and the subsequent demand for uniforms, blankets, weapons and other military supplies created prosperity in Yorkshire's woollen and iron regions. When the fall of Canada was reported in 1760 there were celebrations in Leeds and Wakefield, 'for in the West Riding of Yorkshire we look upon the war in North America as merely carried on for the benefit of our cloth trade', as Rockingham himself put it, clearly identifying himself with the manufacturers and traders of the West Riding.² In 1750 the amount of woollen cloth exported to America was 152,787 pieces. In 1755 this had fallen to 95,937 pieces, but by 1760 it was up to the enormous figure of 408,485 pieces.³ Since Yorkshire was beginning to become one of the major woollen-producing areas of England and since fustian made up the bulk of these exports, the county benefited greatly from the demands of the war.

Until 1763 the Americans had felt threatened by the presence of the French in Canada and down the Ohio-Mississippi river complex. The Seven Years War removed this threat and created a hitherto unknown

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1. W.W.M. R140-10. Rockingham to Melish, 5th October 1778. 'An enlightening of our understandings at Home may enable us to shake hands in friendship with the great Independent Continent, and bring about again a general Peace'.
 2. Cited in G.H. Guttridge, The Early Career of Lord Rockingham 1730-65 (University of California Publications in History XLIV, 1952), p. 19.
 3. E.B. Schumpeter, English Overseas Trade Statistics 1697-1808 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 66-68.

stability and sense of security in the thirteen colonies. For Britain, the war created a national debt of £140 million which successive governments felt ought to be borne partly by the Americans. Consequently the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 marked the beginning of the conflict between England and America which ended twenty years later with the Americans gaining the independence which they had declared in 1776.

The result of the vast increase in the national debt was an attempt by the British Government to make America more directly profitable to Britain. There had been plans to tighten up control of the colonies before 1756 but the war had prevented the implementation of these plans. After 1763 however, legislation came fast and furious as Britain embarked on a new policy for America.

The first decision to be made with regard to America was that the army already there should remain. This was followed by the 1763 Royal Proclamation which forbade the colonists from moving west of an imaginary line across the Appalachians. The British government merely added insult to injury when it ordered the army to prevent all westward movement in contravention of the Proclamation. The final piece of legislation to pass without much disturbance was the Order in Council of 1st June 1763, which tightened up the Customs Service in North America. Many senior customs-men lived in England and employed under-paid and therefore bribe-able deputies to do their jobs. Absentee customs officials were told either to go to America or to resign. The consequence was an immediate and probably over-zealous enforcement of the Trade and Navigation Laws.

It must be remembered that the years 1760-1764 were ones of hardship in England. There were two economic crises in this period: from June to December 1761 and from July to October 1763.¹ 1762 was a year

1. T.S. Ashton, Economic Fluctuations in England 1700-1800 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 173.

of drought but it was followed by the wettest summer in seven years. Wheat prices rose steadily from 36s. 6d. per quarter to 46s. 9d., while total exports declined. This decline was most noticeable in the American trade where exports from London fell from £1,851,142 in 1760 to £931,209 in 1764. The value of exports from outports also declined from £320,249 in 1760 to only £14,315 in 1764.¹ In view of Rockingham's comments on the celebrations of 1760 it seems likely that the joy had turned to sorrow in Yorkshire as army contracts dried up and boom turned to slump. By December 1765 most of the half million cloth workers of Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Keighley, Halifax, Huddersfield, Pudsey, Ossett and Kirkheaton were either unemployed or on half-time employment. There was also much acute distress among hardware workers because of the termination of government contracts at the end of the war. In turn, the coal industry was affected because coal was not in such great demand.² At the same time craftsmen were leaving England for America.

Grenville's government attempted to increase the revenue from America through the Sugar Act, but colonial trade would have ground to a halt if it had been enforced, because the Act provided that the duties should be paid in specie which was lacking in America. The only colony which had an adequate supply of hard cash was Massachusetts. To make matters worse, the 1764 Currency Act prohibited the colonies from printing paper money. The result was a shortage of a medium of exchange.

Rockingham knew of the difficulties. He received a letter from Philadelphia in 1764 which stated quite clearly the conditions there. The writer had tried to set up a business in the city three years earlier but had found things so difficult that he had decided to sell up as

1. P.R.O. Customs 3.

2. W.J. Shelton, English Hunger Riots, p. 142.

soon as possible. He saw the major difficulty as being

the collecting money from our Customers, which will shortly become extremely [sic] scarce, as we are constantly remitting home our Silver and Gold; and by an ill-judged, we wont say, iniquitous Act of Parliament, we are never to make any more Paper Money; so that in short, in a little time all Trade here must be carried on by Trucking one Article for Another for want of a proper Medium.

He went on to say that British Legislation was creating a 'spirit of Independency' in America and was damaging Britain too. He pointed out that a rich America was in the best interests of Britain because 'when our Commerce was free and flourishing we spent our money freely, consumed your Manufactures and cheerfully [sic] remitted our Cash to pay for them, In short the Riches gained here by Trade finally centred on England', but now the colonists preferred to shift for themselves rather than trade with Britain because they had been denied the privileges of Englishmen.¹

In his attacks on government legislation, Rockingham returned again and again to the fact that any restrictions on American commerce eventually rebounded on Britain. He knew of the distress being felt by those involved in trade with America because he kept in touch with the state of commerce. He made it quite clear whom he held responsible for this distress and why. 'I dont imagine Mr. G. Grenville's [sic] popularity is very high in your neighbourhood', he commented to his friend Viscount Irwin of Temple Newsam, Leeds. 'The difficulties he has thrown upon trade by very inconsiderate regulations must affect any opinion in his favour among the mercantile gentlemen'.²

In spite of all the opposition Grenville went ahead with the Sugar

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1. W.W.M. R20-3. Designated 'Sir' and unsigned. Philadelphia, 28th November 1764.
 2. Cited by Paul Langford, The First Rockingham Administration, p. 116.

Act and followed it with the Stamp Act in March 1765. Several M.P.s who spoke against it were friends of Lord Rockingham, such as Sir William Meredith, Henry Conway, Sir William Baker and Tommy Townshend, but there was comparatively little opposition except from Isaac Barré.¹ The Stamp Act was passed without a division but was greeted in America with outbursts of violence. The radicals organized the Stamp Act Congress which passed a non-importation agreement to become effective on 1st November 1765. Between the time of the passing of the Act and news of the Americans' reaction to its reaching Britain, Grenville's government had fallen, and Rockingham had taken office in July 1765. At the age of 35, Rockingham had already had fifteen years' experience in national politics, and more in local affairs. Much of his experience had been hard-won in Yorkshire where he had a large following as a result of a great deal of work for the people of the county. He could also call upon much political expertise from allies such as the Yorkes and the Duke of Newcastle and from government agencies like the Board of Trade.

Rockingham also called in advisers for himself in order to obtain a broad view of the situation. One such source was the physician and Yorkshireman, Dr. John Fothergill. He had known Rockingham for several years and was on friendly enough terms with the marquis to be able to write to him at Wentworth after Rockingham had been asked to form a government, 'to express the satisfaction I feel at his being called again into the service of his King and Country'.² It seems that Fothergill was able to assure Rockingham of the support of his fellow-Quakers,

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1. Parliamentary Diaries of Nathaniel Ryder 1764-67, ed. P.D.G. Thomas, Camden Miscellany xxiii, Camden Society, 4th Series, vii (1969), pp. 256-261. Hereafter, Ryder Diaries.
 2. B.C. Corner and C.C. Booth, Chain of Friendship: Letters of Dr. John Fothergill of London, 1735-1780 (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 246. Hereafter, Fothergill.

since he went on to say that the marquis could 'rest secure of the countenance and support of the truest Friends of their King and Country'. Fothergill suggested that since Britain benefited from her American colonies then they were worth more consideration. He argued that American discontent had led to a trade embargo which had caused distress in England and drew the conclusion that the best way of easing English distress was to end the discontent in America. Certainly Fothergill had access to important information. As a Friend he would have known all the Quakers who traded with America. These men not only had commercial links with the colonies, but also had personal connections as well. Thus there was a great untapped source of knowledge about America among the Friends, compared with an equal amount of ignorance in England at large. It was typical of the thoroughness of the Marquis of Rockingham to seek out such people before making any decision.¹

The situation inherited by Rockingham was an extremely difficult one. His predecessor's legislation had led to tension and rioting in the colonies, a decline in colonial trade with Britain, and a Parliament intent on bringing the recalcitrant colonies to heel. The marquis lacked nothing in the way of unsolicited information and advice. William Bollan, the agent for Massachusetts, relayed all the letters he received from Boston. Rockingham actually kept over eighty documents concerning the Stamp Act disturbances: one wonders how many failed to survive. A representative selection from these papers shows the extent of Rockingham's understanding of the events and conditions prevailing in Boston. On 13th November 1765 Bollan sent him a copy of a letter he had received from a London merchant which had originated in Boston on 25th September

1. This information is based on the work of A.T. Gary 'The Political and Economic Relations of English and American Quakers 1750-1785' (D.Phil thesis, Oxford University, 1935), pp. 36-37 and p. 234.

1765. The Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, wrote an account of the Oliver riot, which is among Rockingham's papers, together with an account of the destruction of his own home. Both these events took place in August 1765 and were part of the Boston Stamp Act riots. Another letter to Rockingham, signed only 'R.T.', originated in London and set out the colonists' arguments against the Stamp Act. On 26th March 1766 Bolla sent letters to Rockingham from Hutchinson together with copies of the Massachusetts Resolves.¹

Rockingham also sought information for himself. One man he consulted was George Folliott, a merchant from Chester. Folliott held several government contracts for supplying the British navy stationed in America, and frequented the New York coffee house in London when he was in town. Rockingham knew him at least as early as 1763, because Folliott was the middleman for Lady Rockingham's linen purchases in Ireland.² George Folliott noted in his diary on 9th October 1765 that he had been to see Mr. Puget

who informed me that it was my lord Rockingham's desire, that I should wait upon his Lordship ... who received me very Politely; talked over some American Affairs - the Stamp Act, the late riots at Boston &c. also the Probability of Raising a Duty on Molasses at 1d. per Gallon, that of 3d. being too high ... [then] Mr. Dowdeswell came in who also asked some Questions ... both desirous of Knowing the Quan/titie/s of Molasses which might be expected to be Imported. 3

It would seem from this that Rockingham had plans to modify Grenville's Sugar Act as early as the beginning of October 1765, to bring it more

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1. W.W.M. R24-1. William Bolla to Rockingham, 13th November 1765.
 - 2. Thomas Hutchinson to William Bolla, 1st September 1765.
 - 58. R.T. to Rockingham, 7th January 1766.
 - 74. William Bolla to Rockingham, 26th March 1766.
 2. W.W.M. R176-9. Hugh Wentworth to Rockingham, 26th March 1763.
 3. The Diary of George Folliott 1765-1766 (Wigan Record Office Manuscript Collection), 9th October 1765.

into line with the sum that colonial experts felt was reasonable. Folliott calculated that a 'moderate estimate' would be an annual colonial importation of 33,000 hogsheads of molasses - over 1 million gallons, or some £7,425 per annum, assuming that trade was resumed at its pre-1764 levels. It was apparently a very attractive idea.

Also in October 1765 Rockingham was planning a Bill to create free ports in the West Indies. He had sent three papers to the Duke of Newcastle for the latter's approval, which Rockingham obtained. In Newcastle's opinion

They are ... extreamly [sic] well writ and prove sufficiently their point, that we are at liberty both by law and Treaty, to admit the Spanish Bullion to any part of our Dominions in America, and that seems to be the point at present contested for. ... I do hope [that] Liberty will also be given for Spanish vessels to return with certain Commodities ... or otherwise the great Stagnation of our Trade with North America, & the Exportation of our Woollen manufactures ... will not be put upon the same foot as it was before Mr. Grenville gave those Fatal Orders. 1

Free ports had been one source of conflict between British and colonial interests during the Seven Years War, since the Americans used St. Eustacia, Santo Domingo and Monte Christi to trade with Spain and France. Rockingham's proposal was to make free ports official and so enable Britain to benefit from them. As Burke put it:

materials were provided and insured to our manufactures - the sale of these manufactures was increased - the African trade preserved and extended - the principles of the Acts of Navigation pursued, and the plan improved - and the trade for bullion rendered free, secure, and permanent, by the Act for opening certain ports in Dominica and Jamaica. 2

It is particularly noticeable that both Newcastle and Burke stress the

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1. W.W.M. R1-511. Newcastle to Rockingham, 22nd October 1765.
 2. Edmund Burke, 'A Short Account of the Late Short Administration', in The Works and Correspondence of Edmund Burke (London, Francis and John Rivington, 1852), 3, 2.

advantages for the manufacturing parts of the country, while Newcastle specifically names the woollen industry - but then he, too, was a land-owner in the West Riding of Yorkshire and in Nottinghamshire.

Earlier the same month, Newcastle advised Rockingham that there was nothing to be gained from attempting to enforce the Stamp Act and the marquis obviously agreed. He had already embarked on formulating a programme of legislation for the colonies which came to fruition after the repeal of the Stamp Act. It is only logical to presume that he also had plans to repeal the Stamp Act, which was a major stumbling-block in the way to conciliating America. He felt that the Act showed that Grenville had 'neither prudence or foresight'.¹

The big problem in the way of repeal was the Duke of Cumberland. He was, after all, the effective head of administration and was by nature as well as by profession a soldier. Cumberland was for enforcing the Act by military methods if all else failed. Dr. Langford rightly maintains that 'there is not the least substance in the traditional view that Rockingham and his friends came to power pledged to repeal the Stamp Act, and committed to supporting colonial aspirations'.² Rockingham possibly did not even expect to come to power in 1765: it was only through Cumberland that he was offered the post of First Lord. While admitting that the way in which he came to office precluded him from having any firm commitments, it is not impossible that he had pre-formed opinions on America. He had sufficient knowledge of the colonies and very quickly turned his attention to formulating grounds for repealing the Stamp Act.

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1. Rockingham to Viscount Irwin, 25th October 1765. 'The notable confusion which [Grenville] has raised in America, though it lays difficulties on the present Administration ... shows that he had neither prudence or foresight'. Cited in Langford, The First Rockingham Administration, p. 109.
 2. Langford, The First Rockingham Administration, p. 109.

The decision seems to have been made by 23rd October 1765 as a letter to the marquis from Lord Northington shows. Northington suggested that legislation must be the first step. 'I think your L[ordshi]p doth very proper in giving Your Attention to the Trade of this Kingdom & to any well-founded Complaints of the Merchants, But where the Law is against Opinion in such case, the Relief must wait the Judgement of the Legislature'.¹ All this took place while Cumberland was still alive: it is possible, therefore, that the cleavage in the administration was between the followers of Cumberland who wanted enforcement of the Act and the followers of Rockingham who had apparently already decided on repeal. P.D.G. Thomas asserts that the Privy Council which met on 23rd October resolved that the Stamp Act should be implemented by legal means if possible, or by force if necessary.² The Minute concerned actually stated that reports had been received from Governor Bernard of Massachusetts 'giving an account of Riots of a dangerous tendency which had arisen in the Town of Boston with a view to prevent the execution of [the Stamp Act]' and the Privy Council therefore recommended that letters should be sent to the several colonial governors telling them to 'provide by all prudent and proper methods ... and use all legal means to preserve peace and good order by a full Exertion of the Civil Power [and if necessary] to procure the Aid of the Military in Support of the Civil Power'.³ There is not a word, in fact, about forcibly implementing the Act, only of restoring law and order. Cumberland's death on 31st October removed the real obstacle in the way of repeal and the marquis was able to clarify his position ready for the forthcoming fight.

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1. W.W.M. R1-513. Northington to Rockingham, 23rd October 1765.
 2. P.D.G. Thomas, British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 137-80.
 3. Acts of the Privy Council (Colonial), pp. 383 and 449.

It was already apparent that something was seriously wrong with the trans-Atlantic economy. Even worse, merchants and manufacturers in England were blaming the Stamp Act for their loss of trade. In the West Riding some 3,050 workers had been laid off by their employers because of the lack of orders from Rayner, Dawson & Co., of Leeds. A further seven hundred had been laid off directly by that firm as the order book emptied.¹ Rockingham too, linked the economic slump with the Stamp Act and subsequent colonial non-importation movement. He wrote to John Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire, that he would 'give his interest to repeal one hundred Stamp Acts before he would run the risk of such confusions as would be caused by enforcing it and that he knew there were already ten thousand workmen discharged from business in consequence of the advices from America'.² Barlow Trecothick forecast disaster if speedy action was not taken, saying that the end result would be chronic unemployment and starvation in England. He warned that 'too great a delay and caution in administering the remedy may render the diseases of this embarrassed nation incurable',³ again indicating that the 'remedy' [i.e. repeal] had already been decided upon. This indication is reinforced by the marquis' notes headed 'Plan of Business' dated 27th November 1765.

Que: Consideration of North America in the Commercial
- to be first brought on -

Que: to avoid the discussion on the Stamp Act - till
good principles are laid down for Easing and
Assisting North America and being well informed
of the High Importance of the Commerce to N^{orth}/
A^{merica}/ respectively to the Mother Country. 4

On the same day, John Wentworth wrote to Daniel Rindge that it was certain

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1. W.W.M. R96-15. Notes by Rockingham detailing the numbers of men laid off, and by whom.
 2. Cited by T.S. Mayo in John Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire 1767-1775 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1921), p. 19.
 3. W.W.M. R24-43a. Trecothick to Rockingham, 7th November 1765.
 4. W.W.M. R49-6.

that the ministry was favourably disposed towards America and was opposed to the use of military might in the colonies. He was also aware of the likelihood of 'great opposition to the repeal of this odious Act'.¹

A mass of documentary evidence collected by Rockingham from America seems to give weight to the assertion that he linked the slump with the Stamp Act,² although the statistics produced by the customs service do not bear out his assumption. Admittedly, eighteenth-century customs records are far from reliable but they are the only means available of discovering with any remote hope of accuracy the state of trade, and since eighteenth-century politicians used the same figures, perhaps they should not be dismissed out of hand.

The value of British trade with America in the period 1760-1766 was as follows, in fmillion sterling:³

<u>Year</u>	<u>British Imports</u>	<u>British Exports</u>	<u>Balance</u>
1760	761,099	2,611,764	1,850,665
1761	547,892	1,652,078	1,104,186
1762	742,632	1,377,160	634,528
1763	1,106,161	1,631,997	525,836
1764	1,110,572	2,249,710	1,139,138
1765	1,151,698	1,944,114	792,416
1766	1,043,958	1,804,333	760,375

The decline in exports to America was already evident when the Stamp Act was passed and the trade embargo imposed by the Americans had a minimal impact overall. What does become clear from the customs records is that specific industries were badly affected, and this was passed on to merchants trading with America, who also suffered economically. The areas

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1. John Wentworth to Daniel Rindge, 27th November 1765, cited by Mayo in John Wentworth, p. 19.
 2. For example, W.W.M. R23-1 to R23-14 which are copies of letters and papers from America. Also R1-532, N. Sparhawke to Rockingham, undated, but late 1765. R1-522, Governor Boone of New York to Rockingham, November 1765.
 3. P.R.O. Customs 3.

worst hit by the 1765 colonial non-importation tended to be the textile and metal-producing parts of the country and especially Yorkshire.

British Exports to America (% of whole)¹

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>1760</u>	<u>1765</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Wrought Brass	23.0	11.3	-11.7
Wrought Copper	33.5	10.4	-23.1
Nails	50.3	38.9	-11.4
Glass and Earthenware	34.8	20.0	-14.8
Wrought Iron	34.7	8.3	-26.4
Lead and Shot	5.6	2.8	- 2.8
Fustians	29.1	20.6	- 8.5
Long Cloths	19.2	8.1	-11.1
Short Cloths	36.8	24.0	-12.8
Stuffs	19.9	10.5	- 9.4

Not surprisingly, Rockingham and his friends were perfectly aware of the increasing distress in the part of England where they lived and publicly were made more aware of the distress elsewhere by the petitions which were orchestrated by Barlow Trecothick and the Committee of North American Merchants, many members of which were prominent Quakers like David Barclay. The Committee sent out thirty copies of their circular letter asking for petitions for the repeal of the Stamp Act on economic grounds and it had a remarkable success rate. Twenty-six petitions were sent to the House of Commons, two of which arrived too late to influence Parliament.² The petitions may be divided into three groups:

Textile areas = 15
Ports = 5
Metal industries = 6

Furthermore at least seventeen of the petitions came from areas represented

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1. Schumpeter, Overseas Trade Statistics, pp. 63-69.
 2. Petitions were sent from Liverpool, Lancaster, Manchester, Coventry, Leeds, Halifax, Sheffield, Leicester, Birmingham, Macclesfield, Wolverhampton, Stourbridge, Dudley, Taunton, Worcester, Bristol (2), Bradford-on-Avon, Frome, Minehead, Witney, Chippenham, Melksham, London, Nottingham and Glasgow. Those from Sheffield and Worcester were the late arrivals.

by Rockinghamite M.P.s.¹ Rockingham had provided grounds for moving for the repeal of the Act in a very positive way without having to raise the thorny problem of whether or not Britain had the right to tax the colonies.

The marquis also stood to gain personally if trade with America was restored. His lands in south Yorkshire were a rich source of coal and blackband iron-ore both of which were used in the nail-making and wrought iron industries of the area. He leased some coal-mining rights but kept personal control over most through his estate managers. If the metal industries were depressed then he was likely to lose financially since the mines ceased production if output outstripped demand.

The demand for metal goods in America was generally for domestic and agricultural implements of all descriptions, and for nails. In 1760 the colonies imported 18,702 cwt. of nails; in 1765 the quantity had fallen to 12,458 cwt. The wrought iron industry was even worse hit. In 1760 some 56,634 cwt. were imported to America; in 1765 only 14,269 cwt. were bought. As D.M. Clark says, in Sheffield only 20% of the iron workers were employed in March 1766 and even in February many cutlers were complaining about the decay of their trade with North America.² At least four Sheffield companies - Kenyon's, Jonathan Moore, William White, and Joseph Bailey - traded with America direct. William White, for example, employed his great-uncle as a 'traveller' selling Sheffield wares there, and had built up a trade particularly in Boston and Philadelphia. Jonathan Moore sent his son to New York in 1769 to act as his agent in

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1. They are Liverpool (Sir William Meredith); Halifax, Leeds and Sheffield (Sir George Savile and Edwin Lascelles); Leicester (Sir Thomas Cave); Birmingham, Stourbridge, Dudley and Wolverhampton (Thomas Anson, Andrew Archer, Sir George Skipwith, William Dowdeswell); Nottingham (John Plumptre, John Thornhalgh); Worcester (William Dowdeswell); Bradford-on-Avon, Frome, Chippenham, Melksham (William A'Court, Pierce A'Court Ashe); Manchester (Peter Legh).
 2. D.M. Clark, British Opinion and the American Revolution (New York, Russell & Russell, 1966), p. 37.

place of the American he had employed.¹ As their trade declined after the passing of the Stamp Act so they blamed the Act for the problem. The colonial non-importation lasted only a few months and was blamed for a crisis of trade before it really had much chance to take full effect.

The textile industry also suffered a severe post-war slump, particularly the West Riding woollen region. Benjamin Farrer spoke of the dismissal of 30% of the West Riding work force² and Robert Dawson reported that he had dismissed about a thousand employees from his factory in Leeds because his American remittances had fallen by a third up to February 1766.³ Capel Hanbury, a merchant selling woollen and iron goods to Maryland and Virginia, told the Parliamentary hearing of 31st January 1766 that his trade was suspended 'at present'.⁴

The evidence to be put before Parliament was well-selected and equally well-rehearsed. Sir William Meredith set out the questions and answers for the various witnesses who were to be produced.⁵ Daniel Mildred and Capel Hanbury were both called to give evidence but Benjamin Franklin was the star witness. Other witnesses were collected by Sir George Savile. These men were the Yorkshire Rockinghamites Elam, Farrer and Milnes. John Milnes' company in Wakefield traded directly with America and was the only Wakefield company that he knew of to do this. The other manufacturers sold to middle-men and were not aware of what became of their manufactures after the first sale. Milnes reported that he had been affected badly by the slump, as did other men called to give evidence. John West was consequently able to report to Newcastle that

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1. S.P. Garlick, 'Sheffield Cutlery and Allied Trades' (M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1951), p. 142.
 2. W.W.M. R27-34. Benjamin Farrer's evidence.
 3. W.W.M. R27-32. Robert Dawson's evidence.
 4. W.W.M. R27-15. Capel Hanbury's evidence.
 5. W.W.M. R42.

'The Witnesses were called, Trecothick ... gave a full and Satisfactory Account of the distress ... and stated everything as he did to your Grace this morning. Hanbury and Mildred confirmed him in everything'.¹ Other men from 'Rockingham country' included Thomas Morris, a hosier from Nottingham who had already discharged a hundred men; Joseph Bunney a Leicester hosier who had sacked a thousand workers and Obadiah Dawson, a woollen manufacturer of Leeds, who had dismissed a thousand men out of a workforce of twelve hundred and who had stocks on hand to last him months.

A dangerous possible side-effect of the economic slump was stated quite clearly by the Duke of Newcastle to the Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter dated 2nd February 1766.² Newcastle knew that Britain was heavily dependent on trade and that the total volume of her world-wide trade was in decline, but that the worst decline was with the American colonies. He said that the repeal of the Stamp Act was vital, in the effort to revive the trans-Atlantic trade, otherwise 'we shall undoubtedly have riots, mobbs [sic] and insurrections in all the great Trading towns in the Kingdom, and Numbers of our Manufacturers turned a starving'. It is quite possible that Newcastle was playing on the fears of the Archbishop in order to encourage him to influence the Lords Spiritual to vote for repeal. He was also afraid that America might find a ready ally in France if relations with Britain broke down irrevocably. The colonial debt to Britain was enormous, a factor which made repeal even more urgent. Barlow Trecothick cited trade figures to Parliament at his

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1. B.M. Add. Mss. 32973, fo. 411, cited in D.W. Watson, 'Barlow Trecothick and other associates of Lord Rockingham in the Stamp Act Crisis' (M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1957), p. 45.
 2. B.M. Add. Mss. 32973, ff. 342-3, cited in Watson, 'Barlow Trecothick', p. 364.

examination on 11th February 1766, saying that British trade to America was worth between £2½ million and £3 million per annum, but that English merchants were owed around £5 million at that time.¹ He asserted that if those debts remained unpaid then widespread bankruptcy was inevitable. Perhaps Rockingham had every intention of repealing the Stamp Act once he was in a position to do so but needed reasons which were acceptable to the majority of M.P.s. Parliament was unlikely to approve of repeal on constitutional grounds, but might be persuaded to do so on economic ones. In eighteenth-century England riots often accompanied hardship; M.P.s did not need to be told that if unemployment and prices continued to rise then the results were almost inevitable. The merchants' and manufacturers' petitions were a God-send for the marquis and he utilized them to the full in order to push through the repeal of an Act which he found was essentially contrary to his view of Empire. Added to this, the Rockinghamites were agreed that the Act was unenforceable without the use of the military. It was a statesmanlike move by the marquis to attain repeal in spite of the fears of losing face, the mere thought of which gave the Grenvillites nightmares. Burke wrote that America could be subdued, but the results would be disastrous.

We might, I think, without much difficulty have destroyed our colonies ... but Four million of debt due to our merchants, the total cessation of a trade annually worth four million more, a large foreign traffic, much home manufacture, a very capital immediate revenue arising from colony imports, indeed the produce of every one of our revenues greatly depending on this trade, all these were very weighty accumulated consideration, at least well to be weighed, before that sword was drawn. 2

Consequently, Rockingham pressed on with repeal of the Act on the grounds

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1. Ryder Diaries, p. 291-2.
 2. Edmund Burke, 'Observations on a Late Publication on the Present State of the Nation', in Works and Correspondence, 3, 82.

that it was imprudent and counter-productive. That he felt strongly about the subject he revealed in a letter to Charles Yorke, when he remarked that if the repeal was not carried, he could 'wish no man so great a curse, as to desire him to be the person to take administration and be obliged to enforce the Act'.¹ Others also opposed enforcement for reasons of their own: General George Howard said he would rather commit suicide than fight his fellow-countrymen; the king preferred modification to repeal or enforcement, perhaps hoping to get the best of both worlds.

The opposition to repeal was strong and arguments tended to centre around the right of Britain to tax the colonies. The administration coped admirably with its opponents. Burke made his maiden speech during the debates for repeal and was much complimented by Pitt who also spoke for repeal and helped to swing opinion in that direction. Proxy votes were called in. On 11th March the government mustered thirty-two proxies as compared with the opposition's ten. Repeal was achieved with a majority of thirty-four votes and received Royal Assent on 18th March, only a year after being passed and only having been operative - or not, as the case may be - for four months.

The price Rockingham had to pay for getting the repeal through Parliament was the passing of the Declaratory Act which stated that Parliament, 'had, hath and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes ... to bind the colonies ... in all cases whatsoever'.² The marquis never intended that the right should be exercised and as Lady Rockingham noted, the Declaratory Act was never quoted as a source of grievance by the Americans, even as late as 1775.³

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1. B.M. Add. Mss. 34530 ff 37-38. Rockingham to Charles Yorke, 25th January 1766. Cited by P.D.G. Thomas in British Politics, p. 249.
 2. 6 Geo III. c. 12.
 3. W.W.M. Unnumbered memo, in Box R170/175. After 1774.

Much has been made of the Declaratory Act and it did prove to be a stumbling block, since Charles Townshend chose to exercise the declared right. The marquis and his followers insisted that their motive in passing it was only to enable the repeal of the Stamp Act, and there is no good reason to doubt them.¹ Even Fothergill suggested that the colonists should 'suffer it to die away in the obscurity it deserves'.²

Once the Stamp Act had been repealed merchants promptly shipped orders off to their colonial buyers who had problems selling the goods because of the continuing slump, lack of specie, and the domestic production of goods previously imported from Britain. In fact the trade depression scarcely lifted until 1767 and then the Townshend Duties caused another colonial boycott.

Repeal of the Stamp Act was not an end in itself so far as the marquis was concerned. On 4th March Burke wrote to Charles O'Hara telling him that the ministry was preparing for a complete revision of all the colonial commercial laws from the Navigation Acts downwards. The plan was one drawn up between the merchants to the West Indies and America, the Board of Trade, the Treasury Board, Rockinghamite M.P.s and the marquis himself. Everything seemed to favour a speedy conclusion to Rockingham's American policy but the plan failed to develop as he had hoped. On 23rd April Burke was obviously very disheartened. He complained to O'Hara that the ministry's American resolutions were to be presented to Parliament the following day but he felt that of 'twenty good projects, it is well if two can be brought to bear; and it is well, too, if one at least of these two, be not maimed, mutilated and deprived of its vital Spirit and Efficacy'. He admitted that Rockingham was trying to demolish

1. For example, W.W.M. R81-97, R1-1186, R1-100.

2. Fothergill to James Pemberton, 8th April 1766. Fothergill, p. 257.

the 'whole Grenvillian fabrick', not out of political opportunism but to 'clear the Ground'. The problem was that the opposition - mainly Grenville's supporters - engaged in the dissection of minutiae to prevent Rockingham doing anything on American affairs. Burke bemoaned the fact that 'they have hitherto been but too successful. This day nothing is done. God knows when anything will'.¹

The legislation which Rockingham managed to put through Parliament was the tip of the iceberg. His overall plan would probably have formed a secure and lasting foundation for continued Anglo-American friendship within the colonial context. What actually was achieved was piecemeal and bore no resemblance to the original plan. For example, two measures which failed to materialize were a plan to create a uniform colonial currency and another to allow the direct export of fruit and wines from Spain and Portugal to America. Measures which were successful were the Indemnity Act, the Revenue Act and the Free Port Act. The Indemnity Act was necessary to give a blanket pardon to those who had or may have laid themselves open to prosecution for failing to implement or obey the Stamp Act. It involved large numbers of persons, since few stamps had been used. By passing the Indemnity Act Rockingham acknowledged the total unworkability of the Stamp Act. The Free Port Act was the result of the combined efforts of the North American and West Indian merchants and the administration. It opened up Dominica and Jamaica to Spanish trade.

The 1766 Revenue Act reduced the duty on molasses imported to North America to a standard 1d. per gallon, which was what the Americans had asked for in 1764. It may be seen as crucial from two viewpoints. It proved that the colonists would pay duties which were not extortionate: the Act was bringing into Britain some £20,000 p.a. by 1772 and produced

1. Burke to Charles O'Hara, March 4th and April 23rd 1766. Copeland, Burke Correspondence, 1, 239-252.

a total of over £300,000 between 1766 and 1776, which was more than the overtly revenue-producing Acts of Grenville and Townshend put together. Second, it showed that provided administration was equitable, then the Americans had no real objection to the Trade and Navigation Acts.

The Free Port Act marked the first step along the road to experiments with free trade, a new idea in the 1760s. Rockingham's overall view of Empire and colonial commerce was, in fact, far-reaching and potentially radical. The collapse of his ministry in July 1766 prevented his scheme being effected and paved the way for further attempts to tax America, particularly by Townshend during the next Parliament.

Rockingham's evident pride in his achievement may be judged from a letter he wrote to William Reeve, a Bristol merchant. He commented that 'it is with no small satisfaction that I can look back upon the measures of the last session of Parliament, because I think that at no time the commercial interests of this country was more the object of Government'.¹

After being dismissed from office, Rockingham received a number of addresses thanking him for his successful efforts to revive the trade with America. As may be expected, they came from Whig strongholds and manufacturing areas such as Sheffield, Leeds, Halifax, York and Hull.² Many of the names which appeared on these Addresses were those of influential manufacturers.

From Sheffield Joseph Ibberson, Joseph Hancock, William Birks, the Broomheads, the Eyres, Samuel Staniforth, Benjamin Roebuck, James Kenyon and the Broadbent family were among the 230 signatories. Kenyon, the Broadbents and Roebuck were all ironmasters; the two latter were also

1. W.W.M. R1-670. Rockingham to Reeve, August 1766.

2. W.W.M. R59. Rockingham kept the Addresses.

bankers. Birks was a razor-maker and master-cutler. He was, besides, the 'only Proprietor of the Tobacco Pipe'.¹ Staniforth and the Broomhead and Eyre families were involved in iron manufacture and merchanting; they were also Roman Catholics, as was Joseph Hancock, another 'little mester'. These Catholic families were not only involved in trading concerns but also worked for Catholic relief which was obtained in 1778, thanks largely to the efforts of Sir George Savile and the Rockinghamite faction in Parliament.

The Leeds Address featured Jeremiah Dixon, Thomas Lee, Christopher Bramley, Joseph Milner and several of the Elam family among its one hundred signatures. These men were all concerned with trade to America. The Elams for instance, traded in tobacco, woollens and groceries; they were Quakers and had pioneered the West Riding woollen trade to America. Jeremiah Dixon was a Rockinghamite as was his partner John Lee. They manufactured clothing.

Halifax's Address was signed by some seventy men, including Joseph Farrer and James Lister. Farrer had given evidence to Sir George Savile for the repeal of the Stamp Act; James Lister of Shibden Hall was a woollen manufacturer, merchant and Justice of the Peace.

Seventy men signed the Hull address which specified Rockingham's 'constant Attention to the Security and Advancement of Trade'. The marquis was High Sheriff of the town, which had suffered badly during the Seven Years War. The number of ships from America fell from fourteen in 1758 to only eight in 1766, while the colonial non-importation of 1765-66 also took its toll since the port of Hull exported Sheffield metal goods and West Riding cloth to the colonies.

1. Kenneth O. McLeod, The First Century: the story of a Canadian Company (Canada, 1979), p. 10. I am grateful to Henry Birks Sons Ltd. of Canada for a copy of their Centenary publication.

The Address from York is more than predictable. It was signed by 153 men, of whom sixty-four were active members of the Rockingham Club. The active Rockinghamites - Jerom Dring, Stephen Croft, George Montgomery-Metham and John Carr the architect, for example - feature early in the signatures and possibly organized it.

These addresses reflect the good effect which Rockingham's legislation had on trade besides some of the influence which traders and manufacturers had on him. In helping commerce he gained for himself popular support which was maintained throughout his long years in opposition. In his reply to the Manchester Address the marquis said that he must consider himself fortunate because the 'Times & Accidents put me in a Situation where I could at least shew my desire of doing Service to my Country, & If the Attempts in Favour of Trade & Commerce have succeeded & real benefit is procured, it ensures me the Comfort of looking back with Pleasure on the Measures I promoted'.¹ Had his colonial measures been ineffective then the Addresses would not have been so well-supported no matter how hard his allies had worked.

Chatham's government was responsible for the next outbreak of unrest in America in the shape of Charles Townshend's American Duties Act of 1767. Townshend's proposals to lay 'external' taxes on America were generally popular since the revenue would enable a cut in the Land Tax to be carried out. The Rockinghamites who spoke against the Revenue Act were outvoted and Dowdeswell spoke for them all when he labelled the duties as 'Grenvillian', thus lumping them with the Stamp Act as imprudent at the very least. Even so, the Revenue Act, the Act for establishing an American Board of Customs Commissioners and the New York Restraining Act were all passed by the Commons within a week.

1. W.W.M. RL-674. Rockingham's draft reply to the Manchester Address. Undated but 1766.

Once the news of the Townshend Duties officially reached America in July 1767 there was a widespread renewal of violence but on a much larger scale than in 1765. The riots put the Rockinghamites in a dilemma: they could not support the colonists, neither could they support punitive measures by Britain since they stood by their own policy of paternalistic control rather than the popular demand for coercion. They received a verbal battering from other groups in Parliament which wanted the Americans to be put firmly in their place as subordinates. Grenville blamed Rockingham for renouncing the right of Britain to levy internal taxes on the colonies by repealing the Stamp Act and remarked that 'nothing would effectively Recover that Right which Parliament had abandoned but the exertion of that very Power which the Colonists had Denied'.¹ Rockingham was loth to be drawn into a discussion on the establishing of British sovereignty over America at the meeting he had with the Bedfords in July 1767 in an attempt to form a ministry but Grenville set out to establish an American policy. Rockingham felt that the problem could not be resolved because the solution depended on 'future and uncertain events'. He stood by his conviction that Britain was sovereign over her colonies and

appealed to the conduct of himself and his Friends whether there was the least doubt of his and their Intentions to maintain /that soveriegnty/, that after the Public Proof given of him and his Friends' Intentions He thought neither L/or/d T/emple/ nor Mr. G/renville/ had a right to put such a Question to him, that he wondered they dared to do it, that he did not think it worth an answer, his opinions and intentions being so well known, & that He would not permit ... any Man to Question his Sincerity. 2

Dowdeswell believed that the American colonies should have their own separate government department with Dartmouth at its head. This idea

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1. W.W.M. R1-838. Minutes of the Meeting between the Rockinghams and the Bedfords, held on 20th July 1767.
 2. Ibid.

was actually implemented in 1768 when the Earl of Hillsborough became Secretary of State for the American Colonies.

Towards the end of July Rockingham began to receive information from Joseph Harrison of Bawtry who was the Collector of Customs in Boston. Harrison was a friend of Sir George Savile and was under Rockingham's patronage. In January 1766 he had acted as the marquis' assistant secretary under Burke and during the Stamp Act crisis was one of the unofficial advisers to Rockingham, providing him with invaluable information. He went to Boston in October 1766 leaving his son at home. Again, the link of personal friendship, local interests and political policy can be seen at work.

Harrison informed Rockingham that the power and authority of King and Parliament were at a low ebb in Massachusetts and that Crown officials were unable to do their jobs.¹ He also informed the marquis that the good effect of the 1766 Revenue Act was being destroyed because the 1d. per gallon duty on molasses was being abused: 1d. was being charged at each port of entry by rapacious customs officials with the result that some molasses paid a duty of anything up to 1s. because the cargo was sent round several colonies before it was finally sold. It is not surprising that the Americans disliked the customs service.

As part of Charles Townshend's policy for America an American Board of Customs Commissioners had been established and was based in Boston. The commissioners appointed were hard-liners who were expected to stop the smuggling. Unfortunately the shortage of specie was acute by 1768 and the attitude of the commissioners worsened the existing tension. In 1768 they decided to make an example of John Hancock, a leading Boston radical and probably the richest merchant in the colonies.

1. W.W.M. R63-8. Harrison to Rockingham, 29th July 1767.

They ordered that Hancock's ship Liberty should be seized for suspected smuggling. The unfortunate Harrison was the man who actually had to do the job. During the attempt a riot was provoked and Harrison was beaten and stoned, his pleasure boat was burned out and he had to take unpaid leave to recover from his injuries. It appears that the five commissioners resented Harrison's connection with Rockingham and 'he seems pointed out to be the forlorn-hope of their scheme. And would inevitably have suffered but his amiable life renders him beloved in Boston that he could do what no other man might safely attempt'.¹ If Harrison was safe, one wonders what the Boston mob would do to those they really disliked.

Even in the period 1768 and 1769 Rockingham was receiving letters from the colonies which pronounced him as a 'friend to America'. Moses Franks, a New York merchant who lived in London and acted as agent for his colony, handling 80% of the trade of New York merchants, told Rockingham that 'America had been taught by experience to look towards you for protection' and hoped that the mildness of the marquis' opinions towards America would not vary.² James de Lancy, a New York landowner, politician and merchant, and leader of the most powerful faction in New York's Assembly believed that Rockingham was a true friend of America and hoped that 'the repealers of the Stamp Act will again befriend the Colonies by promoting the repeal of the [Townshend Duties] and the demolition of the Board of Commissioners'.³ Admittedly he was a friend of Rockingham. They both loved horse-racing and in 1773 de Lancy begged Rockingham to send him a decent jockey to ride the horses he had bought from the Wentworth stud. It was from these sorts of friendships that

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1. W.W.M. R1-1118. Sir John Wentworth to Rockingham, 13th November 1768.
 2. W.W.M. R1-910. Moses Franks to Rockingham, 11th December 1767.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1156. James de Lancy to Rockingham, 4th February 1769.

Rockingham formed his views on America. Even the Boston House of Representatives said that the marquis was a 'patron of the colonies and a friend of the Constitution and the Rights of Mankind'.¹

Rockingham defended his actions of 1766. In an undated document the marquis emphasised how inconsistent Britain had been in her treatment of the colonies.

It is unnecessary to look back into the conduct of their predecessors any further than to say, that they had Each of them a System

- G: Grenvils [sic] was to raise a revenue - a great harm
- Ours was, to draw advantages to this Country out of its Commerce with its Colonies
- The Present Administration neither adhered to the one nor reverted to the other Plan, but revived the differences by a bill whose object was trifling &c as revenue & in its Commerical View most truly & acknowledg'd absurd. 2

In August 1768 the London merchants to North America were becoming increasingly uneasy about the threat of a total non-importation agreement in the colonies. By that time, trade was again reaching high levels, and 'the demand for goods to go to America from the manufacturing Parts of this Country, have been ... the Greatest ever known'.³ The number of broad-cloths milled in the West Riding had certainly risen, from 55,000 pieces in 1765 to 74,000 pieces in 1766 and 102,000 pieces in 1767.⁴ Much of this cloth went to America via London merchants even though new markets were being opened up and thus absorbed some of the

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1. W.W.M. R63-10 and R152-1b. Boston House of Representatives to Rockingham, 22nd January 1768.
 2. W.W.M. R81-2. Rockingham's notes for a speech, undated but between May 1767 and December 1769. The marquis always made notes in this way.
 3. H. Heaton, 'Yorkshire Cloth Traders in the United States 1770-1840', Thoresby Miscellany, Vol. 11, (1945). Mitchell and Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 189 give the 1766 figure as only 72,000 pieces and suggest that the higher figure for that year was as a result of more stringent inspection.

cloth. The Elams of Leeds could easily have gone bankrupt if their sales to America had been damaged. They had moved from importing tobacco into exporting cheaper woollens and worsteds to the colonies and in the 1760s became shippers as well. Their Sam Elam, a 300-ton vessel, was one of the largest ships in the trans-Atlantic trade. They did so well that in 1768 Samuel Elam sent John J. Glover to New York as their agent.

In spite of reports that manufacturers were overloaded with work, the trade figure for 1769 show a decided decline - almost a collapse - of exports to America.¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>P.R.O.</u>	<u>Schlesinger</u>
1767	£1,210,725	
1768	£1,717,931	£2,157,218
1769	£1,086,757	£1,336,122

Because of this the Rockinghamites again attacked the objective of raising revenue in America. They blamed Chatham and the indecision of the Cabinet for the problem. Dowdeswell made a scathing denunciation of the administration to the marquis which indicates how pessimistic he had become.

The Ministers are some of them so weak and some so obstinate, All of them so Indifferent to every Thing that does not go into their own Pockets, and some of them Men of such suspicious Characters into the Bargain, that one has I think no room to hope that They will bring the Matter before Us in any Shape for Accomodation. 2

For his part, Sir George Savile was of the opinion that Grenville had only advanced the crisis by twenty or perhaps fifty years, but he could not see the point of taxing the colonies. The whole exercise had adverse effects in practice so far as he was concerned.

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1. P.R.O. Customs 3, and A.M. Schlesinger, The Colonial Merchants and The American Revolution 1763-1776 (New York, Frank Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), p. 237.
 2. Dowdeswell to Rockingham, 14th August 1768. Dowdeswell Papers.

I do not know or think that I shall be benefitted twenty pounds by all the taxes that will ever be levied in North America, and from the local situation of the chief part of my landed estates there are but few persons in England that will be more immediately affected by the increase or decay of your trade. 1

Newcastle believed that the idea of conquering America and forcing the people to submit was a common one and advised Rockingham to rally his forces to oppose the measure.

Rockingham still felt that his policy of 'justness and mildness' towards the colonies was the right one and he continued to defend his legislation while attacking the implementation of it.

The Declaratory Bill which we brought in to fix and ascertain the rights of this Country over its colonies, is what I must and shall ever adhere to. The exerting of that right, is a matter which ought to be well considered, and the ability of the colonies ought to be the first postulat^{um} ground to go upon. 2

Rockingham began to prepare for the forthcoming fray in Parliament. He collected a list of the exports from all the North American colonies between 5th January 1768 and 5th January 1769.³ Although the quantity of each of the items is not noted, the type of commodity is [see Chart overleaf]. It is obvious from these lists that Britain depended heavily on America for timber and stores with which to equip the navy. Some colonies exported goods which were unique. Quebec for instance sent 'Indian skins, dressed', 'Canada balsam' [varnish] and 'capalaire'. Several colonies sent raw materials for apothecaries: cortex winteranus [also known as Peruvian bark, it is the bark of a tree which is rich in quinine] and cortex elutheria [a purgative]. Gum Guaiacum [an emetic] was sent from Philadelphia. Ginseng was another medicinal import to

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1. Savile to Dr. Thomas Moffatt of Rhode Island, 1768. Cited in Namier and Brooke, House of Commons, 3, 406.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1100. Rockingham to Harrison, 2nd October 1768.
 3. W.W.M. R61-5 and 6.

	Bos ton	Mass Bay	New fd lnd	Que bec	N.S.	N.H.	Rh. I.	N.Y.	Phil	Via	N.Cla	S.Cla	Flo ri da	Conn
Pot Ash	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Pearl Ash	X	X		X			X	X	X					X
Cotton	X	X					X	X	X	X		X		X
Castorum	X	X		X				X						
Candles	X	X						X						
Corn	X			X				X	X	X	X	X		
Furs	X	X	X				X	X	X					X
Flax Seed	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X			
Fish	X	X	X		X				X					
Horns	X	X				X		X	X			X		
Honey	X	X						X						
Iron - Pig	X	X					X	X	X	X		X		
Iron - Bar	X	X					X	X	X	X		X		X
Iron - Ore	X	X												
Indigo	X	X							X	X	X	X	X	
Lignum Vitae	X	X				X		X	X	X	X	X		
Logwood	X						X	X	X	X		X	X	
Mahogany	X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	
Naval Stores	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Masts	X	X		X	X	X				X	X	X		X
Boards (Pine)	X	X		X	X				X		X			X
Hand Spikes	X	X			X	X		X		X	X			
Oars	X	X					X	X			X			
Ash Planks	X	X				X	X		X		X			X
Oak Planks	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
Planks & Boards	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Staves	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Shingles	X	X								X	X			
Spars & Poles	X	X	X	X		X					X			
Anchor Stocks	X	X				X				X				
Timber	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X
Trunnels	X	X				X			X	X				
Oil	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X
Beef & Pork	X	X					X	X	X		X	X		X
Flour & Bread	X	X						X	X	X	X			X
Rice	X	X						X		X	X	X		X
Sugar	X	X		X					X	X				
Turpentine	X	X	X				X		X	X	X	X		
Beeswax	X	X				X		X	X	X	X	X		
Wheat	X							X	X	X				
Whalebone	X	X		X			X				X			
Rum		X						X	X	X		X		
Tar		X	X			X	X			X	X	X		
Hides & Skin			X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	
Whale Fins			X					X						X
"Sundries"			X											
Brazillitto						X			X	X		X		
Genseng				X				X	X	X				
Copper Ore				X				X	X					
Wine					X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Hemlock					X		X							
Sasparilla							X	X	X				X	
Sassafras								X	X	X				
Ebony/Ivory							I	E&I	E					
Pimento								X	X	X		X		
Tobacco										X	X			
Hemp										X	X	X		

Britain. The imports of cotton, tobacco and iron all helped to maintain manufacturing industries in Britain while America also provided ready markets for the finished products.

Families were still emigrating to America too, probably because of the lack of employment at home. Rockingham received a memorandum from one of his agents in January 1769 listing all those who had emigrated during the previous ten months from south Yorkshire [see Chart overleaf].¹ They all must have thought that they could continue in their trades in America, which would seem to show that the colonial iron industry was alive and well despite British regulations.

In the early years of colonization in America the manufacture of iron was encouraged because of the readily available raw materials and high quality of the finished product. By the 1730s slitting mills, furnaces and forges existed in New England, allowing the colonists to undertake whole processes from raw materials to finished articles. The result was a falling off in manufactures exported to America and complaints to Parliament from ironmasters in Birmingham and Sheffield. In 1750 Parliament passed an Act forbidding the manufacture of steel or the refining of iron in America.² It also forbade the manufacture of finished items made from iron and the emigration of artisans to America, although this clause was often ignored as may be seen from those leaving south Yorkshire. The 1750 Act was disliked in America but it did not check the growth of the colonial iron industry. In 1775 there were more iron furnaces in America than in the whole of England and Wales and colonial iron production exceeded that of Britain.

In 1764 the restriction which allowed American iron to be imported

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1. W.W.M. R1-1149. Downes to Rockingham, 16th January 1769. Part of the list is as overleaf. The total was at least 67.
 2. 23 Geo. II c.29.

c)

<u>Emigrant</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Parish</u>
Mr. Humphrey, his wife & 6 children		Ecclesfield
Wm. Thompson, his wife & 3 children	wood collier	Ecclesfield
Stephen Thompson, his wife & 3 children	cutler	Ecclesfield
Wm. Windle, his wife & 1 child	wood collier	Wortley
James Parkinson, his wife & 1 child	wood collier	Bradfield
Robert Waller, his wife & 1 child	forgeman	Rotherham
Geo. Bevins, his wife & 3 children	forgeman	Sheffield
David Tomlinson, his wife & 1 child	forgeman	Bradfield
William Spence	forgeman	Bradfield
Thomas Dolphin, his wife & 3 children	joiner	Sheffield
Another, name forgot	joiner	Sheffield
Ann Bramhall		Rotherham
A servantman		Rotherham
Richard Ragg, his wife, 5 children & apprentice	blacksmith	Ecclesfield
John Bailey	cutler	Sheffield
Samuel Wigfall	cutler	Sheffield
/And others/		

only to London was lifted and Hull and Bristol began to develop an iron importing rôle. This helped the south Yorkshire metal industries since Hull was the main port for the area. However, the 1765 non-importation quickly affected the British metal industries. In Birmingham several thousand iron workers were laid off because of a lack of orders from America and in 1766 one merchant had sacked 300 workmen because his usual sale of nails to America to the value of £50,000 p.a. had been almost completely cancelled. British nail-makers were among the first to suffer and this industry was one of the largest in the Sheffield-Rotherham area. The iron industry was still depressed in 1768 as it was largely based on the American market. Exports to the colonies included scythes, ploughshares, axes and hoes, all of which were produced by the multitude of 'little mesters' which was the typical industrial unit of Sheffield. The companies of Broadbent, Roebuck, and Osborne and Gunning were atypical, since they were larger concerns which traded their products directly to the colonies. The little mesters tended to use middle men who had the necessary expertise.

The colonial non-importation finally got under way when the Boston merchants adopted an agreement on 1st August 1768. Other colonies followed suit very reluctantly but by the end of 1769 all had adopted some sort of trade boycott. Consequently the effects were not so strongly and immediately felt in Britain as the 1765 ban had been.

Rockingham defended his failure to press for the repeal of the Townshend Duties on the grounds that they had no chance of success, that time should be given for things to cool down in both Britain and America, and that he did not feel that Parliament would appreciate lenity at that moment in time.¹ However, he told Harrison that 'it is to be suggested

1. W.W.M. R1-1186. Rockingham to Harrison, 19th May 1769.

to the Colonies, that the Administration intend to repeal the Act in the next Session of Parliament, if the Conduct of the Colonies is Moderate & no fresh Matter of Irritation from thence Intervenens'. He stood by his conviction that the idea of making America a 'Revenue Mine' was absurd, but still asked Harrison for 'accurate Accounts of the State of Duties - Trade &c in the Port of Boston. Mr. Fisher will let us have them for the ports of Salem & Marblehead - Those Sort of Authentick documents are often Very Useful & Very Material'. Harrison brought the lists with him to England when he returned in December 1769, having spent six months collecting the accounts of all the colonies. Rockingham believed that Harrison's efforts would give the Rockinghamites a better insight into the state of the colonies than anything which anyone else could produce.¹

Some of Rockingham's friends wanted to be allowed to inform colonial correspondents that repeal of the Townshend Duties was likely. Among them was Sir William Meredith, whose constituents were suffering from the boycott since Liverpool exported textiles and metal goods from the manufacturing north and midlands, and enjoyed the largest share of the American and West Indian trade. Meanwhile, Barlow Trecothick was again trying to organize petitions against the Act but with little success because there was also a petitioning movement going on over the Wilkes affair. That issue tended to dominate English politics rather than the colonial problem, and the Rockinghamites were heavily involved in it. One man, Henry Rawlinson of Lancaster, expressed a wish that Rockingham might return to office 'to diffuse Blessings to [this] Country and her colonies, instead of the arduous struggle to prevent the Progress of Evil', because he saw no prospect of Grafton's government attempting

1. W.W.M. R1-1254. Rockingham to Dowdeswell, 23rd December 1769.

repeal.¹

By July, Rockingham was reaching a state of near despair. The colonies had begun to pass their non-importation agreements against the Duties and Rockingham saw that the effects would

have very Serious Consequences in this Country most particularly so in all the Manufacturing Parts of this Country as well as in Lancashire &c. The Virginia & New York addresses & Resolutions will alarm the exporters of our Manufactures & Will probably stop the Export; the certain consequence must be that our Manufacturers will want Employment, the Merch/ants will be distress'd & these aggravated circumstances added upon the back of all our Home Business I fear will throw the Whole Country into the Utmost Confusion. 2

The merchants were becoming distressed because their colonial purchasers were not paying the debts they owed. One reason for this was their intention to pressurise British merchants into pushing for repeal. Another was more basic. The critical shortage of specie had got continually worse. Although many Americans were undoubtedly wealthy in that they owned vast landed estates, they simply did not have the cash to pay for goods.

Grafton's government certainly had its problems at the end of 1769. In a letter dated 9th December, Alexander Wedderburn told Rockingham that the government had not decided what to do about the Wilkes petitions, that Ireland was causing problems, that Grafton did not know how to proceed with the Money Bill, that he had not yet decided what to do about America. There was the threat of a war with France and Spain, the ministers were worried about Chatham's health, and Hillsborough talked as though he was likely to be going into opposition.³ On top of all that,

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1. W.W.M. R1-1189. Henry Rawlinson to Rockingham, 27th May 1769.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1209. Rockingham to Stephen Croft, 11th July 1769.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1251. Wedderburn to Rockingham, 9th December 1769.

Grafton had just been through the trauma of divorce proceedings against his wife. It seemed likely that the administration was at an end.

Grafton resigned on 21st January 1770, just two weeks into the start of the new session of Parliament. The king refused even to entertain the thought of appointing Rockingham as his new first minister because he 'knew the disposition of Lord Rockingham and his friends'¹ or Chatham, probably because Chatham had let the king down so badly in 1766. Instead he offered the post to his boyhood friend Frederick, Lord North.

It soon seemed as though the colonial problem was going to be allowed to drift into oblivion. North quickly introduced a bill to repeal all the Townshend Duties except the tea tax. News of this was being sent to America by early March 1770 although British merchants were still not sure whether the non-importation would be lifted if the tax on tea remained. The Boston Massacre of 5th March was allowed to pass virtually unnoticed in Britain.

After the Townshend Duties were partially repealed the colonial non-importation movement began to break down. Exports to America reached an all time peak and the colonial radicals were thrown into disarray at the strength of feeling against continuing the boycott. New York was the first colony to break the deadlock and by August 1770 trade was beginning to resume a more normal pattern. The end of the trade embargo was marked by a rapid increase of exports to America. In the iron industry alone the value of trade to America jumped from £622,600 in 1769 to £702,845 in 1770 and to £897,432 by 1771.²

The Leeds Intelligencer of 21st August 1770 reported that 'the Account of the inhabitants of New York having agreed to the importation of goods from England was received here by our American Merchants with

1. John Brooke, King George III, p. 158.
2. P.R.O. Customs 3.

great pleasure; since when, great quantities of cloth have been sent down to Hull, in order to be shipt to that place'. Trade to Russia, Italy and Germany was also beginning to flourish. The only ones who were suffering, were the merchants trading with America.¹

However, as the months went by, the differences seemed to be pushed to one side if not altogether forgotten. Imports from America increased slowly while exports to America began to level off after the increase of 1770-71. The tea tax which Rockingham maintained was an 'uncommerical, unproductive peppercorn rent' was retained. Most colonies refused to purchase British tea and a modus vivendi had been reached for the moment. Rockingham still advocated repeal but was ignored. This pattern was to become all too familiar over the ensuing twelve years. Rockingham spent much of his political career in parliament urging leniency and consideration for America but was unheeded until it was far too late.

The increased export of goods to America meant that unemployment in England fell and America ceased to be a focus of national political activity. The Rockinghamites were busy with the Petitioning Movement following the Middlesex Election, although Rockingham did tell James de Lancey that the aggressive tone of the colonists was creating difficulties in England:

both sides are beginning to tire of quarrelling ...
[but] when your Assembly's Meet - you put into your Resolves &c Sharp and Passionate Expressions - beyond what is at all necessary on the matter, & indeed in some assert Matters not Tenable in argument & beyond what I am sure is your Intention to persist in. -All of which feed this Passion and continue the Ill Humour among many on this Side.

This Conduct on your Side draws on violent Language from hence & also harsh Resolves in Terrorem & which I scarce believe there is any Man rash enough here to wish to see carried into Execution. 2

1. Fothergill to Fisher, 20th September 1770. Fothergill, p. 325.
2. W.W.M. R1-1291. Rockingham to James de Lancy, 11th April 1770.

The marquis reasonably concluded that it was only fair that the colonists should moderate their activities since he preached moderation in England.

In spite of the superficial calm there were forebodings of forthcoming problems. In July 1771 Governor John Wentworth warned Rockingham that the 'present calm does not proceed from content ... Alienation takes deeper root in these quieter times than when much evaporated in profusion; & verily I believe America is lost to England unless some conciliatory means of mutual use of safety are adopted'.¹ Wentworth acknowledged the likelihood of Britain being able to subdue America and enforce the obedience of the colonists while pointing out that 'such a vast extended continent of disgusted subjects would be extremely useless if not finally detrimental'. This was in fact very similar to the argument used later by the Rockinghamites in their opposition to Lord North's legislation.

The final steps in the build-up to the war were taken over an almost unrelated crisis within the East India Company which had a monopoly of importing tea from which the British Treasury reaped the profits.

By 1773 the situation for both the government and the Company was critical. Some fifteen million pounds weight of tea was literally rotting in warehouses in London and more was en route for Britain. The Company was virtually bankrupt and was unable to conduct affairs in India effectively. Many influential Britons who were stockholders in the Company demanded that something should be done to help. Some of the directors even suggested that the tea tax on exports to America should be abolished. Lord North refused even to consider that proposal. North believed that if the East India Company was allowed to export tea direct to America - which made it cheaper - then everyone would benefit. The Americans would be able to buy tea at 9d. per lb. less; the East India

1. W.W.M. R1-1385. Governor Sir John Wentworth to Rockingham, 23rd July 1771.

Company would sell its tea stocks; the government's revenue would increase and so would the salaries of British officials in America who were paid out of the customs' revenues. These ideas came to fruition in the Tea Act of May 1773.

The only real opposition to the government came from Rockingham and his friends. They realized that any legislation concerned with tea was potentially dangerous and believed that the East India Company should find its own salvation instead of being saved at the risk of creating further difficulties in America. The total revenue from tea exported to America after deducting the expense of customs collection was only £400 p.a. and Dowdeswell thought it was not worth maintaining Townshend's 3d. tax if it precluded the sale of two million pounds weight of tea in America. However, the Rockinghamites opposition was outnumbered in Parliament and the Tea Act was passed.

Initially there was no reaction from America. It was not until October that the radicals seemed to grasp the economic significance of the Act, by which time the East India Company had shipped cargoes of tea to Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston. The violent, if belated, reaction caught American loyalists by surprise and although they were able to rebut the radicals' arguments, James de Lancey foresaw problems. Whilst approving of Rockingham's opposition to helping the East India Company he also commented that the Tea Act 'will cause as much noise as the Stamp Act did'.¹

The Boston 'Tea Party' of December 1773 was a relatively non-violent but defiant demonstration of antipathy to the Tea Act which did result in the destruction of £9,999 worth of tea. The news did not break in England until the end of January 1774 after which the majority of

1. W.W.M. R1-1457. James de Lancey to Rockingham, 26th October 1773.

people demanded retribtuion and compensation. According to Lord John Cavendish

the Bedfords & the remains of G. Greenville's [sic] Friends are very loud; to be sure the Bostonians behaviour is indefensible. L[or]d Buckingham has given notice that He has a Motion to make ... it is supposed to relate to America. Our friends have determined not to attend it. We cannot have much to do with any measures they may have to propose, but it it most probably that the repeal of the Stamp Act will be arraigned in the course of the proceedings in which case We must defend ourselves. 1

At this point Rockingham was at Wentworth Woodhouse. He was again suffering from his 'old complaint' so that 'the untoward events which happen, rather affect me, and I do not feel either so active in mind or so steady under any disagreeable occurrences as I formerly did'.² He remained at home until February 1774 when he felt sufficiently well to go to London. Meanwhile he had received an anonymous letter from America which summed up the defect of the Declaratory Act: 'If the Mother Country may bind the colonies by all laws without limitation, a power so extensive would constitute a direct, absolute Tyranny. ... If the Parliament can't make all laws to bind the colonies, the Parliament can't make any'.³ This was one of the problems created by implementing the Act. Rockingham had been sensible enough to realize that conciliation was only possible in 1766 if such an Act was passed but never intended to be used. His successors were the real revolutionaries but were unable to enforce the legislation they attempted, so making parliament appear weak and ineffectual.

In the Spring of 1774 Rockingham's supporters in parliament numbered between forty and fifty and were a potentially powerful force if they

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1. W.W.M. R1-1479. Lord John Cavendish to Rockingham, 29th January 1774.
 2. Rockingham to Burke, 30th January 1774. Copeland, Burke Correspondence 2, 515.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1480. Unsigned letter from North America to Rockingham, 5th February 1774.

could be brought to act together. His chief adherents were from Yorkshire and its immediate surrounds, as may be expected. Others - men like Dempster, Gregory and Baker - had the same political convictions. Unfortunately their morale was low and Rockingham's ill-health prevented him from giving the leadership which they needed to oppose legislation against the colonies.

Rockingham had a subtle idea of sleeping sovereignty over America. He had never supported the use of force and never came to that idea. He saw both Britain and America as suffering from the oppression of royal prerogative and a tentative move towards absolutism. He firmly believed in the unquestioned supremacy of parliament over America but doubted the expediency of asserting that supremacy. He stood for the traditional approach of salutary neglect towards the colonies.

When Lord North opened the debate on the Boston Port Bill in parliament on 14th March 1774 he was opposed by Dempster, Sawbridge, Byng, Dowdeswell, Phipps and Lord George Cavendish, Lord John Cavendish and Tommy Townshend. In the House of Lords the Bill was opposed at its second reading by Rockingham, Richmond, Portland, Manchester, King, Craven, Bessborough and Abingdon. Richmond was particularly violent in his opposition. The Bill passed both Houses without a division. The same pattern may be seen throughout the debates on the other Coercive Acts. The Rockinghamites opposed each of the Bills in the face of massive support for the Government, with no success whatsoever. Burke's arguments were impressive, but most M.P.s favoured punishing the recalcitrant Bostonians. Rockingham knew that any opposition he and his followers might produce would be a waste of time and energy but felt that they had to continue with their policy even though they would be unpopular because 'the Argument which will hereafter be drawn from our Silence or Total Inactivity will be, that we either did not dissent or that we

did not foresee the Possibility of the Inconveniences which may arise'.¹

In April 1774 Rose Fuller attempted to get the Tea Act repealed and was supported by Pennant, Dowdeswell, Lord John Cavendish, Savile, Burke, Tommy Townshend, Barré, Fox and Frederick Montagu. The following month Sir George Savile presented colonial petitions against the Coercive Acts to the Commons. Rockingham spoke against the Acts because he thought that the 'System of Measures now adopted against America ... can only tend to Increase the disorder and inconvenience. To correct what is amiss in the colonies would require the Utmost Circumspection that the Measures should at least appear to be founded both in Policy and Justice'.¹

In fact 1774 saw a slight increase in trade between Britain and her colonies, which presumably reflects a shortage of English goods in America. The following year saw an almost total extinction of trade between the two countries. In spite of this upturn of trade the Leeds Mercury of 17th May 1774 reported that 'scarce a week passed without some setting off from this part of Yorkshire for the Plantations' because of the bad state of trade and the high cost of living. In Yorkshire the woollen manufacturers produced 30,000 fewer pieces of cloth in 1774 than in the previous year and the Leeds merchant community was split over colonial issues. The Elams led merchant opposition to North's policies and were particularly virulent because they were Quakers and their co-religionists were suffering as a result of British legislation. They were joined by the Unitarians who thought that North was attempting to re-introduce despotism to England via America. Leeds Corporation was ranged against these men. The Leeds textile industry exported mainly to America so when the colonial export trade virtually collapsed after

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1. W.W.M. R1-1487. Rockingham to Lord Manchester, 22nd April 1774.
 2. W.W.M. R81-38. Rockingham's notes for a speech against the Massachusetts Regulating Act, 1774. (Undated).

1772 there were riots in the city and five merchants went bankrupt during the course of one year.

While Britain and America prepared for a war which few people wanted to fight, the continental Congress was petitioning for redress of grievance. One petition was sent to the Marquis of Rockingham who, in his reply thanking Congress, remarked that 'It will be difficult for men who have been so deeply concerned in all the arbitrary and harsh measures now so justly arraigned, to retrace at once and adopt a temperate, mild, conciliatory plan'.¹ In any case, Rockingham was still being criticised over the Declaratory Act: even Chatham had said that the Act was the cause of all the confusion. As Rockingham pointed out to Burke, the 'Americans in their claims of the repeal ... have had the prudence and the temper not to call out for and insist on the repeal of the Declaratory Bill'.²

While the political wrangling continued on both sides of the Atlantic, merchants in England finally began to organise themselves and to produce petitions to parliament asking for reconciliation with America. A 'very numerous and respectable meeting' was held on 4th January 1775 at the King's Arms tavern in London for 'merchants and others concerned in the North American trade' to consider 'a petition to parliament on the present alarming situation ... the total stoppage of our commerce ... and the present decline of the trade and manufactures of this kingdom'. There was only one dissentient voice: a gentleman who said there was no point in petitioning until parliament had decided what to do, 'but this appearing to be a Ministerial manoeuvre ... [he] was over-ruled'.³ The York Chronicle expected the London merchants' petition 'will be followed by others from Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and by other manufacturing towns in England'. A report also appeared from a Manchester man giving

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1. W.W.M. R1-1533. Rockingham to Arthur Lee, 31st December 1774.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1536. Rockingham to Burke, 8th January 1775.
 3. York Chronicle, 13th January 1775.

an account of the decline of industry in the town and noting 'into what deep distress must thousands upon thousands of innocent families now sink. Families that have hitherto comfortably maintained themselves by preparing goods for America'.¹

At the King's Arms meeting, David Barclay read out a letter from Samuel Elam, the Leeds merchant, which testified to the effect of the American non-importation. The letter reads:

The unhappy difference betwixt Great Britain and America throws the merchants in this country into great inconveniences and the manufacturers into great distress; there are now a great many cloth-dressers in the town out of employ and a much greater number of cloth-makers such as carders, spinners, and weavers in the country adjacent. The poors rate at Dewsbury is already got up to 8s. in the pound, and at Batley, Heckmondwike and other towns thereabouts the poors rate is nearly as much: and it is my firm belief, that if the trade to America is shut up until this time twelvemonth, all the rents of the lands and houses in the above townships will not be sufficient to support the poor alone.²

Elam provided the signatures of 353 unemployed master clothiers to support his statement, of whom 192 came from the borough of Leeds. His letter was published in the London Evening Post on 5th January which prompted an immediate refutation of his statement by the Mayor, Recorder and Vicar of Leeds. They were supported by fourteen Leeds merchants who were 'convinced that no public letter of such import has been sent from hence and were happy in knowing that such account is a misrepresentation of the situation of the manufacturers of this place'.³

Elam was quick to reply to their letter, saying that he was concerned only with the distress caused by the non-importation agreements and the resulting stagnation of trade to America, and not with European trade which was healthy.⁴ Elam was well supported by Quakers and Unitarians although he may have had ulterior motives for his public-spiritedness. In 1775 he

1. York Chronicle, 13th January 1775.

2. Ibid., 20th January 1775.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 3rd February 1775.

had seventeen colonial debtors and of those only four had paid him in full by 1777. He stood to lose a great deal of money if the conflict degenerated into full-scale war.

The York Courant of 24th January 1775 reported that a merchant petition was being circulated in Newcastle and there was a similar petition in Manchester 'but it is generally thought there will be a counter one signed by more respectable Names'.¹ The London petition was presented to parliament by Alderman Hayley on 23rd January along with two petitions from Bristol. The one from Bristol corporation was presented by Henry Cruger, M.P., and the Merchant Adventurers' petition was presented by the other Bristol M.P., Edmund Burke. All three were referred to what Burke called the 'silent Committee of Oblivion',² although they were supported in parliament by Meredith, Tommy Townshend, Fox, Savile and Lord John Cavendish. The same fate awaited the petitions from Birmingham, Liverpool, Norwich, Dudley, Glasgow, Manchester and Wolverhampton. It is interesting to note that these same towns sent petitions to the Marquis of Rockingham during the Stamp Act crisis asking for that Act to be repealed, and that all were still represented in parliament by Rockinghamite M.P.s. The first London petition said that dealers in woollen, iron and linen goods were especially hard hit, indicating, perhaps, that Elam was not exaggerating the distress in Yorkshire. The petition continued: 'the public revenue is threatened with a large and fatal diminution, the petitioners with grievous distress and thousands of industrious artificers and manufacturers with utter ruin'.³ All the petitions were received and then were 'buried' and forgotten by the House of Commons. On 7th February the members of the House of Lords decided that they would not actually receive any of the petitions.

1. York Courant, 24th January 1775.

2. York Chronicle, 27th January 1775.

3. Cobbett and Wright, History of Parliament, XVIII, 170.

This provoked an immediate written protest signed by eighteen Rockinghamite peers, which had no effect whatsoever.¹ On 30th January the marquis spoke in the House of Lords against the use of troops in America 'and said that the sending of any more would only prevent obedience, and that every town at which they were stationed would be turned into a Boston'.²

Rockingham's warnings were ignored by the government which believed that the rebellion was still restricted to Boston and could be put down by the army. Lord North had the idea that the Americans had behaved as they had because of the action of a few hotheads. By February 1775 Rockingham could see that the whole continent would have to be conquered and that the people would then have to be kept in subjection if Britain was to keep America as a colony.³

In Leeds the Elam petition for conciliation had been countered by an address to parliament for enforcing government policy in America. Rockingham, who was kept informed of events in Yorkshire by friends like Pemberton Milnes and Jeremiah Dixon, remarked that he was surprised at some of the names on the petition. He was also suspicious of the Leeds Address because he 'instantly observed' that 'few real merchants and manufacturers concerned in the American trade have signed'.⁴ In fact 'None of the Milnes assented to it: Messrs. Charnock, Zouch, Straubenzee and D. Maude were the only merchants of note that agreed [to the enforcing of the Coercive Acts], along with Doctors Cookson, Bacon and Mr. Towne'.⁵ It transpired that the Mayor of Leeds, Mr. Blayds, had decided

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1. Cobbett and Wright, History of Parliament XVIII, 181-2. They were Richmond, Camden, Torrington, Archer, Stanhope, Cholmondeley, Rockingham, Wycombe, Craven, Courteney, Abingdon, Effingham, Ponsonby, Fitzwilliam, Scarborough, Abergavenny, Portland, Tankerville.
 2. Burke to a Bristol merchant committee, 30th January 1775. Albemarle, Memoirs, 2, 256.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1553. Rockingham to Pemberton Milnes, February 1775.
 4. Ibid.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1550. John Smith to Rockingham, 6th February 1775.

to contradict Elam since the stocks of cloth were no lower than usual at that time of year. Blayds was a 'considerable' merchant to America but only a handful of merchants were concerned solely in the colonial trade. The other signatories exported to 'Italy, Germany, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Russia &c', where English trade was improving.¹

The Milnes family of Wakefield had set in motion another, pro-American, petition which the marquis believed would act as a balance to the Leeds petition. It was to be presented to the Commons by Sir George Savile but Rockingham was convinced that both it and the one from Birmingham would do little good because the ministers

seem determined not to hear or consider any petition which they may receive from the body of merchants or manufacturers in any part of Great Britain, I believe that they dare not look at the infinite distress and inconvenience which the measures they pursue will too probably bring on. 2

On 7th February both Houses sent an Address to George III which was effectively a declaration of war on America since it asked the king to take measures sufficient to enforce the legislation passed by parliament. The Rockinghamite peers promptly produced an opposition motion complaining that the Americans went unheard and the business had been rushed through parliament in one day; that no evidence was given to prove there actually was a rebellion; that the colonists had a real grievance; that parliament had heard only half the story and that was biased and that British merchants and manufacturers were already suffering through the actions of the government.³ The same eighteen peers signed this Dissentient motion as had signed the objection to merchant petitions not

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1. W.W.M. R1-1542. Mary Dixon to Rockingham, 30th January 1775. She was the wife of Jeremiah Dixon, who was 'laid up with gout' at this time.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1553. Rockingham to Pemberton Milnes, February 1775.
 3. W.W.M. R5. Minutes of the House of Lords, 7th February 1775.

being heard by the House. The response from the king was an almost foregone conclusion. 'His Majesty ... thinks it proper to acquaint this House [of Lords], that some addition to His Forces by Sea and Land will be necessary'.¹

Rockingham was right when he said that merchants and manufacturers were suffering. On 8th February a meeting was held by the principal hosiers in Nottingham to 'consider of a petition ... in favour of the Americans'. The result was three to one in favour although 'it is thought there will be a counter-petition'.² A number of hosiers had been forced to dismiss their employees and it was becoming apparent that the situation could only get worse. However, as had happened in Leeds, there was a counter petition, signed by men who were neither manufacturers nor members of the corporation, which challenged the accuracy of the earlier petition.³

The pattern of petition and counter-petition continued in Yorkshire throughout 1775. On 10th March traders at and near Huddersfield asked the Commons to 'support the lawful authority of this Kingdom' over the Americans,⁴ and on 10th September the Recorder of York proposed an Address to the Throne supporting the government. There had been little response to it so it had been left for the Corporation to consider.⁵ By 9th October, Jerom Dring was pleased to report that 'the steps which have been taken to prevent this City from Addressing have had the effect we desired, and ... the Recorder ... has agreed to give up the pursuing it further'.⁶ On 6th September petitions from Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester and Lancaster were addressed to the king asking for the execution of the war against the

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1. W.W.M. R5. Minutes of the House of Lords, 10th February 1775.
 2. York Chronicle, 10th February 1775.
 3. Burke to Mark Huish, 22nd February 1775. Copeland, Burke Correspondence, 3, 121.
 4. York Chronicle, 17th March 1775.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1601. Rockingham to Lord John Cavendish, 18th September 1775.
 6. W.W.M. R1-1608. Jerom Dring to Rockingham, 9th October 1775.

colonists.¹ The Mancunians said that 'whatever check our Manufacturers may receive by a necessary war we shall chearfully [sic] submit to a temporary inconvenience rather than continue subject to lawless Depradations from a deluded and unhappy people'.²

In Yorkshire some corporations were moved to produce loyal Addresses. On 27th September the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of Beverley joined with 'the rest of your Majesty's loyal subjets, in giving this public testimony of our utmost abhorrence of the present unnatural rebellion ... in North America, as well as of those factious and evil-minded men, both at home and abroad, by whose means [it] is principally promoted and abetted'. At almost the same time, Hull was the source of three petitions. The one presented by Robert Manners [son of one of Hull's M.P.s] came from the mayor, recorder and aldermen of the town. It noted that they had 'beheld with ... indignation ... seditious assemblies, traiterous addresses and correspondencies' in America and applauded the king's 'firmness of resolution' to subdue the colonies. Ten men signed the document, as compared with the 170 merchants who produced an address asking for the differences between Britain and America to be 'settled upon a permanent foundation, to the mutual happiness and prosperity of both'. The third address came from Trinity House and not surprisingly offered to 'assist ... in carrying into execution the legislative authority of Great Britain'.³

In November, the York Courant printed several items from the London Gazette of 4th November. It reported that several Addresses to the king concerning America had been submitted. The Mayor and Corporation of Leeds had forwarded another pro-war address which had been supported by a second one from 262 Leeds 'gentry, clergy, merchants, freeholders and

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1. York Chronicle, 22nd September 1775.
 2. York Courant, 19th September 1775.
 3. York Chronicle, 20th October 1775. The petitions were written on 19th, 26th and 23rd September, respectively.

principal inhabitants'. They had been countered by a pro-peace petition signed by 1,200 Leeds men. A Halifax petition from 664 gentry, clergy and freeholders and another from similar persons in Derby also asked for firm measures against America, while Sir George Savile had presented a petition for reconciliation from 1,848 Halifax men.¹ Not that any petition or counter-petition made much difference to the course of events. They all went unheeded. As early as 25th January, Burke had realised what was likely to happen and decided not to ask for a division of the House for each petition, saying 'he would not trouble the noble Lord (North) and his train, to walk out every five minutes in funereal pomp to inter petitions'.² What is important about these petitions, addresses and counter-petitions is that although opinion was divided in Yorkshire, the opposition to the initial conflict and then to the war against America was far better organised and far better supported than the coercive faction. One must give credit to the Marquis of Rockingham and his supporters though. Throughout 1775 they kept trying to present the petitions they received to persuade the government that its policies were self-destructive to Britain.

In two sets of notes for speeches, Rockingham outlined his views. The first of these shows just how ineffective he must have felt in opposing almost the whole of the House of Lords. He began by saying that he had always tried to reconcile the differences between Britain and America but it would be a 'Herculean Labour to Convince G[reat] Britain that they have no Right to Tax' and that 'America must be convinced that there is a distinction between Bills of Taxing and Bills of Restraining'.³ The second set of notes explains in great detail, possibly for the benefit

1. York Courant, 10th November 1775.

2. York Chronicle, 3rd February 1775.

3. W.W.M. R81-50. Rockingham's hand, no date, but before April 1775.

of those Lords who had still not grasped the seriousness of the situation, that

the Body of Merch^{an}ts, Traders & others of this Metropolis concerned in the Commerce of N^{orth} America and the W^{est} India Planters & Merch^{an}ts form so considerable a Proportion of the Bulk of Trade of this Empire, that when they appear as supplicants at Your Bar, Every Attention is & must be due to them. There is scarce any Considerable Commerce or any Considerable Manufacture in this Country which is not either Immediately connected with the American or with the W^{est} India Trade, or which in some Part of the Circle of Return of Wealth to this Country doth not feel a Connexion & dependency on the uninterrupted Course of the American or W^{est} India Trade. 1

Many M.P.s and peers must have thought that by mid-1775 the Rockingham faction was opposing North for the sake of it. They were a vociferous minority who registered their views at every available opportunity. Burke even manufactured opportunities by bringing debates around to American issues. It should have been apparent that they did have a strong opinion on the treatment of the colonies however factious they may have appeared. They were even prepared to be unpopular. The marquis refused to set aside his principles, saying he would rather risk his life and [quite considerable] fortune than support the king against America. Admiral Keppel refused a command even though it was the thing he most wanted, because he would have had to fight the colonists. The Earl of Effingham went one step further and resigned his commission.

Rockingham maintained his attacks on government policy regardless of the consequences. In another draft speech he commented that if America was to be conquered and subdued by force of arms, then the government must be prepared to keep the colonies in subjection in that way for ever. He rightly remarked that the reigns of George I and George II did not stop the Scots from being Jacobites and so one battle would not stop

1. W.W.M. R81-73. Rockingham's hand, no date, but before April 1775.

the Americans fighting for their ideals either. Even more pertinent was the prediction that if Britain lost the forthcoming battle then British trade would collapse within the year.¹

The marquis based his views on information from America and the manufacturing parts of England. He continued to receive letters from the colonies, which related not only events but the attitudes of the Americans. From one such letter he learned that North's Plan of Reconciliation of 20th February was repugnant to the colonists; that they were 'staggered at the open avowal of the House of Commons respecting the Taxation of America'; that the Americans were preparing to fight the British, who 'have begun a war in which you risk everything without the least prospect of gain'.² The marquis speedily relayed this information to others who felt that war was the wrong answer to the problem.³ It seems to have been common knowledge that Americans were sending him news. James Murray wrote to him from New York on 3rd June 1775 and prefaced the letter with the comment that 'Your Lordship is I know well informed from this part of the world that it is unnecessary for me to say much of the present unhappy situation of this country'.⁴ The marquis also received copies of letters sent from America to correspondents in England. There can be little doubt that Rockingham was one of the better-informed

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1. W.W.M. R81-130. Rockingham's hand; undated but before April 1775.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1590 (a). Unsigned to Rockingham, New York, 4th May, 1775.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1650. Shelburne to Rockingham, undated, 1775 thanking the marquis for the information received from Boston.
R63-14. Manchester to Rockingham, 30th May 1775, asking Rockingham for any other information he might receive to be passed on.
 4. W.W.M. R150-5. James Murray to Rockingham, New York, 3rd June 1775.

politicians in England on colonial matters.¹ By the end of June 1775 he was able to inform Lord Manchester that

By my stay here [at Wimbledon] I have had the opportunity of seeing variety of accounts from America, & indeed if I had wanted any confirmation of there being the most detrimental resolution in America to resist the violent Measures of Administration, & also if I could have entertain'd any doubt of there being a Power & strength in America capable to resist, every intelligence evinces, that America hath both the Will & the Power to resist. 2

He went on to say that Britain would soon feel the distress and indignity of defeat. He hoped that the distress felt by the commercial parts of the country would 'have effect' in encouraging merchants and manufacturers to rise against the 'ministers &c. who have planned and executed the measures which have brought on this calamity'. He was astute enough to realize, however, that it would take time for the economic implications of a breach with America to filter through to the majority of people and he was prepared to wait for a long time until the population of England came round to his way of thinking. He knew that his party would be beaten in Parliament time and time again but that their protests must continue to be lodged because

It must have an Effect upon the Publick at large

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1. The bundle R150 is made up entirely of letters, extracts and copies of information from America. To serve as examples of this, in June 1775 alone, letters were sent to Rockingham as follows:
 - 1. Messrs. Sargent & Chambers, who received a letter from 'a merchant of Note and character'.
 - 2. An eye-witness account of the battle of Lexington, sent to him by Keppel.
 - 3. Copy of a postscript from a letter from New York, 7th June.
 - 4. Extract of a letter from New York-based army. Copy is in Lady Rockingham's hand.
 - 5. James Murray to Rockingham, 3rd June 1775.
 - 6. J.B.J. to 'My Dear Sir', Charlestown, 22nd June 1775.

R1-1575. H.R. to Thomas Wooldridge, New York, 7th June 1775.
R1-1590(b) Unsigned to Rockingham, 10th June 1775.
R1-1566. Unsigned, to an unnamed general, Philadelphia, 11th June 1775.
R1-1567. General Gage to Rockingham, Boston, 12th June 1775.
 2. W.W.M. R1-1569. Rockingham to Manchester, 28th June 1775.

when they see Men of High Rank and of Known Principles & of undoubted Abilities, stepping forwards in so extraordinary a Manner, to face a Torrent - not merely of Ministerial or Court Power - but also of almost general opinion. 1

Although Rockingham was probably right in thinking that the belligerent attitude of Britons would disappear in the cold light of hardship, some merchants were already beginning to voice their fears as early as June 1775. Thomas Wooldridge worked for a merchant house dealing entirely with the colonial trade and he was 'greatly agitated in the present truly alarming crisis'.² The situation was likely to get much worse after 10th September because the American non-importation was due to begin on that date, to add extra muscle to the already-imposed colonial exportation ban.

English merchants to America and the manufacturers who supplied them were being adversely affected by August of 1775 but others were benefiting from the Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji and the first partition of Poland. These two events, according to Burke, had 'open'd a most astonishing market for almost every Article of produce, which used to be exported to the Colonies'.³ Trade had also improved for those manufacturing goods needed by the British military, and shipbuilding and fitting were also experiencing a boom. Viscount Dudley complained about the rising unemployment among nail-makers in the Birmingham area as a result of the cessation of trade with America and believed that 'should our present disputes with America be spun out to any length, our manufacturers must be ruined'.⁴ Dudley was not a supporter of Rockingham but was one of the first peers to see the effects of government policy on his own locality. However, the increased demand for men-o'-war and weapons

1. W.W.M. R1-1602. Rockingham to Burke, undated incomplete draft.

2. W.W.M. R1-1579. Wooldridge to Rockingham, 16th July 1775.

3. Burke to O'Hara, 12th August 1775. Copeland, Burke Correspondence, 3, 187.

4. Cobbett & Wright, History of Parliament, XVIII, 950-951.

ensured that the Birmingham manufacturers were not short of work for long. The Yorkshire woollen industry also benefited from the war because manufacturers there supplied the uniforms needed by the army and navy for the extra recruits. Rockingham acknowledged that 'trade, except in some particular Branches in this Neighbourhood is very good. Russia and Spain affords a large demand for goods, & the latter particularly for Some Sorts of goods which the Weavers formerly employ'd for American orders can do & make'.¹ Even Burke was forced to admit, in July 1776, that the loss of the North American trade was being offset by a vast increase of exports to Russia, especially in hardware and coarse woollens.² Rockingham still placed his ultimate hope on the merchants and manufacturers of England feeling 'great inconveniences' and demanding a change of policy. He was sufficiently realistic to see that 'nothing but repeated disappointments and the feelings of real distress will ... give that turn to the minds of the people ... which ultimately will be necessary to save this whole Empire from perdition'.³ Even more worrying for the anti-war faction was that merchants were under the impression that the war and non-importation would be of a short duration. Burke reported that in Bristol the merchants were stocking up the warehouses and were borrowing money to do so after they had spent their capital on supplies. Few manufacturers had laid off their workers: instead they were working on short time so as to be ready for the boom at the end of the conflict.⁴

In Yorkshire there was a distinct conflict of opinion about the state of trade. As has been seen, Samuel Elam had reported in January 1775

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1. W.W.M. R1-1596. Rockingham to Champion, 2nd September 1775.
 2. Copeland, Burke Correspondence, 3, 191, and Morning Post, 15th July 1775.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1601. Rockingham to Lord John Cavendish, 18th September 1775.
 4. Burke to Rockingham, 14th September 1775. Copeland, Burke Correspondence, 3, 209.

that men in Leeds were being ruined by the American troubles although the Corporation disagreed. Elam's viewpoint was supported even by John Wesley, who was a government adherent. Wesley said in 1775 that trade everywhere was declining and thousands were unemployed. He was in a very good position to judge, too, since his ministry took him all over the country. He said that some people had actually starved and others he had seen looked like walking shadows.

Even when I was last in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a tenant of Lord Dartmouth was telling me: "Sir, our tradesmen are breaking all round me, so that I know not what the end will be". Even in Leeds I had appointed to dine at a merchant's; but before I came the bailiffs were in possession of the house. Upon my saying: "I thought Mr. _____ had been in good circumstances", - I was answered: "He was so; but the American War has ruined him". 1

The iron industry also suffered in the early years of the war because the colonists no longer imported from England and had even become proficient at casting their own cannon and small arms. More important, though, was the fact that the colonists began successfully to intercept ships bound for America carrying supplies for the British army.

North's government was still pursuing an economic boycott on the colonies: in December 1775 it was pressing for a prohibition of all trade with the colonies since some merchants were still sending goods to America if they had the opportunity. As might be expected, the Rockinghamites opposed North's Bill but they seem to have had little merchant support. The Duke of Richmond admitted that he was weary of the 'American Business' because the merchants only opposed specific pieces of legislation which directly affected them. As he pointed out,

they must be made to see that the measures on the whole are good or bad, if good, a particular measure is scarce worth opposing, but if on the whole they

1. E. Lipson, Economic History of England (London, Black Ltd., 1931), Vol. 3 The Age of Mercantilism, pp. 298-299.

are ruinous, the whole system must be opposed ...
You may tell the merchants that you cannot get an
attendance of Lords unless they will take a more
decided part and firmly stand by them in their
general system of politics. 1

Richmond obviously believed that the Rockinghamites had a policy towards America and that it was necessary for them to have merchant support. Even so, many Rockinghamite peers were not attending the House of Lords in late 1775. The Dissentient against the Prohibitory Act was signed by only eight men instead of the usual eighteen.²

By 1776 Rockingham had changed the direction of his attack on the government. He continued to maintain that the war against America would be an economic disaster for Britain, but he began to comment more and more frequently on the likelihood of a British defeat by the colonists. Once again the marquis was ahead of most of his contemporaries in weighing up the situation and again he was right, but he hoped that neither side would win a complete victory for then 'there may be some chance of more temper prevailing'.³ He was pessimistic, however: 'this country will pay dear for its folly, but nothing but experience will or can have any effect'.⁴

In 1777 the Rockinghamites again decided to change their tactics of opposition. Hitherto they had failed to produce a concerted action for want of support and so the Duke of Richmond suggested that they should begin to emphasise the cost of the war because 'Injustice, rapine, murder, desolation, loss of liberty: all these we can inflict or suffer our fellow subjects to endure, but when we are to pay, we shall grumble'.⁵

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1. W.W.M. R1-1637. Richmond to Rockingham, 11th December 1775.
 2. W.W.M. R5. 15th December 1775. They were Abergavenny, Abingdon, Richmond, Ponsonby, Fitzwilliam, Rockingham, Manchester and Chedworth.
 3. W.W.M. R1-1668. Rockingham to Champion, 4th July 1776.
 4. Ibid.
 5. W.W.M. R1-1712. Richmond to Rockingham, 19th February 1777.

Britain was beginning to pay.

It becomes daily more and more evident that we cannot succeed in reducing America. It is said that ... this war has already destroyed 30,000 Americans and 10,000 English. It has cost us £15 million and will cost as many more in articles furnished and not brought to account, though we should make peace tomorrow. Our trade has suffered to an immense amount, money grows very scarce, & very soon will not be to be had at any rate. Stocks begin to fall & will tumble down very fast if we continue. We have not men to supply our army nor our fleet. These physical impossibilities or goings on will necessarily bring us to a standstill . 1 -

Prices rose. The cost of tobacco increased from 7½d. to 2s. 6d. per pound; pitch rose from 8s. to 35s. per barrel. Tar, turpentine, pig-iron and oil prices increased fourfold. Trade also began to suffer. Lord George Cavendish reported that in Manchester 'their trade [was] in a great measure ruined ... & unless [it] took a favourable turn very shortly, their trade would be irretrievable, that some People began to open their eyes fast'.² Rockingham's worst fears were being realized.

Britain's resources were stretched to the limit. The Navy had ships scattered around the world from the East Indies to the Atlantic, in the Mediterranean and at home. In 1770 Rockingham had asked about the state of the Navy: he was appalled by what he was told. At that time over half the ships were in need of repair or rebuilding because they were rotten, having been built rapidly with unseasoned timber. Of a total of 158 ships only fifty-four were serviceable in 1770 and they needed refitting, which would take over six months. By 1778 the situation was even worse. Fifty ships were available for home service and the British Navy had a mere 126 other vessels to protect a world-wide empire.³

1. W.W.M. R1-1731. Richmond to Rockingham 19th August 1777.
2. W.W.M. R1-1789. Lord George Cavendish to Rockingham, 18th October 1778.
3. W.W.M. R133-4,5 and 6; R72-1 and 2.

As the war lurched to its end British merchants and manufacturers found themselves plunged into a state of ruin once again. The European markets which had compensated for the loss of American markets after 1774 also ceased to be viable because of the war against Spain and France and the League of Armed Neutrality.¹ The value of British trade to Europe suffered a severe blow after the commencement of the world-wide war, but all areas were affected because Britain's enemies were able to intercept merchantmen with relative ease. There was little protection available from the Navy which was overstretched. The slump in Britain's trade with Europe came at a time when legal trade with America had ceased. Between 1776 and 1785 British exports earned £2 million p.a. less than in the period 1771 to 1775 and imports were down by almost £1 million p.a. in the same period. The worst years were from 1776 to 1780 and provided ample ammunition for the Marquis of Rockingham to attack the economic effects of the government's policy.

His first task as Prime Minister in March 1782 was to acknowledge America's independent status and to try to establish a general peace if possible. He would allow no argument against his proposal formally to let America go, and was even prepared to resign over the issue if circumstances required him to make a stand. After so many years in opposition his principles would still not allow him to compromise his beliefs. He issued orders for an immediate truce to be agreed, to end the bloodshed in America even before negotiations were started. He did not live long enough to see the final settlement.

As Prime Minister and a supporter of the American cause, Rockingham found himself inundated with letters from Loyalists who had fled to Britain. His generosity also appears to have been well-known and many

1. Schumpeter, Overseas Trade Statistics, pp. 63-69.

of the petitioners were sent amounts of money. He gave one John Morrison £60 or £70 out of his own pocket for example, and ordered the Treasury to reimburse £1,270 to Sir George Collier for money he had spent in helping colonial refugees who had gone to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Some forty letters asking for financial help are still extant and in view of the marquis' open-handedness, there is every reason to believe that all the petitioners received help in some way.¹

The British government received about 3,000 claims for compensation from loyalists, of whom only 8% were Crown office holders. The majority were farmers, merchants and artisans who had been caught up in the struggle between politicians on either side of the Atlantic.² Most had lost their homes and security and few settled down in Britain: they spent the rest of their lives in what they saw as exile.³ Most of them received little help after Rockingham died. Shelburne and Pitt presumably had not been so deeply involved in the struggle for the colonists' rights.

Although Rockingham's opposition to the conflict with, and then the war against, America was mainly centred in London he had a great deal of support from Yorkshire both on economic and political grounds. The declining trade of the woollen and iron industries worried him, as did increasing unemployment and poverty. His involvement with other movements in Yorkshire, such as the County Association, reflect his concern over the government's misguided course but he also attempted to help ease the distress in practical ways.

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1. W.W.M. R111.
 2. Esmond Wright, Fabric of Freedom 1763-1800 (New York, Hill & Wang, 1961), pp. 153-155 says that 'the size and fate of this Loyalist element has been minimized by American historians'. Eighty thousand had left America by 1783, according to Wright.
 3. W. Brown, The King's Friends (Providence, Rhode Island, Brown University Press, 1965). The statistics are compiled from information throughout the book.

The marquis' friends who were involved in the Yorkshire cloth industries were constantly in touch with Rockingham over a variety of matters including the state of employment and sales. They appear to have been of one mind and gave Rockingham their whole-hearted support in his political activities. They were the first to sign petitions asking for conciliation with America and among the first to subscribe to charitable funds for helping those who were in distress in England. They also featured largely in the fund-raising for helping American prisoners-of-war.

It is possible that Rockingham's policy towards America in 1765 during the Stamp Act Crisis was partly based on the effects of the colonial import ban which severely disrupted trade in Yorkshire and caused a great deal of hardship. Even when the economic situation improved Rockingham maintained a consistent attitude towards America right until 1782. The fact that he risked his political credibility for so long speaks volumes about the depth of his beliefs. In an age when most politicians would go to almost any lengths to remain in or to get into office, the marquis preferred to remain in opposition rather than to compromise.

His support from friends in Yorkshire sustained him in the long years out of office. Their backing did not waver either: they believed that he had the right solution otherwise they would have drifted away as did his fair-weather parliamentary supporters. What Rockingham had left in 1782 was a hard core of devoted followers who had remained with him through unpopularity, ridicule and ostracism. In the end they were the ones who were justified but sadly Rockingham never saw the results of his efforts on behalf of the Americans.

Lord Rockingham had a policy towards America which was more coherent, consistent and well-thought-out than hitherto has been credited.

His economic interest in Yorkshire and the information to which he had access enabled him to develop a unique attitude to the colonies, one which stressed the partnership between America and Britain and the need for mutual understanding. The marquis' idea of empire, like Burke's, foreshadowed the modern concept of commonwealth through which both countries would benefit. The policies of confrontation had no place in Rockingham's ideology.

Rockingham was aware of the distress in Yorkshire which was partly caused by the colonial problems. Bad harvests and post war slumps played their part in the crises too but the colonies did earn money for the county and a cessation of trade could be recognized fairly easily. Even more striking is the way in which the marquis accumulated a mass of evidence to support his views and how the merchants and manufacturers co-operated with him. This alone marks him out as a man with the interests of others at heart, because his 'natural' rôle would have been to support the landed element, not the traders.

Rockingham's policy towards America and his opposition to government measures and its conduct of the war made him unpopular in England except amongst his staunchest followers but he does appear to have been vindicated by events. He was the man who had the foresight and imagination to envisage events as they subsequently developed. He has never received the recognition of his efforts.

CONCLUSION

Charles Watson-Wentworth died on 1st July 1782 at the age of fifty-two. He was buried just over two weeks later in the family vault in York Minster. His grave bears no acknowledgment of the marquis. Two hundred gentlemen went out to Dringhouses to meet the funeral party and to escort the marquis' body into the city. Besides these, there were six mourning coaches and twenty carriages and the Dean and entire Chapter took part in the service. His death marked the passing of his style of influence in Yorkshire. Earl Fitzwilliam succeeded to his uncle's property and wealth but he never managed to command the same loyalty that Rockingham had achieved. It may have been due partly to the fact that Fitzwilliam was a southerner whereas Rockingham was a Yorkshireman and was proud of it, but Fitzwilliam perhaps lacked the charm of the marquis. How many men must have felt Rockingham's death as deeply as William Lowther is difficult to say, but for him it was

a matter of serious Lamentation, For independent of His Great Worth & Value as a publick Man, I must ever regret this Loss as a private Friend, who had allways /sic/ treated me with a Degree of attention I had no Right to expect, & which I am sure I could not possibly deserve. 1

The marquis' death received no mark of national mourning; his efforts for peace with America were credited to Shelburne; his Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was rapidly recalled because Portland's ideas were not those of the king. It seems that only in Yorkshire did people mourn his passing and he has since been either forgotten or misjudged by the few. His 'great worth and value' have been almost totally neglected.

During his life he made many friends from all ranks of society, not just from among the politically privileged. He seems to have been a most approachable person who had time to deal with almost any problem however small. He used his position to help those in need and was gener-

1. W.W.M. F63-25. William Lowther to Earl Fitzwilliam, 3rd July 1782.

ous in his support of charities. His personal contacts reached throughout the county. He knew and was known to merchants, manufacturers and artisans besides the gentry and nobility.

His enlightened attitude towards religious toleration extended to all but Unitarians and he genuinely sought to bring legal toleration to Dissenters and Catholics alike. This is particularly marked with reference to his Irish estates where Catholic tenants enjoyed more security than perhaps anywhere else in the country's landed absentee estates.

In England and Ireland the Marquis of Rockingham paid painstaking attention to the detail of estate management, working out his own accounts, checking crop yields, inventing implements where necessary and developing the resources of the estates. Amongst the politically active landowners in eighteenth-century England he was also one of the most diligent improvers of his estates.

While all these qualities are admirable, it must be pointed out that he would have been expected to use his position to help others, and his charities received only a small proportion of his income. His extensive contacts bolstered his political supremacy in the county so it was prudent for him to cultivate the merchants and manufacturers. The political support of Dissenters was equally important and although the marquis, like many Whigs, believed in toleration being extended to these groups, it was again politically astute. Although he improved his estates and developed the mineral resources, his long-term indebtedness and the non-payment of accounts must have been a source of discontent and hardship to local suppliers who could ill-afford to subsidise Rockingham.

As Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum in Yorkshire Rockingham perhaps gave more attention to duty than was either expected or necessary. His function in the organisation of the militia could have been delegated to others: one suspects that he may well have done the job

himself because of his longstanding interest in the military rather than because of any sense of duty. He need not have intervened personally in either Halifax or Hull, but the political advantages were great. His rôle in quelling the riots in 1756 was unique. No other Lord Lieutenant dealt with the problem so efficiently and without the use of regular troops.

Lord Rockingham had interests in a wide variety of subjects. He collected coins and medals, he was interested in the sciences, he had a large collection of exotic plants, birds and animals. His love of horses - breeding and racing - took him to all the big meetings besides earning money, and even brought him into contact with Russia and Catherine the Great. He spoke French and Italian and owned books on such diverse subjects as Tull's Horse-Hoeing Husbandry, Chambers' Civil Architecture and Kennicott's State of the Hebrew Text of the Bible.¹ He seems to have been widely read and many of the books in the library were purchased during his marquissate. The marquis was a member of the Royal Society and kept the laboratory established by his father at Wentworth where he could conduct scientific experiments.

He showed humanity and generosity to the servants and tenants on his estates and involved himself in their affairs to a greater degree than was essential, although they were paid relatively low wages. He paid for their weddings and funerals besides giving the fairly common annual treats on St. Thomas' Day and biannual rent days. If the servants undertook their responsibilities properly they could look forward to life-long employment and a pension after retirement. He would not tolerate dishonest or lazy retainers, however. Those who asked for patronage were dealt with quickly and often favourably if it was within his power.

During his pre-eminence as a politician in Yorkshire he was supported

1. W.W.M. A 1212. Executors' Records: books.

by the Rockingham Club in York. This is perhaps the clearest and most long-lived example in the period where a club was formed to support one man and his ideals. The club was the centre of Rockingham Whiggery in the county besides being a social club and many prominent figures were members. The club undertook to organise the election campaigns of Rockingham's nominees in several constituencies and its influence spread throughout the county. The petitioning movement of 1769 and the County Association of 1779 involved many members of the Rockingham Club which enabled the marquis to maintain a hold on both those movements while remaining in the background. His ability to preserve his political supremacy in Yorkshire was largely due to his skilful handling of the electorate and by his following the sense of the electors rather than by overtly trying to lead them. Few Yorkshire freeholders liked to be told what to do but the marquis usually had his own way in the end.

The 'rise of public opinion' in the mid-eighteenth century resulted in more people becoming part of the 'political nation'. Political awareness moved down the social scale to include artisans and traders. They suffered from economic hardship and high prices in times of trade depression and poor harvests and made their problems known both verbally and on occasion violently. The marquis was prepared to listen to the views of these people, be they merchants to America, footsore soldiers or striking seamen, and to make some attempt to respond to their wishes. This obviously enhanced his reputation as a 'caring' man, but one wonders if he really knew how much the lower orders suffered in times of distress. He commented in 1745 that all he could get for supper and breakfast was 'some Barley bread and skimmed milk'¹ but it could be that he did not realise that that was all many people ever had to eat. The people with

1. W.W.M. M2-351. Higham's 'Journall', 1745.

whom he socialised were wealthy and it is doubtful if he ever saw how the poorest people lived. He spent a great deal of money on gambling and horse-racing, and the expenditure on the stables at Wentworth was little short of extravagant.

The Marquis of Rockingham's American policy was linked to the economic conditions of the manufacturing north, particularly his desire to repeal the patently unenforceable Stamp Act, but from then on he developed a positive and clear attitude towards the colonies which was thought out and consistent. Unfortunately he seems to have been a poor parliamentary speaker and failed to express his ideas clearly enough to his colleagues in the House of Lords. Furthermore, his ill-health often prevented him taking effective action, except over the Absentee Land Tax which affected him personally. His inability to cope with pressure at times meant his followers were leaderless, while he stayed at Wentworth or one of the spa towns and left the conduct of his party's affairs to others. There can be little doubt that he was a sick man but he infuriated friends such as Lord John Cavendish by continually 'doctoring' himself and probably undermining his health still further.

Rockingham has been described as being 'a man of second-rate powers' devoured by jealousy and mistrust of abler men than himself, of having 'beliefs evolved from personal prejudices and maintained [by] obstinate self-esteem', of having 'succeeded (where he succeeded) because other men failed' and of showing 'dumb devotion to his rather negative idealism'.¹ This assessment of him does not seem particularly apt. In spite of his faults, the picture which emerges from a study of the man in his native environment is one of a caring, understanding and intelligent person with wide interests, who devoted much time and energy to local, county and

1. R.J. White, The Age of George III, pp. 97-98.

national matters. He accepted people for themselves and valued their opinion but made up his own mind on most issues. He failed to make more of an impact nationally because he refused to abandon his principles in order to take office and maintained an opposition to government policies which he thought were mistaken. In Yorkshire he was respected and liked. It was in Yorkshire where he was given the acclamation which he deserved, because there his qualities were recognised and appreciated.

APPENDIX 1

The Early Illness 1741-42

The illness had begun in July 1741 when Charles was 'a little Indisposed, something Feaverish [sic] I guess it proceeds from Worms and will Soon be Removed'.¹ He also had a rash and it was thought that the cause of the problem was that the boy had overheated himself.² The family had already been cautioned by Ranby 'against overheating themselves before inoculation'.³ although the girls were not inoculated against small-pox until after 18th August.⁴ The boy was still ill at the beginning of August: he had been 'much out of order' for a long time but had been recommended to take warm water baths by Doctor Wilmot and Mr. Ranby.⁵ Charles' Aunt Bell was sure that the baths 'and other Things They'll prescribe will in a short Time entirely Cure his Complaints w/hi/ch neither of Them thought (by the Description) proceeded from any dangerous Causes'.⁶

In spite of Lady Isabella's hopes, Charles did not greatly improve even though his mother believed that 'he continues mending everyday'.⁷ He and his mother had gone to London to consult Mr. Ranby and Dr. Wilmot because his mother was concerned about a 'swelling in a certain part' which was 'larger than when we left Wentworth'. The doctors hoped that it would burst outwards 'which they assure me will be the safest way and give the poor Monkey but very little pain'. They wanted Lady Malton to take Lord Higham to Bristol while the weather was still warm; she wanted her husband to take the three youngest girls to London '& take the inoculating part upon y/ou/rself for the Learned say that it w/oul/d be

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1. W.W.M. M8-25. Malton to Nottingham. After 16th July 1741.
 2. W.W.M. M8-26. Lady Finch to Lady Malton, 30th July 1741.
 3. Ibid.
 4. W.W.M. M8-32. Lady Ann Wentworth to Lord Malton, 18th August 1741.
 5. W.W.M. M8-28. Winchelsea to Malton, 7th August 1741.
 6. W.W.M. M8-29. Lady Finch to Lord Malton, 7th August 1741.
 7. W.W.M. M7-51. Lady to Lord Malton, 18th August 1741.

a very improper time for Punch to be infected & that if I have anything to dō with them I must not come nigh him of [sic] some time'.¹

One wonders if Lady Malton was simply overprotective. On 20th August Lord Winchelsea noted that he was surprised to see the boy 'so well and so brisk'. He hoped that Charles was 'now safe from this complaint' - the same one he had suffered from in 1738/9 - but thought he would never be safe 'if he continues the practice of overheating himself and then drinking Cold Water'.² He said that Charles was 'of a pretty healthy strong Constitution'; Lady Malton was not so sure.

The same day she wrote a progress report to her husband saying that Charles' swelling continued to grow, as did the pain 'in that part (but not the lease [sic] trouble in making Water or going to Stool) & less Fever than c[oul]d be imagined where Matter is as they now imagine certainly gathering & must end in an operation'. In spite of it all, Charles was 'in fine spirits'.³ Lady Malton dosed the boy with cinchona bark which removed the pains in his leg and reduced his fever and she was convinced that they would soon have 'a clear Stage to act in a proper Manner ab[ou]t his other Complaints w[hi]ch the Learned assure me are to be conquered also'.⁴ Charles was soon allowed to eat 'Flesh meat', and Mr. Ranby still assured her that the swelling would break outwards.⁵ Three days later he decided to lance it even though Dr. Bourne disagreed.⁶ The boy's mother was puzzled because the swelling 'sometimes pushes forward very fast then retires a little' but the doctor [Wilmot] and Ranby seemed happy with his condition.⁷ At this point the letters cease, presumably because Lord

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1. W.W.M. M7-51. Lady to Lord Malton, 18th August 1741.
 2. W.W.M. M2-84. Winchelsea to Malton, 20th August 1741.
 3. W.W.M. M7-52. Lady to Lord Malton, 20th August 1741.
 4. W.W.M. M7-53. Lady to Lord Malton, 25th August 1741.
 5. W.W.M. M7-54. Lady to Lord Malton, 29th August 1741.
 6. W.W.M. M7-55. Lady to Lord Malton, 1st September 1741.
 7. Ibid.

Malton arrived with the girls, but a later letter states that surgery was not under-taken to open the swelling.¹

By the end of October the correspondence had recommenced. Charles was ill again. He was just the same as when he left Kensington, so John Bourne had bled him and the child had started on Sir Edward Hulse's prescription which was as bad as the last one, if not worse. Lady Malton thought that 'with such a State of Blood the Continuation of Health cannot be expected' but was hopeful that the 'Cinnabar may prove a more Efficacious remedie [sic] than any that has been tryed [sic] yet'.² That night she applied a 'Blister ... without the least Sympton or tendency to anything like Strangury'. He bore the treatment well, as he had done three years previously, and it seemed so successful that Lady Malton was 'determined to keep it running full as long as I did last time w/hic/h will be done at this time by the help of John Borne [sic] with much ease to the Dear Child'.³ She continued with the blister and applied 'ointment with flyes' with no sign of strangury. Charles found her treatment 'not near the pain he expected' and she was 'full of hopes that he will rec/ei/ve great benefit from it'.⁴

Apart from his other troubles, the boy's knee had swelled but this had 'much abated' since the application of the blister which Lady Malton believed 'must be acting upon the whole Mass of Blood' since it had 'reached the remote part'. She thought that Sir Edward Hulse's powders were too slow in taking effect although the boy took them 'very quietly'.⁵ Sir Edward did not 'apprehend any great danger from the Siziness⁶ of

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1. W.W.M. R170-20. Niccòlo Scanagati of Padua to (a doctor in England?), 20th July 1750. I am grateful to Fr. John McMahon and Dr. Stephen Bemrose for their translations of this letter.
 2. W.W.M. M7-14. Lady to Lord Malton, 31st October 1741.
 3. W.W.M. M7-19. Lady Malton to Lady Finch, 2nd November 1741.
 4. W.W.M. M7-17. Lady to Lord Malton, 4th November 1741.
 5. W.W.M. M7-18. Lady to Lord Malton, 4th November 1741.
 6. thickness.

Charles' blood'; Lady Malton thought that the condition was the cause of all the child's problems which would not end until it was 'set to rights'. At any rate, he was fit enough to go hunting.¹

Charles continued in the same state of health. He slept well at night, ate more than his mother thought was good for him and was able to exercise strenuously without tiring. He put on no weight, though, and 'as for them swellings to his throat, they are almost gone one daye and rise the next'. His mother did not expect a speedy recovery and 'if the D^rs think him in a good state of health now I sh^d be glad to see him in a better'.² He began to improve and by the end of November even she thought he was on the mend and gaining weight.³

Unfortunately, Lady Malton again had cause for concern over Lord Higham's health in January 1742 when he began to suffer from a hoarseness which came and went.⁴ Otherwise he was as well as one could expect with no other complaints.⁵ It was not to last.

In May 1742 he and his mother were in Bristol taking the waters because the boy had been indisposed. Lady Malton thought the waters were doing them good because they were both being violently sick.⁶ However, Charles had had no dinner on 25th and 26th May and was hot, lazy and not inclined to stir 'from which I conclude he is not well, and therefore Intend to give him a gentle Vomit ... and to let him take his old Remedie [sic] the Salt Draughts for a few daies [sic] which I dare say will set him quite to rights'.⁷ By 29th May, Dr. Bourne had bled the boy 'which succeeded very well but ... found it [i.e. his blood] as bad as ever'.

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1. W.W.M. M7-16. Lady to Lord Malton, 7th November 1741.
 2. W.W.M. M7-15. Lady to Lord Malton, 9th November 1741.
 3. W.W.M. M7-22. Lady to Lord Malton, 25th November 1741.
 4. W.W.M. M7-1. Lady to Lord Malton, 25th January 1742.
 5. W.W.M. M7-4. Lady to Lord Malton. 8th February 1742,
and W.W.M. M7-9. Lady to Lord Malton, 22nd February 1742.
 6. W.W.M. M7-29. Lady to Lord Malton, 12th May 1742.
 7. W.W.M. M7-35. Lady to Lord Malton, 26th May 1742.

The waters were not working 'but there is a great deal for them to do which God Grant they may effect'. The weather had turned warm so Lady Malton had 'shorne him ... which has display'd a most Scabby head and indeed several other untoward Blotches he has out upon other parts of his Body' which made her uneasy.¹ The blotches on his head were not numerous 'yet they made up in quality for so virulent a Corrosive Humour is not easily conceived without seeing it'. The pustules on his body were of the same sort and his mother intended to put plasters on them to prevent them from spreading. Charles was also feverish; his glands were swollen and his pulse was erratic 'but out of compassion to you [*i.e.* her husband] I must now tell you he is with me as Brisk and lively as you ever Saw him'. Lady Malton had called in Dr. Logan and Mr. Pye to treat the boy and they had prescribed 'the Precipitate Perse' as the cure. Clearly Charles was impatient to be cured because he told his mother to give him the medicine 'to Cure me which I am sure it will do or shoot me through the head at once'. She thought that this attitude was 'odd from one of his Age and [*it*] does not a little disturb'.² The blotches began to burst and indent but the doctor thought that 'all will be well in the end'.³ Meanwhile, Charles was still losing weight even though 'he had none to spare before' and he was inclined to be lazy 'which was not his natural turn'. His father recommended Gascoign's Powder - a dose of five grains made up with syrup into a pill - every night.⁴

To make matters worse, the doctors disagreed about the treatment. 'Dr. Pye is Vehemently for the P. Perse, Dr. Logan saies [*sic*] that it is a Medicine that may prove too rough in its operation for his Constitution

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1. W.W.M. M7-36. Lady to Lord Malton, 29th May 1742.
 2. W.W.M. M7-38. Lady to Lord Malton, 1st June 1742.
 3. W.W.M. M7-39. Lady to Lord Malton, 2nd June 1742.
 4. W.W.M. M7-32. Lord to Lady Malton, June 1742.

& therefore begs a tryal [sic] of Beazor Mineral and Viper Broth'. The Bristol water had not yet acted 'because his case is of too obstinate a Nature'¹ and Lady Malton herself was satisfied that since nothing else had worked to cure the boy, the time had come to try mercurials, even though she knew that they were 'powerful and perhaps in some cases hazardous medicines'.² She wanted to see some remedy succeed but was 'afraid of violent ones and at the same time vastly distrustfull. [sic] of mild ones'. Her 'terrors' did not arise from any immediate danger to her son, and her 'perfect Knowledge' of his disorder convinced her that whatever remedies he took, the cure was in the hands of God.³

To add to Charles' disorders, on 12th June he developed a 'very Inflamed bad Eye ... the same Eye that ... he did not see so well of [as] the other ... [He] sais [sic] that from that eye Alone he can Scarcely distinguish anything'. The doctor suggested bathing the eye: Lady Malton knew that the 'frightful Symptoms' which were 'shocking to behold'⁴ were a result of 'the Same as produces all the rest of his complaints in whichever Shape they appear'. The eye was very bloodshot and inflamed; the eyelid was swollen so he could hardly open it. The other eye was dull and 'he has very little sight of it'.⁵ By 14th June the eye problem had eased somewhat but Lady Malton could find no cause to attribute the improvement to any of the "cures". Charles was still being subjected to Bristol water, Beazor mineral, Viper Broth, cinnibar and the Precipitate Perse.⁶ She decided to take the boy home to Went-

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1. W.W.M. M7-41. Lady to Lord Malton, 5th June 1742.
 2. Ibid.
 3. W.W.M. M7-43. Lady to Lord Malton, 7th June 1742.
 4. W.W.M. M7-45. Lady to Lord Malton, 12th June 1742.
 5. W.W.M. M7-56. Lady to Lord Malton, Undated: 12th June 1742?
 6. W.W.M. M7-46. Lady to Lord Malton, 14th June? 1742.

worth because he was more likely to recover there than anywhere else.¹
He still ate and slept well and was 'pretty cheerful' but his looks are bitter bad still. The Flesh he lost in the Accidental Feavour [sic] he has not Recover'd and his complexion is of the most Sickly Sort his hands of the same Hue his legs are tollerable [sic] well'.²

They returned to Wentworth in short stages and by 6th September Higham was 'perfectly recovered ... after the long and successful Care that Lady Malton has taken' of him.³ In May 1743 he was inoculated and made a perfect recovery from the smallpox⁵ after which he caught cold 'by stripping when He was hot'.⁶ Lord Higham does not seem to have been seriously ill after that although his mother panicked each time she thought he ran the risk of falling ill.⁷

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1. W.W.M. M7-47. Lady to Lord Malton, 15th June? 1742.
 2. W.W.M. M7-48. Lady to Lord Malton, 16th June 1742.
 3. W.W.M. M2-104/5. Lady Finch to Malton, 6th September 1742.
 4. W.W.M. M2-123. Lord Irwin to Malton, 24th May 1743.
 5. W.W.M. M2-122. Captain Thomas Buck to Malton, 27th May 1743.
 6. W.W.M. M2-135. Lady Finch to Malton, 18th June 1743.
 7. W.W.M. M2-343 for example.

APPENDIX 2

NICCOLO SCANAGATI'S MEDICAL REPORT 1750

Having had the good fortune to lend my assistance to My Lord Malton (who is roughly twenty years of age, with a full-blooded and fiery temperament and an excellent and robust constitution, and who has stayed here in Padua for two months on account of his health), I have been able to observe certain particular features of his illness. I believe it would be fitting, with all due respect for the peace and security deserved by so illustrious a person, for these features to be clearly recorded, together with the method and remedies that were adopted for his recovery. He had come from Venice, and for some days had been suffering from a poisonous venereal discharge which caused painful inflammation in all his natural parts. He passed urine with great difficulty, experiencing pain and a burning sensation, and his desire to urinate was frequent. This forced him to take to his bed. In this condition, he thought it necessary to have the vein in his arm opened, which produced relief. He then took the following electuary, consisting of three ounces of emollient, three drams of powdered jalap, a half [-dram] of purified nitre, bound together with lemon juice, swallowing a dram and a half of this mixture in the morning on an empty stomach, and a similar dose in the evening. The dark greenish poison was oozing slowly from his penis, which was all contracted, and the sharp and constant pain extended from the perineum up to the urinary bladder, producing small swellings now in this place, now in that. There was a fierce burning sensation in the glands, which prevented him from sleeping. Because of this, it seemed reasonable to bathe that part in tepid water and milk, and to apply poultices to the areas affected by swelling and contractions, together with cold drinks and a few grains of laudanum at night. These treatments produced some alleviation of the aforementioned symptoms, but his urine consistently contained a very

fine and light whitish sediment and had a very pungent odour, similar to that of a sal volatile; therefore, having regard to the patient's temperament, which was fiery and full-blooded, to the continuing inflammation, to the quality of the blood, which appeared to be polypus, and to the vegetative forces, I let blood from him once again, continuing with the cold drinks and a plentiful decoction made up from a single anti-venereal herb; in between these I administered a certain medicine designed to keep his bowels open. Whilst the signs of inflammation were decreasing (by which I mean the pain in the natural parts, the swellings and the strong contractions in the penis) and the urine was being passed easily and without burning, the aforesaid My Lord desired first of all that we proceeded to the next stage of the cure (which is normally carried out after the inflammation has passed) on the suspicion of having had commerce with a person, from whom however he had no sign of venereal infection. He wished me to smear him with mercury until he felt a sensation from it in his gums, or indeed that instead of smearing I should administer the mercury to him internally - which seemed considerably more appropriate in this case than smearing. I therefore gave him the silver [i.e. quicksilver, or mercury], beginning with a small dose and increasing it over ten days. As a result, after a few days he experienced stinging in the gums and abrasion to the palate. Having done this, and paying strict attention to his diet, I administered ?, including a good deal of milk. Notwithstanding these remedies, the aforementioned sediment in the urine remained. This sediment therefore seemed to me to demand a specific examination before proceeding to use some astringent balsam and administer a special cold ablution designed to eliminate all vestiges of the discharge and to harden the enfeebled parts. On examining it [the sediment] very carefully, I saw that it was neither fibrous, nor mucous nor purulent but, as I said above, always very fine and light and with

a pungent odour; for this reason (and bearing in mind that we still had to await the success of the mercury that had been taken internally), any suggestion of syphilitic chancre or other similar infection in the neck of the bladder was to be utterly excluded.

I then enquired of My Lord if at any other time he had had a similar peculiarity in his urine. He replied that when very young and still inexperienced sexually, for some time following a fever he had had the same unusual urine, and indeed that on one occasion this symptom had coincided with certain tumours on the testicles. It was only by chance that he had not had recourse to surgery, the reason being that he was also afflicted with a throat infection - to which he was prone - and therefore had his vein opened four times. Thereupon the inflammation subsided, and equally the tumours and sediment disappeared. He told me that as a youth he had sometimes experienced some difficulty and a burning sensation when urinating, which subsided when his blood was let and with the application of poultices. I observed that from time to time his face and body were covered with many purplish spots, which, having produced a little fluid, would disappear - as indeed happened in the course of the cure, at the end of which his face was entirely free from these spots. From this observation, it seemed to me simple to deduce both the original cause and the more immediate [?] cause of the said sediment: namely a natural complexion of humours which are exacerbated by muriatic [i.e. acidic] sourness, together with the marked inflammation of the blood and the motion of the contracted poison. Now that My Lord has to depart and continue the journey he had begun, I consider it necessary for him to observe scrupulously the following régime. Firstly, he should make frequent use of Whey, or failing that, thin chicken broth. Secondly, for several days he should take one and a half drams in the morning and an equal amount in the evening of an electuary consisting of: emollient,

guaiacum resin, balsam, ? , rhubarb and nitre, in accordance with the revised English Pharmacopoeia. He should avoid all types of food, vinegary sauces, ? ? , and all violent exercise, especially riding, for some time. A few days after his journey has ended, if he has a resurgence of burning, pain or swelling in his natural parts, let his vein be opened and if, as is to be hoped, it happens that there is no trace of these symptoms, the entire course of treatment should be terminated with a cold ablution of the natural parts. These are the treatments and procedures that I, with my slight understanding, have thought necessary for the complete recovery of My Lord.

Niccòlo Scanagati,

Padua, 20th July, 1750.

APPENDIX 3

ROCKINGHAMITE M.P.s

There were 102 different men who represented the Yorkshire constituencies between 1753 and 1782 of whom fifty-seven were Yorkshire born or held lands there. The following list details these men. The lists are compiled from Sedgwick, History of Parliament and Namier & Brooke, History of Parliament. Those whose names are underscored were 'outsiders'.

- YORKSHIRE: Sir Conyers Darcy; Henry Playdell Dawnay; Sir George Savile; Edwin Lascelles; Henry Duncombe.
- ALDBOROUGH: Andrew Wilkinson; William Pitt; Nathaniel Cholmley; Aubrey Beauclerk; Henry Clinton; Charles Wilkinson; Abel Smith; William Baker; William Hanger; Sir Richard Sutton; Charles Mellish; Edward Onslow; Sir Samuel Fludyer.
- BEVERLEY: Charles Pelham; Sir William Codrington; John Joliffe Tufnell; Michael Newton; George F. Tufnell; Hugh Bethell; Charles Pelham; Sir Griffith Boynton; Sir John Pennyman; F. E. Anderson.
- BOROUGHBRIDGE: Lewis Watson; William Murray; John Fuller; Sir Charles Bisshopp; Augustus H. Fitzroy; Thomas Thoroton; Brice Fisher; James West (Sn); James West (Jn); Nathaniel Cholmley; Henry Clinton; Charles Mellish; Anthony Eyre; William Phillips; Charles Ambler.
- HEDON: Sir Charles Saunders; Peter Denis; Beilby Thompson; Lewis Thomas Watson; Christopher Atkinson; William Chaytor.
- HULL: Richard Crowle; Ld. Robert Manners; Sir George Montgomery Metham; William Weddell; David Hartley; William Wilberforce.
- KNARESBOROUGH: Richard Arundell; Sir Henry Slingsby; Robert Boyle Walsingham; Lord John Cavendish; Sir Anthony Abdy; Lord George Augustus Henry Cavendish; Frederick Ponsonby; James Hare.
- MALTON: Henry Finch; John Mostyn; Savile Finch; John Dawnay; Edmund Burke; William Weddell.
- NORTHALLERTON: Daniel Lascelles; Edwin Lascelles; Henry Peirse.
- PONTEFRACT: Robert Monckton; William Monckton Arundel; Sambrooke Freeman; William Hamilton; Sir Rowland Winn; Henry Strachey; Sir John Goodricke; Charles Mellish; William Nedham; John Smyth.
- RICHMOND: William Henry Kerr; John Yorke; Thomas Yorke; Sir Ralph Milbanke; Thomas Dundas; Sir Lawrence Dundas; Alexander Wedderburn; William Norton.
- RIPON: William Aislabie; Sir Charles Vernon; William Lawrence; Charles Allanson; Frederick Robinson.
- SCARBOROUGH: William Osbaldeston; Sir Ralph Milbanke; John Major; Fountayne Wentworth Osbaldeston; George Manners; Sir James Pennyman; Ld. Tyrconnel; Sir Hugh Palliser.
- THIRSK: Thomas Frankland; Roger Talbot; Henry Grenville; John Grenville; William Frankland; Sir Thomas Gascoigne; Beilby Thompson.
- YORK: William Thornton; Lord John Cavendish; George Fox Lane; Charles Turner; Sir John Armytage; Sir George Armytage.

The second list identifies those M.P.s who were at some point Commissioners of the Peace in the North Riding and/or Deputy Lords Lieutenant of the West Riding. These details are compiled from Namier & Brooke, House of Commons, and W.W.M. unnumbered bundles following R170/175.

FOR THE NORTH RIDING COMMISSIONERS, they were: Sir George Savile; Sir Griffith Boynton; Sir John Goodricke; Sir Rowland Winn; Sir Ralph Milbanke; Sir William Pennyman; Roger Talbot; Thomas Frankland; William Aislabie; Charles Turner; Edwin Lascelles; Thomas Duncombe; Andrew Wilkinson; Nathaniel Cholmley; William Osbaldeston; Daniel Lascelles; Thomas Yorke; Henry Duncombe; William Weddell; William Thornton; William Joliffe Tufnell; Charles Wilkinson; Charles Allanson; Fountayne Wentworth Osbaldeston; William Chaytor; John Yorke.

FOR THE DEPUTY LORDS LIEUTENANT OF THE WEST RIDING, they were: William Monckton Arundel; Sir Conyers Darcy; Sir George Savile; Sir Rowland Winn; Savile Finch; Sir John Armytage; George Fox-Lane; Andrew Wilkinson; William Aislabie; Charles Turner; Henry Duncombe; Hugh Bethell; Nathaniel Cholmley; William Thornton; William Osbaldeston; Edwin Lascelles; Daniel Lascelles; Thomas Yorke; Anthony Eyre; William Mellish; William Joliffe Tufnell.

APPENDIX 4MEMBERS OF THE ROCKINGHAM CLUB

Member	1754	1763	1782
Allenby, J.		X	
Atkinson, B.	X		
Atkinson, G.	X		
Atkinson, J.		X	
Bacon, F.		X	
Baldock, W.		X	
Barclay.	X		
Barker, R.	X	X	
Barlowe.	X		
Barstowe, B.	X	X	
Batty, R.			X
Bell, R.	X		X
Benson, E.			X
Bewlay, B.		X	
Bewlay, R.	X	X	
Blake, J.	X	X	X
Blanchard, W.			X
Bluitt, W.			X
Bouchier.	X		
Bower, H.	X		
Bracken.	X		
Branfoot.	X		
Brassint, J.			X
Brighton, J.		X	
Brown, P.			X
Brown, W.			X
Callbeck.	X		
Camidge, J.			X
Carr, J.	X	X	
Cawley, T.	X	X	
Chubley, F.			X
Clark, R.			X
Clark, T.			X
Clough, E.	X		X
Coates, G.	X	X	
Coates, F.		X	
Cooper, M.	X		X
Cordley, T.	X	X	X
Cordukes, R.	X	X	
Cordwell, R.			X
Coupland, J.			X
Croft, R.			X
Croft, S.	X	X	X
Croft, S. (Jn)			X
Carley, H.B.	X	X	
Davis, R.		X	
Dawson, Edward.	X	X	
Dawson, Edwin.	X		
Dawson, R.	X		
Dawson, W.	X		

	1754	1763	1782
Disnay.	X		
Driffield, R.	X		X
Dring, J.	X	X	X
Dodsworth, R.A.			X
Eamonsen, J.			X
Eastburn.	X		
Ellis, T.	X		
Elwick, J.	X		
Elwick, J. (Jn)		X	
Ereskine, R.			X
Erskine, G.		X	
Etherington, A.		X	X
Etherington, C.	X	X	
Etty.	X		
Fenton, R.	X		
Fenton, W.	X		
Finney, J.			X
Fisher, J.			X
Fleming, J.	X	X	
Fleming, W.		X	
Forlies, C.			X
Fretwell.	X		
Frobisher, N.			X
Garband, R.			X
Garencieres, T.D.	X	X	X
Gatie, J.		X	
Gilbank, T.	X	X	
Gilby.	X		
Gorwood, J.		X	
Gouillet, P.		X	
Graves, J.		X	
Greaves.	X		
Greene, W.			X
Grocock, W.		X	
Gylpin.	X		
Hardisty, T.			X
Harnell, J.		X	
Harrison, J.		X	
Harrison, W.			X
Harley, T.			X
Haughton, G.	X		
Hawksworth.	X		
Heworth.	X		
Hoare.	X		
Horner, W.	X	X	
Hornsey.	X		
Hotham, James.		X	
Hotham, John.	X	X	
Hotham, R.	X	X	
Hotham, W.	X		
Hudson, W.			X
Hunter, A.			X
Iveson, G.	X	X	
Jackman, J.			X

Member	1754	1763	1782
Jackson, J.	X		
Jefferson, J.			X
Johnson, Dr.	X		
Jolliffe, W.			X
Jubb, H.	X		
Kettlewell, W.		X	
Kilpatrick.	X		
Kitson, G.			X
Kitson, R.			X
Knipe.	X		
Langwith, O.		X	
Lawton, R.			X
Linton.	X		
Luttrell, T.			X
Mackley.	X		
Marfitt, T.	X	X	
Marsh, J.	X	X	X
Marshall, C.		X	
Marshall, D.	X		
Marshall, M.	X	X	
Marshall, T.			X
Mason, N.		X	X
Maude, J.	X	X	X
Mayre, W.			X
Meek.	X		
Mills, J.			X
Milner, T.			X
Milner, Sir W.	X		
Montgomery -Metham, G.		X	
Moorhouse.	X		
Moseley.	X		
Mosley, J.			X
Mosley, T.		X	
Mossen, J.			X
Myers, H.			X
Newstead, W.		X	
Newton, I.	X		
Nowell, J.		X	
Nutting.	X		
Oldfield, C.	X	X	
Ovington, J.	X	X	
Parkinson, R.			X
Parker, J.			X
Peacevell, T.			X
Perott.	X		
Perritt.	X		
Pickard, G.			X
Place, L.	X		X
Place, T.	X	X	X
Plumpton, E.	X	X	X
Porteous.	X		
Preston, J.	X		

Member	1754	1763	1782
Preston, T.	X		
Preston, W.	X	X	
Pulleyn, F.	X		X
Read, W.		X	
Richardson, James.	X	X	
Richardson, John.	X	X	
Richmond.	X		
Robinson, J.	X		
Rodwell, T.			X
Root, J.	X		
St. Quintin, M.		X	X
Sanderson, T.		X	
Saunders, F.			X
Savile, Sir G.	X		
Sawyer, J.			X
Shaw, T.			X
Sheppard, J.	X	X	
Sherwood, J.			X
Siddall, T.	X		
Siddall, W.	X	X	
Smith, T.	X		
Smythe, F.			X
Spencer, W.			X
Spooner, J.	X	X	
Spooner, (Jn)	X	X	
Stabler, E.	X	X	X
Stabler, S.	X		
Stainforth.	X		
Stainton, H.	X	X	
Standish.	X		
Staveley, W.			X
Stillingfleet, W.		X	
Storr, B.	X	X	
Stowe, J.	X	X	
Suger, N.	X		
Suger, J.	X		X
Surr, G.			X
Suttell, T.		X	
Swann, T.	X	X	X
Terry, J.	X	X	X
Terry, J. (Jn)			X
Terry, L.	X	X	X
Terry, L. (Jn)			X
Terry, R.	X	X	
Terry, T.	X		
Tesseyman, W.		X	X
Theakston, J.		X	
Thompson, G.	X	X	
Thompson, Rev.R.	X		
Thompson, W.	X	X	X
Thornton, W.	X		
Topham.	X		
Vickard, T.			X

Member	1754	1763	1782
Walker, T.	X		
Wäude.	X	X	
Webster, I.			X
Wentworth, P.	X		
Wharton, C.		X	
Wharton, G.		X	
Wharton, T.	X	X	
Whisker.	X		
White, J.	X	X	
White, T.	X		
White, W.			X
Whittaker, T.R.	X	X	
Wiggins, James.	X	X	
Wiggins, John.		X	
Willan, E.			X
Wilkinson, J.			X
Willey, R.			X
Wilmer, J.	X		
Wilmer, R.	X		
Winn, Sir R.	X		
Wise.	X		
Wombwell.	X		
Woodhouse, R.		X	
Wright, J.	X		
Wyvill, H.	X	X	
Wyvill, M.	X		
Yoward, R.		X	

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